# WRITING BY EAR

## Clarice Lispector and the Aural Novel

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# Writing by Ear

## *Clarice Lispector and the Aural Novel*

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*For my mother, Maria Luiza Librandi (1940–2015), who at the moment of her death taught me: "Deixa nascer!" – "Let it be!"*

*For my grandmother Maria and my great-grandmother Hakime, who came to Brazil from Syria.*

*This book is also dedicated to my (and all) children, who are (re)born each day.*

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# Preface

This book is the result of collective work. My name is on the spine, but it has been authored just as much by those who have suffered through and enjoyed the listening/writing process with me. This process began for my family and me on December 25, 2008, when we landed, so to speak, in the United States. *Suffered* is perhaps not the most precise term, but I will use it here as a kind of placeholder for something deeply felt but perhaps less melodramatic in nature. It is no stretch to say that this book began with an act of sacrifice for me and those closest to me: to leave one's home and language is a rupture, and it requires one to undergo a sometimes painful (and always awkward) second birth in another language and place. Listening, I discovered over the process of writing this book, is inseparable from birth and death.

The present book is the result of many experiences of hearing and mishearing, of listening and misunderstanding, of being lost in translation and found anew in unforeseen transcreations. It is also the result of a focused taking-into-account of the subtle nuances that occur between, below, and above languages (and other meaningful sounds) and that continually shape people's diverse ways of being, communicating, and quite literally making sense.

I indexed my dislocation from Brazil to the United States in my first book, *Maranhão-Manhattan* (2009), through the hyphen, which acts as a bridge and a passage not only from one word to the next, but also from the Global South to the North. From the first moment of my arrival, I began to inhabit a foreign country and a distant hemisphere; I swapped the Southern Cross for Ursa Major, and my home became a place to be missed, far away in a South that gradually became my new North. I also discovered through this process that one indeed must leave Brazil to

re-encounter it (a recurrent topic in Brazilian literature and history). There is no fixed itinerary, but there are key signposts and stopovers: Latin America, Latinx/Chicanx culture, African American culture, the Pacific Rim, the United States and Canada in all their wild and diverse immensity. In the end, one comes to imagine or envision an America prior to continental or national divisions: Amerindian, Asian, and beyond, all echoing through these spaces and our time.

English, it must be said, is not my language. In producing and listening to a foreign tongue, I began to notice the vast canyons of echoing difference between English and my native Portuguese. Here it is not so much the meaning of words alone that matters. The problem is muscular and sensory, manifesting itself in the way in which one has to move one's tongue so as to enunciate certain phonemes or difficult consonantal clusters. An example (one that became a favourite for my Brazilian-born but American-educated kids) is the English word *world* – it remains for me a *word-world* that my tongue refuses to circumnavigate. Like Fernão de Magalhães before me, I come up short (so my kids tell me), ending my word-journey on some tropical island, far from home, shipwrecked.

There are also advantages if one wishes to remain attentive to them. The nearly constant presence of English in my ears has made me notice a certain singularity present in works written in Brazilian Portuguese, a production that revolves around a particular *listening* stance. This observation, for which I at first had no words or means of formal expression, serves to explain my excitement upon rediscovering – in the spring of 2010, and in the context of a course I was then offering – the following passage from Clarice Lispector's final novel, *The Hour of the Star*: "The question is: how do I write? I can verify that I write by ear, just as I learned English and French by ear." Since its first inscription, *writing by ear* thus finds itself connected to the presence of multiple languages and soundscapes, a sonorous world (that word again) that informs and makes possible a certain writing practice based primarily on acoustics and listening.

Looking back, it becomes clear to me that I lived my arrival in North America nearly a decade ago as a double movement. Moving in one direction (the Portuguese word *sentido* is closer to what I mean, and I strain not to reach for it), I found myself immersed in a foreign soundscape, one that has often been characterized more by inexplicable silences than by sound itself. At the same time, I had been invited to the United States to teach and reflect on literature and cultural expression in my own

language, to contemplate and somehow *live* Brazil from my new, Northern Californian circumstances. By interacting in English, Portuguese, and Spanish, and all held in place by unmistakably Anglo-Saxon notions of decorum, I was born again as a listener. The result of this prolonged *escuta* is a study that operates at and attempts to map the intersection (that hyphen), where writing meets the ear and the ear meets writing.

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# Acknowledgments

Dá-me tua mão

Lispector, *A Paixão Segundo G.H.*

This book would never have emerged from its amorphous state of seemingly endless listening had it not been for the help of colleagues and students who lent me their own writing ears. Vincent Barletta, in this respect, was more than an interlocutor and translator; he was in a strict sense a poetic transcreator of this book, a *brother-in-ears* who generously lent his impeccable English to the project and helped me to find the manuscript's final *rhythm*, including the translation of citations from the original Portuguese. The corpus of secondary literature on Clarice Lispector is, to put it mildly, intense and extensive, and very little of this material (and, unfortunately, much Portuguese-language literary theory and criticism in general) is available in English translation. Of the many poetic solutions that Vincent found, I would like to cite his rendering of Oswald de Andrade's early statement on writing by ear: "A gente escreve o que ouve, nunca o que houve" ("We write what we hear, not what was here"). This is writing by ear at its purest, most essential level. One of the many gifts that my move to California brought me was my new brother; and brothers offer their hands.

Other co-translating hands participated in this project from its inception. The first among these to offer her assistance was Karen Sherwood Sotelino, an expert translator of Machado de Assis, Raul Brandão, and Raduan Nassar. Helga Wild also helped immensely with the early stages of the writing process. Jamile Pinheiro Dias was from the first a dream collaborator, a marvellous co-editor, and my Amazonian sister. Adam

Morris and Rachel Lee likewise lent their insights at different moments of the project. The manuscript revision process drew much from the valuable collaboration of Thales Augusto Barretto de Castro and Tom Winterbottom, whom I thank with all my heart.

I also owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the many students (both undergraduate and graduate) who worked with me over the past eight years. Atticus Bergman, Robert Casas Roigé, and Christopher Kark participated actively in the fleshing-out of my initial idea, as well as with my readings of Georges Bataille and Clarice. Victória Troianowski Saramago (a Vic) was involved in the writing process with her sweet presence and attentive reading while she was a PhD student at Stanford and after beginning her professorial career. Ami Schiess offered her generous listening while translating and studying *Cobra Norato*. I cannot hope to list the names of all the students who helped me with their questions, their own research, and their attention, so I present here a sample to stand in for the whole: Gabriela Andicoechea Fischmann, Gabriela Badica, Mackenzie Barnes, Miguel Bota Burgués, Alessandra Carneiro, Cynthia Casas, Anna Castillo, Caroline Egan, Serena Ferrando, Cuauhtémoc García-García, Samuel Blue Gibson, Mariana de Heredia, Daniel Hernández, Sebastião Macedo, Alexis Marie Pearce, Juan Esteban Plaza Parrochia, Virginia Ramos, Luis Rodríguez-Rincón, Sarah Sadlier, Fatoumata Seck, Lena Tahmassian, Kiah Thorn, Cristóbal Trujillo, Monica VanBladel, Callie Elizabeth Ward, and André Zollinger, among others. More recently, the arrival of Bruno H. Castro brought new energy to the project, along with unforeseen cinematic and auditory connections.

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Substantial parts of *Writing by Ear* were written during my time as a faculty fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center (2013–14). This fellowship offered me time, space, and an interdisciplinary conviviality that were fundamental to advance my research. This year was and will remain a dream that came true. I remember with joy all the lunches we shared together and the animated conversations with Lilla Balint, Daniel Heller, Dorinne Kondo, Yi-Ping Ong (and her *Art of Being*), Benjamin Paloff, Ugur Pece, Jean Petitot, and Daniel Rosenberg, among all the other fellows. My special gratitude goes to Robert Barrick, Roland Hsu, Patricia Terrazas, and Caroline Winterer. Thanks also to Rania Sanford, for always finding me a place at the Faculty Writers' Retreat, an excellent initiative co-hosted by the Hume Center for Writing and Speaking and the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity.

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Gratitude, and love.

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# Note on Copyright and Translations

Extracts from the published books by Clarice Lispector in Portuguese and images of her paintings are reproduced by kind permission of Agencia Literaria Carmen Balcells. The English translations of Clarice Lispector's *Near to the Wild Heart*, *The Passion According to G.H.*, *Água Viva*, *The Hour of the Star*, *A Breath of Life*, and *The Complete Stories* are taken from the New Directions editions and with their permission. Permission for the various quotations from Lispector's *Discovering the World* has been granted by Carcanet Press.

With each quotation, I first give the Portuguese original followed by the English translation. The page numbers refer, first, to the cited version of the original Portuguese text and then to the English version. The complete information on the editions used is found in the list of Works Cited. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of the extracts of criticism and other sources from the Portuguese are my own.

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Escuta: eu te deixo ser, deixa-me ser então

(Listen: I let you be, so let me be)

Lispector, *Água viva*

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# Contents

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# 1 Introduction: A Certain Intimate Sense

… aprofundando-se o que nela havia de doçura e de escuta – pois esta era a sua natureza.

(… deepening what there was in her of sweetness and listening – for this was her nature.)

Lispector, *A cidade sitiada*

If we listen closely, we can hear the pulse of a uniquely auditory mode of writing in the work of several authors of the modern period, and specifically at the heart of Brazilian literature. In the present book, I examine the broader significance of the explicit articulation of a *writing by ear* found in the work of Brazilian novelist Clarice Lispector (1920–77). If listening, and audition more generally, can be examined within fields as diverse as ethics, law, medicine, physiology, anthropology, folklore studies, philosophy, politics, rhetoric, music, and psychoanalysis, I argue in this study that there is a *listening in writing*. What it implies, first of all, is a mode of writing that has as its foundational image the "orelha à escuta, grande, cor-de-rosa e morta" ("ear listening, large, pink and dead") that appears at the beginning of Lispector's first novel, *Near to the Wild Heart*, published in 1943 (13; 3).[1] This image would return only slightly altered in the final novel she published in her lifetime, *The Hour of the Star* (1977), in the guise of a male narrator, who quite perfunctorily claims: "escrevo de ouvido" ("I write by ear") (18; 10). This is an idea that suggests a reframing of authorship as a form of active and fertile *aural* reception. It also recasts the written text as a mute sign that nonetheless resonates and echoes within the mind (and body) of the reader. Throughout this

book, I read Lispector's ear, "dead" and separate from any body and yet active and listening, as a figurative and eminently modern theory of writing. My goal is to come to an adequately theorized understanding of what it means to "write by ear," and how such resonance, fashioned in the silence of writing (and reading) fiction, comes to have its power and produce its effects. Lispector is a point of departure insofar as she persistently proposed throughout her career a conceptualization of writing by ear and opened a path for such writing and analysis, which finds representation in the work of other writers, both within and beyond Brazil. I argue that Lispector's "ear" is connected to her experience with a range of languages (e.g., Brazilian Portuguese, English, French, Hebrew, and Yiddish). This ear also situates us within a third space beyond the traditional binaries of speech/writing, orality/literacy, activity/passivity, and sound/silence. Such a stance has far-reaching implications in Latin America and the Global South; however, it likewise matters a great deal for texts produced in a wide range of cultural settings and frameworks. Lispector was, after all, a writer deeply attuned to forms of listening and verbal/aesthetic practice in Brazil and in the world at large. It is this "listening-to" the world that ultimately constitutes the central focus of the present book.

In what follows, I unpack the notion of listening in writing, an idea that I break down into three constituent parts or concepts: 1) writing by ear; 2) the aural novel; and 3) echopoetics. In addition, I offer a kind of précis of Lispector's biography. Finally, I describe the structure of the book, its style, and its scope.

**Listening in Writing: Between Orality and Literacy**

For some time, historical, philosophical, literary, linguistic, and anthropological studies have discussed the relation between literacy and orality, above all in the context of Latin American literature. Important examples include the work of Angel Rama (1982; 1998), Antonio Cornejo Polar (1994), Carlos Pacheco (1992), and Martin Lienhard (1991), among others. These studies consistently call attention to the relation, at times conflictive and at times complimentary or even magnetic, between these two poles. In this line of research, the proposed divide between speech and writing amounts to a "rhetorical device" used not to inscribe an essentialized orality but to create an *effect* of orality that helps to displace the written system itself (Millay 2005, 19). In the end, it serves to contest the ideology and power attributed to literacy, and in this context,

writers effectively position themselves as cross-cultural mediators. In these foundational studies, one can say that the focus rests, above all, on the way in which European literary forms were adapted and transformed within the colonial and postcolonial context. *Writing by Ear* inserts itself into the tradition of these studies, but it proposes that critics include a third term between writing and orality: listening in writing. The presence of hearing/listening in writing calls on its readers to contemplate a sense that has been left largely (if paradoxically) unexplored in previous discussions on the relationship between orality and writing. It is my intention to show that the inclusion of the ear changes the panorama of the discussion.

Despite the differences between speech and writing, both are manifestations of language. But what does it mean to think about the relationship between the ear and the process of writing? The ear does not produce language: the ear is mute, it does not speak, and it has no voice. Although it occupies a fundamental position in the cycle of spoken language, the ear is basically a receptive organ, the channel and the labyrinth through which the sounds of the outside world enter and communicate within our body. Unlike voice and writing, which produce speech and texts, listening is silent and receptive. From this receptivity, the following questions arise: What is the specific aesthetic for which listening in writing calls? What is the relation that listening in writing establishes with silence, echo, and the sounds of the world? How are we to understand authorship when writers present themselves as objects of reception rather than subjects of production? What is the relation that exists between the book – a mute text – and the verbal practice of the world that surrounds it? What is the relation between written literature in Brazil and the significant percentage of Brazil's population that does not possess alphabetic literacy? In which ways does the robust oral and aural culture of Brazil shape literary genres and forms with unmistakably European roots?

Throughout *Writing by Ear*, I am concerned at once with shedding light on the narrative representation of listening and with a broader reconceptualization of fiction through listening, considering it an auditory practice that transcends the dichotomy of speech and writing. The main point of the argument is that listening, as a third term, takes part in both poles: listening is part of the oral dimension of speech, and it is likewise part of the silent dimension of written words. Listening, as we will see (or *hear*), is not merely sonorous but is also steeped in silence. At first, one might think that the auditory question might just be another

way of linking writing to orality, since *audition* would signify the audition of voices. Taking into account Lispector's work, however, it becomes clear that theorizing the relation between listening and writing requires a differentiated approach: listening in writing necessarily refers not to audible sounds alone but to silence as well. This is not about an opposition between written silence and orality, or between text and speech, or between silence and sound; rather, it is the conjugation of these two moments – their friction. It is a writing by ear; that is, a text that is the result of the hearing of sounds that remain in writing, as silence.

## A Listening Literary Turn

*Writing by Ear* approaches Lispector's work through the notion of listening in writing. In this sense, this is not only a critical reading of Lispector's work; my aim is rather to show readers how to use Lispector as a *theoretical source* capable of helping one to rethink fiction in general as an aural practice. For this reason, I make use of Lispector's fiction to theorize listening in writing through her own words, a fact that explains why direct quotations from her work form an important part of the main argumentation and of my close readings. What does it mean to write by ear? This is the question at the centre of the present book. To answer it, I undertake "a close listening" (Bernstein 1998) of Lispector's voice as it emerges from the silence of her writing. In the interstices that lie between voice and silence, one finds listening: a place of speaking through mute silence, a place of writing through voice that allows one to hear silence, the final vibration of language.

Lispector is at once a writer and the principal theorist of what she refers to as "writing by ear." That this is a theory of language and literature authored by a woman adds to the feminist appeal of the present book. That Lispector is a writer working within the between-space of twentieth-century Rio de Janeiro and incorporates within herself a host of subjects – she is a Judeo-Brazilian woman born in the Ukraine, and from her position of unquestionable whiteness, she chooses to incorporate a Brazil that is at once black, Indigenous, Catholic, animist, *umbandista*, and formed through *candomblé* while also taking in the accents acquired during her long sojourns outside of Brazil – is what makes her writing so amply pluralist and multiversal.

José Américo Mota Pessanha's seminal 1965 study on *The Passion According to G.H.* provides an early signpost for the theoretical potential of Lispector's work. As he puts it, her writing "has the iconoclastic force

of philosophy's beginning" (Pessanha 1965, 184). Pessanha also points out that Lispector's fiction presents silence as a "source of language" (186). Benedito Nunes (1989), a central figure of Lispector scholarship, underscores the failure of language as a theme of her writing and points to the link she maintains with improvisational music and with "a kind of schizophrenic mode of writing" (68), both important aspects in a discussion of writing by ear, as I show over the course of the following chapters. Nevertheless, it is Plinio W. Prado Jr's 1989 analysis of the "sublime failure" at the heart of Lispector's fiction that indicates quite specifically the importance of listening for understanding her work: "To write, according to C.L., is first to *listen*, it implies an attempt to capture that which speaks by means of what is said" (Prado 1989, 26). This is a fundamentally important observation; however, Prado's goal is not to theorize listening but rather to focus on what he refers to as the "unnamable." This, he argues, is achieved through the failure of language, a "vertigo or defect" (26). As a text that acts through subtraction (and through amputation, as I discuss in chapter 4), the ineffable is expressed negatively, as if it were pronounced through mute silence. This formulation is crucial for the present book, which relates listening and writing through muteness and silence. Earl E. Fitz, a pioneer in Brazilian studies within the United States, has likewise pointed out the importance of silence in Lispector's work and the development of the "lyrical novel," a term that I adapt and refashion as the "aural novel."[2]

Considering Lispector's fiction as a case study and a source for theory, *Writing by Ear* presents a theory of the novel derived from listening and based on readings of *Near to the Wild Heart* (1943), *The Besieged City* (1949), *The Passion According to G.H.* (1964), *Água Viva* (1973), *The Hour of the Star* (1977), and *A Breath of Life* (1978), as well as the literary columns (*crônicas*) brought together in *The Discovery of the World* (1984). With the terms "writing by ear," the "aural novel," and "echopoetics," my broader aim is to offer new vocabularies for the study of literature focused on the act of listening in writing. I am particularly interested in describing what I call the "aural novel," which corresponds to a certain configuration that the novel has acquired in Brazil at least since the work of Machado de Assis in the late nineteenth century. I consider both "writing by ear" and the "aural novel" to be part of a broader poetics of listening that I refer to as "echopoetics."

"Echopoetics" is a term that refers to a poetics of resonances that considers the aesthetic, ethical, and ecological reverberations of the imaginary. It is through an echopoetics that we might begin to attend more

adequately to the semantic spirit of words as echoes of the material presence of voices, rumours, and noises that surround writers in their time and life, and that resonate with each reader. A written text founded on listening is first *a receiving text* rather than a producing one. By "echopoetics," I refer to such a receptive capacity as an unconditional openness to the outside, and as a result of being completely inside in the sense of belonging, of being part of something that can be the womb, the world, and/or the planet itself, as Lispector articulates it.

Rather than a study of sound and sense (to recall José Miguel Wisnik's magnificent 1989 book *O Som e o sentido*), the present book is an invitation to construct a relatively new field of study: the study of listening in writing. In dialogue with philosophical notions of listening articulated by Jean-Luc Nancy, Jean-François Lyotard, Peter Sloterdijk, Way Chee Dimock, and Adriana Cavarero, and in parallel to the field of sound studies, voice, and poetry (discussed in the works of Charles Bernstein (1998), Craig Dworkin (2011), and Antonio Sergio Bessa (2009), among others), this book can fairly be considered part of a "listening turn" in literary studies. This turn is close to what Ana María Ochoa Gautier describes in her study *Aurality. Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (2014):

> So what is happening when we talk about an "aural turn" is not necessarily that suddenly hearing has emerged on the scene today. As historians of sound increasingly show us, the archive tells us on the one hand, that many practices and disciplines central to modernity have to do with hearing and, on the other, that the history of globalization needs to take into account histories and understandings of listening that come from radically different regions, that point to different ontologies and politics of life and cannot be subsumed under the epistemic formations of Western modernity. Rather, what is crucial is that the changing relation between nature and culture regarding questions about hearing implies a reorganization of our own questions and disciplinary divisions around sound. (213)

Whereas my focus is the ear and the literary text, the focus of Ochoa's study is the relation between the ear and the voice, between practices of listening and vocalization, i.e., the acoustics involved in several practices (from popular music to Afro-descendant religions, from Indigenous sonorities to the "vocal pedagogy of the nation-state" [212]). In my case, the focus rests upon silence, muteness, resonances, and echoes.

If writing is silent, listening to what is written does not simply imply an ability that has to do with sound. In addition to the sounds of the world to which it points, there are sounds inside the reader's mind, which emerge when we repeat the words we read in silence. Garret Stewart, in *Reading Voices* (1990), has shown the magic of this internal noise that so affects us at the embodied level in silent reading. Addressing the "reading body," Stewart argues: "This somatic locus of soundless reception includes of course the brain but must be said to encompass as well the organs of vocal production, from diaphragm up through throat to tongue and palate. Silent reading locates itself, that is, in the conjoint cerebral activity and suppressed muscular action of a simultaneously summoned and silenced enunciation" (1). The practice of what Stewart defines as *phonemic reading* (processed in silence by the "*listening* reader" [278]) "has to do not with reading orally but with aural reading" (2). Aural reading resonates internally within our body, as the muted interior sound never fully ceases to be sound, even if it is never louder than the faintest whisper. Writing by ear involves these two dimensions: sound and silence. If on the one hand acoustics matters in this discussion, the presence of listening in writing involves hearing non-sonorous sounds – in other words, sounds that are not audible. We call them "silence" for lack of a better term, since we tend to think of silence as opposed to sound, even if we are aware that sound is audible, and silence vibrates. As Lispector herself has presented this idea, in her best-known novel, *The Passion According to G.H.*: "a respiração contínua do mundo é aquilo que ouvimos e chamamos de silêncio" ("the continual breathing of the world is what we hear and call silence") (98; 99). This approach corresponds to one of the critical questions proposed by Jean-Luc Nancy (2007): "Is even listening itself sonorous?" (98). Not necessarily, as it turns out. Deafness, partial or not, is an important aspect to be considered in a theory of listening in writing.

This is also a way to escape the fate of sound studies and its obliviousness to the "non-cochlear ear," to call to mind Seth Kim-Cohen's expression (2009). Kim-Cohen's book distinguishes sonic art from music and the audible with the aim of conceptualizing non-sonorous sound in order to consider an expanded field of artistic experiments from the 1950s onward: "The expanded situation of sound is the idea that I have been trying to bring into play – … so that the implications of thinking sound-beyond-sound and/or sound-without-sound might take root" (xix). The sonic arts that Kim-Cohen studies are contemporary with Lispector's first

novels: "Pierre Schaeffer's initial experiments with *musique concrète*, John Cage's first silent composition, and Muddy Waters's pioneering electric recordings – all occurred in the same year: 1948" (xix).[3]

Visuality has until now received the lion's share of the attention in critical works on Lispector written in Brazil and elsewhere. Among the studies focused on the eye and the poetics of seeing in Lispector, one might turn to the important readings of Wisnik (1988) and Regina Pontieri (1999). Carlos Mendes de Sousa's 2012 study, based on the uses of the term "figural" (according Jean-François Lyotard's definition), is also predominantly concerned with images, i.e., with vision but also with blindness. However, Sousa's "figures" can be adapted to the notion of reverberation that I adopt in my own reading, as a study that follows the *figurations of listening* in Lispector's writings.

At the same time, it is important to state that a focus on listening does not mean any backgrounding of the sense of vision. In my own approach, I make ample use of the visual arts – especially painting and photography – to speak of sound art. By privileging a verbivocovisual approach to literary texts, I avoid the "audiovisual litany" (Sterne 2003, 15), i.e, the clear division between sound and sight as opposing poles (similar to the division between oral speech and written texts discussed above). In *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, Sterne shows that sound, hearing, and listening are central aspects of modernity, but, similar to Nancy's critique of the oculo-centric character of philosophy, Sterne signals the predominance of a visual terminology in the theoretical domain. If the culture of listening/hearing is predominant as the culture of seeing in modernity, philosophical knowledge is predominantly ocular. As Sterne has put it, there is "a disjuncture between the aurality of a practice and the ocularcentric language used to describe it" (12).

In this way, a listening in writing (and its resonant silence, its mute shrieks, its vibrant muteness) is the central theme of the present book. For this reason, I focus on *hearing* and *the ear* as processual synonyms that constitute a third way beyond the conventional dichotomy between speech and writing. In fact, hearing produces an affinity between writing and orality, and it helps us to think of a new distribution and mobilization of the senses: listening in writing, visual audition, silent but resonant reading, mute but speaking writing, and so on. The result, I argue (following Lispector's conception), is a writing by ear, with the novel as an eminently aural space and authorship as a locus of reception more than production.

## Lispector's Ears

When most European readers still had little knowledge of Lispector's work, Hélène Cixous would offer a series of startling comparisons:

> If Kafka had been a woman. If Rilke had been a Jewish Brazilian born in the Ukraine. If Rimbaud had been a mother, if he had reached the age of fifty. If Heidegger had been able to stop being German, if he had written the Romance of the Earth. Why have I cited these names? To try to sketch out the general vicinity. Over there is where Clarice Lispector writes. There, where the most demanding works breathe, she makes her way. (133)

Even more suggestive than the genuine pathos and enthusiasm of this passage, however, is what Cixous affirms directly afterward: "But then, at the point where the philosopher gets winded, she goes on, further still, further than all knowledge. After comprehension, step by step, she plunges trembling into the incomprehensible shuddering depth of the world, *the ultrasensitive ear*, tensed to take in even the sound of the stars, even the minimal rubbing of atoms, even the silence between two heartbeats" (133, my emphasis). Cixous is here attuned, one might say, to Lispector's writing; she echoes it and it resonates with her.[4] And one should not lose sight of the fact that while she points to Lispector's similarities to Kafka, Rilke, Rimbaud, and Heidegger, she also gestures to what is different in her work, a fiction that moves forward when philosophy falls silent to listen to that which exceeds reason's grasp.

Lispector's "ultrasensitive ear" is the most precise unit of analysis within the present book. It is through this ear that I work to understand (to hear) the theory of listening that Lispector develops in her writing. Here it is helpful to turn to a point made by Jean-Luc Nancy, namely that to create a philosophy of listening, it is necessary to learn from poets and writers of fiction. For Nancy (2007), and the philosophical tradition to which he belongs, listening represents an escape from the dominance of language and signification, and in order to think it, one must bend language a bit so as to hear and give sense to the extra-semantic modes of signification, to that which makes sense primarily as sound, timbre, and tone.[5] Reminding his reader that there is quite possibly "more isomorphism between the visual and the conceptual," Nancy criticizes the vision-centric character of philosophy from Plato to Lacan (30). Instead of terms (metaphors) such as *accent*, *tone*, *timbre*, *resonance*, *sound*, *amplitude*, *density*, *vibration*, or *undulation*, philosophical knowledge has

instead drawn from terms associated with the visual domain: *form*, *idea*, *representation*, *aspect*, and *phenomenon* – all of which serve to maintain the dominance of the visual rather than that of "acoustic penetration" (3). If listening is what escapes theorization, it is because it is also what quite naturally escapes the gaze. Nancy reminds his reader that one cannot *see* what one *hears*, and that it is thus necessary to move from an eye-oriented phenomenology to an ear-oriented ontology, which also implies "surmounting, outsmarting [*déjouer*], or displacing the 'impossibility of circumscribing the essence of listening' within a theoretical system" (78). What if, as a thought experiment, we were to imagine the allegorical cave in Plato's *Republic* as a space of echoes instead of shadows? Can it be done? Might one, for instance, theorize listening (and timbre) by undoing the "primacy of language and signification" (30)? Would the resulting "negative semantics or paradoxical hermeneutics" provide enough of a foundation upon which to build (34)?

According to Nancy, a philosophy of listening must satisfy three demands. First, it needs to consider resonance as a special particularity of hearing that can serve as the foundation of all senses. Second, it must foreground the "listening body" as a resonant chamber: From the first cry of a newborn to the last murmur, a listening body releases "something produced in the throat, a borborygmus, a crackle, a stridency where a weighty, murmuring matter breathes, opened into the division of its resonance" (27). Third, it must frame the subject as a "diapason-subject," by which Nancy means a presence that occurs not "in view of" but rather in a process of constant referral, an echo (16). Such a framing effectively transcends the subject-object distinction and goes back "from the phenomenological subject, as intentional line of sight, to a resonant subject, an intensive spacing of a rebound that does not end in any return to self without immediately relaunching, *as an echo*, a call to the same self" (21). The subject here is reverberation itself.

**Writing by Ear and Multilingualism: "I Live by Ear"**

The expression "I write by ear," which appears in Lispector's *The Hour of the Star*, is the fictional version of a personal note that Claire Varin found in one of Lispector's notebooks, and which became a point of departure for Varin's study: "Vivo de ouvido. Vivo de ter ouvido falar" ("I live by ear. I live by having heard [others] speak") (2002, 26). This was perhaps not by chance. It is in fact striking that Varin, a native of Canada who had travelled to Brazil to study Lispector's work and learn Portuguese, could

capture the importance of voice and listening in Lispector's writing, or as Varin has so beautifully put it, the "ecstasy of the voice before all apprehension" (69). Varin's study opened possibilities for new work in this area, such as the present one, which focuses specifically on understanding the term "writing by ear" (something not analysed in Varin's work) and its possibilities for wider application.

The question of later-acquired languages affecting the maternal one is fundamental to consider when defining writing by ear. Interviewing Lispector's eldest sister, Varin discovered that their parents spoke Yiddish at home, a language that Clarice heard but never formally learned or spoke: "Final truth, or first hidden truth: Yiddish, a language wandering among other languages" (61). Another writer, Grace Paley (1989), also a foreigner to Brazil, has made a keen and acute observation in this regard: "Clarice Lispector spent the first two months of her life in the town of Chechelnik in the Ukraine. This is a small short fact. The interesting question, unanswered in the places I've looked for it, is – at what age did she enter the Portuguese language? And how much Russian did she bring with her? Any Yiddish? Sometimes I think this is what her work is about … one language trying to make itself at home in another. Sometimes there's hospitality, sometimes a quarrel" (ix).

The daughter of Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrants, Lispector was born on December 10, 1920, and she would die the day before her fifty-seventh birthday, on December 9, 1977, of a cancer that was diagnosed far too late for effective treatment. She was born in Ukraine, in the village of Chechelnik, precisely when her parents were leaving Russia in order to escape the growing persecution of Jews.[6] After a long process, Lispector's parents along with Clarice and her two older sisters managed to board a ship in Hamburg that was headed to Brazil. They arrived in 1922, when Clarice was about one year old. They disembarked in the Northeast, in Maceió (Alagoas), where her father had family. Her father would initially work as a peddler, and the family was inarguably quite poor. Lispector's experience of Northeastern Brazil would expand when her family moved to Recife (Pernambuco). Besides hearing Yiddish at home, Lispector attended a Hebrew school in Pernambuco, the Colégio Hebreo-Idisch-Brasileiro:

> In the third grade, before her mother died, she went to a new school, the Colégio Hebreo-Idisch-Brasileiro, on the Rua da Glória, a block or so away from the Praça Maciel Pinheiro. As the name indicates, the school taught

> Hebrew and Yiddish in addition to the usual disciplines … There are no references to Hebrew in her work, but the child with the gift for words apparently made up the gap quickly, for she was chosen to give one of the three year-end discourses the students presented to the faculty and parents, in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Portuguese. The small Clarice gave the Hebrew discourse, which means she was at the top of the class. (Moser 2009, 65)

When she was fifteen years old, the family moved to Rio de Janeiro. Lispector's mother, who suffered from a chronic paralysis, would die in 1930.[7] After studying law, acquiring Brazilian citizenship, starting a career as a journalist, and publishing her first novel (1943), Lispector would marry the young Brazilian diplomat Mauricio Gurgel Valente and undertake a series of travels that would keep her out of Brazil for sixteen years. It was then that other languages, especially English and French, would insinuate themselves upon her ears. As Varin argues, on the bilingualism and even multilingualism of Lispector's fiction:

> Yiddish rests within her almost as a stowaway, as she would never learn to express herself in the language of her mother, who had died when Clarice was only nine years old. Mothered in Yiddish, she would assimilate the Portuguese of the land chosen by her parents … She would constantly cultivate a binary mental structure through the acquisition of other languages (French, English, and Italian during her residence in Italy (1944–46), Switzerland (1946–49), England (1951), and the United States (1952–59) and thanks to her activities as a translator over the last fifteen years of her life … Raised with the instability of a limited bilingualism, she worked, quite naturally, in the margins. Her syntax, which surreptitiously translates a singular mix of languages, emerges like a kind of foreign accent. (27)

This particular "mix of languages" makes Lispector an exemplary case of someone who writes language as a foreigner, making her especially responsive to hearing nuances, timbres, and intonations (material that precedes semantic comprehension):[8]

> Pois, como eu disse a palavra tem de se parecer com a palavra, instrumento meu. Ou não sou um escritor? Na verdade sou mais ator porque, com apenas um modo de pontuar, faço malabarismos de entonação, obrigo o respirar alheio a me acompanhar o texto. (1998e, 29–30)

> (Since as I said the word has to resemble the word, my instrument. Or am I not a writer? Actually, I'm more of an actor because with only one way to punctuate, I juggle with intonation and force another's breathing to accompany my text.) (2011, 14)

To "juggle with intonation" is to write by ear like a foreigner who mentally repeats the sonority of the language she hears to learn how to play with it and manipulate it into meaningful if idiosyncratic shapes. It follows logically from this that the punctuation of Lispector's text seeks to capture a particular intonation, which in turn makes it very difficult for her to write, as she constantly makes clear in her fiction and non-fiction. Anyone who has read Lispector knows that her writing serves as a persistent attempt to capture a vibration – a *said* that strives to inscribe what is unsaid. As a writer, Lispector is not satisfied with her material, the words that are chosen and used; as a writer, she wants her reader to look at the written word and be able to read – or, better still, to hear – all the words that were not chosen, which remain as non-realized virtualities, as if it were possible to write not according to syntagmatic axes but rather simply according to the axes of the paradigm (to recall Ferdinand de Saussure's and Roman Jakobson's semiotic terminology). This is why colours (vision) and sound (hearing) are her principal paradigms. This is also why reading Lispector can be an experience that is as difficult as it is pleasurable. Her words reach us first as sounds, with the body, and they touch unexpected regions. The translator of her *Complete Stories*, Katrina Dodson (2015), expresses her impressions of Lispector's work: "Reading Clarice Lispector is a disorienting experience" (629). She continues:

> What remains constant is the intimate physicality of Clarice's voice – its strong rhythms and the way she seems to be whispering in your ear like a sister, mother, and lover, somehow touching you from far away. Part of her rhythm comes from a fondness for repetition: refrains that produce an incantatory feel or thematic crescendo, anaphoric structures that lend a biblical tone, the slapstick effect of a repeated catchphrase, or the compulsive reiterations of an obsessive mind, like Laura's in "The Imitation of the Rose." Her words hold onto a sensory coherence, even when their semantic logic threatens to come undone … She haunts us each in different ways. I have presented to you the Clarice that I hear best. (635)

**The Form of the Book and Its Chapters**

I present the form of the book through two specific notes. From the first, I explain that the book itself possesses a rhetorical structure that resembles the theory I wish to develop. In this sense, this text not only speaks *about* writing by ear, it also *shows* it through the very form of its argumentation. The book has an openly paraphrastic, fragmentary, or even kaleidoscopic structure, which operates on many occasions through repetitions, jumps, and insights. As becomes apparent throughout the argumentation, a theory of writing by ear presupposes a rhetoric that questions and problematizes conventional forms of (written) reason. Such a rhetoric is present throughout Lispector's work, as well as in the broader evolution of the novel in Brazil.

The second note refers to the diction that I employ. This book is written largely in the rich and difficult interstices of American English and Brazilian Portuguese, and with the explicit intention of producing mutual resonances. As stated in the Preface, *Writing by Ear* came to be through the (strange and estranging) experience of teaching Luso-Brazilian literature in English and in the United States. It thus has its origins in certain observations, interactions in my teaching and research that came to form theoretical inquiries revolving around spatial and linguistic dislocation.

The next two chapters situate listening in writing in the broader context of Brazilian literature. The other chapters focus, solely, on a reading of Lispector's novels. The chapter "Writing by Ear" starts with a comparison between Lispector's "writing by ear" and Augusto de Campos's poetic notion of "pulsation," in order to highlight the *aural* aspect of poetry and prose. The main goal is to present a listening history of Brazilian literature while also refining questions of concern to scholars of Latin American literature related to the semantics of edges and borders, to a semiotics of corporeality, and to a performativity directed by the sense of hearing. In this chapter, it is also important to underscore that "writing by ear" as a fictional framework has particular relevance for literatures that tend to maintain an ethical, poetic, and political connection with communities deeply shaped by forms of verbal communication that do not rely on the mediation of writing. It is no secret that these communities, both within and beyond the social sciences, have been pejoratively framed as "illiterate" or "unlettered." As a conceit, "writing by ear" unquestionably finds itself resonating strongly with and in many cases travelling alongside marginalized communities in Latin

America, the Caribbean, and Africa – and this even if we leave aside the wide range of ways in which this idea reverberates with Native American thought.

Presented as a theoretical tool, a kind of *vade mecum* concept, *writing by ear*, and its extension in the *aural novel* and the *echopoetics*, allows me to disclose a particular configuration that the international field of literature acquires in and through Brazil; at the same time, it brings out the inherently cosmopolitan character of Brazilian literature and the omnivorous and ever-attentive relationship that it has to other literatures and languages.[9] My concern is to escape, by all means necessary, any essentialized or isolationist reading of Lispector's work so as to grasp a more intimate and planetary sense of writing that has taken place in Brazil.

In chapter 3, "The Aural Novel," I trace out the contours of Lispector's "aural novel," a rubric that brings to the forefront a neglected aspect of polyphony in fictional prose. I first conceptualize the term in accordance with novelists such as Mia Couto and Toni Morrison, to then present a reading of Lispector's *A hora da estrela* (*The Hour of the Star*, 1977), in which the notion of "writing by ear" finds its first explicit expression. I pay special attention to the form of the aural novel in Brazil, in a genealogy that goes back to the pioneering work of Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis in the late nineteenth century, and I discuss the work of Oswald de Andrade and of João Guimarães Rosa as important figures for the formation of the "aural novel." As this is a book focused on Lispector's work, when I do speak of other writers, I tend to focus on the same literary tradition within which she participated: that of the modern Brazilian novel. My broader suggestion, not developed here, is that the work of other modern Brazilian writers such as Mário de Andrade (1893–1945) and Graciliano Ramos (1892–1953), as well as more recent authors such as Hilda Hilst (1930–2004) and Paulo Leminski (1944–89), and even contemporary novelists such as Veronica Stigger, Nuno Ramos, Evandro Afonso Ferreira, Ana Miranda, and many others, can be profitably read through the lens (or, more accurately, within the echoing space) of a writing by ear, forming in this way an entire lineage of aural works.

In chapter 4, "Hearing the Wild Heart," I offer a close analysis of Lispector's first novel, *Perto do coração selvagem* (*Near to the Wild Heart*, 1943). The goal is to present the first development of "writing by ear" through an examination of the image of the "dead ear," which appears in the first paragraph of her first novel. There is here (hear), I suggest, a deep connection to Vincent van Gogh's act of cutting his ear, itself a

gesture that marks modern art. This unusual comparison has required the development of a sinuous argumentation that follows the flow of unconscious connections. The "dead ear" offers an occasion to understand a series of Lispector's motifs that will reappear in *Água Viva*, published thirty years after her first novel, and narrated by a character who is also a painter. I describe these motifs in Lispector's texts and, also, in the paintings she produced in the 1970s. In my reading, the motif of the sacrifice of the ear corresponds, for Lispector, to the sacrifice of the voice in silent writing. At the same time, as an ear detached from the individual body, it signals an expanded sense of listening to the world. Following George Bataille's reading of van Gogh's sacrifice in relation to his paintings of sunflowers and withered flowers, I also explore other salient motifs in this chapter: the voice of "the woman" in relation to the figure of the mother, the link between the ear and the uterus, between hearing and childhood, between hearing and mourning. The status of Lispector's presentation of her protagonist as a very clear "portrait of the artist as a young (wo)man" is related to the force of creation as radiation, and the solar images that appear both in Lispector and van Gogh. Born from a sacrifice, the process of writing is described through the figure of amputation, the figure of the inaudible, the "it" language, and its echolalias. Finally, at the end of her first novel, the body of the protagonist expands itself to the wild world and is reborn as a horse, a motif that will reappear in all of the subsequent chapters until the conclusion.

In chapter 5, "Loud Object," I turn my attention to *Água Viva* (1973), which bore the working title "Objeto Gritante." I trace the image of this "loud object" as being the union of the ear and the typewriter. Friedrich Kittler's discussion of Nietzsche and the typewriter (1999) is an occasion to relate Lispector's work to that mode of modernity according to which the sacrifice of the mother's voice gives rise to an attentive and (un) authorial listening.

In chapter 6, "The Echopoetics of G.H.," I focus on Lispector's best-known work, *A paixão segundo G.H.* (*The Passion According to G.H.*), published in 1964. Understood as a study of metamorphosis, the novel, I argue, presents its structure in and through the operation of echo. A verbal art founded on the mythological figure of Echo, the term "echopoetics" serves to conceptualize and give expression to the reverberations of both sound and silence in Lispector's prose masterpiece as well as to the notion of authorship as a receptive (and responsive) stance. A comparison with the myth of Echo (as presented by Ovid) also helps my

reader to understand the development of a poetics of listening in Lispector's novel that moves in an ultimately inhuman direction and takes on a planetary dimension.

I begin the concluding chapter, "Hearing Horses," with a chance encounter, a productive *trompe l'oreille*. It involves my sonic confusion between "horse" and "Horace" at an academic talk that ended up giving form to my poetic and philosophical project, and which brought me closer to understanding Lispector's poetics. Most dramatically, there is the stark poetic difference between Horace and Ovid, and Lispector's consistent preference for the latter. Instead of coherence and verisimilitude (Horatian precepts), writing by ear – and Lispector's entire *oeuvre* – produces literary metamorphoses, a whole continent of fecund and beautiful monsters. What we find in Lispector are plurivocal texts, forms in flux, and numerous beasts – some mythological, such as centaurs and sirens, and some woven together in novel settings of juxtaposition and co-presence. For Lispector, it also happens that the horse is by far (and perhaps not incidentally for the personal anecdote with which I begin this chapter) the most important figure in her extensive bestiary. It is thus of particular significance that the central event in *A cidade sitiada* (*The Besieged City*, 1949) is the Ocyrhoe-like transformation of a suburban woman into a horse. Philosophically, the horse of Lispector/Lucrécia is related (as in a genealogy) to other horses in the history of thought, in particular to the "philosopher-Centaurus," Friedrich Nietzsche. According to the image developed by Peter Sloterdijk (1986), Nietszche, the thinker whose gesture to protect a horse is said to have been the last one witnessed before he entered the madness that clouded the final years of his life, established the modern form of literature as a hybrid text in between philosophy and fiction. This is also Lispector: a fictionist-philosopher, a writer-Centaurus (*centaurus*, one should keep in mind, is a grammatically feminine word in Latin). Lispector attempts to unite form and movement, thus moving past the traditional binary of form and theme. Against the fixity of the written text, her consistent (even obsessive) aim was to create texts able to capture the instant of time in movement. Following the horse sign, I compare Lispector's form and movement to what Eadweard Muybridge managed to do, in the late nineteenth century, through the use of stop-motion photography. The ear in writing thus has a relation to the non-human world, to modern technologies of sound and image, and (above all) to the way in which focused attention on both has shaped the production of fictional prose in Brazil.

## A Certain Intimate Sense

In a famous essay, "Notícia da atual literatura brasileira – Instinto de Nacionalidade" ("Report on Contemporary Brazilian Literature – The Instinct for Nationality") (1994 [1873]), Machado de Assis rejects the representation of local picturesqueness or "colour" in novels and defends the idea that writers should reveal their connection to a certain time and/or country through the expression of a "certo sentimento íntimo" (804), a "certain intimate feeling." Machado wrote the essay with the intention of publishing it first in the United States, which brings to the fore a confrontation between the foreigner and the local – between a *here* and a *there* – that is an integral part of any definition of a "national literature." That is, for Machado de Assis, the question of what makes a Brazilian author (or one of any other nationality) distinct from all other sorts of authors is an *instinctive* belonging to a certain time, to a certain language, and to a certain territory. A kind of writerly *habitus*. The question for us is, beyond imperfect approximations borrowed from the social sciences, how are we to understand the matter of "instinct," this simultaneously concrete and vague expression of a "certain intimate feeling"? My suggestion is to translate this *feeling* or *sentiment* as *sense*, specifically, the sense of audition, which is so overwhelming and recurrent in Brazilian authors (and, *a fortiori*, Machado de Assis) that one can seriously and productively talk about a "philosophy of the ear" in Brazilian literature.

Ultimately, *Writing by Ear* presents fiction writers as literary theorists. It is, at its most basic level, an invitation to include within current theoretical and speculative debates regarding world literature specific conceits with origins in the writing practices of Brazil's modern novelists, and articulated primarily in Brazilian Portuguese. In this aspect, it is a study that directly responds to a statement by anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2016):

> I've said it elsewhere, and I'll repeat it here: Oswald de Andrade, Guimarães Rosa and Clarice Lispector, after Machado de Assis, are the true authors of a philosophical reflection that is truly Brazilian, the inventors of an original aesthetic, metaphysical, and political language capable of bringing to light the obscure conceptual potentialities of the language(s) that we speak in our country, just as Borges or Lezama Lima did for American Spanish. (12)

When I choose to translate the intimate sense(s) of Brazilian literature through the notion of "writing by ear," what I am performing is an act of invention in the sense re-given to the word by the American anthropologist Roy Wagner (1981): not as testing something new as in a scientific experiment, but in the ancient rhetorical sense of producing analogies. If an ethnographer translates a foreign culture according to the terms of her culture of origin, similarly, I am conceptualizing the term "writing by ear" as a way to describe and to translate a culture and language of origin after being affected by the effects of other cultures and languages. As we know, it is by being outside of a place that we recognize its particularity while defamiliarizing ourselves with it in a process of turning foreigner and operating through barbarisms, translations, and mistranslations.

Finally, *Writing by Ear* reflects a genuine effort on my part to speak simultaneously within, together with, and beyond the traditional disciplinary and regional (not to mention national and linguistic) concerns of Brazilianists and Latin Americanists. That is, the theory of a *writing ear* is most directly concerned with opening up a broader dialogue on listening and literature. Much like an act of literary and philosophical diplomacy, one of my basic goals for the present book is for it to serve as a conversation starter. That is, I hope to present and analyse dialogues, resonances, and connections in Lispector's fiction in the Anglo-American critical idiom.

Here I would like to quote James Clifford (2013), who highlights the ways in which culture is "local, tied to blood and language, rather than emergent, multiplex or coalitional" (147–8). For Clifford, the tendency to equate "language with culture oversimplifies more complex affiliations" (149). These affiliations can include provisional groups established by trade, by conflict, by kinship, or through multilingualism and dialects. For me, the question of the ear is fundamental in a process of finding, inventing, and producing an "emergent, multiplex or coalitional" field of relations based on multilingualism, accents, and dialects, for the ear opens the possibility to receive all languages as sounds even if not semantically understandable; that is, the ear establishes connections that go beyond the linguistic link to accentuate the musical and sonorous aspect of language. This is how the ear comprehends the musical sphere of tones and accents that allow us to understand the intention of a speech even if we don't understand its meanings. Besides that, the ear brings the vibrating aspect, the sonic

texture (Bairon 2005) of a text when it is heard in my silent reading (Stewart 1990) or vocalized and performed aloud (Bernstein 1998). The notion of *Writing by Ear* aims, though, to contribute to "the existence of multiple affiliations," based specifically on listening, i.e., on a pre-language zone of murmurs and rumours, whispers and jokes, tricksters' puns, witticisms, translations and mistranslations populating the contact zone between local-regional-world-planetary, as well as animal-human-earth relationships.

# 2 Writing by Ear

Ouço a música antiga de palavras, sim, é assim.

(I hear the ancient music of words and words, yes, that's it.)
Lispector, *The Hour of the Star*

In *The Hour of the Star*, published in 1977 two months before her death, Clarice Lispector, in the guise of a male narrator, made a complex connection between written words and the sense of hearing: "E a pergunta é: como escrevo? Verifico que escrevo de ouvido assim como aprendi inglês e francês de ouvido" ("And the question is: how do I write? I can confirm that I write by ear as I learned English and French by ear") (18; 10). Around the same period, in 1975, Augusto de Campos wrote "O Pulsar," a poem that takes the form of a telegram from the stars, part of the series "Stelegramas" (1975–8), published in the 1979 collection *VIVA VAIA*.

In the English translation by Augusto de Campos in collaboration with Charles Perrone (2006), we read: "Wherever you may be / on Mars or Eldorado / open a window to see / the pulsar nearly mute / embrace of light years / that no sun cheers / and emptied echoes o(e)ver see." Visually, the words of the poem stand white on a black background with two letters transformed into patterns: the "o" is designed as a small solar circle, and the "e" is replaced by the image of a star, with the letters acting as *punti luminosi*. In the poem, the stars threaten to become extinguished as they become smaller and smaller on each line. Even if the poem asks the observer/reader to "open a window" and "*see* the pulsar nearly mute," as a message spread across the page or the sky, the pulse of the pulsar was heard by Caetano Veloso, who in 1978 set the poem to music, traversing

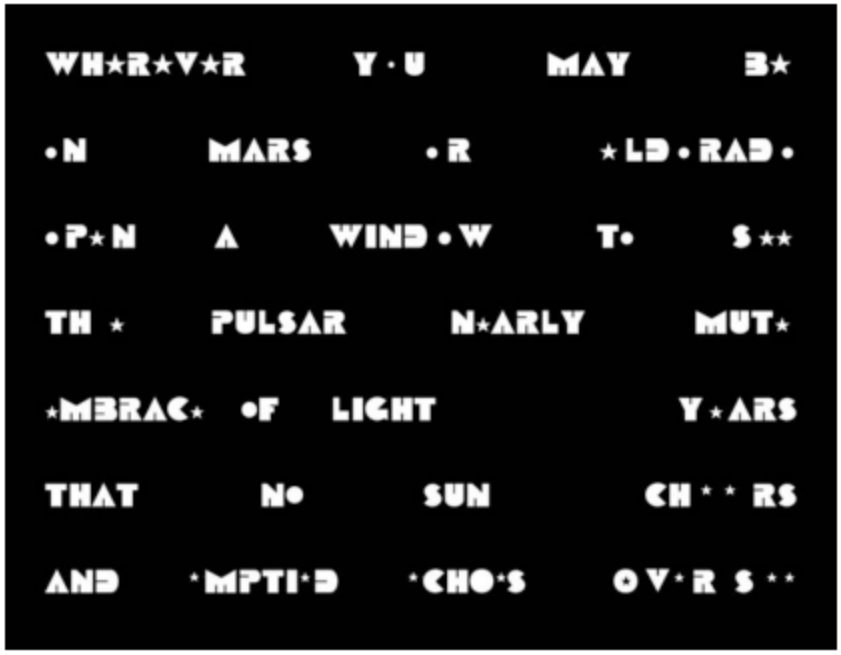


Figure 2.1 Augusto de Campos's "O Pulsar." Reprinted by permission of the author. Translated by the author in collaboration with Charles Perrone.

the connection among writing, vision, and hearing as part of the "verbivocovisual" program of the concrete "poets of fields and spaces" (as Veloso sang in "Sampa" [Veloso 1978]). In the context of the present book, Lispector's *The Hour of the Star*, written by ear, and the stars of Campos's poem – with their "pulsar nearly mute" – resonate together like a message to be deciphered.

The poem's pulsating stars, as well as the death of the protagonist, Macabéa, at the end of Lispector's novel, coincide in a darkness that somehow shines and with the written word that pulses even if it remains silent. In an interview with Jorge Luis Borges, Augusto de Campos (2013) explains to his Argentinian counterpart that the word "pulsar" in Portuguese exists as a verb and a noun to designate the heartbeat. The same word has also become a neologism originating from the English expression "pulsating radio sources," transformed into an acronym, "pulsar," which made him think of *pulsating star*. In this way, the beating (*pulsar*)

of the heart corresponds to the luminous pulsating of the stars. Years later, on the back cover of his collection *Despoesia* (1994), Campos once again reaffirms his use of pulsar/pulsating and its relationship to the poetic act: "A flor flore / A aranha tece / o poeta poeta / quer o vejam, quer não / ele pulsa / o pulsar quase mudo" ("The flower flowers / The spider spins / The poet poets / Seen or unseen, it pulsates / The near-mute pulsating"). That same "near-mute pulsating" made its appearance in Lispector's writing through Macabéa, the semi-literate heroine of *The Hour of the Star*: "Morta, os sinos badalavam mas sem que seus bronzes lhes dessem som. Agora entendo essa história. Ela é a iminência que há nos sinos que quase-quase badalam" ("With her dead, the bells were ringing but without their bronzes giving them sound. Now I understand this story. It is the imminence in those bells that almost-almost ring") (86; 76). This "pulsar nearly mute" as vibrations appears again in the description of another Lispector character, Angela from *A Breath of Life* (1978): "Angela é o tremor vibrante de uma corda tensa de harpa depois que é tocada: ela fica no ar ainda se dizendo, dizendo – até que a vibração morra espraiando-se em espumas pelas areias. Depois – silêncio e estrelas" ("Angela is the vibrating tremor of a tense harp-string after it's been plucked: she stays in the air still saying, saying – until the vibration dies spreading out in froth across the sands. Afterwards – silence and stars") (45; 35).

Connecting Lispector's *writing-by-ear* with Augusto de Campos's *pulsar nearly mute* is part of a study intended to describe a distinctive quality of literary texts,[1] and its specificity in Brazilian modern fiction: this fiction's sharp sense of hearing, in other words, the way fictional writing captures timbres and nuances, accentuated in a culture where orality and musicality are predominant.[2] Although Concrete Poetry has mostly been understood as a visually oriented form of artistic production, centred on the creation of poems appealing to the eyes, in a 1992 interview, Augusto de Campos argues for his poetry's intense connection to aurality, an argument framed as the response to the following question:

> It's also argued, of course, that CP [Concrete Poetry] distorts or denies the orality of lyric discourse. The North American poet and critic John Hollander, for instance, has written that "since a true concrete poem cannot be read aloud, it has no full linguistic dimension, no existence in the ear's kingdom." Haroldo de Campos has a poem, "o pavilhão da orelha" ("the outer ear"/"the pavilion of the ear"), that not only (ironically) shows the Portuguese common usage of a phrase like Hollander's, but as a critical

> poem, a kind that the Brazilian *concretistas* seem to specialize in argues for the aurality of itself and poems like it. (Greene 1992, 25)

Campos's response to this point is extremely telling:

> In our experience, we always saw CP as a "verbivocovisual" proposition that did not exclude "the ear's kingdom," but integrated it into a new conception of concretude, of the materiality of poetic language … And a large number of concrete poems have involved or emphasized the auditory level, in a way unexplored even by the traditional lyric … Or one might recall the many musical works that have adapted their texts from CP. All this is empirical evidence that the general conception of CP has never implicitly excluded the aural dimension … In the great majority of cases, however, we can say that the emphasis on the visual element, by means of repetition or paronomasia, sustains a parallel emphasis on the aural level. What's required, in this scheme, is a comparative rupture with the linearity of a traditional reading: a convocation of various voices, a simultaneity or multiplicity of readings, the introduction of the pause or silence as a structural element. (26–7)

In another interview, Campos relates not only the creation of poems but also the act of transcreations, intensely practised by the Concrete poets, to an acute sense of listening:

> Art translation holds the same tension in relation to the original as the musical interpreter does in relation to the composer. In this sense I can invoke the liberty that jazz singers and instrumentalists have, for example, to give "their" version of classics such as Gershwin or Cole Porter. There is a great difference between hearing "Summertime" sung by Billie Holiday or Janis Joplin, each with a personal and unique reading of the song, and by a lyrical singer like Barbara Hendricks, who gives an orthodox performance. Or by someone who just sings it in tune. For this very reason, although I try to stay attuned as much as possible to the literal original, I have no interest in keeping this literality when I feel the desire to recreate it, in the sense of "making it new," to make a regenerative and differenced interpretation in my language that makes it come alive in Portuguese as a work that "everyone wants to recite by memory." There are no absolute rules about this, although technique becomes "the test of sincerity," as Pound said. It is, above all else, a question of hearing. (Translation by Jackson 2010, 142)

Lispector's poetics, as I argue throughout the present book, is the result of an analogous "question of hearing." We can say that both authors, Lispector and Campos (and their related poetics), appeal to readers to perceive the vibrations or the imminence of sounds and images in printed-mute words, in order to encounter the text as an object to be seen and to be heard. Both authors, in this sense, are writing to escape the fate announced once by Marshall McLuhan: "literacy gave us an eye for an ear" (1997, 124). In his famous sentence, literacy leads to four hundred years of silent reading. As explained by McLuhan's editor, Michael A. Moos: "The phonetic alphabet inaugurates purely visual thinking because it begins to circumvent the ear … typography silences the ear altogether by making silent reading possible" (1997, 154). Distinct from literacy and "its stress on fragmentation and specialization," the electronic age would return us to a tribalized collective sense of hearing, for "we hear from all directions at once; this creates a unique unvisualizable space" (McLuhan 1997, 123). For McLuhan, this *auditory space* is "a kind of orchestral, resonating unity" (124). In accordance with McLuhan, but in defence of silent reading, this study argues that the opposition between oral/written and aural/visual forms cannot be applied to fictional texts as resonant objects. Printed poetry and prose in fiction are oral/written/aural/visual at the same time, as verbivocovisual products. If the analysis of sounds is mandatory in the interpretation of poems, the texts focused on in my study belong to the genre of fictional prose. But the point is that, when we start to consider a text as a resonant unit, the lines or the limits between genres are not as important as their hybridism, with fictional prose acting out as poems or prose poems. What is of central importance in the present book is fiction; i.e., my focus is on written texts that create and establish an imaginary relationship with the world, that constitute themselves in more or less deliberate ways as objects that invent or become a world in their own right.

**Resonances**

Following the beats of the "Pulsar," I wish to compare a fictional text to a closed music box: each time a book is opened, one is able to hear the pulse of its words reverberating past experiences in a written form while sending new resonances into the future with each rereading. Wai Chee Dimock's "theory of resonance" (1997) advances a similar argument. She argues for a turn to hearing and to listening in order to redefine the (printed) literary text as an "aural object," which changes semantically

with the passage of time. Resonance, understood as "the traveling frequencies of sound," is thus for her the key concept to apply to literary texts. Dimock reverses the traditional answer to the question, why a printed literary text endures. It is not because it is a fixed and completed stylistic object, but rather because it is incomplete and has an "unstable ontology." This means that a (printed) literary text is affected by the interpretive readings it receives over time, incorporating new meanings in its materiality. This process of absorbing is a resonant effect. A literary meaning is, then, not only multiple but also mutable and malleable. She argues: "The literary is not an attribute resident in a text, but a relation, a form of engagement, between a changing object and a changing recipient, between a tonal presence and the way it is differently heard over time" (1064). Dimock also makes the claim that our hearing has become insensitive to perceiving such nuances, and that we need to reintroduce the importance of the ears, which have been muted by the supremacy of the eye in Western thought.

Similarly, in his small but fundamental book *Listening*, Jean-Luc Nancy (2007) proposes that we consider resonance as the foundation of all senses. Nancy's text helps us think the transference from the auditory/musical field to the literary, when he distinguishes between the terms "hearing" and "listening" (*entendre* and *écouter* in French). On the one hand, "hearing" means to understand the meaning of the message, to understand what is being said by means of the intellect. On the other hand, "listening" denotes intense and special concentration on that which is received in terms of bodily resonance, paying attention above all to the intonation, the timbres, the noises, and the silences. Thinking about listening means thinking about what comes *before* articulated language, like an infra-language (noises, babbling, murmurs, whispers), and what comes *after*, the ultra-sound that outlasts and transcends language like an extended rhythm or an echo that rebounds. Silence is a special case, as it is as much infra- as ultra-, and is placed as easily before and after semantic language.

In this expression, "I write by ear," which is akin to a self-discovery, Clarice Lispector opens the doors to a world that is still little explored in the printed literary universe: the study of the auditory and acoustic properties of writing, present not only at the moment of fictional creation, when the writer "hears" voices and inscribes them, but also during silent reading, when an imaginary world is awakened by the vibrations of the words' sounds and images. Taking the expression "writing by ear" literally, and unfolding the web of its musical and auditory metaphors,

the aim is to describe the form it takes in fictional prose. The doubly implied metaphors, "playing by ear" and "learning by ear," suggest that "writing by ear" functions as an allegory (a metaphor of the third degree) for the production and interpretation of fictional texts based on musical acoustic non-writing practices. Writing by ear also requires readers who are able to "hear" a written text, in order to capture precisely that which passes between the lines, like the form and design of an intonation, a tone or a timbre.

Given the robust plurivocality that has characterized literature in Brazil since its colonial inception, and the eminently (and explicitly) receptive stance that many of its modern authors have adopted, I have structured my argument in the present chapter to follow two intersecting paths. In the first instance, Lispector's notion of "writing by ear" serves as a foundation for a renewed history of Brazilian literature, framed as a history of active listening with the sense of hearing and specific acts of audition as its main focus. In the second place, my goal is to offer a Luso-Afro-Amerindian-Brazilian contribution to Latin American criticism, turning the semantic range of terms related to edges, margins, and borders to a more explicit semiotics of corporeality and performativity revolving around the ears and sound, more generally.

**Notes for a Listening Literary History**

The literature produced in Brazil is as much the result of colonial encounters and mis-encounters as it is the writing of a language continuously emerging from contact between European Portuguese and Amerindian languages, especially the creolized *língua geral* spoken in Brazil for nearly two centuries along with Nheengatu in the Amazonian region, Guarani and Latin American Spanish in the South, Bantu and other languages from Africa, and, more recently, the languages spoken by Spanish, Catalan, Jews, Syrian, Lebanese, Italian, and Japanese immigrants (among many others) who established themselves in Brazil. It would be a mistake to consider Brazilian Portuguese a mere variant of European Portuguese. When working with Brazilian literature, one is always working with multiple cultures entextualized and recontextualized by writers looking to develop a mode of expression (each time a singular, contingent phenomenon) capable of disclosing the multiple cultures and languages simultaneously in play within the necessarily fictionalized concept of *nation*, and always against any description or self-designation based on monolingualism.

In the Brazilian history of conquest, instead of mind-oriented subjecthood, one finds what Roland Greene (1999) has framed as widespread "objecthood." Greene examines the early colonial moment during which Brazil's name emerges from *pau-brasil* (brazilwood), a commodified object exported to Europe, and the land itself is transformed into an object of desire by the fascination produced by *pau-brasil*'s deep red colour, linked both to passion and love, and to blood violence. As Greene puts it, there is a singularity to Brazil as a cultural (and unrequited) *object* of love and conquest in the Americas, a singularity that finds ample modern expression through Oswald de Andrade's "Brazilwood Poetry" in the 1920s and the "Concrete" poetry of the 1950s. Instead of reacting against this image of objecthood (trying, for example, to proclaim Brazilian identity as a form of unique and fully formed (national) subjecthood), I would like to take advantage of it for a literary and cultural analysis of fiction produced "by ear." What kind of authorial subject is the one predominantly informed by the ears? My study suggests that rather than a speaking-oriented subject, an ear-oriented author acts less as a subject than as an object of reception (like an anthem); hence conventionally negative aspects such as "belatedness" or "passivity" receive a positive value of openness while concomitantly dealing with the historical and socio-political constraints of Brazil and South America as a whole. An ear-oriented author is the one (dis)oriented by foreign tongues, by babbling and rumours, erotically and unconsciously moved by that to which s/he listens. Such perspectives, which closely approximate animal perception, for instance, abound in João Guimarães Rosa's and Lispector's fiction. In this sense, an ear-oriented author is informed by lyricism, and the text's message is less the result of an individual quest and more the buzz or *pulsar* of a collective voice (which otherwise remains unconscious or unheard.)

**Antonio Vieira and the *Línguas***

The presence and importance of audition in Brazil has a long history that, in my own ear-centric approach, goes back to the *línguas* (interpreters), people so called because they personified the role of translators living in between the Indigenous languages and the Portuguese spoken by the church. Whether the *línguas* were Natives being trained by priests or priests who were learning Indigenous languages, they learned by ear before becoming able to produce or to help in the production of the first grammars of the *língua geral*.[3] As is well known, during the colonial

period the focus was on the incorporation of Christianity into the Indigenous languages, with the idea of eliminating the "barbarians," their way of life, their language, and their way of thinking, and transforming them into converts to Catholicism; later, when the slave trade began, a similar notion was applied to the Africans considered as "boçais" ("obtuse"), incapable of correctly pronouncing the Portuguese language.

The following comment on Indigenous language by Antonio Vieira, in his 1657 sermon on the Holy Spirit, is very indicative of this process of an ear-oriented relationship:

> Por vezes me aconteceu estar com o ouvido aplicado à boca do bárbaro, e ainda do intérprete, sem poder distinguir as sílabas, nem perceber as vogais ou consoantes de que se formavam, equivocando-se a mesma letra com duas e três semelhantes … outras tão interiores e escuras, e mais afogadas na garganta que pronunciadas na língua; outras tão curtas e subidas, outras tão estendidas e multiplicadas, que não percebem os ouvidos mais que a confusão, sendo certo, em todo rigor, que as tais línguas não se ouvem, pois se não ouve delas mais que o sonido, e não palavras desarticuladas e humanas. (2000, 428–9)

> (At times I found myself with my ear closed to the mouth of the barbarian, and even on that of the interpreter, without being able to distinguish the syllables or understand the vowels and consonants from which they were formed. I'd mistake one letter for two or three similar ones … others were so short and raised, and others so extended and multiple that that one's ears make out nothing but confusion. In all truth, it's correct to say that such languages are not heard; that is, one hears in them only their sound rather than discrete human words.)

Vieira's ears could not pick up the meaning of the words being pronounced. What he heard was but the sonorous "confusion" of "línguas escuras" that lacked any divine light. As Alcir Pécora has argued in the context of a commentary on this well-known passage from Vieira's extensive collection of sermons, it was first and foremost the responsibility of Jesuit missionaries in the Amazon to train (*reduzir*) the Indigenous tongue in such a way that it might produce sound that was "intelligible" to the Christian ear (2008, 70). Of course, while Vieira's description would serve as a useful colonial tool to discard the language of non-Christian "barbarians," it also reveals a great deal about the limitations of the Jesuit ear, i.e., its inability to make sense of foreign languages to

which access is not given through reading but by listening. Roy Wagner gives an excellent description of this complex process of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic listening/hearing. This is a process that tends to be forgotten in a "high literate civilization"; however, it is reawakened whenever one needs to learn a foreign language by ear:

> Consider what happens when we speak. Often it seems to me that members of a highly literate civilization like our own imagine spaces between the word they use when they talk, rather like those that appear between words on the printed page … In fact, what we produce in speech is a kind of blurred and mumbly music, and one has to learn how to resolve this orchestration into conventional forms and units if one is to make sense of it, much as a trained musician learns to resolve a roar of sensuous tonality into notes, chords, harmony, melodic line, and structural form … what matters, insofar as communication is concerned, is whether the speaker (who is, of course, listening to his own music) and the listener make the same resolutions. (1981, 53)

## Oswald de Andrade and the "Auracular" World

The ethico-politico-aesthetic reversal implicit in a writing by ear would be precisely the focal point of Oswald de Andrade's denunciation of Vieira and the European colonial project.[4] With his ears pricked to the "contribuição milionária de todos os erros" ("wealthy contribution of all the mistakes") (2011, 61), he draws attention through his philosophy of anthropophagy to an ethic/aesthetic of audition: instead of "civilizing" the Amerindians, one should listen to them: "O homem europeu falou demais … É preciso ouvir o homem nu" ("The European spoke too much … We need to hear the naked man") (1990, 285). In one of his literary columns (*crônicas*), part of a series not incidentally titled *Telefonema* ("Telephone Call"), Andrade accentuates the relation between the anthropophagous mouth and listening: "O movimento aqui em São Paulo desenvolvido com o nome de 'Antropofagia' nunca excluiu as conquistas técnicas da cívilização nem os sonhos do momento social. Mas fazia escutar a voz bárbara dos trópicos" ("The movement here in São Paulo developed with the name 'Anthropophagy' never excluded the technical conquests of civilization nor the dreams of the social moment. But it made one listen to the barbarous voice of the Tropics") (1993, 159). Andrade's project thus

works directly against the systematic silencing of "barbarous voices" in writing.

Indeed, Oswald de Andrade draws attention to an ethic/aesthetic of audition, fundamental to understanding his devouring philosophy of anthropophagy, an aspect never fully analysed in comparison to the oral dimension of anthropophagy. Andrade suggests that the Brazilian position in the international cultural arena as well as the Brazilian incorporation of European tradition should be approached with a play on sounds that is at once jocular, satirical, and parodic. This play on words and sounds is the one that Andrade employed when he announced within the "Manifesto antropófago" the Amerindian-Brazilian philosophical principle, "Tupi or not tupi: that is the question" (2011, 67), a sonic recreation of Shakespeare's verse, "To be or not to be."

Another fundamental sentence in the "Manifesto" is the following one: "Só podemos atender ao mundo orecular" (69). Hélio Oiticica, a visual artist associated with the Tropicalist movement, has translated the "Manifesto" into English (1972), and he renders this sentence in the following way: "We can only answer to (care for) the (orecular) world." In a note, he explains: "'Orecular' must be a misspelling of oracular which could be the same in English, translated, and makes sense in the sentence; the sentence should definitely be: 'We should only care for the oracular world'" (n/p).[5] This said, according to Andrade's defence of errors as contributions to thought and writing, we should perhaps learn from this mistake, insofar as it productively, if accidentally, unites two words – oracular and auricular – the enigmatic messages of oracles and the aural process. Pedro Neves Marques offers the following translation: "We can attend only to the auracular world." And he comments: "Oswald de Andrade uses the pun, 'auracular' joining the word aural (relating to the ear) to oracular" (Andrade 2014, 101).

**A Listening Zone**

For an aural history of Brazilian literature, it is fundamental to recuperate and rethink at once the matriarchy of Andrade's anthropophagous proposal and to highlight the importance of audition within it. In dialogue with Mary Louise Pratt's notion of "Imperial Eyes," I would suggest that the work of Andrade asks the reader also to consider "Native Ears" as its potential counterpart. "Native Ears" refers to Native Americans, but it also refers to "native languages" as mother tongues, and native as "born in" referring to the gestational moment. If the "Seeing Man" occupies

the place of a historical dominion, which also means the place of the literary language of tradition, the ear, and the gestational body, also blended with the earthly environment, are where an ear-oriented writing finds its place. In her foundational study, Pratt (1992) focuses on travel writings produced by "the European male subject of European landscape discourse – he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess" (7). She analyses the "contact zone" in relation to the visual realm, and her main subject is the imperial gaze. Here I borrow her coinage to rethink it through a "contact zone" in which it is the receptive and not the productive position that occupies centre stage. Given this, I would like to underscore the fact that, in Brazilian Portuguese, the word *zona* (zone) means, as in English, an area of interchange; however, it also refers to confusion or wreckage, as in the common expression "Esse lugar está uma zona" ("This place is a wreck"). Furthermore, it is an erotically (and economically) charged term used to designate an area of prostitution, as in the expression, "Eu vou pra zona" ("I'm going to the [red-light] district.") The idea of *zone* can indeed interact productively with the notion of *writing by ear* when we take into account all three forms of signification: 1) interchange of languages; 2) a certain mess or cacophony resulting from sonorous mistakes; and 3) a sensual, erotic sphere performed through the ear.

Indeed, what I am referring to as "writing by ear" relates to what Jacques Derrida (1982), in his essay "Tympan," calls "the discourse of the ear" (xiv). In a note, Derrida reminds the ear's physiology and the sexual meanings it acquires in different cultures:

> Without an inventory of all the sexual investments which, everywhere and at all times, powerfully constrain the discourse of the ear, I shall give an example here to indicate the topics of the material left in the margins. The horn that is called *pavillon* (*papillon*) is a phallus for the Dogon and Bambara of Mali, and the auditory canal a vagina. Speech is the sperm indispensable for insemination. (Conception through the ear, all of philosophy could say.) It descends through the woman's ear, and is rolled up in a spiral around the womb. (xiv)

Derrida's philosophical text is accompanied, *on its margins*, by a poetic essay by Michel Leiris that talks about the shape of the ear in nature and the myth of Persephone, about the difference between what is spoken and what is sung, and concludes by discussing the impact of the invention of the phonograph. "Tympanizing" philosophy, therefore, is bringing it

closer to a hearing wisdom expressed in poetic prose – in other words, in fiction. Therefore, I turn my attention to the philosophy of Derrida, who includes his text on the tympanum in a book entitled *Margins of Philosophy*, signalling that the ears are at the margins, on the *orillas*.

**An Ethics of Listening**

Appropriating Beatriz Sarlo's concept of "orillas" ("edges," 1993), it is possible to propose a sonic (mis)translation of it in Portuguese, and the result would be "orelhas" (ears). This sonorous proximity (with its distinct meanings) allows us to switch the focus from a spatially oriented direction (edges) to an ear-(dis)oriented approach. The conceptual group of images focused around the terms "edges," "frontiers," "borderlands," and "margins" signifies the occupation of a position on the map of the modern world and its historical, socio-political, and cultural divisions in centre and peripheries. In that spatial orientation, I would say that to "write at the edges" implies to stand out in the middle of this geopolitical map, and it has become a traditional image-concept for Latin American writers, given the importance of the notion of *mestizo* or "in-between" cultural descriptions. In relation to this positionality, "writing by ear" effects a transfer: from the margins of the globe (edges) to the bodily margins of our faces. On the one hand, one can think about Brazilian/Latin American edges as being profoundly affected by the ears, with the directive sense of literary incorporation engendering a language of otherness continually procreated in writings. On the other hand, in the corporeal/bodily aspect, "writing by ear" is no more an issue of being (or not-being) Latin American, or European, or whatever else. For it is an eco-echo-co-presence, acoustic, a being-in-the-world, and in-the-body, personal and cosmological. To "write with the ears / or by ear" is to consider vibrations, reverberations, rhythmic resonances between our body and its *alentours*; it is also to write in the "peripheries" of our minds, focused on the poetic unconscious and intuitive effects. The result is a complex product: a text created as a space of listening in which traces of disappeared or minor cultures, as well as voices and histories, survive in the weavings of writings.

Writing by ear can assume different forms in each of the writers addressed in the present book, but it has a unique common trace in all of them: it implies the notion that these authors write at the *orillas* (i.e., in colonial and postcolonial settings) of European tradition (taken as the model), specifically in the Portuguese enclave of South America, and at

a cross-cultural location in between lettered and non-lettered practices. Writing by ear, in the case of Latin America, corresponds to an ethics of listening and of incorporating into writing the majority of a population that is ear/orally oriented, and here I am thinking of so-called minority groups (which are in fact the majority in quantitative terms), which in Brazil are largely the descendants of former slaves, black, *caboclo*, and *mestizo* communities, together with Indigenous groups. How Latin American authors incorporate these people, along with their cultures and languages, into writing forms an important part of the explanation of "writing by ear." But "writing by ear" also implies an intense relationship with other languages and literatures, for the ear eliminates the hierarchy traditionally established among different literary traditions and/or in between writing and oral cultures.

For modernist Brazilian authors, one finds a reversal of the catechesis put into effect through the increasing positive value given to popular cultural practices and to minority groups. And in so doing, these authors brought to literature the soundscape of the streets, their rhythms, the sambas, the religious and spiritual ceremonies and rites, and so on. It is through this reversal that some of Brazil's greatest writers *de-read* (or read inside out) the legacy of colonization. With respect to narrative fiction, in the novel and its variants such as the novella or poetic prose, what one witnesses is a scriptural action that operates in sight of a dis-domestication of orality and that includes it in order to barbarize writing and break with the growing shutting-off of Amerindian and rural voices. This project would develop into the politico-anarchic utopia of some of the best prose produced in Latin America over the past century.

**Haroldo de Campos and the Concrete Sense of Listening**

"Writing by ear" describes the quality of a literature produced in a place where literacy is the exception and not the rule. Although by no means exclusive, the aural presence is thus reinforced in places where orality dominates over literacy. "Writing by ear" is a literary response to these conditions, produced (consciously and unconsciously) by authors who live in a context where illiteracy or semi-literacy dominates and hence affects the forms of their writings. As expressed by Haroldo de Campos (1981):

> O "pesadelo da História", para os principais escritores latino-americanos … tem sido um barroco e obsessivo pesadelo de escritura (levado ao paroxismo

> oximoresco quando se sabe em convivio forçado e doloroso com o mundo sem letras de grandes contingentes populacionais privados de alfabeto) (22)
>
> (For the major writers of Latin America, the "nightmare of history" … has been a Baroque and obsessive nightmare of writing [taken to an oxymoron-like paroxysm when it becomes aware that it is in forced and painful cohabitation with the writing-less world of the large segments of the population that have no access to the alphabet]) (H. de Campos 2007a, 175; slightly amended).

Campos discerns the ambivalence, the simultaneously negative and positive experiences that writing by ear refers to: in what way can an oral tradition, predominantly spoken and performative, be transposed into written literature? How might one create a text that incorporates people outside the alphabetical order to disrupt or to produce a disorder in the literary writing process itself? Writing by ear, in this sense, corresponds to an ethics of listening and to the incorporation – without reduction – of the majority population oriented towards orality. The dilemma presented by Campos will receive different answers according to each author. Campos (1982) himself, in a text on Machado de Assis, defends a tradition of what he calls "literatura pobre," "poor literature" or "poetry of subtraction" that should be understood in comparison to the Baroque style of accretion. In both cases, we are confronted with a literature of excess in relation to a certain sense of proportion and discursive normativity.

One of the main examples of the conjunction between a style of accretion and a "poor literature" is given by Campos in his prose poem of *Galáxias*, specifically in the fragment known as "Circuladô de Fulô." Here we have "cordel" literature united with avant-garde experimentalism and the poetics of the neo-Baroque. After a trip to Europe during which he met Ezra Pound, Campos came back to Brazil, stopping first in the northeastern state of Pernambuco. One particularly sunny day, during a popular celebration, he heard a blind minstrel singing the following, according to Campos's transcreation in writing: "circuladô de fulô ao deus ao demodará que deus te guie porque eu não posso guiá eviva quem já me deu circuladô de fulô e ainda quem falta me dá." Antonio Sergio Bessa translated this difficult passage as: "rounded by flowers under god's under the devil's mercy god shall guide you for I myself can't guide god bless those who give me rounded by flowers and those who are still to give" (in Campos 2007a, 124). Bessa explains how the question of world

literature itself is at stake in this "concrete prose" (in Perloff and Dworkin 2009) and the temporal and geographical connections it establishes, by having as his starting point a text-song born from a state of misery, and pain, although surrounded by the flowers of speech from the tradition of the troubadours:

> Like their European counterparts in the Middle Ages, the Brazilian troubadours are itinerant performers highly admired and respected by the communities that guarantee their survival. Some of the works of the earlier poets, going back to the seventeenth century, still survive through apocryphal texts that to this day circulate as *literatura de cordel* ("cordel" is Portuguese for a rope or yarn, and the expression denotes a kind of book that is displayed in fairs hanging from a yarn).
>
> Campos's interest in this kind of literature is both affectionate and intellectualized. In a sense, he is "rediscovering Brazil" via Pound … Campos also compares the handmade instrument used by the cantador to a *shamisen*, the classic Japanese instrument used in Kabuki. (Bessa 2016)

It is important to note that this poem has received a musical interpretation by Caetano Veloso, a definite stretch of its verbivocovisual poetics where literary text encounters musical production and vice versa. I would add that, written at the edges of high and popular traditions, this fragment of Campos is a key example of the complexities that an ear-oriented writing can achieve.

**The H of the Question**

"Writing by ear" is a written "discourse of the ear," and, in the case of fictional prose, "writing by ear" establishes what I suggest we call "aural novels." What happens is that the outer ear and the inner ear are present in novels to such an extent that we might even speak of a "philosophy of listening" in fictional prose. I believe there is a hearing wisdom in fictional prose in Brazil – a wisdom to be found in "aural novels" that still need to be better heard, since they have something important to convey about the relationship between writing and listening.

In 1926, in the first preface to his novel *Serafim Ponte Grande* (2007), Oswald de Andrade announced, in his aphoristic style, a key procedure for Brazilian fiction: "A gente escreve o que ouve, nunca o que houve" ("We write what we hear, never what was here") (48).[6] The jocular nature of Andrade's phrase relies on the fact that it must be written down and

read, since the sound of the words is the same (ouve/houve [hear/here]) but the meanings are distinct (to hear/to happen). Thus, the sentence promoting the importance of hearing must be read to be understood, establishing an immediate relation between the ear and the writing process, or between the sonorous sphere and the printed-mute texts. Years later, in 1935, Fernando Pessoa would write a letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro explaining the origins of his system of heteronyms. He states: "ouvi, dentro de mim, as discussões e as divergências de critérios, e em tudo isto me parece que fui eu, criador de tudo, o menos que ali houve" ("I heard within me the discussions and disagreements regarding criteria, and my sense is that while I was the creator of it all, I was less *there* than the rest") (1999, 343). One reads in Pessoa's letter the same relation between hearing (*ouvir*) and being-there (*haver*). In this case, it seems clear that hearing implies a significant dispossession of the authorial "I." To hear in the field of fiction is different from the solipsism of hearing oneself, since it acts as an opening to the outside, to speak of and from something or someone that resides somehow beyond oneself, beyond authorial control or reduction. We have here/hear, in other words, a basic principle of fiction and its intense and intimate connection to listening.

Why is it that prose fiction enjoys a closer proximity to listening than other types of narrative? Oswald de Andrade is acutely aware of the fact that he is announcing a crucial difference between the writing of invention, the literary writing of "descoberta e transposição" ("discovery and transposition"), and the writing of history, dedicated to the *ex post facto* comprehension of what happened (here). He establishes a distinction between auditory perception (which would be characteristic of fictional writing) and historical description, a distinction that has yet to be more sufficiently developed. Through this listening principle, including the incorporation of the other and of tradition, the fundamental dilemma of copy versus original is at stake. Refuting realist and naturalist aesthetics as submissive copies from abroad, Oswald de Andrade suggests a fictional production based on listening/hearing.

In his novel *Serafim Ponte Grande*, Andrade unveils (or undresses) the artifice of literary production by exposing it in the final product. The result is a text that exhibits itself more as a work in progress, characteristic of a novel written by ear. Haroldo de Campos, in his study on Andrade ("*Serafim*: A Great Un-Book"), relates the latter's technique to the procedure of "defamiliarization," in an explicit reference to Viktor Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie*, a term defined by Campos (2007b) in the following way: "Viktor Shklovsky, who made use of this concept in his

1917 study ["Art as Technique"] … also developed the idea of 'exposing the technique' (or 'procedure') as a measure of the work of art's specificity" (211). The book as a work of literature is thus negated voluntarily, as a book that denies its own wholeness and exhibits its own creation, similar to what one finds in Lispector. The novel is listed among the author's "Rejected Works," and the copyright is denied: "No rights reserved. May be translated, reproduced, and deformed into all languages," and one of its chapters is in fact the result of a "Printer's Error." As studied by Campos, "[t]hese signs simultaneously 'estrange' the object, or 'defamiliarize' it to our perception, through the very act of pointing to it or emblematizing it" (2007b, 210). Naomi Lindstrom (1980) points to "the extreme fragmentation of the writing" (80), and she describes the structure of the novel: "Eleven narrative segments, each lampooning a different type of literature, appear in puzzling juxtaposition. Each fragment is a novel *in potentia*, for each suggests one possible mode … for elaborating Seraphim's attempts to break with bourgeois cultural patterns. These hypothetical novels remain, necessarily, undeveloped" (80). Oswald denominates his novel an act of "invention." As pointed out by Campos (2007b): "On the cover of my copy of *Serafim Ponte Grande*, which I receive personally from the author, the term 'novel' was crossed out and replaced by the word 'invention'" (367). If, in 1945, Antonio Candido defined *Serafim* as "a fragment of a great book" (quoted in Campos 2007b, 213), Campos, in the 1970s, would redefine it as "a great un-book made up of book fragments" (213). Campos goes on to argue: "it is precisely through the syncopated technique and the resulting unfinished quality that the construction becomes apparent, that the woodwork of the traditional novel, as *priem*, as procedure, was exposed" (213). And he adds: "*Seraphim* is a composite, hybrid book made up of pieces or 'samples' of various possible books … Each one of these excerpts or 'trailers' of virtual books works … as a metonymic allusion to a certain cataloged type of prose, be it conventional or pragmatic, that never manages to impose itself completely on the Oswaldian book … Instead, the excerpts point – allusively and elusively – to a literary mode *that could be but isn't*" (212).

Similar to Oswald de Andrade's aural novel, João Guimarães Rosa is defined by Ana Luiza Martins Costa (2005) as a writer *par excellence* of the "mundo escutado," the "listened-to world." In one of the prefaces to his 1967 novel, *Tutaméia*, he announces: "A estória não quer ser história. A estória, em rigor, deve ser contra a história. A estória, às vezes, quer-se um pouco parecida à anedota" ("The story has no desire to be history. The

story should remain firmly opposed to history. The story, at times, wishes to resemble something like the anecdote") (Rosa 1979, 3). For Guimarães Rosa, stories should approximate anecdotes and jokes in order to combat the nightmares of history. This phrase also served as a way of responding to critics who claimed that his work was not politically engaged; what it implies is that for fictional prose to alter socio-political relations between the rural population in Brazil and the lettered, urban citizen, it would be necessary not to represent these relations in line with historical narratives but rather to alter the politics of enunciation altogether. As Rosa made clear in an interview, "somente renovando a língua pode-se renovar o mundo" ("only renewing language can we renew the world") (Rosa and Lorenz 1983, 87). For the moment, it is important to point out that in Andrade's phrase as well as in the preface to Guimarães Rosa's 1967 novel, one finds the same differentiation between fiction (*estória*) and history based on the presence or absence of the silent *h* (in *ouve/houve* and *estoria/história*). Here a letter that lacks phonetic sonority in Portuguese, an absent presence or present absence, serves to mark fundamental ontological differences. In a similar vein, Lispector would write in *The Hour of the Star*: "Vai ser difícil escrever esta história … Os fatos são sonoros mas entre os fatos há um sussurro. É o sussurro que me impressiona" ("It's going to be hard to write this story … The facts are sonorous but between the fact there's a whispering. It's the whispering that astounds me") (31; 16).[7] How might the whisper find written expression except through poetic and fictional creation? That is, how might this be except through a text that seeks to express, rhythmically and ideophonically, that which resides behind thought (also an early working title for Lispector's *Água Viva*), or that which rests on the hither or thither side of language: sensations, pulsations, reverberations, and timbres?

Each of the aforementioned authors suggests that fictional works, particularly novels, are creations based on the sense of hearing and on the acts of listening rather than on an imitation of historical narratives, i.e, on a *realistic* model of the novel. Following their lead, I reclaim the relevance of aurality as a central feature of fiction, present both as a recurrent theme and as an element that gives it form. What follows is a first description of the works of Machado de Assis, Guimarães Rosa, and Lispector as "aural novels."

# 3 The Aural Novel

Polyphony, the multiplicity of voices woven into written discourse, is the model that Mikhail Bakhtin (1990) advocates to describe the dialogical novel developed by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. In Bakhtin's reflection, the novel is the quintessential example of creolization, of conversation and of conflict, an arena of discourses from different extractions and dialects. The following citations come from notes that Bakhtin wrote in 1970–1 for an essay on "the other's word" that was never published.[1] According to the first note, the writer's mouth assumes a passive position: "Existence itself speaks through the writer, through his mouth" (Bakhtin 1986, 149). Another short reference makes clear that this model corresponds to "another route," distinct, although correlated with the polyphonic model: "Quests for my own word are in fact quests for a word that is not my own, a word that is more than myself … These quests led Dostoyevsky to the creation of the polyphonic novel … A parallel path led Leo Tolstoy to folk stories (primitivism), to the introduction of biblical quotations (in the final parts of his novels). Another route would be to cause the world to begin speaking and to listen to the word of the world itself (Heidegger)" (1986, 149). As we see, this model corresponds to a receptive position of listening *to the word of the world itself*. However, this listening aspect of the theory of the novel, only briefly and parenthetically alluded by Bakhtin and related to the philosophy of Heidegger, has remained underdeveloped in comparison to the notion of the speaking voices in polyphony. To theorize "writing by ear" in prose fiction thus can fairly be understood as a contribution to the rethinking of Bakhtin's theories of the novel aimed in the direction of echoes, reverberations, and resonances, terms that Bakhtin himself used in his critical texts. If multiple contradictory discourses are put into dialogue in the fabric of

the novel as a democratic space of voices, in the case of "writings by ear" we have novels created as a space of listening. This space of listening is what I'm suggesting we call the "Aural Novel."

At this point, I would like to quote two fictionists who will help us advance the definition of the *aural novel*: Mia Couto (Mozambique) and Toni Morrison (United States).[2] In an interview with Paulo Hebmüller, and titled (not incidentally, at least for the present study) "Escutas de Mia Couto" ("Mia Couto's Listening," Couto and Hebmüller 2014), one learns of the auditory origins of his fictional project. Essentially a very quiet child, Couto recounts that while he was very young he learned the art of listening, an art that relates closely to the oral universe of African cultures as well as to the inclusion of music and spoken prosody in his writing:

> The Africa in which I live is a society that listens. People listen to others and in conversation there is a distribution of time: a time to speak and a time to listen, as if people knew somehow to take turns. I think there was a moment in which I, already a journalist, began trying to write the stories that I heard. These stories were so vibrant, had such force, that they called out to be transported from their orality to writing … I began to seek out a more plastic mode of writing that allowed for the inundation of orality. (Couto and Hebmüller 2014)[3]

Nevertheless, the question of listening in writing involves more than just the oral transmission of storytelling; it also entails a conscious listening to silence:

> There is a learning process that more rural societies confer upon us, because in the city we get tripped up when there's silence, and it becomes necessary to resolve it. This sense of discomfort, in contrast, is not experienced in rural Africa. People have in silence not some kind of absence but rather a presence. Something is being said in these moments. It has to do with the strong belief in the invisible world and in the spirituality that revolves around the living.

This art of listening in writing finds itself mixed in with Couto's training as a biologist, insofar as he defines biology as "uma linguagem e uma maneira de escutar" ("a language and a manner of listening"):

> Biology prolonged my appetite for listening to the world and to understand that there are voices that have been excluded due to a certain

> anthropocentric vision according to which we are the only ones with something to say. My manner of embracing biology has been through an attempt to understand languages and learn codes. Today, and not in a metaphorical way, I listen to trees, plants, and insects, because all of these beings wish to say something, right? It's for this reason that they take on colors and smells and differences of form that please me so much to listen to.

To listen to trees, plants, and insects gives the aforementioned passage by Bakhtin, on a listening-to-the-world through prose fiction, a meaning beyond that of articulated, anthropocentric language.

**The Aural in *Beloved***

Asked by Christina Davis about her "written voice," in an interview published in 1986, Toni Morrison answers: "[T]hat may mean that my efforts to make aural literature – A-U-R-A-L – work because I do hear it. It has to be read in silence and that's just one phase of the work but it also has to *sound* and if it doesn't *sound* right … Even though I don't speak it when I'm writing it, I have this interior piece, I guess, in my head that reads, so that the way I hear it is the way I write it and I guess that's the way I would read it aloud" (Morrison and Davis 1994, 230).

In her novels, the aural is related to this mode: *the way I hear it is the way I write it*. This formulation, even if related to orality, is different from saying *the way I speak it is the way I write it*, for it implies also listening to the rhythms, the flow of speech and sounds, accents and prosody, and not only to the reproduction of oral language in a written text. Another important aspect of the aural is the active participation of readers as listeners. The aural, says Morrison, has to do "with the participation of the *other* that is, the audience, the reader" (231). This participatory aspect corresponds to the simile she uses of holding one hand: "One is me and one is you and together we do that, we invent it together and I just hold your hand while you're in the process of going there and hearing it and sharing it" (231). Commenting on the aural aspect of *Beloved* (Morrison 1987), and its relation to the structure of call-and-response, to improvisation, jazz, spirituals, and blues songs, Jody Morgan (2008) argues: "*Beloved* is dedicated to the 'sixty million and more' slaves who died and never had a voice. These millions of voices were silenced not only by people but also by the language that would call them inferior, objects. These millions of voices unspeakable, unspoken cannot be heard through language but require a different medium – the aural" (10). Finally, there is

a last explanation of the aural by Morrison, one that touches on a very important issue related to the ethics of listening: "An artist for me, a black artist for me, is not a solitary person who has no responsibility to the community. It's a totally communal experience where I would feel unhappy if there was no controversy or no debate or no anything – no *passion* that accompanied the experience of the work. I want somebody to say amen!" (Morrison and Davis 1994, 231).

In this way, it is not mere coincidence that writing by ear appears thematized by Lispector in a book revolving around the short life and violent death of Macabéa, a poor immigrant girl from Brazil's Northeast – a book focused on presenting the life of a woman with no voice, much like millions of other Northeastern Brazilians who make their way to Rio de Janeiro only to become lost in the city's immense and cruelly racialized order. Keeping in mind Morrison's explanation of what lies behind *Beloved* and her dedication in that novel, Lispector's dedication in *The Hour of the Star* seems almost an echo:

> Esta história acontece em estado de emergência e de calamidade pública. Trata-se de livro inacabado porque lhe falta a resposta. Resposta esta que espero que alguém no mundo ma dê. Vós? É uma história em tecnicolor para ter algum luxo, por Deus, que eu também preciso. Amém para nós todos. (8)
>
> (This story takes place in a state of emergency and public calamity. It is an unfinished book because it has no answer. I am still waiting for someone in this world to give me an answer. You? It is a story written in Technicolor so that it might provide some luxury, by God, which I also need. Amen for all of us.) (xiv)

## The Hour of the Star

*The Hour of the Star* is a small but expansive book, a masterwork consisting of fewer than eighty pages. The last book published by Lispector during her lifetime, *The Hour of the Star* possesses an almost clairvoyant dimension, in the sense that it unites two points of view: birth and death. This is so insofar as Macabéa is linked to Lispector's childhood as well as to the end of her life. In the work, Lispector morphs into Rodrigo S.M., presented as the author of a book about the character Macabéa, a poor migrant from the Brazilian Northeast living in Rio de Janeiro. Semi-literate,

Macabéa works as a typist. Having lived both in the Northeast and in Rio de Janeiro, Lispector situates herself in the middle between the fictional male author who occupies her place (Rodrigo S.M.) and the character Macabéa, whose name evokes Lispector's Jewish origin in its similarity to the term "Maccabees." Thus, Clarice mixes her Jewish-Ukrainian origins with the Northeastern life of the Everywoman, Macabéa. In this last book of hers, published during her lifetime, she fuses echoes of Yiddish from her childhood with the sounds of the Brazilian Northeast.[4] The entire novel is in fact produced as an echo, one in which the dissonant sounds of Bach and a radio clock, the text of the supposed male author and the feminine voice of Lispector, echoes of Yiddish from Ukraine and Portuguese from Northeastern Brazil all resonate. The double voice of Lispector and Rodrigo S.M. serves to speak about a character without a voice: "ela falava, sim, mas era extremamente muda" ("She talked, yes, but she was extremely mute") (36; 21).

The book begins with an author's dedication followed by an annotation in parentheses that informs readers who has, in fact, written it "(Na verdade Clarice Lispector)" ("(actually Clarice Lispector)") (7; xiii). Even if she is the real author of the book, authorship is transferred to the male narrator named Rodrigo S.M. However, Lispector cannot leave off pointing out that "actually" she is the author, even if her authorship is placed in parentheses and expressed only as a paratext.[5] It is in this way that she begins a fictional play within her fiction, which gives her book a theatrical touch of performativity in that it exposes the framework of creation and its correlative process. Tóibín (2011) has written that reading *The Hour of the Star* is much like "being brought backstage during the performance of a play and allowed odd glimpses of the actors and the audience, and further and more intense glimpses of the mechanics of the theatre – the scene and costume changes, the creation of artifice – with many interruptions by the backstage staff" (x). As if performing upon a theatre stage, one can say that Rodrigo S.M., the fictional author, echoes upon that stage (i.e., the book that the reader holds) the voice of Lispector herself (the book's actual author), which resonates from backstage.

Lispector repeats the process of authorial duplication in *Água Viva*: the main character, who is a painter, transforms herself into the writer of the text that we read; and again in *A Breath of Life*, which establishes the play between the fictional author (again male) and Angela, the book's protagonist, who is herself a writer.[6] Carlos Mendes de Sousa (2012) has coined the term *livro exposto* or "exposed book" (347) to name Lispector's

books that expose the behind-the-scenes of creation, with writer/characters who experience and express the dilemmas, anguishes, and delights of writing and narrating. One might justifiably apply this same term ("exposed book") to the work of Machado de Assis and Guimarães Rosa. Authorial duplication is, in fact, part of a literary project expressed and problematized at a metafictional level. As I will discuss later, one finds, in a very condensed form, a procedure that repeats the authorial metafictional procedure initiated by Machado de Assis in the *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* nearly a century before.

The short dedication to *The Hour of the Star* begins with a kind of throwaway phrase: "Pois que dedico esta coisa aí" ("So I dedicate this thing here") (7; xiii). If, seen from one perspective, the book is diminished as "this thing here," from another it is aggrandized through its dedication to many of the great composers of European classical music: "Pois que dedico esta coisa aí ao antigo Schumann e sua doce Clara que são hoje ossos, ai de nós" ("So I dedicate this thing here to old Schumann and his sweet Clara who today, alas, are bones") (7; xiii). The book is also dedicated to Ludwig van Beethoven, Johann Sebastian Bach, Igor Stravinsky, Richard Strauss, Claude Debussy, Marlos Nobre, Sergei Prokofiev, Carl Orff, and Arnold Schönberg. The reader is thus faced with a text that mixes a high and low register with a kind of "null set," a generic "thing here." One can read in this a kind of contempt for writing on one hand and a high admiration for music as a superior art on the other: "O que me atrapalha a vida é escrever" ("What trips up my life is writing") (5; xiv). After this dedication, the reader finds the title page with the book's title and fourteen other possible titles or subtitles, among which appears the name of the author herself, as if the book could also be read as a biography or even an autobiography. In this way, before even beginning to read the novel, the reader is exposed to the process by which the book comes to be, to its sketch, within which various possible titles present themselves.

The text itself begins in the following way: "Tudo no mundo começou com um sim. Uma molécula disse sim a outra molécula e nasceu a vida" ("All the world began with a yes. One molecule said yes to another molecule and life was born") (17; 3). From the start of life to the birth of the universe, *The Hour of the Star* begins as a cosmogonic book; at one point, the narrator affirms that he is effectively creating life through his slowly dying protagonist. In fact, the first twenty pages of the book are nothing but the auto-exposition of the pre-process of creating a fictional life, the life of Macabéa, and the book's difficult gestational process carried out

by an author who decides to write about an anti-character. There is here a dynamic and conflictive relation between Rodrigo and Macabéa, a kind of love-hate relationship (Sá 2004). The text is quite violent in its description of how a bourgeois intellectual might relate to a character who lacks so much; at the same time, however, Macabéa, in her extreme fragility and ingenuousness, stands as a kind of philosopher of nonsense insofar as she estranges language and thus calls on the reader to rethink what discourse in fact is in relation to reality (Hansen 1989). Her dialogues with Olímpico de Jesus, for example, are magisterial in their mix of humour and irony.

Another important element is the novel's intertexts. At the beginning of the narrated portion of the novel, one finds Macabéa looking at herself in the mirror, in a scene that is part of the modern fictional tradition in Brazil, with two illustrious antecedents: Machado de Assis's Alferes, from the short story "O Espelho" ("The Mirror"), and Guimarães Rosa's story of the same title, in which the protagonist looks at himself to such an extent that he ceases to recognize himself. Lispector also takes up Euclides da Cunha and his famous phrase from *Os sertões*: "O sertanejo é antes de tudo um forte" ("The backlander is above all a strong man"). In the case of Macabéa, one reads: "O sertanejo é antes de tudo um paciente, eu o perdôo por isso" ("The man from the backlands is above all a patient. I forgive him") (75; 57). Unlike the biblical Maccabees, Macabéa finds herself among the oppressed who lack even the strength to rebel.

*The Hour of the Star* is an amalgam of various interwoven plots: an autobiographical plot, a sociological plot, a plot of literary intertexts, a musical plot, a photographic and pictorial account, and much metafiction all condensed within a tiny book that ends with both Macabéa's and Lispector's death (the latter would die only two months after the book's publication). The final scene of the book reads as follows:

> A morte é um encontro consigo. Deitada, morta, era tão grande como um cavalo morto. O melhor negócio é ainda o seguinte: não morrer, pois morrer é insuficiente, não me completa, eu que tanto preciso.
>
> 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. Desculpai-me esta morte. (97)

> (Death is an encounter with oneself. Lying there, she was as big as a dead horse. The best thing is still this: not to die, because dying is insufficient, it doesn't complete me, I who need so much.

> Macabéa killed me.
>
> She was finally free of herself and of us. Don't be afraid, death is an instant, it passes like that, I know because I just died with the girl. Pray forgive me this death.) (76)

The scene is then followed by some closing paragraphs:

> E agora – agora só me resta acender um cigarro e ir para casa. Meu Deus, só agora me lembrei que a gente morre. Mas – mas eu também?!
>
> Não esquecer que por enquanto é tempo de morangos.
>
> Sim. (98)

> (And now – now all I can do is light a cigarette and go home. My God, I just remembered that we die. But – but me too?!
>
> Don't forget that for now it's strawberry season.
>
> Yes.) (77)

It is thus the same "yes" that opens the novel that one finds at its very end: birth and death folded upon one another, a fold in time and telling.

**Improvisation**

The duplication or multiplication of authors and voices highlights a text that is constructed as if without control, through improvisation:

> Mas aí é que está: esta história não tem nenhuma técnica, nem de estilo, ela é ao deus-dará … Durante o dia eu faço, como todos, gestos despercebidos por mim mesmo. Pois um dos gestos mais despercebidos é esta história de que não tenho culpa e sai como sair. (44)

> (But there's the rub: this story has no technique, nor style, it lives from hand to mouth … During the day I make, like everyone else, gestures I don't even notice myself. And one of the gestures I notice the least is this story of which I'm not guilty and which turns out however it turns out.) (28)

In Lispector, improvisation goes so far that it is not a method but rather a "way of life." This is what we find in another reflection offered by Clarice herself about the freedom found in writing: "A improvisação como modo de viver. Mesmo as narrativas discursivas têm em si uma

liberdade, se não de quebra do condicionamento, mas de improvisação do destino" ("Improvisation as a way of life. Even discursive narratives have within them a freedom – if not breaking free from conditioning, then improvising a destiny," quoted in Borelli 1981, 44). In other words, in improvisation, the plot structures itself in a way that pretends not to have a structure, as if events were developing by chance.[7]

*The Hour of the Star* calls itself a "livro inacabado" (8), an "unfinished book" (xiv), similar to Oswald de Andrade's *Serafim Ponte Grande*, discussed in the previous chapter. The whole first part is devoted to exposing the process of writing the book as a metafictional essay prior to the action of the narrative, which then begins suddenly: "O jeito é começar de repente assim como eu me lanço na água gélida do mar … Vou agora começar pelo meio dizendo que – " ("The thing to do is to start all of a sudden just as I jump all of a sudden into the icy water of the sea … I am about to begin halfway saying that – " (31; 16).

"Como que estou escrevendo na hora mesma em que sou lido" ("Just as I'm writing at the very same time I'm being read") (18; 4). In this magnificent declaration, Lispector synthesizes what will be the distinctive feature of her last works: texts in fragments, which are later unified and reworked, but without losing the freshness, vividness, and immediacy of lived experience. It is there that improvisation begins to be mentioned more and more in her works, along with the concept of writing by ear. Following her, I suggest that improvisation can be defined as an act of reaching an ideal state, in which impression (sensorial, physical, corporal) can immediately become expression (symbolic and artistic), so that (utopically) there is no separation between what is seen and what is painted, what is said and what is written, what rumbles and what is heard. Improvisation longs to create a symbolic expression that is the closest possible rendition of the sensorial impression, as if it were possible for the body not to distinguish itself from its surroundings. Improvisation suspends or eliminates weighed, measured, and controlled thought, and acts as the most immediate reaction to the stimuli present. The less programmed it is, and the more the performer lets him- or herself be carried away by the stimulus of the moment, the better the results. This is what happens with improvisation during a music or theatre show: what counts is the immediate reaction to what is happening here and now. This reaction certainly includes prior knowledge and training, but in the act of improvisation all of this repertoire must be almost forgotten in order to look and sound new, unprecedented and surprising – for the audience as well as for the performer. Thus, improvisation is a question of

movement, quick or slow, but always in tune with the event that awakens the concomitant and simultaneous reaction, so the thing perceived is also the thing that is thought, said, and read.

For Lispector, like playing music by ear, writing by ear is a process that advances by trial and error, in a living immersion that is more unconscious than conscious, progressing without method: gropingly, blindly. In this sense, Lispector's writing by ear is similar to Keats's verse "Darkling I listen" (in "Ode to a Nightingale"), which in turn recalls one of Lispector's revealing expressions about her method of writing: "A procura da palavra no escuro" (*A hora da estrela*, 1998e, 80) ("The search for the word in the dark" [2011, 61]).[8] Blindness, then, is a fundamental aspect of Lispector's *visionary* writing: the deprivation accentuates the sense of hearing, which becomes more developed in order to capture timbres and nuances.[9] As the narrator of *The Hour of the Star* says:

> As palavras são sons transfundidos de sombras que se entrecruzam desiguais, estalactites, renda, música transfigurada de órgão. Mal ouso clamar palavras a essa rede vibrante e rica, mórbida e obscura tendo como contratom o baixo grosso da dor. Alegro com brio. (22–3)
>
> (Words are sounds transfused with unequal shadows that intersect, stalactites, lace, transfigured organ music. I hardly dare shout out words at this vibrant and rich, morbid and dark web which has its countertone in the thick bass of pain. Allegro con brio.) (8)

## The Features of the Aural Novel

The aural novel can involve three interconnected features that are repeated with variations in several authors of Brazilian literature: 1) duplication of authorship through the creation of characters who are themselves writers, and presented as apprentices of a form they don't master and that, for this same reason, they feel free to experiment with; 2) a conversational pattern establishing a direct dialogue with their readers as if the book could change according to the reader's answers and expectations; 3) the exposure of their book as a work in progress, an "improvised draft" being written as if at the same time as it is being read. Listening is involved in all these procedures. As they delegate authorship, actual authors assume a receptive standpoint (just as an ear does). The framing of the book as a conversation and the way it is exposed as

a work in progress, and often as if it were an improvised one, stress the dimension of an interaction that combines both speaking and listening. If we agree that these techniques in isolation or in conjunction are part of the genre of the novel or the novella, and that they can be found in various literary traditions, what strikes us is the reason for its recurrence in prose fiction in Brazil; in other words, the reason why it has established itself as a model that is continuously emulated. I propose that these techniques help to produce identification between these novels and a broader Brazilian public used to learning "by ear." Thus, while these techniques could be found in different literary traditions, their recurrence in Brazilian novels means something more and different that we need to specify.

**Machado de Assis**

Machado de Assis (1838–1908) is the point of origin, the father of what I define as modern aural novel in Brazil.[10] In his writing we find the duplication of the writer into fictional characters who then assume authorial functions, a tendency that has been carefully and subtly analysed by Abel Barros Baptista (2003). "Autobibliography" is the term that Baptista borrows from Jean-Luc Nancy to refer to a book that speaks about itself as a book, which refers to its own birth, makes its own self-analysis, and sets out the rules of the game it plays. Brás Cubas, the fictional author who writes his memories from the grave in *As memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1997a [1881]) *The Posthumous Memoir of Brás Cubas*), and Bento Santiago, who "writes" *Dom Casmurro* (1997b [1900]), are two Machadian characters that Baptista identifies as "supposed authors." The idea of listening to other voices becomes important, thus creating a "scattered work" ("obra difusa") in a "free form." These are the terms used by Brás Cubas when he defines his book: "The truth is that it's a question of a scattered work where I, Brás Cubas, have adopted the free-form of a Sterne" (Assis 1997a, 5). As Baptista shows us, this definition is repeated by the actual author, Machado de Assis, who quotes his character with the voice of authority when defining this book that is, or should be, the property of the real author, who is now deprived of the power of being the only voice. For Baptista, the key to Machado de Assis's worldwide renown as a master of the metafictional process is his anticipation of what would come to be known as the "death of the author" in the twentieth century. The delegation of authorship to fictional writers makes it impossible to assign responsibility for the text, since those who set out to write

are characters. This self-exposure takes place through a dialogue with readers, in a potential conversation that gives the impression of assigning the responsibility for the book's achievements or failures to the reader. The radicalization of this self-exposure takes place when the fictional writer says he is writing the book here and now, at the very moment it is being read.

Throughout *Dom Casmurro* the reader is also informed that the book is being written right here and right now, as if the reader were witnessing the moment of its creation: "I might take this out when the book is printed" (Assis 1997b, 95); "now I am composing this narrative" (105); "I beg your pardon, but this chapter should have been preceded by another, recounting an incident … but it's a great nuisance to alter the page numbers; I'll leave this as it is, and then the narration will go straight on to the end" (220). Thus Bento Santiago is a "supposed author" who pretends to be writing the book as the reader is reading it; this leads him to define it as a "book with gaps in it" (112), gaps that are to be filled in by the reader. The book's "scattered," dispersed form can also be related to what Roland Barthes argues in "Listening" when he defines modern listening based on the paradigm of psychoanalytic listening, attentive to nuances of speech and intonation rather than the literal composition of the meanings of the sentences uttered (1985, 259).[11] In my view, Machado de Assis's "scattered" work appeals to a kind of listening that is also diffuse or dispersed, obligating the subject (author or reader) to renounce his or her privacy and enter a zone of whispers and secrets in the collective unconscious, which are now laid out and exposed to view. It is here that the question of auditory writing in Machado de Assis is related to the term "auditivity" and to a gestural form, a way of moving the body, transcribed and imitated in the play of writing. As such, Brás Cubas, who narrates his life from beyond the grave, announces one of the principal features of auditivity in a writing that is sinuous, not following the "regular and fluid style" preferred by readers but rather following bodily gestures: "this book and my style are like drunkards, they stagger left and right, they walk and stop, mumble, yell, cackle, shake their fists at the sky, stumble, and fall" (Assis 1997a, 111).

**Auditivity and "Capoeira Style"**

I consider the term *auditividade* or *auditivity* (and its constitutive ambivalence, as we will soon see) fundamental for understanding the methods of composition particular to Brazilian lettered culture. The term was

coined by Luiz Costa Lima, first in an article on the historical situation of intellectuals in Brazil published in 1981, and later, revisited, in a piece on Machado de Assis. In the first article, Costa Lima (1981) analyses the situation of the lettered individual from colonial times to the nineteenth century in relation to both a predominantly illiterate general population and a dominant elite that always marginalized or demeaned black, *cabodo*, and Indigenous cultural practices. In this context, the presence of the auditory element in writing has a negative connotation, linked to demagogic oratory destined to persuade the public instead of the creation of a writing intended for the difficult task of argumentative and conceptual convincing. In the second article (2002), auditivity takes on positive connotations, and is connected to the incorporation of Afro-Brazilian cultural practices into literary writing. The example, now, is Machado de Assis. In Costa Lima's reading, Machado de Assis's chronicles are characterized by a style that uses evasive word play in an intellectual dance, disorienting the reader while also allowing the author to evade the possible censorship of his perspective on the political events of the time. Costa Lima terms this "capoeira style," and names Machado de Assis the "capoeira master," establishing a previously unnoticed relationship between literary writing and the Afro-Brazilian play of the body.

According to Costa Lima, "the Machadian auditory element injects *capoeira ginga* ["swing"] into the ink on the page" (2002, 335). Machado de Assis's word play is similar to the play of the body in capoeira, with its dodges and feints, its *dribles* and *negaceios*. In the written text, the *negaceio* or feint is carried out "by dismantling propositional logic" (332). Thus, reversing any linear argument, a loose, constellational chain of sentences appears, forming a "writing that is impregnated with auditivity" (335). Costa Lima then poses the question: "Can we understand capoeira as the beginning of the individuation of a way of writing?" (331). Far from weak or inconsistent reflections, what we see in the highly developed poetic composition of writers like Machado de Assis is a writing that incorporates another, more allusive connection, full of meanderings and nuances, an auditivity that is conscious and practised experimentally.

If Roberto Schwartz (2001) sees the volubility of Machadian narrators as critical representations of the local elite, Costa Lima perceives the verbal dodges and feints of the author's chronicles as parallel to the more popular forms of bodily expression in Brazil, close to what José Miguel Wisnik (2008) finds in his study of the presence of the African-originated *maxixe* sound in Machado de Assis, through which the author reveals his mixed-race heritage. Recalling that Machado de Assis was the

descendant of slaves, we must make clear that this is not a relationship of cause and effect but rather a conjunction in which inconscient roots come into existence with the emergence of aesthetic configurations to invent them. This clarification is important. Thinking about "writing by ear" in relation to "Brazilian expression" in capoeira or in popular music does not mean that there is an expression present in a reality that exists prior to the creation of the text in which the author gives it shape. Rather, what Lispector calls "our Brazilian mode of expression" (quoted in Varin 2002, 28) emerges from an immersion by contact and contagion, similar to the way in which children learn the language of the place where they are born or raised. Thus, according to Costa Lima, capoeira as a writing style does not mean "any form of nativist inspiration" (2002, 338). Machado de Assis's writing has different models of inspiration, and capoeira is one of the components related to the "expressive-communicative practice that he captured in his own country" (339). Like an internal component, capoeira as a style, from the point of view of a native, "is perhaps the richest aspect and the most complicated to describe, because it is still mixed up with our presence" (339). In this way, it becomes more important for "foreign" ears, capable of distancing themselves from the local, to be able to perceive possible unexpected resonances. Thus I would say that writers, in their work, give voice to the communicative practices of the collective body of which they are part, and re-transmit this practice to readers who can perceive it between the lines of their texts.

Thus, auditivity is understood not only as the presence of the oral in the written, but also as a loose, constellational linking of sentences. Thinking about the question of "auditory writing," I would thus add one more element to the meanings of the term "auditivity." Auditivity also means a way of listening to that which is the most intimate in language, and to that which is the most difficult to learn and repeat: its intonation and its accents. In addition, it means the writer's ability to transmit this subtle presence of the voice and its reverberations through the written text. In my study, "writing by ear" corresponds to the positive aspect of auditivity in a text that is simultaneously open to the performances of speech and created as a complex literary product where listening plays a major role.

**Guimarães Rosa and Guerrilla Writing**

The same device of authorial doubling is found in João Guimarães Rosa, representing the vast space of the Brazilian interior known as the *sertão*. In Guimarães Rosa's 1956 novel *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (*The Devil to Pay in*

*the Backlands*), the character Riobaldo narrates his life in one long and uninterrupted speech to the city doctor who listens to him. Thus we have a novel that exposes metafictionally the formation of an author coming from an oral experience. Riobaldo narrates his life, and meanwhile, we suppose, his interlocutor is taking notes about what the speaker is telling him about the backlands (as Guimarães Rosa himself did on his research visits to the area). The situation is akin to one of fictional ethnographic writing in which the author hears what his character tells him, pretending not to have control over the order of the narrative, which follows the ebb and flow of orality. Much has already been said – and much is still left to say – about orality in Guimarães Rosa, but for an analysis of auditivity we must recall the key episode of Maria Mutema, the character who kills through the ear, in the same way that the uninterrupted speech of Riobaldo kills, or silences, the speech of the city doctor.[12] The book starts with the sound of a gunshot – "Those shots you heard were not men fighting" – indicating that the reader is entering into dangerous discursive territory (Rosa 1963, 3). While Euclides da Cunha in his *Os sertões* (*Rebellion in the Backlands*, 1902) denounces the crime committed by the city against the *sertão*, in Guimarães Rosa, the backlands fire shots to stay alive and to be heard by the man from the city. *Grande Sertão: Veredas* is, thus, a discursive war machine. Like the trackers and *jagunços* or backlands cowboys at war, rhetorical guerrilla tactics including auditory weapons (speech, orality, listening) are used to disarm the traps of the "lettered city" (Rama 1998). The strategy creates a paradox: how to relate to an at once non-lettered and hyper-cultured literature? In the case of Rosa, "writing by ear" corresponds to the creation of a high "illiterate" literature, a literature whose literary value has unlettered practices at its pulsating heart.

Guimarães Rosa structured his written work based on the sources of oral/aural transmission found in the *sertão*, a geographic place distant from the coastal "lettered city." Close to oral traditions present in the popular genres of "repente" and "cordel," the sertão reverberates with European medieval poems and narratives spread out by errant colonizers in the first centuries of the conquest, and simultaneously preserves linguistic forms of archaic Portuguese, as well as the first language contacts between Natives, colonizers, and Africans. As a place of freedom and escape for Indigenous, Afro-Americans, and *mestizos*, the *sertão* became an important literary topos in Brazilian history, and it received a renovated avant-garde treatment in Rosa's fictional prose. As well described by Alfredo Bosi (2012), Rosa's narrative "is so deeply rooted in the author's ear for an archaic-popular language of the backlands, of Minas

Gerais and, at the same time, one interwoven with vernacular, classical and medieval twists, that is to say, a language of literary refinement" (i).

The structure of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, a book without chapters, imitates an improvised speech that lasts for close to five hundred pages and which appears aimless, uncontrolled. As the narrator says, his speech takes "the wrong turn" without clear direction, precisely because it is not like the speech of the man from the city who knows how to write "a story in a book" (Rosa 1963, 48, 69). However, what appears to be improvisation, like a narrative that pretends to be constructing itself aimlessly, does in fact obey a certain order – a disorganized order, but an order nonetheless. In other words, imitating orality or improvisation has an order that is not fixed but mobile, contingent and dependent on the ways in which it is read, privileging this or that aspect of the story. Individual readers then, each time they want to retell the story in their own words, will organize (or disorganize) the narrative in their own way; the book will appear to be an uncontrollable sea (one of the preferred metaphors of *sertanejo* narratives), always renewed with each wave of readings. Thus, applying the words of Machado de Assis, we find in Guimarães Rosa a "scattered work" in a "free form."

We saw that, in the work of Machado de Assis and Guimarães Rosa, writing by ear and improvisation are also brought together in an oblique discursive link, creating a logic of the sinuous, tortuous, and indirect. Similarly, improvisation is also present in their texts, but a feigned one: the text *pretends* to have been written without planning, in the here and now, while the narrators converse with their readers. In the duplication or multiplication of authors and voices, a common characteristic appears in the works of Machado de Assis, Clarice Lispector, and Guimarães Rosa, albeit in different ways: their works seem as if they are being written at the very moment in which they are read, as if they were being created here and now, impromptu, without the prior establishment of control by their authors. The authors thus seem to be almost overtaken by their writing and stunned by their doubles, who take away their authorial control. What I am interested in highlighting here is that in this uncontrollable affiliation, the voices of these characters/supposed authors are what guide the construction of the narrative, and thus the authors themselves (Lispector, Rosa, and Machado) are no longer writing, but rather listening, and following the directions indicated by their characters/authors. The writers, then, act as ethnographers listening to their culture as if it were foreign, making it strange in order to better invent it in their fictions and dictions. And although authorial duplication is a common device in

many literatures, its use by at least three major names in Brazilian literature seems to be of a piece with a tendency in Brazil for expression to be strongly characterized by orality and, consequently, auditivity. (I am thinking about the example of another writer, Graciliano Ramos, and his character-author Paulo Honório, in *São Bernardo*, written in 1936.) And as a result of this tendency, "the aural novel" emerges as a distinctive (or "auditory") and dominant feature of literature in Brazil.

**From the Aura of the Photo to the Aural Novel in Brazil**

In accordance to our verbivocovisual orientation, I conclude by using visual arts to expose the general structure of the aural novel in Brazil. "Cabeça Acústica" ("Acoustic Head") (1996) is an object created by the visual artist Marepe.[13]

The ready-made is composed of two connected washbasins, with a hole in one side and a funnel in the other.[14] In the photo taken at Barra Beach in Salvador, the artist himself has his head in one side, and a boy is listening to what he might be saying or singing through the other. One can see it as a sort of portable amplification chamber that increases the experience of a sonic interaction.

Moving from the photo to the text as an aural object, let us imagine that the artist is the writer, the fictional text is the *performatic* object, and the reader is in the place of the active recipient. In Brazilian Portuguese, we use the adjective *performático* ("performatic") to describe a person or an event that presents the qualities attributed to a theatrical performance. These qualities involve bodily presence, surprise, and improvisation. The "performatic" can be related to, but it is also distinct from, Anglo-American notions of the performative (Austin 1975) and of gender performativity (Butler 1988). In brief, as it is not our focus here, suffice it to say that the "performatic" in the context of the form of the novel describes a work of fiction created as if it were not a printed book but a lively conversation, as a "talking text" that points to a gestural posture. In this textual field, according to our parallel with the images of Marepe, the writer is a voice that reverberates and gains acoustic amplification through the textual object, and the reader is acting as a listener. As they are together in the same place and time, in a situation of co-presence, we can also imagine that this reader can potentially talk back. This inversion is a crucial aspect of the novels discussed in the present book, because, like the improvisational characteristic of the "acoustic event" on the beach in Salvador da Bahia, they give the

Figure 3.1 Marepe, "Cabeça Acústica" ("Acoustic Head") [1] performance at Barra Beach, Salvador, Brazil, 1995. Photo: Marcondes Dourado. Courtesy of Galeria Luisa Strina.

impression of emerging even as we read them, simulating an act of co-presence, as if it the whole event were a conversation. Let us move to the next photo of this series.

We have now another artist (or "writer," according to our parallel) alone, talking to nobody or to himself, or simply listening to the potential sounds surrounding that beautiful landscape – its silence, the blowing of the wind, or the ocean waves. The less he can see, the more he can listen to these minimal sounds.

Marc Weidenbaum (2010) made a key observation regarding this work: "The Marepe 'Cabeça Acústica' object holds its own, whether used as an icon of Brazilian art, or of culture in an age of globalization. As with any sound-related art that is presented in silence, the Marepe piece embodies a certain ambiguity" (n/p). A "sound-related art … presented in silence" corresponds to the notion of writing by ear and the aural

Figure 3.2 Marepe, "Cabeça Acústica" ("Acoustic Head") [2] performance at Barra Beach, Salvador, Brazil, 1995. Photo: Marcondes Dourado. Courtesy of Galeria Luisa Strina.

novel. Like writing and photography, listening in writing is mute, and silent, although a recipient of sounds and reverberations. Weidenbaum then asks: "In this case, does it symbolize focus or myopia – is a human whose head is placed inside the gadget benefiting from the emphasis on sound, or cut off from sight, smell, and other senses?" My suggestion is to think the aural art not as the privileging of one sense over others, but as the site of resonances as an expanded object, like the novels of Lispector.

# 4 Hearing the Wild Heart

Clarice Lispector made her literary debut in 1943 with *Perto do coração selvagem* (*Near to the Wild Heart*), and even then her work was closely linked to listening. Turning to an early passage in that first novel, it is worth reading with one's ears newly attuned:

> A máquina do papai batia tac-tac … tac-tac-tac … O relógio acordou em tin-dlen sem poeira. O silêncio arrastou-se z z z z z z. O guarda-roupa dizia o quê? roupa-roupa-roupa. Não, não. Entre o relógio, a máquina e o silêncio havia uma orelha à escuta, grande, cor-de-rosa e morta. (13)

> (Her father's typewriter went clack-clack … clack-clack-clack … The clock awoke in dustless tin-dlen. The silence dragged out zzzzzz. What did the wardrobe say? clothes-clothes-clothes. No, no. Amidst the clock, the typewriter and the silence there was an ear listening, large, pink and dead.) (3)

In this initial paragraph one finds onomatopoeic language referring to the typewriter ("clack-clack"), the clock ("tin-dlen"), silence (that nonetheless resounds as zzzzzz), and a wardrobe that imaginatively says "clothes-clothes-clothes," although the narrator pulls back from this last image with a rhythmic, "No, no." She then caps off her description of the scene with an almost surreal, auditory presence: "Amidst the clock, the typewriter and the silence there was an ear listening, large, pink and dead." What might this last sentence mean?

To begin, Lispector's juxtaposition of the typewriter and the ear constitutes the earliest presentation of a writing by ear, a conceit that would

accompany her writing to the end. In the present chapter, I propose what amounts to a close reading of this dense paragraph, with a special focus on the image of the "ear listening, large, pink and dead," in order to unveil its configuration and allegorical character. Paradoxical as it may seem, one in fact gains a better understanding of Lispector's auditory writing by turning to the visual arts, especially painting. My proposal is to relate Lispector's "dead ear" to still-life painting (*natureza morta* in Portuguese) and, in particular, to the amputated ear of Vincent van Gogh.[1] In this way, I establish a link between Lispector and van Gogh through George Bataille's analysis of the latter's work and his focus on the images of the sun and of sacrifice. In relating Lispector's image to painting, I also establish a link between *Near to the Wild Heart* and her later novel *Água Viva* (originally published in 1973), the narrator of which is a painter. What one finds in the latter work, I argue, is an accentuation, reaffirmation, and intensification of the theoretical and poetic framework already present in the earlier text.

## The Hearing Dead Ear

Let us begin with an apparent paradox: Lispector's dead ear hears. How is this so? Before the reader can begin to answer this question, she is presented with a second image: the link between the dead, listening ear and the typewriter. What is the relation between these two objects? What do they collectively mean? Put briefly, they signal Lispector's entrance (as this relation effectively inaugurates Lispector's career as a fiction writer) into writing as a sacrificial act. For Lispector, writing implies a sacrifice of one's voice – a move into silence – but also a redemptive act of survival insofar as the dead ear still somehow manages to hear. This ear is detached from the body as writing is detached from voice, and yet both are loci for resonance and echoes, even if only in the mind and thus technically silent. It is as if the sacrifice of one's own voice were the condition for being able to hear and *listen to* (the two are not one and the same) the reverberating silence through and with the typewriter. In this sense, the sacrifice of voice is also an act of liberation: the voice, because it is dead, comes to inhabit writing as a listening; and the text, understood as something more dynamic and open-ended than the expression of an individual subjectivity, acts as a receptive channel, as a space of centrifugal expansion and contact with what lies outside.

If, in the first paragraph, Lispector associates the typewriter with the father, she links the ear to the voice of the mother. Over the course of *Near to the Wild Heart*, women are explicitly linked to voice, while masculine figures – father, professor, and husband – are all consistently linked to writing. It is in this intersection between the ear and the typewriter that Lispector's first novel, which revolves around the protagonist Joana, both as a girl and a woman, emerges and firms itself. Its text is as much a *listening to writing* as a *writing by ear*, passing from one element to the other: from the mechanized typewriter to the onomatopoeic text; from the severed ear, which listens to the silence of writing, to the father who writes while the young Joana listens to the sound of the keys. What one finds here is a scene of a family formation designed and developed in this first paragraph of Lispector's first novel, which also points to and almost predicts her future written work, with respect to the way in which she makes explicit the relation between her writing and other forms of art (e.g., painting, music, and sculpture) as well as different forms of technology, such as the typewriter, photography, cinema, and even computers. As Nadia Gotlib (1995) has argued, "It is early in the first chapter of this [i.e. her first] novel that a poetics of narration emerges. It is, in fact, the primordial chapter, the opening scene of an entire career of novelistic production" (169). Claire Varin (2002) has said much the same thing: "*Perto do coração selvagem* carries with it the seed of all her subsequent works. It is the *mold*, the set of future manifestations, the One containing all possibles" (111).

**Family Novel**

The protagonist of *Near to the Wild Heart* is Joana, a young woman who also serves as a kind of double for Lispector (as writer) herself.[2] Fiction and autobiography intertwine in the interstices of the text, which unfolds as a "portrait of the artist as a young woman," even lifting the title and the opening epigraph from James Joyce: "He was alone. He was unheeded, happy, and near to the wild heart of life" (Joyce 1916, 198–9).[3] An artistic coming-of-age story, *Near to the Wild Heart* is also what Marthe Robert (1972) has described as a "novel of origins" insofar as it offers a deep analysis of the orphan-hero myth (with Joana serving as the hero) and shares a correspondence with the childhood fantasies interpreted by Freud. In *Near to the Wild Heart*, the mother is already deceased at the beginning of the narrative, just as Lispector's mother died when the author was but nine years old. In the book, Joana's

father appears writing on a typewriter, but he soon dies as well. This second death leaves Joana orphaned in much the way that Lispector was orphaned not long before she began writing the novel.[4] The plot itself is quite simple, and it can be summed up with a few lines from the text itself: "O curto tempo de vida junto ao pai, a mudança para a casa da tia, o professor ensinando-lhe a viver, a puberdade elevando-se misteriosa, o internato … o casamento com Otávio" ("The short time she'd had with her father, the move to her aunt's house, the teacher teaching her to live, puberty mysteriously rising, boarding school … her marriage to Otávio") (24; 15). The first chapter is appropriately titled, "O Pai …" ("Father …"), and the book is divided into two parts. The first part consists of nine short chapters that make significant temporal leaps, passing from Joana's childhood to her life as an adult. This first part begins and ends with two masculine figures, her father and then her future husband, Otávio; nonetheless, it also includes two feminine figures, her aunt and the "mulher da voz" ("the woman of the voice"). The second part begins with "O Casamento" ("The Wedding"), a chapter that in reality recounts the end of the wedding, and it ends with a chapter titled "A Viagem" ("The Trip"). Lispector did in fact travel after writing this novel, accompanying her diplomat husband, and she would not return to Brazil until their marriage ended sixteen years later. In *Near to the Wild Heart*, travel is also a journey towards death, and to the final transformation and metamorphosis of the character.

Marta Peixoto (1994) examines "the recurring Oedipal structures in Joana's tangled relations with the other characters," and she defines four "triangular configurations": with her father and her dead mother; with her teacher and his wife; with her husband and his mistress, with her lover and his former mistress. However, as Peixoto notes, because "this novel encodes in its peculiar structure the development Lispector imagines for a female artist" (1), Joana escapes the regular Oedipal triangle: "These anomalous triangles result in Joana's breaking multiple bonds, ruptures that allow her to reassert, again and again, her artistic ambition" (5).

In Joana's case, to the extent that she serves as a fictional alter ego for the young Lispector, we are faced with a rebellious figure who does not conform to convention and who escapes or transcends normal moral parameters. It is in this way that Peixoto defines the character in her study. In the chapter "The Young Artist and the Snares of Gender," Peixoto analyses the deal with the devil that Lispector's writing establishes as

a means of breaking with the loci of subservience occupied by women and affirming through this rupture her own status as an artist. "The Utopian freedom from the constraints of gender that Joana achieves at the end of the novel is only a first stage of Lispector's lengthy meditation on gender and female talent that continues throughout her work" (2). It is worth noting that Peixoto links these issues to the plot structure of the novel itself and goes so far as to make use of Rachel DuPlessis's (1985) language, arguing that Lispector must "disobey the novel": "The very unconventionality of the plot events, as Joana flirts with, but escapes, marriage, adultery, and passionate love, has led critics to worry about the supposedly "unfinished" quality of the novel, and Joana to ponder, thinking of herself as a character of a narrative, 'How can one end Joana's story?'" (5).

By the end of the novel, Joana comes to transcend binary gender boundaries and enter into the field of animality. This manner of "disobeying" the structure of the novel will reach its climax in *Água Viva*, a book that is, at the same time, an essay, a novel, and a diary. It is in this book that the reader encounters the writer-painter, and where flowers and, in particular, the sunflower occupy a fundamental role.

It is worth pointing out that writing by ear, even if linked to parental figures, if we are to take seriously the associations presented by Joana, leads to the liberation of that scene through constant gestures of artistic rebellion that culminate in the transformation and liberation of the human subject, and in the transcendence of gender as well as genre so as to be able to achieve the neuter, the *it*, as Lispector would come to express it in *Água Viva*:

> 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. Parece com momentos que tive contigo, quando te amava, além dos quais não pude ir pois fui ao fundo dos momentos. É um estado de contato com a energia circundante e estremeço. (13)

> (No use trying to pin me down: I simply slip away and won't allow it, no label will stick.[5] I'm entering a very new and genuine chapter, curious about itself, so appealing and personal that I can't paint it or write it. It's like moments I had with you, when I would love you, moments I couldn't go past because I descended into their depths. It's a state of touching the surrounding energy and I shudder.) (7)

Always keeping in mind Lispector's concern for limits and transgression, one may come to a deeper and more contextualized understanding of the "ear listening, large, pink and dead" that opens *Near to the Wild Heart*. To begin, we may ask, why is it large, why is it pink, and why is it dead?

**The Ear**

Speaking of *Near to the Wild Heart*, Hélène Cixous (1991b) argues: "Clarice's first move as a child was to put herself at the *écoute* of, in tune with writing, of something that happens between the body and the world" (1). In the opening scene, the listening ear belongs at once to Joana, who listens to all of the narrated sounds (e.g., the typewriter, the clock, the silence), and to an omniscient narrator who hears everything that the characters hear and think, as it is narrated through free indirect discourse, moving frequently from the third to the first person without interruption, as in this passage: "Ela só veria o que já possuía dentro de si. Perdido pois o gosto de imaginar. E o dia em que chorei?" ("She would only see what was already inside her. Having lost the taste for imagining. What about the day I cried?") (21; 12). Almost at the end of the narrative, the reader finds a clue that the third-person omniscient narrator may be Joana herself, who lived with her aunt after the death of her parents: "Titia, ouça-me, eu conheci Joana, de quem lhe falo agora … Veja se compreende a minha heroína, titia, escute" ("Aunty, listen to me, I knew Joana, of whom I speak now … Try to understand my heroine, Aunty, listen") (172; 164). Who is speaking here? Is it the adult Joana, speaking of herself in the third person past tense as if she were someone else? This duplication of narrator and character corresponds also to the duplication of Lispector's life and that of her protagonist.

The listening ear hears the tapping of the typewriter, it hears the gears of the clock moving, and it hears the resounding silence that the first two persistently interrupt, even if only briefly. That is, there is an intimate relation between writing, the passing of time, and the sound of silence; and this intimacy is registered and felt through listening. Between the writer, time, and silence, there is this enormous ear, pink and dead – separated, therefore, from the living body as an object apart. That the ear is so large suggests quite literally the transcendence of human dimensions, but it can also suggest an ear that hears much or even everything, as if it were its own body. To listen with one's body, or with different parts of the body, is a recurring image in Lispector's fiction, as one can see in the

following passage from *Água Viva*: "Não se compreende música: ouve-se. Ouve-me então com teu corpo inteiro" ("You don't understand music: you hear it. So hear me with your whole body") (10; 4). In the same way, it is not only with the ears but with her hands that the narrator hears music: "Vejo que nunca te disse como escuto música – apóio de leve a mão na eletrola e a mão vibra espraiando ondas pelo corpo todo: assim ouço a eletricidade da vibração, substrato último no domínio da realidade, e o mundo treme nas minhas mãos" ("I see that I've never told you how I listen to music – I gently rest my hand on the record player and my hand vibrates, sending waves through my whole body: and so I listen to the electricity of the vibrations, the last substratum of reality's realm, and the world trembles inside my hands") (11; 5).

The "large" ear is thus linked to a series of images pointing to a broader sense of listening. And why is it pink? I would like to suggest that this is a reference not so much to the colour of skin as to the colour of paint on a canvas; that is, the large ear and the colour pink refer to a painted ear. Seen from this perspective, it is easier to understand Lispector's use of the term *morta*, as it is now an association, voluntary or unconscious, with still-life painting. We can thus read the scene composed of the typewriter, the armoire, the clock, and the ear as a painting. And here one already encounters the insinuation of a recurring correlation: in evoking sound, Lispector's text paints it; in speaking of painting, her text makes us hear the zzzzz of the silence. As we will see, the pictorial abstraction and the sonorous unite as "radiant" configurations, since the phrase that ends the opening scene of the first paragraph is "Os três sons estavam ligados pela luz do dia e pelo ranger das folhinhas da árvore que se esfregavam umas nas outras radiantes" ("The three sounds were connected by the daylight and the squeaking of the tree's little leaves rubbing against one another radiant") (13; 3). The term *radiant* is extremely important for an adequately contextualized reading of Lispector's work, as will soon become apparent. For the moment, I wish only to point out the daylight (as visual and pictorial matter) that unites the three sounds – that of the typewriter, that of the clock, and that of the silence – together with the rustling sonority of the tree leaves. There is here, in fact, a simultaneous focus of irradiation in terms of both light and sound. The expanded sense of hearing, which radiates outward to a listening to the murmur of tree leaves, reappears in the same book, in the following passage in which the narrator speaks of Joana: "Mas na verdade não enxergava tanto quanto ouvia dentro de si a vida. Fascinara-a o seu ruído – como o da respiração de uma criança tenra – , o seu brilho doce – como o de uma

planta recém-nascida" ("But in fact she didn't see so much as hear the life inside her. She was fascinated by its noise – like the breathing of a tender child, by its sweet glow – like a newly-born plant") (76; 68). The hearing of life within itself is linked to birth, both for the child and the plant, and gestation is at once that of the human body and that of the plant emerging from the earth. This image reappears in other texts by Lispector. It is worth recalling the following passage from *Água Viva*:

> "O quê?" "Eu não disse nada." Mas eu percebia um primeiro rumor, como o de um coração batendo debaixo da terra. Colava quietamente o ouvido no chão na terra e ouvia o verão abrir caminho por dentro, e o meu coração embaixo da terra – "nada! eu não disse nada!" – e sentia a paciente brutalidade com que a terra fechada se abria por dentro em parto, e sabia com que peso de doçura o verão amadureceria cem mil laranjas, e sabia que as laranjas eram minhas. Porque eu assim queria. (57–8)

> ("What?" "I didn't say anything." But I noticed a first rumble like that of a heart beating beneath the earth. I quietly put my ear to the ground and heard summer forcing its way in and my heart beneath the earth – "nothing! I said nothing!" – and I felt the patient brutality with which the closed earth was opening inside in birth, and I knew with what weight of sweetness the summer was ripening a hundred thousand oranges and I knew that the oranges were mine. Because that is what I wanted.) (55–6)

In this way, to hear "life within itself" is also to hear the rumour of the earth, which makes of Lispector's writing something akin to animism, according to which things, objects, and flowers murmur and have life even if dead or beneath the ground. The "ear listening, large, pink and dead" thus transforms itself into an allegorical emblem, which in turn allows the reader to approach it as a still-life painting. In the seventeenth century, still-life paintings were commonly linked to the theme of vanity and used quite explicitly as *memenți mori*, which underscores the importance of life for the reaffirmation and memory of death, through the evocative world of painted objects.

**Van Gogh's Ear**

Lispector is nonetheless a modern writer; and if this suggestion relating her writing with painting is correct, the image of this dead ear reminds us one of the most important inaugural scenes of modern art: the

self-mutilation of Vincent van Gogh, on the night of December 23, 1888. That night, the tension with Gauguin – who had come to stay with van Gogh and to paint at Arles – having reached an extreme pitch, van Gogh severed his left ear, wrapped it, still bloody, in a newspaper, and sent it as a package to a certain Rachel, who worked in the brothel he frequented on the rue du Bout-d'Arles.

Before proceeding with Lispector, I suggest pausing here for a while to revisit van Gogh's act, in the way in which George Bataille has examined it in two texts written during the 1930s. After that we will be able to come back to Lispector's initial image to understand better what kind of sacrifice this dead ear would be the image of. Let me only signal one thing: isn't it curious that a painter cuts off one of his ears instead of attacking his eyes? Would that mean that van Gogh painted with his ears, as Lispector writes with her ear? What does such synaesthesia signify? What can this episode from the life of van Gogh teach one about Lispector's dead ear that nonetheless still listens?

After cutting himself, van Gogh spent time as a patient in the hospital of Saint-Remy, and he went on to live only a year and a half longer, dying under controversial circumstances in July of 1890.[6] This episode in the life of van Gogh would assume a foundational place in the development of modern art, and it continues to be an object of interest and speculation even to the present day.[7] The impact of van Gogh's ear is so strong within our cultural imaginary that it was even "reconstituted" in 2014 by German artist Diemut Strebe along with a team of scientists.

The replica consists of living cells grown from samples provided by Lieuwe van Gogh, the great-great-grandson of Vincent's brother, Theo. In contrast with still-life works (*natureza morta*), we have here a kind of "active-life" (*natureza viva*). As Strebe has put it in an interview: "Absolutely it's alive! What we did is create a machine to mimic the body. The whole system in which the ear lives you could say is the skin. The nutrition comes from the plasma. We have a pump, which is the heart, and an oxygen exchange like a lung" (in Rhodes 2014). The ear is also equipped with a microphone, and visitors can talk into it, receiving something akin to white noise in response. "You can exchange a whole genome, and construct a whole person to a certain degree," Strebe says. "But the sound installation outlines the absence." It is of particular interest that unlike Lispector's dead ear, which listens, we have here a living ear that nonetheless cannot hear. To understand a bit better the modern fascination with van Gogh's ear, it is useful to turn now to the comments of Bataille.[8]

Figure 4.1 "Sugababe" (2014) by Diemut Strebe 2014. With permission from the artist.

**Bataille on van Gogh's Radiance**

In his analysis of van Gogh's mutilating gesture, Bataille has written two texts: "Sacrificial Mutilation and the Severed Ear of Vincent van Gogh" (1985 [1930]); and "Van Gogh as Prometheus" (1986 [1937]). The first is written as an anthropological essay, while the second, consisting of only two pages, is essentially a panegyric to van Gogh. In "Sacrificial Mutilation," Bataille makes reference to Oedipus, for whom mutilation is tightly linked to castration, but his analysis is above all anthropological and mythical. Bataille reminds his reader that the mutilation of different parts of the body was traditionally linked to divine sacrifice, as a votive act, but he also points out that in modernity it has lost its connection to the divine and has come to be related most directly with an interior experience linked to madness. His essay, however, serves as a kind of anamnesis of the past, reminding its reader of a long series of mutilations associated with sacrificial rites. Beyond this, Bataille reads the gesture of sending the ear to a brothel as the acceptance of that which society

refuses. As he puts it in "Sacrificial Mutation," van Gogh "carried his severed ear to the place that most offends polite society" (1985, 70). Van Gogh's gesture can be compared to that of thinkers who rebelled against different forms of tyranny and torture: "[van Gogh's ear] lives along with the tongue of Anaxarchus of Abdera, bit off and spat bloody in the face of the tyrant Nicocreon, and with the tongue of a Zeno of Elea spat in the face of Demylos" (71).

Exactly what sort of ritual sacrifice did van Gogh perform in cutting off his ear? Bataille responds to this question by proposing an unusual analogy between the amputated ear and the Dutch painter's solar obsession; a fixation that only becomes more accentuated after this time and finds its most telling expression in van Gogh's numerous paintings of sunflowers. Bataille argues: "It is relatively easy to establish the extent to which Van Gogh's life was dominated by the overwhelming relations he maintained with the sun, yet this question has never before been raised" (62). In the following passage, Bataille expresses his main thesis:

> The relations between this painter (identifying himself successively with fragile candles and with sometimes fresh, sometimes faded sunflowers) and an ideal, of which the sun is the most dazzling form, appear to be analogous to those that men maintained at one time with their gods, at least so long as these gods stupefied them; mutilation normally intervened in these relations as sacrifice: it would represent the desire to resemble perfectly an ideal term, generally characterized in mythology as a solar god who tears and rips out his own organs. (67)

By establishing this link, Bataille removes van Gogh's self-mutilation from individual or clinical madness and connects it instead to a tradition or lineage characterized by a certain nobility; for example, to the acts of maximum sacrifice and rebellion committed by mythical heroes such as Icarus and Prometheus. In the later poetic essay, Bataille returns to van Gogh in order to celebrate him as one of the great mythical heroes, in the same line as, for example, Prometheus, who stole fire from Mount Olympus in order to give it to humans, an act for which he was cruelly punished by Zeus. Turning back to van Gogh, Bataille effectively sings a paean to van Gogh's work and, for this reason, he speaks of laughter and overflowing. This does not mean that one finds in van Gogh's work some kind of tribute to the sun but rather, as with Prometheus and fire, an attempt to capture it. Van Gogh pulls the sun to the earth in his paintings, and the act of cutting off his ear is of a piece with the action

of pulling the sun from heaven. We see also that for Bataille the act of mutilation, dramatic in terms of van Gogh's biography, is in essence the equivalent of manifesting the power of "radiance" offered to humans through his paintings. Thus, after the mutilation, in "Van Gogh as Prometheus," Bataille argues:

> Van Gogh began to give the sun a meaning which it had not yet had. He did not introduce it into his canvases as part of a décor, but rather like the sorcerer whose dance slowly rouses the crowd, transporting it in its movement. At that moment all of his painting finally became *radiation*, *explosion*, *flame*, and himself, lost in ecstasy before a source of *radiant* life, *exploding*, *inflamed*. (1986, 59)

Imagining viewers appreciating paintings by van Gogh in an exhibition, Bataille argues that the painter belongs not to the field of art production or consumption but rather to something much broader and universal. For Bataille, van Gogh's act of self-sacrifice and offering is part of his art, all of which serves as a heroic offering to humanity, without forgetting that the act itself occurred very near the day in which the birth of Christ would be commemorated (although Bataille does little or nothing with this correlation):

> Vincent van Gogh belongs not to art history, but to the bloody myth of our existence as humans. He is of that rare company who, in a world spellbound by stability, by sleep, suddenly reached the terrible "boiling point" without which all that claims to endure becomes insipid, intolerable, declines. For this "boiling point" has meaning not only for him who attains it, but for *all*, even though *all* may *not yet* perceive that which binds man's savage destiny to *radiance*, to *explosion*, to *flame*, and only thereby to power. (60)

As is apparent, Bataille repeatedly uses the term *radiance*, the same term that appears in *Near to the Wild Heart* soon after Lispector speaks of the dead, pink, listening ear. If, as Bataille points out, the work of van Gogh is what "binds man's savage destiny to *radiance*," in the case of Lispector, we might correspondingly see her work as that which "binds woman's savage destiny to radiance." The desire to reach the "boiling point" is at the centre of Lispector's poetics insofar as she consistently seeks out what she calls "climax," a state that has been previously analysed as a kind of ecstasy or epiphany. In the case of *Near to the Wild Heart*, there is a profound link not only to the epiphany described by James Joyce but

also to the art of van Gogh. We see that the tragic character of van Gogh's life and the painting gains in the reading of Bataille a dimension that is beyond epic: it is more accurately cosmogonic. The hyperbole at the centre of this reading, which transcends the recorded facts of van Gogh's individual madness, is necessary to account for the artistic excess that one finds in the art of van Gogh – *excess* in the sense of an inaugural act. No reading of van Gogh's severed ear seems as contemporary and opportune as that offered by Bataille. One wonders, in fact, how to explain that the source of artistic force should appear in its way in the interstices of the first paragraph of Lispector's first novel, through the image of a dead ear and the concomitant use of the word "radiant," which acquired such importance in Bataille's reading of van Gogh's painting. It is worth repeating the passage: "Entre o relógio, a máquina e o silêncio havia uma orelha à escuta, grande, cor-de-rosa e morta. Os três sons estavam ligados pela luz do dia e pelo ranger das folhinhas da árvore que se esfregavam umas nas outras radiantes" ("Amidst the clock, the typewriter and the silence there was an ear listening, large, pink and dead. The three sounds were connected by the daylight and the squeaking of the tree's little leaves rubbing against one another radiant") (13; 3). It seems that there is a felicitous (or tragic) coincidence between Bataille's reading and Lispector's text. I believe there is no interpretation to explain this relation, because it is not a matter of a citation for explicit reference but rather a kind of artistic unconscious acting subterraneously. Insofar as it is an eminently evocative coincidence, we fall into the field of mystery (which is itself praised by Lispector) or dreams, and into the unconscious of a historical period. One should keep in mind the fact that Lipector's first novel was published only seven years after Bataille's 1937 encomium to van Gogh, and that she was writing at the peak of the Second World War, when the outcome was still in doubt and when the indiscriminate murder of millions of Jews at the hands of the Nazis had only recently become an established, if unimaginable, fact. My point here is that in this particular context, artists and thinkers such as Bataille and Lispector would become more receptive to an understanding of sacrifice and art as a robust gesture of institutional refusal. This is, in any case, an impulse inaugurated by van Gogh, which is transmitted as a pulsation and the mark of what would become modern and avant-garde art, an affiliation within which it is right to situate Lispector.

The radiant impact of van Gogh's work was noted by Katherine Mansfield, the writer with whom Lispector most identified in her youth, and more specifically during the time that she was writing *Near to the Wild*

*Heart*, to the point that she would say, after reading Mansfield's *Bliss*, "Mas esse livro sou eu!" ("But that book is me!") (quoted in Borelli 1981, 66).[9] In 1921, in a letter to Dorothy Brett, Mansfield recalls the vision that she had upon seeing the paintings of van Gogh eleven years before, in an exhibition of post-Impressionist painting organized by Roger Fry:

> Wasn't that Van Gogh shown at the Goupil ten years ago? Yellow flowers, brimming with sun, in a pot? I wonder if it is the same. That picture seemed to reveal something that I hadn't realized before I saw it. It lived with me afterwards. It still does. That and another of the sea-captain in a flat cap. *They taught me something about writing, which was queer, a kind of freedom – or rather a shaking free.* It is – literally – years since I have been to a picture show. I can *smell* them as I write. (1996, 333)

The impact of van Gogh's yellow flowers is so intense that even a decade later Mansfield still can smell them, an image that accentuates the vividness of that painting. It is interesting also that her letter speaks to the impact of that painting in the creation of a literary work. In order to express what she learned through van Gogh's painting, Mansfield uses the highly expressive terms "queer," "freedom," and "shaking free." The same terms can be used to speak of the impact that Lispector's texts have had on their readers, and in particular to describe the savage liberty of her first fictional heroine. Benjamin Moser (2009) confirms this relation when he suggests some of the possible reasons why Lispector admired Mansfield so much: "Perhaps it was Mansfield's selfless dedication to her art. But another possibility is Mansfield's defiance of convention, her ceaseless, doomed fight for freedom. For the young author of *Near to the Wild Heart* as for her rebellious creation Joana, freedom, personal and artistic, was the highest good" (144).

There is yet another term that might link the authors: ecstasy. In comparing Lispector's short story "Amor" ("Love") with Mansfield's "Bliss," Nadia Gotlib (1995) cites directly from Lispector herself on the Portuguese translation of the term *bliss*: "the correct translation is not *felicidade* (happiness), since *bliss* is closer to *ecstasy*" (152). Beyond this, it is important to point out that the solar image in Lispector's work has scarcely been explored by critics, in large measure because of the persistent mention of *night* in her texts, whether as darkness or blindness. The question now is how the sun and the sunflower appear for Lispector, and not just in her texts but also in the paintings that she herself created during the 1970s. Painting was always part of her universe. Giorgio de Chirico painted a portrait of Lispector when she lived in Italy, just after

the publication of her first novel. She was also painted by other artists, such as Carlos Scliar. At the same time, from 1960 onward and especially in 1975, Lispector herself would do a series of paintings. This was an amateur pastime for her, but she considered it to be one of the "purest" of activities that she undertook: "It's relaxing and at the same time exciting to play with colors and forms for no reason at all. It's the purest thing I do" (quoted in Moser 2009, 153–4). Which paintings are these? There are roughly twenty paintings by Lispector, and they are found now in her archives within the Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa and the Instituto Moreira Salles, both in Rio de Janeiro. She cites some of these canvases in *Um sopro de vida* (1978), which she began to write in 1974. In this book, the character Angela Pralini is also a painter. It is in this text that Lispector reveals her method: "I've never heard of this way of painting: it consists of taking a wooden canvas – Scotch pine is the best – and paying attention to its veins. Suddenly then a wave of creativity comes out of the subconscious and you go along with the veins following them a bit – but maintaining your liberty" (quoted in Moser 2009, 354). The titles of her paintings are likewise significant (examples include "Gruta" ["Grotto"], "Medo" ["Fear"], "Sol da meia-noite" ["Midnight Sun"], "Explosão" ["Explosion"], and "Caos e Metamorfose" ["Chaos and Metamorphosis"]), and I will examine some of them shortly.

**Lispector and the Sun**

In the first chapter of *Near to the Wild Heart*, in order to get her father's attention while he is banging away at a typewriter, Joana says:

> – Papai, inventei uma poesia.
> – Como é o nome?
> – Eu e o sol. – Sem esperar muito recitou:
> – "As galinhas que estão no quintal já comeram duas minhocas mas eu não vi."
> – Sim? Que é que você e o sol têm a ver com a poesia?
> Ela olhou-o um segundo. Ele não compreendera …
> – O sol está em cima das minhocas, papai, e eu fiz a poesia e não vi as minhocas … – Pausa.
> – Posso inventar outra agora mesmo: "Ó sol, vem brincar comigo." (14)
>
> ("Daddy, I've made up a poem."
> "What's it called?"

> "'The Sun and I.'" With only a slight pause she recited: "'The hens in the yard have eaten two worms but I didn't see them.'"
> "Well? What do the sun and you have to do with the poem?"
> She looked at him for a moment. He hadn't understood …
> "The sun is above the worms, Daddy, and I made up the poem and didn't see the worms …" – Pause. "I can make up another one right now: 'Hey sun, come play with me.'") (4)

In the following chapter, which presents Joana as an adult, her solar poem will be extended to the vitality of creation and its necessary link with evil: "A certeza de que dou para o mal, pensava Joana … Não, não, – repetia-se ela – é preciso não ter medo de criar … Porque a melhor frase, sempre ainda a mais jovem, era: a bondade me dá ânsias de vomitar" ("The certainty that evil is my calling, thought Joana … No, no, she repeated, you mustn't be afraid to create … Because the best phrase and always still the youngest, was: goodness makes me want to be sick [to vomit]") (18–19; 9–10). It is important to note in this context that in one of Lispector's letters she relates vomit to writing, suggesting that the latter is an act of catharsis and exteriorization; the same reference also appears in Bataille's reading. Contrary to ingestion, the sense of interiorizing social restrictions, van Gogh exteriorizes and pushes outward. As Joana claims: "Roubar torna tudo mais valioso. O gosto do mal – mastigar vermelho, engolir fogo adocicado" ("Stealing makes everything more valuable. The taste of evil – chewing red, swallowing sugary fire") (20; 11). We see how for Joana the force of creation appeals to the sun, to fire, to theft, and to evil to achieve the illumination of liberty, as she points out in the novel's final chapter, "The Journey": "No entanto sentia que essa estranha liberdade que fora sua maldição, que nunca ligara nem a si própria, essa liberdade era o que iluminava sua matéria. E sabia que daí vinha sua vida e seus momentos de glória e daí vinha a criação de cada instante futuro" ("Nevertheless she felt that this strange freedom that had been her curse, that had never connected her even with herself, this freedom was what illuminated her matter. And she knew that her life and moments of glory came from it and that the creation of each future instant came from it") (196; 189). The question of an art that projects itself into the future finds expression at the end of the novel. In what remains of the present chapter, I will continue to establish analogies between the art of van Gogh and that of Lispector, beginning with the representation of flowers and their link at once with death and birth.

**Dead Flowers**

One of the most interesting elements in the relation that I'm seeking to establish between Lispector's dead ear and the severed ear of van Gogh in relation to the sun is the fact that van Gogh was, according to Bataille (1985), the first to paint flowers that were *withered and dead*: "No one else, it seems, has ever painted wilted flowers, and van Gogh himself painted all other flowers as fresh" (63). Van Gogh's painting of a dead, wilted sunflower can be seen as an image that corresponds to Lispector's dead ear, and in both cases the viewer/reader is faced with an explicit form of "natureza morta," of "still life."

In *Near to the Wild Heart*, Joana engages in an intense reflection on the task of narration and on the distance between what is intensely thought in silence and what words express. Lispector writes: "ela pensava uma coisa e depois não sabia contar igual" ("she'd think one thing and then didn't know how to tell it the same") (40; 32). In order to "contar igual," to "narrate what one thinks," it is necessary to find the exact expression. In this way, only some phrases are capable of forging a correspondence between thought and speech, since not all that is said presents things in the way that they are experienced. Among the phrases that express what is essential about life for Joana, there is this: "flores em cima do tumulo" ("flowers on the grave"), a phrase that reinforces the link between writing and the task of reflecting on death and mourning: "Uma coisa que se pensava não existia antes de se pensar … Mas se eu digo, por exemplo: flores em cima do túmulo, pronto! eis uma coisa que não existia antes de eu pensar flores em cima do túmulo" ("Something thought didn't exist before it was thought … But if I say, for example: flowers on the grave, presto! there's something that didn't exist before I thought flowers on the grave") (40; 32). The phrase functions in the book as a kind of leitmotiv: "Surpreendeu-se com o pensamento novo, inesperado, que viveria de agora em diante como flores sobre o túmulo" ("She surprised herself with the new, unexpected thought, which would live from then on like flowers on the grave") (62; 54). It will be explicitly cited within the book and linked to sight:

> Certos instantes de ver valiam como "flores sobre o túmulo": o que se via passava a existir … Para se ter uma visão, a coisa não precisava ser triste ou alegre ou se manifestar. Bastava existir, de preferência parada e silenciosa, para nela se sentir a marca. Por Deus, a marca da existência … É que a visão consistia em surpreender o símbolo das coisas nas próprias coisas. (45)

(Certain instants of seeing were like "flowers on the grave": what was seen came to exist … To have a vision, the thing didn't have to be sad or happy or manifest itself. All it had to do was exist, preferably still and silent, in order to feel the mark in it. For heaven's sake, the mark of existence … You see, vision consisted of surprising the symbol of the thing in the thing itself.) (37)

In the novel, flowers on the tomb inescapably refer to the death of Joana's father, and before that the death of her mother. In Lispector's own biography, flowers occupy a special place linked to her family name, which she would poetically translate as *fleur-de-lis*, like a lily worn on the chest, a *lis-pector*. She would mention this in her last interview, recorded for a television program in 1977, the same program during which she would inform the host, "eu estou morta. Estou falando do meu túmulo" ("I am dead. I am speaking from my tomb," in Lerner 1992, 69). In fact, she asked that the interview should air only after she was truly dead, which occurred a few months later. The relation with flowers, which also includes a reference to flowers that wither, would accompany her to the end, when, in the hospital, just before she died, she would write out a brief and stirring note of farewell, offered to those who remained:

Sou um objeto querido por Deus. E isso me faz nascerem flores no peito. Ele me criou igual ao que escrevi agora: "sou um objeto querido por Deus" e ele gostou de me ter criado como eu gostei de ter criado a frase. E quanto mais espírito tiver o objeto humano mais Deus se satisfaz.

Lírios brancos encostados à nudez do peito. Lírios que eu ofereço ao que está doendo em você. Pois nós somos seres e carentes. Mesmo porque estas coisas – se não forem dadas – fenecem. Por exemplo – junto ao calor de meu corpo as pétalas dos lírios se crestariam. Chamo a brisa leve para minha morte futura. Terei de morrer senão minhas pétalas se crestariam. É por isso que me dou à morte todos os dias. Morro e renasço. Inclusive eu já morri a morte dos outros. Mas agora morro de embriaguez de vida. E bendigo o calor do corpo vivo que murcha lírios brancos. O querer, não mais movido pela esperança, aquieta-se e nada anseia. Eu serei a impalpável substância que nem lembrança de ano anterior substância tem. (Quoted in Borelli 1981, 61)

(I am an object loved by God. And that makes flowers blossom upon my breast. He created me in the same way I created the sentence I just wrote: "I am an object loved by God" and he enjoyed creating me as much as I

enjoyed creating the phrase. And the more spirit the human object has, the greater God's satisfaction.

White lilies pressing against the nudity of my breast. The lilies I offer to whatever hurts inside you. Since we are beings and needy. Even because certain things – if not given away – wither. For example – beside the warmth of my body the petals of the lilies would wilt. I call out to the light breeze for my future death. I will have to die because otherwise my petals will wilt. And that is why I give myself to death every day. I die and am reborn. I have also already died the death of others. But now I am dying intoxicated with life. And I bless the warmth of the living body that withers the white lilies. Desire, no longer moved by hope, calms and longs for nothing … I will be the impalpable substance that has no memory of the year before.) (Quoted in Moser 2009, 382–3)

**The Sunflower and Birth**

Besides the lily, Lispector's flower was also the rose. There is, for example, the rose that Laura, from the short story "A imitação da rosa," sees before embarking on a path towards madness or alienation or to a sphere that one cannot truly specify but which closely resembles a state of extreme poeticity. And if the sunflower was painted by van Gogh as a wilted flower, it is also a flower of origin and birth for Lispector in her later novel *Água Viva*. In *Água Viva*, the narrator/painter dedicates roughly four beautiful pages to flowers, describing many of them and the way in which she paints them in her work: "Agora vou falar da dolência das flores para sentir mais a ordem do que existe … Quero pintar uma rosa … Como transplantar o cravo para a tela?" ("Now I shall speak of the sadness of flowers so as to feel more of the order of whatever exists … I want to paint a rose … How to transplant the carnation onto canvas?") (51–2; 49–50). Turning to the sunflower, she says: "O girassol é o grande filho do sol. Tanto que sabe virar sua enorme corola para o lado de quem o criou. Não importa se é pai ou mãe. Não sei. Será o girassol flor feminina ou masculina? Acho que masculina" ("The sunflower is the great child of the sun. So much so that it knows how to turn its enormous corolla toward the one who made it. It doesn't matter if it's father or mother. I don't know. I wonder if the sunflower is a feminine or masculine flower? I think masculine") (53; 51). Related to the mother and father, the sunflower is the source of life. In fact, its importance grows even more thanks to a phrase that Lispector eventually cut out of the final version of *Água*

*Viva*, but which remains in the first manuscript of the book. Remembering that she was born in Ukraine in 1920, she situates the sunflower within her place of birth when she claims: "But one thing is for sure: the sunflower is Ukrainian" (quoted in Moser 2009, 316). In light of this statement, the following passages of *Água Viva* merit full citation, in the first place because of their beauty but also because of what they reveal about the relation between the sunflower and van Gogh's ear as articulated by Bataille. In the following scene, the narrator/painter recounts, or more accurately paints, her birth:

> Agora as trevas vão se dissipando.
> Nasci.
> Pausa.
> Maravilhoso escândalo: nasço.
> Estou de olhos fechados. Sou pura inconsciência. Já cortaram o cordão umbilical: estou solta no universo. Não penso mas sinto o it. Com olhos fechados procuro cegamente o peito: quero leite grosso. Ninguém me ensinou a querer. Mas eu quero. Fico deitada com olhos abertos a ver o teto. Por dentro é a obscuridade. Um eu que pulsa já se forma. Há girassóis. Há trigo alto. Eu é. (34)

> (Now the shadows are retreating.
> I was born.
> Pause.
> Marvelous scandal: I am born.
> My eyes are shut. I am pure unconsciousness. They already cut the umbilical cord: I am unattached in the universe. I don't think but feel the it. With my eyes I blindly seek the breast: I want thick milk. No one taught me to want. But I already want. I'm lying with my eyes open looking at the ceiling. Inside is the darkness. An I that pulses already forms. There are sunflowers. There is tall wheat. I is.) (30)

The link between being and the sunflower appears once again in another striking moment of the same novel, the passage that could be read almost as a literary transcription of the ritual practised by van Gogh. It presents, in fact, a ritualistic moment that occurs during a solar eclipse:

> Quanto mais maldita, mais até o Deus. Eu me aprofundei em mim e encontrei que eu quero vida sangrenta, e o sentido oculto tem uma intensidade que tem luz … Meu rito é purificador de forças. Mas existe malignidade

> na selva. Bebo um gole de sangue que me plenifica toda. Ouço címbalos e trombetas e tamborins que enchem o ar de barulhos e marulhos abafando então o silêncio do disco do sol e seu prodígio. Quero um manto tecido com fios de ouro solar. O sol é a tensão mágica do silêncio … E o eclipse do sol causa terror secreto que no entanto anuncia um esplendor de coração. (38)
>
> (The more accursed, the nearer toward the God. I deepened myself in myself and found that I want bloody life, and the occult meaning has an intensity that has light … My rite is a purifier of forces. But malignancy exists in the jungle. I swallow a mouthful of blood that fills me entirely. I hear cymbals and trumpets and tambourines that fill the air with noise and uproar drowning out the silence of the disc of the sun and its marvel. I want a cloak woven from threads of solar gold. The sun is the magical tension of the silence … And the solar eclipse causes secret terror that nonetheless announces a splendor of heart.) (34–5)

Soon after this passage, there is a new birth: "Vou fazer um adagio. Leia devagar e com paz. É um largo afresco. Nascer é assim: Os girassóis lentamente viram suas corolas para o sol. O trigo está maduro. O pão é com doçura que se come. Meu impulso se liga ao das raízes das árvores" ("I'm going to make an adagio. Read slowly and with peace. It's a wide fresco. Being born is like this: The sunflowers slowly turn their corollas toward the sun. The wheat is ripe. The bread is eaten with sweetness. My impulse connects to that of the roots of the trees") (39; 36).

**The Halo**

The sequence of possible relations between Lispector and van Gogh continues, now through the image of the candelabra and the *pintura do halo das coisas* (the painting of the halo of objects). Bataille recounts that van Gogh makes the following analogy: "Speaking in a letter to his brother about a painting he liked, he expressed the wish that it be placed between two vases of sunflowers, like a clock between two candelabra" (1985, 63). A clock between two candelabras would thus be like a painting between two sunflowers in vases. The reference to the clock reminds the reader of the presence of the same object in the first paragraph of Lispector's *Near to the Wild Heart*. More interesting still is the association that one can make between van Gogh's suggestion and Lispector's "Escuridão e luz: centro da vida" ("Darkness and Light: Centre of Life"), painted in 1975:

Figure 4.2 "Escuridão-e-luz-centro-da-vida" (1975) by Clarice Lispector. With permission from Agencia Literaria Carmen Balcells.

The correspondence continues with van Gogh's image, he himself as a candelabra, as Bataille describes it: "It is possible to see the painter himself as an overwhelming incarnation of the candelabrum of sunflowers, attaching to his hat a crown of lighted candles and going out under this halo at night in Arles (January or February 1889), under the pretext, as he said, of painting a countryside at night" (1985, 63).

In the same way, for Lispector, it is not a matter of painting an object so much as trying to capture its halo or vibrations. This from *Água Viva*:

> O que te escrevo 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 vertiginoso. Finco a palavra no vazio descampado: é uma palavra como fino bloco monolítico que projeta sombra. E é trombeta que anuncia. O halo é o it. (44)
>
> (What I write to you has no beginning: it's a continuation. From the words of this chant, chant which is mine and yours, a halo arises that transcends

the phrases, do you feel it? My experience comes from having already managed to paint the halo of things. The halo is more important than the things and the words. The halo is dizzying. I plunge the word into the deserted emptiness: it's a word like a slim monolithic block that gives off shadow. And it's a heralding trumpet. The halo is the *it*.) (41–2)

**Behind the Thought**

The "it" is one of the principal themes that Lispector develops within *Água Viva*, part of a larger effort within this novel to find a way to say that which words cannot articulate. The "língua it" ("it language") would be a kind of pre-Edenic language, one in which a verbal reference would be identical to the thing it names, a language achievable through painting, music, gestures, and really anything that is not words. That "it language" is found, according to Lispector, "atrás do pensamento" ("behind thought").

Before being published as *Água Viva*, the novel's working title was "Atrás do Pensamento: Monólogo com a Vida" ("Behind thought: monologue with life"). What is it that lies "behind thought" that Lispector wishes to say? As she puts it: "Atrás do pensamento atinjo um estado. Recuso-me a dividi-lo em palavras – e o que não posso e não quero exprimir fica sendo o mais secreto dos meus segredos" ("Beyond thought I reach a state. I refuse to divide it up into words – and what I cannot and do not want to express ends up being the most secret of my secrets") (65; 64). To arrive at this place or state, it would be necessary to use words to free oneself from the "escravidão das palavras" ("slavery of words"). As she points out in "Lembrança da feitura de um romance" ("Notes on the making of a novel") from May 2, 1970:

Ao escrevê-lo, de novo a certeza só aparentemente paradoxal de que o que atrapalha ao escrever é ter de usar palavras. É incômodo. É como se eu quisesse uma comunicação mais direta, uma compreensão muda como acontece às vezes com as pessoas. Se eu pudesse escrever por intermédio de desenhar na madeira ou de alisar uma cabeça de menino ou de passear pelo campo, jamais teria entrado pelo caminho da palavra. (1999b, 285)

(As I write them down, I am convinced once more that, however paradoxical it may sound, the greatest drawback about writing is that one has to use words. It is a problem. For I should prefer a more direct form of communication, that tacit understanding one often finds between people. If I

> could write by carving on wood or by stroking a child's head or strolling in the countryside, I would never resort to using words.) (1992, 71–2)

Benedito Nunes's description of Lispector's writing process is particularly apt, a process that he refers to as a "dis-writing" ("desescrever") and relates to specific artistic techniques involving reduction or attrition. For Nunes (1969), Lispector does not write in the strict sense of the term; rather it is if she engaged in "dis-writing, in the process achieving the maximum reflux effect of language and making manifest the 'it,' the unexpressed" (137–8). As it happens, Lispector did in fact (and even in the most banal sense) write by attrition. On a sheet of typing paper among the documents that make up the Clarice Lispector archive in the Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, one might confirm this technique of dis-writing. On this page, she places a series of items, a kind of to-do list, relating to the editing of a book she is writing. Of the nineteen items on the list, twelve relate directly to the technique of attrition:

1. Read cutting out the excessive descriptive adjectives
2. Read cutting out "modern" words …
3. Read cutting out that which sincerely doesn't seem right …
4. If possible, in some cases, leave just the facts and cut the idea.
5. Read cutting out what resembles Joana
6. Remove paradoxes …
7. Cut out grandiose truth
8. Modify excessively rich phrases
9. Remove the excess of the first chapter …
10. Remove games, the falsely innocent tone …
11. Remove the analogous "likes" …
12. Erase all vestiges of any process

(quoted in Gullar and Pelegrino 2008)[10]

This writing process becomes progressively more pronounced until it finds its maximum expression, evolving into an entire poetics of "amputation" in *Água Viva*. Of course, I quite consciously use the term "amputation" here.

One of Lispector's earliest critics, Alvaro Lins, on the occasion of the publication of Lispector's second novel, *O Lustre* (*The Lustre*, originally published in 1946), complained of the unfinished character of the text, considering it and *Near to the Wild Heart* to be "mutilated and incomplete novels" (quoted in Guarizo 2013, 43, from Callado 1963, 192). This method of subtraction thus presents itself from the beginning; and if it was

criticized in 1946, it has subsequently come to be a highly valued aspect of Lispector's poetics. One sees that the conception of naming defended by Lispector closely, even dangerously, approximates the act of amputation.

The painter-narrator of *Água Viva* invents for herself a name, the kind of pseudonym that resembles the name that she gives to God: "Como o Deus não tem nome vou dar a Ele o nome de Simptar. Não pertence a língua nenhuma. Eu me dou o nome de Amptala. Que eu saiba não existe tal nome. Talvez em língua anterior ao sânscrito, língua it" ("As the God has no name I shall give Him the name of Simptar. It belongs to no language. I shall give myself the name of Amptala. As far as I know no such name exists. Perhaps in a language before Sanskrit, *it* language") (42; 39). This naming with the language prior to Sanskrit would eliminate the distance between the name and the thing it names; for this reason it is the *it* language, a language not of Adam but of Amptala, which precedes Adam. Adriana Guarizo (2013) has pointed out a necessary fact: the repetition of the same letters "mpta" in *Amptala* and *Simptar* produces a sonorous proximity with the verb *amputate*. Based on this, Guarizo makes a suggestion that is of singular importance to the concept of writing by ear. She suggests that for Lispector all naming is itself an act of amputation. This is so because in each naming, the virtualities of that which was not chosen as a name remain as an unnamable horizon (159). And it is this unnamable horizon that Lispector seeks out in her writing. Unlike the poetic project of her contemporary João Guimarães Rosa, Lispector writes not in order to add names but rather to remove them, since, in defining, the name removes from things their potentiality and, one might say, the freedom to be any or in fact no name at all. One can even go further and say that the appeal to silence in Lispector's work would have as one of its points of attraction precisely the possibility of not naming, this being one way to escape the system of amputation. The failure of language, as Benedito Nunes and others have pointed out, would be its great success.

The path to the word that Lispector seeks is thus a path that leads to other forms of art.[11] There are various passages in *Água Viva* that help readers to understand that the place behind thought is where painting operates: "Atrás do pensamento não há palavras: é-se. Minha pintura não tem palavras: fica atrás do pensamento. Nesse terreno do é-se sou puro êxtase cristalino. É-se. Sou-me. Tu te és" ("Beyond thought there are no words: it is itself. My painting has no words: it is beyond thought. In this land of the is-itself I am pure crystalline ecstasy. It is itself. I am myself. You are yourself") (42; 39–40). Music also occupies this space, as does pulsation: "Bem atrás do pensamento tenho um fundo musical. Mas

ainda mais atrás há o coração batendo. Assim o mais profundo pensamento é um coração batendo" ("Far beyond thought I have a musical background. But even farther beyond there is the beating heart. Therefore the most profound thought is a beating heart") (42; 39–40). The beauty of this search for what takes place behind thought consists of producing in words that which is found before the word or outside of it, in the immediacy of the painted gesture or in the abstraction of sound. As Lispector puts it in the passage cited above, relating the arts of writing, painting, and music: "O que pintei nessa tela é passível de ser fraseado em palavras? Tanto quanto possa ser implícita a palavra muda no som musical" ("Can what I painted on this canvas be put into words? Just as the silent word can be suggested by a musical sound") (11; 5).

**The Figure of the Inaudible**

The reader arrives at a very important passage, which must be read with great attention, because it is here that a fundamental term is presented for the understanding of how a writing by ear operates: "o figurativo do inaudível" ("the figurative of the inaudible"). Lispector makes use of the term in one of her *crônicas*, published in the *Jornal do Brasil* in 1969. The *crônica* speaks of the atonal music of the German composer and violinist Paul Hindemith. In the 1920s, Hindemith collaborated with Anton Weber and Arnold Schoenberg, and also with Bertold Brecht, as a member of the *Neue Musik* movement, which placed classical music in dialogue with jazz and popular music. Persecuted during the Nazi period, not for being Jewish but for producing art condemned by Joseph Goebbels as "degenerate," Hindemith emigrated to the United States, and he lectured at Yale University from 1940 to 1953. At this point, he returned to Europe. In the elegant *crônica*, "Hindemith," that Lispector writes on his music, she makes no mention whatsoever of the composer's biography but only of the effect of his music on the listener: "O violino de Hindemith não conta sobre, antes se conta, antes se desdobra. Ele não é grave, ele é gravidade. E em nada disso existe o abstrato. É o figurativo do inaudível … Depois é difícil reproduzir de ouvido a sua música, não é possível cantá-la sem tê-la estudado. E como estudar uma coisa que não tem história?" (1999b, 229); ("Hindemith's violin does not narrate. It unfolds and transforms itself. It is not austere, but austerity. And there is nothing abstract here. It represents the inaudible … It is difficult to play this music by ear afterwards, it is impossible to sing those chords without studying them. And how can we study something which has no history?") (1992, 73).

This *crônica* gains in importance insofar as it will be transposed and adapted for *Água Viva*, published only four years afterward. In the passage from one text to the other, Lispector will redefine the term "figurative of the inaudible," linked to music, as the "figurative of the unnameable" in an effort to describe her own writing. Like Hindemith's melody, her writing does not tell a story, nor does it refer to facts: "Onde está o fato? Minha história é de uma escuridão tranquila, de raiz adormecida na sua força, de odor que não tem perfume. E em nada disso existe o abstrato. É o figurativo do inominável" ("Where is the fact? My story is of a calm darkness, of the root asleep in its strength, of the smell which has no scent. And in none of this does the abstract exist. It is the figurative of the unnameable") (74; 74). For this reason, Lispector's writing would function in much the same way as Hindemith's music: "Sei que depois de me leres é difícil reproduzir de ouvido a minha música, não é possível cantá-la sem tê-la decorado. E como decorar uma coisa que não tem história?" ("I know that after you read me it's hard to reproduce my song by ear, it's not possible to sing it without having learned it by heart. And how can you learn something by heart if it has no story?") (74; 73). The figuration of the inaudible in music and the unnamable in writing unifies the figuration of an "odor que não tem perfume," a "scent that has no perfume," transferring the analogy to the sensory field of smell, but also to the field of the invisible and painting: "Tanto em pintura como em música e literatura, tantas vezes o que chamam de abstrato me parece apenas o figurativo de uma realidade mais delicada e mais difícil, menos visível a olho nu" (1999b, 316); ("In painting as in music and literature, what is called abstract so often seems to me the figurative of a more delicate and more difficult reality, less visible to the naked eye") (quoted in the introduction, by Benjamin Moser, to *Água Viva* 2012c).

*Água Viva* is the experience of writing that takes much further and more seriously the search for the "figurativo de uma realidade mais delicada e mais difícil" ("figurative of a more delicate and difficult reality") in a text that wishes to capture the instant as it happens, and, for this reason, its structure is that of a lack of apparent structure, like a junction of fragments, exactly as Lispector wrote her first novel. But now there is no longer any narrative. This fragmentary tendency becomes accentuated, and the book, which consists of less than ninety pages, is written with the help of Lispector's friend Olga Borelli. As Lispector puts it: "Esse livrinho tinha 280 páginas; eu fui cortando – cortando e torturando – durante três anos. Eu não sabia o que fazer mais. Eu estava desesperada. Tinha outro nome. Era tudo diferente" (quoted in Gotlib, 1995, 410); ("That


Figure 4.3 "Explosão" (1975) by Clarice Lispector. With permission from Agencia Literaria Carmen Balcells.

little book was 280 pages long; I went along cutting – cutting and torturing – for three years. I didn't know what else to do. I was desperate. It had a different name. Everything was different.")

The first-person narrative is that of a painter who decides to write a text directed to a certain unnamed *you*, like a love letter or a letter calling for a separation. Much like her painting "Explosão" ("Explosion"), the book begins with an explosion, a cry of hallelujah, which is also a howl of pain: "É com uma alegria tão profunda. É uma tal aleluia. Aleluia, grito eu, aleluia que se funde com o mais escuro uivo humano da dor de separação mas é grito de felicidade diabólica. Porque ninguém me prende mais" (9); "It's with such profound happiness. Such a hallelujah. Hallelujah, I shout, hallelujah merging with the darkest human howl of the pain of separation but a shout of diabolic joy. Because no one can hold me back now'" (3).

The shout of happiness is lost within the howl stemming from the pain of separation. At the intersection of these two seemingly conflicting sentiments and responses is born "a felicidade diabólica" ("diabolical happiness"), which comes from the achievement of creative liberty: "Porque ninguém me prende mais" ("Because no one can hold me back now") (9; 3). Is there not here also a possible comparison with van Gogh's gesture? Separation, cutting, violent amputation, a pain from which one temporarily, provisionally separates oneself in order to give rise to a "radiant" and fatal liberty? I arrive thus at the point at which it is possible to respond to the question I posed at the beginning of the present chapter: Why did van Gogh cut off his ear and not attack his eyes?

**Audition of the World**

Van Gogh's severed ear is a nearly perfect figure for the inaudible. The severed ear is a self-dispossession; it is also a turning from oneself to the outside, to the world. To cast the ear outward is to give it as a gift and to cease being heard – a decisive act of separating oneself from the phallocentrism condemned by Jacques Derrida and casting one's hearing outward so as to hear "otherwise," to hear as the world. In the same way, Lispector's dead ear that nonetheless listens acquires a broader sense and sensibility: that of transcending its own individual hearing and amplifying its senses through an audition of the world. This means also to move beyond the system of interior speech and to achieve silence in writing, writing that does not speak, in the expressive sense of the term, since it is mute and is not part of orality but nonetheless hears.

It is possible now to return to Bataille and add to a reading that reinterprets his own reading of van Gogh. In the essay "The Other Sun: Non-Sacrificial Mutilation and the Severed Ear of Georges Bataille," Fredrik Rönnbäck (2015) focuses on the importance of hearing and its presence in the work of Bataille. As Rönnbäck explains it, Bataille considers that cutting off the outer ear, or cutting off a finger, is a less difficult amputation to carry out than hollowing out one's eyes (all of these gestures being substitutes for the greater terror of castration). For this reason, Bataille's text does not pay special attention to the fact that van Gogh chose to cut off his ear. Rönnbäck's reading underscores the importance of hearing both in van Gogh's act of self-mutilation and in Bataille's own written work. Synthesizing the difference between the eye and the ear, Rönnbäck argues: "Whereas the eye represents the Sun as a symbol of vision and knowledge – reason as opposed to unreason – what makes it possible for the ear to take its place is that, like the Sun, it is a means of

orientation. Slicing the ear results in a complete upheaval of the stability and permanence of this world" (116).

As Rönnbäck puts it, although the cutting of the ear's external cartilage does not affect the inner ear, it is a gesture that compels us to imagine what it would mean to puncture the eardrum. To cut off one's ear would thus be the equivalent of creating a spatial disequilibrium, to lose one's way, since the inner ear is at once the centre of orientation and disorientation: "The ear is the locus of balance and orientation, and Van Gogh's solar-induced self-mutilation … can be read in light of this fact. The destabilization of Van Gogh's art, when the entire visual field is drawn into the wild disorienting dance of the Sun, is symbolically prefigured by his attack on the center of balance. From that moment on, Van Gogh's painting is 'radiance, explosion, flames'" (116).

Directing his focus to a reading of Bataille's work and its relation to hearing, Rönnbäck points out that what emerges is essentially "an undercurrent in Bataille's work, a silent mourning whose symbolic manifestation is the ear as opposed to the eye" (120). The order of metaphor that hearing puts in place is ineluctably associated with periods of mourning and with a call to silence: "It is an attempt to grasp the ungraspable by embracing it in its absence, akin to the belief found in apophatic theology that the ineffable can only be approached through silence" (119), which is exactly what one finds in the fictional work of Lispector. As Bataille (1985) puts it, speaking explicitly of van Gogh: "The rupture of personal homogeneity and the projection outside the self of a part of oneself, with their rage and pain, appear thus to be linked regularly to the expiations, periods of mourning, or debaucheries that are openly evoked by the ceremony marking the entry into adult society" (68).

*Near to the Wild Heart* is likewise Joana's "ceremony marking the entry into adult society." It is a figurative expression of Lispector's own life that she fictionalizes as the portrait of the artist as a young woman. But what sort of atonement or mourning, to be precise, might the dead ear represent in Lispector's written work?

**Mother/Father/Orphan**

In a well-known interview with Marisa Raja Gabaglia (quoted in Varin 2002), Lispector offers a particularly rich view of what for her might well serve as the place of dead-ears-hearing in her thought:

– Você tem paz, Clarice?
– Nem pai nem mãe.

– Eu disse "paz."
– Que estranho, pensei que tivesse dito "pais." Estava pensando em minha mãe alguns segundos antes. Pensei – mamãe – e então não ouvi mais nada. Paz? Quem é que tem? (191)

("Do you have peace, Clarice?"[12]
"Neither father nor mother."
"I said 'peace.'"
"How odd, I thought you said 'parents.' I was thinking about my mother a few seconds before. I thought – Mama – and then I didn't hear anything else. Peace? Who has this?") (quoted in Moser 2009, 62, with my slight amendment)

The auditory confusion between *pais* (parents) and *paz* (peace), which psychoanalysis refers to as parapraxis or a "Freudian slip," could not be more revealing, given that Lispector's written fiction persistently deals with the status of being an orphan and, above all, the death of the mother. The loss of one's parents, one might say, corresponds to the impossibility of peace. When Lispector says, "Pensei – mamãe – e então não ouvi mais nada," "I thought – Mama – and then I didn't hear anything else," it is as though we are hearing her own verbal explanation of the dead ear as a metaphor in her fictional work. The moment that she thinks *Mama*, she ceases to hear anything else and becomes a kind of dead ear insofar as listening for her is the place of the mother, who has died. In his text on Bataille, Rönnbäck (2015) lays out very clearly the relation between audition and the maternal figure:

> The ear is the focal point of a series of attributes of the mother: the fetishism that Freud ascribes to the fear of castration, the melancholia that afflicted Bataille's own mother, the loss of balance … The ear is also the receptacle of the mother tongue, as Jacques Derrida notes when he sets up Nietzsche's German, the living mother tongue, against Latin, the dead language of the father. Whereas the father tongue is no longer spoken or heard and can only be acquired by means of the eyes, the mother tongue almost unnoticeably enters the mind through the ear. (121)

Rönnbäck refers here to Derrida's *Otobiographies*, a reading of Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*. In the case of Lispector, her mother tongue was Yiddish, which she heard during her childhood also through her father, and which remained a heritage language for her throughout her life. In

her case, we can say that this maternal language arrives to her transmitted through the ear as a dead language. Her mother died in September 1930, and in the *crônica* "Pertencer" ("Belonging"), published on June 15, 1968, Lispector makes her feelings clear:

> Fui preparada para ser dada à luz de um modo tão bonito. Minha mãe já estava doente, e, por uma superstição bastante espalhada, acreditava-se que ter um filho curava uma mulher de uma doença. Então fui deliberadamente criada: com amor e esperança. Só que não curei minha mãe. E sinto até hoje essa carga de culpa: fizeram-me para uma missão determinada e eu falhei. Como se contassem comigo nas trincheiras de uma guerra e eu tivesse desertado. Sei que meus pais me perdoaram eu ter nascido em vão e tê-los traído na grande esperança. Mas eu, eu não me perdoo. Queria que simplesmente se tivesse feito um milagre: eu nascer e curar minha mãe. Então, sim, eu teria pertencido a meu pai e a minha mãe. (1999b, 111)

> (Yet my birth was planned in such a pleasing way. My mother was in poor health and there was a well-known superstition which claimed that a woman could be cured of illness if she gave birth to a son. So I was deliberately conceived: with love and hope. Only I failed to cure my mother. And to this day I carry this burden of guilt: my parents conceived me for a specific mission and I failed them. As if they had been relying on me to defend the trenches in time of war and I had deserted my post. I know my parents forgave me my useless birth and forgot that I had frustrated their great hopes. 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 my mother.) (1992, 149)

The dead ear is at once a figure for the place of the mother, dead through sacrifice, and it is also Lispector's ear that sacrifices itself in writing in the name of the dead mother, since in the mythography of her biography the mother became pregnant in order to save herself from an illness, but the baby to whom she gave birth, Chaya (Clarice),[13] could not save her from death. This personal narrative has been retold several times by biographers and critics, and I will point out here only some of the principal aspects, since my interest is to show that the figure of the mother (which Lispector extends to all women) is what links writing to hearing, writing to death, mourning to silence. Carlos Mendes de Sousa (2002) has gone so far as to place the image of the "lost mother" at the very centre or origin of Lispector's poetics: "This leads us to a

vital insight: that it is around the maternal figure that the origin of Clarice's literature revolves" (18). In the *crônica* "Brainstorm," published on November 22, 1969, Lispector writes: "O monstro sagrado morreu: em seu lugar nasceu uma menina que era órfã de mãe" (1999b, 246); ("The sacred monster died and in its place a little girl was born who lost her mother") (1992, 320). This same phrase, it bears mentioning, would find itself repeated in *Água Viva*. In the same *crônica*, Lispector writes: "Vou-lhes contar um segredo: a vida é mortal. Nós mantemos esse segredo em mutismo cada um diante de si mesmo porque convém, senão seria tornar cada instante mortal" (1999b, 245); ("I shall tell you a secret: life is mortal. We conveniently suppress this secret, otherwise we should make each instant mortal") (1992, 319). Verbal suppression and mute silence find themselves thematized many times in Lispector's writing, and in each case this silence is the fruit of a secret: the constant reminder of our mortality. In another of her *crônicas*, "Quase briga entre amigos" ("Friendly Disagreement"), published on January 27, 1973, she responds to two specific questions, making reference in each case to mute silence:

> 1) Clarice, por que é que você escreve?
> 2) Clarice, por que você não escreve?
> – Escrevo porque não posso ficar muda, não escrevo porque sou profundamente muda e perplexa. (1999b, 447)
>
> (1. Clarice, why do you write?
> 2. Clarice, why do you not write?
> "I write because I cannot remain silent: I do not write because I'm profoundly tacitum and indecisive.") (1992, 591)

Writing is for Lispector a way of emerging from mute silence, but it is also an affirmation of this and other forms of silence. I return then to my principal thesis: the dead, listening ear as an allegory of the place of writing, as a sacrificial place for the loss of voice, which inaugurates the field of mute silence linked to maternal absence.

**The Woman of the Voice**

It is in this way that the symbolic system linked to the typewriter, the legacy of the father, which I examine in the following chapter, intersects with the legacy of the mother and with that of the "woman of the voice" to whom Lispector refers in her first novel. The third chapter of *Near*

*to the Wild Heart* was initially titled "… A Mãe …" ("… Mother …"), and afterwards, through the author's own emendation, it came to be called simply "… O Dia …" ("… Day …"). In this chapter, the father converses with a friend; it is nighttime, and Joana, who is still a child, listens to the dialogue, which, at a certain moment, revolves around the mother, whose name was Elza. Her father states: "Ela morreu assim que pode" ("She died as soon as she could") (28; 20). The little girl, afraid to go to sleep, curls herself up in her father's lap, thinking:

> Hoje então que ela estava com medo de Elza. Mas não se pode ter medo da mãe. A mãe era como um pai. Enquanto o pai a carregava pelo corredor para o quarto, encostou a cabeça nele, sentiu o cheiro forte que vinha dos seus braços. Dizia sem falar: não, não, não … Para animar-se pensou: amanhã, amanhã bem cedo ver as galinhas vivas. (29)
>
> (Especially today, now that she was afraid of Elza. But you couldn't be afraid of your mother. A mother was like a father. As her father carried her down the corridor to her room, she leaned her head against him, smelled the strong scent that came from his arms. She said without speaking: no, no, no … To cheer herself up she thought: tomorrow, first thing tomorrow see the living chickens.) (21)

In the chapter "Joana's Day," the following questions are posed as if from a state of vigilance: "Onde estava a mulher da voz? Onde estavam as mulheres apenas fêmeas? E a continuação do que ela iniciara quando criança?" ("Where was the woman of the voice? Where were the women who were just female? And what about the continuation of what she had begun as a child?") (24; 15). The question remains unanswered until much later, when it is explained in the chapter titled "The Woman of the Voice and Joana." Who is the woman of the voice? She's a secondary character, with no name, a real estate agent whom Joana meets when she is looking for a house to rent. What strikes Joana's attention is the intonation of this woman's voice: "Joana não a olhou mais atentamente senão quando ouviu sua voz. O tom baixo e curvo, sem vibrações, despertou-a … Não compreendia aquela entonação, tão longe da vida, tão longe dos dias …" ("Joana didn't pay her too much attention until she heard her voice. Its low, curved tone, without vibrations, roused her … She didn't understand that intonation, so far from life, so far from days") (73; 65). This voice will become linked to the memory of the past: "Desde aquele dia, Joana sentia as vozes, compreendia-as ou não as compreendia. Provavelmente

no fim da vida, a cada timbre ouvido uma onda de lembranças próprias subiria até sua memória, ela diria: quantas vozes eu tive …" ("From that day on, Joana felt voices. She understood them or didn't understand them. No doubt at the end of her life, for each timbre heard a wave of her own reminiscences would surface to memory, she'd say: how many voices I've had …") (74; 66). This important passage demonstrates that the voice, in Lispector's writing, refers not to the transmission of an oral text, but rather to feeling or experiencing the timbre that emanates from voices and which also acts as a "halo" that she wishes to document in all of its painstaking detail through painting and writing. The voice reveals to Joana that her "true existence" rested not with facts and events but in being alive: "Esse o fundo da narrativa" ("This was the backdrop of the narrative") (75; 67). For this reason, what matters, once again, is not the relation of facts but rather silence and murmurs, all the rest being merely accessory: "Mas a voz? Não pôde libertar-se dela durante todo o resto da tarde. Sua imaginação corria em busca do sorriso da mulher, de seu corpo largo e quieto … O principal – incluindo o passado, o presente e o futuro – é que estava viva. Esse o fundo da narrativa" ("But what about the voice? She was unable to shake it for the rest of the afternoon. Her imagination raced to find the woman's smile, her broad, quiet body … The main thing – including past, present and future – was that she was alive. This was the backdrop of the narrative") (75; 67). It is at this moment that the beautiful sonorous image of the "murmúrio do seu centro," "the burbling at her center," emerges:

> O murmúrio leve e constante como o de água entre pedras. Por que descrever mais do que isso? É certo que lhe aconteciam coisas vindas de fora. Perdeu ilusões, sofreu alguma pneumonia. Aconteciam-lhe coisas. Mas apenas vinham adensar ou enfraquecer o murmúrio do seu centro. (75)
>
> (Constant burbling like that of water between stones. Why describe more than that? Things outside of her had no doubt happened to her. She had been disillusioned, had the odd bout of pneumonia. Things happened to her. But they only intensified or weakened the burbling at her center.) (67)

The life that runs through her body, the burbling at her centre, this is what Lispector practises in her writing and inaugurates with *Near to the Wild Heart*, and what we see resonating in *Água Viva*, as its depuration or as an abstraction of the figure of the inaudible that opens her first novel. Lispector's writing, punched out on a typewriter, is thus best understood

as a search for the expression of this tone, this murmuring, this timbre. And this search, this learning process, came to her through the voices of women such as that of the character Lidia, who while visibly pregnant causes Joana to reflect:

> Que poesia seria a base de sua vida? Que diria aquele murmúrio que ela adivinhava no interior de Lídia? A mulher da voz multiplicava-se em inúmeras mulheres … Oh, estava exagerando talvez, talvez a divindade das mulheres não fosse específica, estivesse apenas no fato de existirem. Sim, sim, aí estava a verdade: elas existiam mais do que os outros, eram o símbolo da coisa na própria coisa. E a mulher era o mistério em si mesmo, descobriu. Havia em todas elas uma qualidade de matéria-prima, alguma coisa que podia vir a definir-se mas que jamais se realizava, porque sua essência mesma era a de "tornar-se." Através dela exatamente não se unia o passado ao futuro e a todos os tempos? (141)

> (What might that murmuring she sensed inside Lídia be saying? The woman with the voice multiplied into countless women … Oh, maybe she was exaggerating, maybe women's divinity wasn't specific, but merely resided in the fact of their existence. Yes, yes, there was the truth: they existed more than other people, they were the symbol of the thing in the thing itself. And woman was mystery in itself, she discovered. There was in all of them a quality of raw material, something that might one day define itself but which was never realized, because its real essence was "becoming." Wasn't it precisely through this that the past was united with the future and with all times?) (133)

The "symbol of the thing in the thing itself," "a quality of raw material," and the capacity of "becoming" characterize the (metamorphic) ideal that women possess, part of their "divinity," which is associated with giving birth:

> [E]u nada sei, posso parir um filho e nada sei. Deus receberá minha humildade e dirá: pude parir um mundo e nada sei. Estarei mais perto d'Ele e da mulher da voz. Meu filho se moverá nos meus braços e eu me direi: Joana, Joana isso é bom. Não pronunciarei outra palavra porque a verdade será o que agradar aos meus braços. (156)

> (I don't know a thing, I am able to give birth to a child and I don't know a thing.

> God will receive my humility and will say: I was able to give birth to a world and I don't know a thing. I will be closer to Him and to the woman with the voice. My child will move in my arms and I will tell myself: Joana, Joana this is good. I won't utter another word because the truth will be what pleases my arms.) (148)

This reflection on voice and on a child in one's arms reminds one of the discussion that Adriana Cavarero (2005) has proposed on the mythical figure of Echo. In her reading, it is a soothing through the voice, when one babbles softly, that is the murmur with no other meaning except that of an embrace and of a belonging, the first contact of the infant (*in-fans*, without speech) with the "lulala" of language, which Jacques Lacan would define as "lalangue," and which Lispector/Joana refers to as "lalande."

**Hearing and Childhood**

Speech and writing emerge in childhood, and it is at this stage that Joana serves as an ear listening to her father beat away at the typewriter, the ticking of the clock, and the hum of silence – language that is born in one's infancy. In this way, it is notable (even in a musical sense) how Joana writes like a child, a writing in echo that emerges through the repetition of words, as if she were composing a children's song. Her infantile perception of the world remains apparent through repetition, through the rhythm of the phrases, through the mixture of concrete elements with both deep and superficial thoughts, writing in the way that a child speaks. Echo thus appears materially in the text, through the repetition of words and of whole phrases. As a narrative device, we hear the echo through the childish language of Joana: "Então subitamente olhou com desgosto para tudo como se tivesse comido demais daquela mistura. 'Oi, oi, oi … ,' gemeu baixinho cansada e depois pensou: o que vai acontecer agora agora agora?" ("Then suddenly she looked at everything with distaste as if she had eaten too much of that mixture. 'Oi, oi, oi …' she murmured wearily and then wondered: what's going to happen now now now?") (14; 99–101). She employs the same technique in other passages: "Yes, yes, so what? What now now now?" (117) and "Nunca nunca nunca sim sim, canta baixinho" ("Never, never, never, yes, yes, she sang quietly") (17; 7). This repetition emerges as the elaborative essence of the chapters that make up *Near to the Wild Heart*, created as echo: "por enquanto é tempo por enquanto é vida mesmo que mais tarde" ("for now is time

for now is life even if it is later") (185; 173). The echo becomes echolalia in a language "ressoando nas profundezas da boca," "resounding in the depths of the mouth," that Joana invents when pronouncing words such as "amêndoas," "almonds":

> – Amêndoas … – disse Joana, voltando-se para o homem. O mistério e a doçura das palavras: amêndoa … ouça, pronunciada com cuidado, a voz na garganta, ressoando nas profundezas da boca. Vibra, deixa-me longa e estirada e curva como um arco. Amêndoa amarga, venenosa e pura. (167)

> ("Almonds …" said Joana, turning to the man. "The mystery and the sweetness of words: almond … listen, pronounced carefully, voice in my throat, echoing in the depths of my mouth. It vibrates, leaves me long and drawn out and curved like an arch. Bitter, poisonous and pure almond.") (159)

We also see it through the invention of words such as "lalande," in a dialogue with her husband, Otávio:

> Ela contara-lhe certa vez que em pequena podia brincar uma tarde inteira com uma palavra. Ele pedia-lhe então para inventar novas. Nunca ela o queria tanto como nesses momentos.
>
> – Diga de novo o que é Lalande – implorou a Joana.
>
> É como lágrimas de anjo. Sabe o que é lágrimas de anjo? Uma espécie de narcisinho, qualquer brisa inclina ele de um lado para outro. Lalande é também mar de madrugada, quando nenhum olhar ainda viu a praia, quando o sol não nasceu. Toda a vez que eu disser: Lalande, você deve sentir a viração fresca e salgada do mar, deve andar ao longo da praia ainda escurecida, devagar, nu. Em breve você sentirá Lalande … Pode crer em mim, eu sou uma das pessoas que mais conhecem o mar. (170)

> (She had once told him that when she was a child she could spend a whole afternoon playing with a word. So he asked her to invent new ones. She had never wanted him as much as she did at those moments. "Tell me again what Lalande is," he begged Joana. "It's like angel's tears. Do you know what angel's tears is? A kind of little narcissus, the slightest breeze will make it bend this way and that. Lalande is also the night sea, when no one has set eyes on the beach yet, when the sun hasn't risen. Every time I say: Lalande, you should feel the cool, salty sea breeze, you should walk along the still-dark beach, slowly, naked. Soon you will feel Lalande … Believe me, I'm one of the people who knows the sea best.) (162)

For Lispector, the ear is thus the presence of the "woman of the voice" in the written text as well as of the language of *lalande* "resounding in the depths of the mouth," that which links writing by ear to the uterus.[14] The dead ear can be translated also as an ear outside the womb. Birth pulls the body of the *in-fans* outward and away from its state of umbilical and sonorous union. How might one make it so that writing might be a return to the uterus, that is, a return to that primordial audition? As Lispector herself puts it in *Água Viva*: "Entro lentamente na escritura assim como já entrei na pintura. É um mundo emaranhado de cipós, sílabas, madressilvas, cores e palavras – limiar de entrada de ancestral caverna que é o útero do mundo e dele vou nascer" ("I enter the writing slowly as I once entered painting. It is a world tangled up in creepers, syllables, woodbine, colors and words – threshold of an ancestral cavern that is the womb of the world and from it I shall be born") (14; 8).

The images of caverns and grottoes are salient and constant in Lispector's novels, as well as in her painting. One sees quite clearly announced here the guiding lines of her writing: her writing seeks to express the timbre of the voice, the typewriting that resounds (tac tac tac); she wishes to inscribe, within muted letters, the murmur, the scream, the intonation of the "woman of the voice," who is dead like her mother, but finds herself multiplied in all female-women (*mulheres-fêmeas*, a compound term that Lispector uses twice in *Near to the Wild Heart*). At the same time, it is a writing of an orphan, a young girl become a woman without her father or her mother. Lispector's fiction is an intense and constant reflection – it is, at its core, a focused preparation for death. One can even say that all of her fictional characters live out death, and this is especially true for Joana, since she is the first.

**End and Future**

At a certain moment in *Água Viva*, the narrator states: "Aliás, não quero morrer. Recuso-me contra 'Deus.' Vamos não morrer como desafio?" ("As a matter of fact I don't want to die. I rebel against 'God.' Let's not die as a dare?") (85; 86). How to end *Near to the Wild Heart*? Perhaps logically, with the death of the protagonist. But Joana does not die when she dies; rather, she is transformed and comes to be part of a unified substance. It is worth reading the entire passage in order to verify how the book's themes return as a *ritornello*, contradicting as well the commonly held idea that Lispector's first novel is essentially unfinished. Lispector knew very well, from the beginning, what it was that she was doing; it is

just that what she was searching for was found at once on the hither and thither side of any ordered narrative structure, existing first as a pictorial essence or even musical and circular. At the end of the book, the opening paragraph takes flight once again, and again we find the protagonist in a position of listening:

> Era de manhã, sabia que era de manhã … Recuando como pela mão frágil de uma criança, ouviu, abafado como em sonho, galinhas arranhando a terra. Uma terra quente, seca … o relógio batendo tin-dlen … tin … dlen … o sol chovendo em pequenas rosas amarelas e vermelhas sobre as casas … Deus, o que era aquilo senão ela mesma? mas quando? não sempre … Como se tudo participasse da mesma loucura, ouviu subitamente um galo próximo lançar seu grito violento e solitário. Mas não é de madrugada, disse trêmula, alisando a testa fria … O galo não sabia que ia morrer! O galo não sabia que ia morrer! Sim, sim: papai, que é que eu faço? Ah, perdera o compasso de um minueto … Sim … o relógio batera tin-dlen, ela erguera-se na ponta dos pés e o mundo girara muito mais leve naquele momento. Havia flores em alguma parte? e uma grande vontade de se dissolver até misturar seus fins com os começos das coisas. Formar uma só substância, rósea e branda – respirando mansamente como um ventre que se ergue e se abaixa, que se ergue e se abaixa … (189–90)

> It was in the morning, she knew it was in the morning … Regressing as if by a child's fragile hand, she heard, muffled as if in a dream, chickens scratching the earth. Hot, dry earth … the clock clanging tin-dlen … tin … dlen … the sun raining in tiny yellow and red roses over the houses … Dear God, what was that if not herself? but when? no, always … As if everything were partaking of the same madness, she suddenly heard a nearby rooster release its violent, solitary cry. But it's not dawn, she said trembling, running her hand across her cold forehead … The rooster didn't know it was going to die! The rooster didn't know it was going to die! Yes, yes: Daddy, what shall I do? Ah, she had skipped the bar of a minuet … Yes … the clock had clanged tin-dlen, she had risen up on tiptoes and the world had spun much more slowly at that moment. Were there flowers somewhere? and a great desire to dissolve until her ends merged with the beginnings of things. To form a single substance, rosy and mild – breathing tamely like a belly that rises and falls, rises and falls … (182–3)

To form a singular substance means to interrupt the separation between species and beings, and in this way it is also as much a rebirth as

a return to the womb, a leaving behind of death or an entering into it by which one achieves immortality: "Não podia pois morrer, pensou então lentamente. […] Não morreria porque … porque ela não podia acabar. Isso, isso" ("So she couldn't die, she then thought slowly. […] No … She wouldn't die because … because she couldn't end. Yes, yes") (191; 183).[15] And then again we find something quite similar:

> Eternidade é o não ser, a morte é a imortalidade – […] Agora a certeza de imortalidade se desvanecera para sempre. Mais uma vez ou duas na vida – talvez num fim de tarde, num instante de amor, no momento de morrer – teria sublime inconsciência criadora, a intuição aguda e cega de que era realmente imortal para todo o sempre. (193).
>
> (Eternity is non-being, death is immortality – […] Now the certainty of immortality had vanished forever. Once or twice more in her life – perhaps late one afternoon, in an instant of love, at the moment of death – she would have the sublime creative unconsciousness, the sharp, blind intuition that she was really immortal for all time.) (186)

We arrive thus at the moment in which Joana ceases to be a woman and finally becomes something else, close to the savage heart:

> Não era mulher, ela existia e o que havia dentro dela eram movimentos erguendo-a sempre em transição. […] Ela notou que ainda não adormecera, pensou que ainda haveria de estalar em fogo aberto. Que terminaria uma vez a longa gestação da infância e de sua dolorosa imaturidade rebentaria seu próprio ser, enfim, enfim livre! (201)
>
> (She wasn't a woman, she existed and what she had inside her were movements lifting her always in transition. […] She noticed that she still hadn't fallen asleep, thought she would still surely crackle on an open fire. That the long gestation of her childhood would end and from her painful immaturity her own being would burst forth, free at last, at last!) (193)

The text moves from the third to the first person, and to a lovely canticle of final transformation, in which the protagonist is turned to stone and water, only to be reborn as a horse:

> porque então viverei, só então viverei maior do que na infância, serei brutal e malfeita como uma pedra, serei leve e vaga como o que se sente e

> não se entende, me ultrapassarei em ondas, ah, Deus, e que tudo venha e caia sobre mim, até a incompreensão de mim mesma em certos momentos brancos porque basta me cumprir e então nada impedirá meu caminho até a morte-sem-medo, de qualquer luta ou descanso me levantarei forte e bela como um cavalo novo. (202)

> because then I will live, only then will I live bigger than in my childhood, I will be as brutal and misshapen as a rock, I will be as light and vague as something felt and not understood, I will surpass myself in waves, ah, Lord, and may everything come and fall upon me, even the incomprehension of myself at certain white moments because all I have to do is comply with myself and then nothing will block my path until death-without-fear, from any struggle or rest I will rise up as strong and beautiful as a young horse.) (194)

With this image we return to van Gogh, who along with Joana and Angela announces the future to the image of a horse. Natalie Heinich (1996) analyses the fact that van Gogh was the first to embody the futurist temporality of the avant-garde – in the sense of a failed present but of a guaranteed future through the sacrifice of the artist during her or his life. It is worth quoting the entire passage:

> It was during Van Gogh's lifetime that the new ethic of singularity, and the projection into posterity that crystallized the notion of the avant-garde, were systematized in French artistic circles. However, Van Gogh did not himself resort the term "avant-garde" (that would still have been rather incongruous in his day). He uses the image of the cab-horse … This image cannot fail to evoke the anecdote of the beaten horse, the sight of which in a Turin street is said to have produced Nietzsche's first bout of madness, the same year as van Gogh's. (57)

On May 20, 1888, in the same year that Nietzsche wraps his arms around a stranger's horse, van Gogh writes the following letter to his brother Theo, in which he clearly expresses his consciousness of the sacrifice that art demands of him and, at the same time, the amplitude and openness that he could offer to future artists.

> There is and there remains and it always comes back at times, in the midst of the artistic life, a yearning for – real life – ideal and not attainable. And we sometimes lack the desire to throw ourselves head first into art again and

Figure 4.4 "Gruta" (1975) by Clarice Lispector. With permission from Agencia Literaria Carmen Balcells.

to build ourselves up for that. We know we're cab-horses and that it'll be the same cab we're going to be harnessed to again. And so we don't feel like doing it and we'd prefer to live in a meadow with a sun, a river, the company of other horses who are also free, and the act of generation … We no longer rebel against things, we're not resigned either – we're ill and it's not going to get any better – and we can't do anything specific about it. I don't know who called this condition being struck by death and immortality. The cab we drag along must be of use to people we don't know. But you see, if we believe in the new art, in the artists of the future, our presentiment doesn't deceive us … All this is to say there are things one senses in the future and that really come about … We don't feel we're dying, but we feel the reality of the fact

> that we're not much, and that to be a link in the chain of artists we pay a steep price in health, youth, freedom, which we don't enjoy at all, any more than the cab-horse that pulls a carriage full of people who, unlike him, are going out to enjoy the springtime. Well then – what I wish you as well as myself is to succeed in recovering our health, because we'll need it … There's an art in the future and it will surely be so beautiful and so young that, really, if at present we leave it our own youth, we can only gain in tranquility. (van Gogh 2009, 611)

Lispector's final character, the writer and painter Angela who moves through *Um Sopro de Vida*, puts it on the following terms: " – Meu ideal seria pintar um quadro de um quadro" ("My ideal would be to paint a picture of a picture") (53; 43). At this point, she goes on to describe with near perfection one of the paintings created by Lispector herself: "Fiz um quadro que saiu assim: um vigoroso cavalo com longa e vasta cabeleira loura no meio de estalactites de uma gruta. […] Ah, meu Deus, tenho esperança adiada. O futuro é um passado que ainda não se realizou" ("I once did a painting that turned out like this: a robust horse with a long and extensive blond mane amidst the stalactites of a grotto. […] Ah, my God, I have hope postponed. The future is a past that has not yet come to pass") (53; 43).

# 5 Loud Object

In this chapter, my attention turns to the complex and historically conditioned relation between woman and machine, writing and shouting, sign and sound. These are fundamental binaries (though they are not necessarily opposed) in Lispector's work, and in order to make sense of them, I will be using ideas developed by German media theorist Friedrich Kittler. A professor of media aesthetics and history at the Humboldt University of Berlin until his death in 2011, Kittler was the author of (inter alia) two seminal monographs on matters related to sound, sign, and communication. In the earlier of these, written in the early 1980s, Kittler offers a historical narrative of communication media throughout the nineteenth century, and he works to establish a more or less direct analogy between the simultaneous rise of new technologies and of psychoanalysis at the end of the 1800s. Following the terminology of Jacques Lacan, Kittler relates the phonograph to the Lacanian *real*, the cinema to the *imaginary*, and the typewriter to the *symbolic*. Beyond this direct link to Lacan, Kittler's analyses of writing technology also follow a temporal taxonomy that runs more or less parallel to the epistemological periods defined by Michel Foucault. As Kittler frames it, his "Republic of Scholars" would be the equivalent of the *classic* Foucauldian episteme associated with the Renaissance; Kittler's "1800" would then be the equivalent of Foucault's modern period (which also corresponds to late German Classicism, Romanticism, or the "Age of Goethe"); and in "1900" Kittler presents the emergence of what will come to be the postmodern. Of the many differences between these distinct epochs, Kittler distinguishes between "1800" as "the age of representation" and "1900" as the "age of the signifier" (1990, 190). In other words, the centrality of authorship, originality, and individuality corresponds to this first age of "representation," while

with the second one finds a gradual process by which authorship comes to be more peripheral and contingent; there is a rise in the practice of dictation, as well as the development of a new and at times troubling consciousness regarding various forms of communicative materiality.[1] In the transition from one age to the next, one likewise passes from what Kittler refers to as a "time of poetry" – when writing was practically the only verbal, communicative technology available – to a time in which writers found themselves compelled to confront and compete with new technologies of sound and image. As part of this same transition, one passes from the domain of writing by hand (during the period before the invention of the printing press in the second half of the fifteenth century) to that of mechanized writing, from phonetic literacy transmitted through the "mouth of the mother" to automatic, anonymous writing by machines of different sorts. As this last point perhaps makes clear, the question of gender is also fundamental for Kittler's analysis: within the episteme of 1800 and before, men would essentially "write the woman" by means of the phallic extension of their pens, and thus before the twentieth century – and the advent of the typewriter – writing remained the domain of men.[2] With the advent of the episteme of 1900, however, it becomes more common for women to write, and to do so outside the boundaries of the previous patriarchal domain. Within this new panorama, "the typewriter, still a component of our historical *a priori*, can be seen to initiate a fundamental mutation in the mode of existence of language" (Wellbery 1990, xiv). It is precisely this fundamental mutation that the careful reader finds expressed in Lispector's fiction, from her precocious literary debut in 1943 to the very last texts that she (painfully) authored during the second half of the 1970s.[3]

**The Father and the Machine**

As I have observed, it is within the intersection of the ear and the typewriter that writing by ear finds expression. In the present chapter, I turn explicitly to this question, showing that the relation between the ear and writing, as well as the ear's link to the maternal figure, also produces the sound of the typewriter and its initial relation with the paternal figure. As we have seen, *Near to the Wild Heart* begins with the image of the father writing on his typewriter and with his young daughter, who listens to the sound of the keys: "Her father's typewriter went clack-clack … clack-clack-clack …" (13). At the end of the book, the same scene of the father and the typewriter returns, but now as part of a remembrance of things

past. With the death of the father, what remains is the mnemonic trace not of a physical house but of the "position of the house within him" and the image of Joana's father "beating on the machine," in a time that is now "vague, far-off, mute" (189).[4] It is also in this temporal dislocation that the name of the father is inscribed much like the presence of an absence. The reference to the typewriter appears once again at the end of the first chapter of the same novel. In this scene, Joana is still a little girl, and she is on her way to sleep. The reflection that she describes takes place in a dreamlike state, which explains why the text presents itself like something resembling a series of free associations, as if what she is writing were guided only by the autonomous force of the words themselves without any conscious control. It is worth paying special attention to the reference that she makes to the typewriter:

> – Nunca nunca sim sim. Tudo era como o barulho do bonde antes de adormecer, até que se sente um pouco de medo e se dorme. *A boca da máquina fechara como uma boca de velha*, mas vinha aquilo apertando seu coração como o barulho do bonde; só que ela não ia adormecer. Era o abraço do pai. O pai medita um instante. Mas ninguém pode fazer alguma coisa pelos outros, ajuda-se. Anda tão solta a criança, tão magrinha e precoce … Respira apressado, balança a cabeça. Um ovinho, é isso, um ovinho vivo. O que vai ser de Joana? (17; my emphasis)

> (Never, never, yes, yes. Everything was like the noise of the tram before falling asleep, until you felt a little afraid and drifted off. *The mouth of the typewriter had snapped shut like an old woman's mouth*, but it had all been making her heart race like the noise of the tram, except she wasn't going to sleep. It was her father's embrace. He meditated for a moment. But you couldn't do things for others, you helped them. The child was running wild, so thin and precocious … He sighed quickly, shaking his head. A little egg, that was it, a little live egg. What would become of Joana?) (7; my emphasis)

Lispector compares the typewriter to a mouth; more specifically, she presents it as akin to the mouth of an old woman that closes, in a probable allusion to the sound of the machine's cover being closed by the father (and I will return to this image soon). This sound is joined by the "noise of the tram," a reminder that comes from an unknown source but that curiously finds resonance in Kittler's study when he compares the speed of the typewriter to the development of trains. Both sounds seem to trouble the young girl, since they "tighten her heart" to the point that

she falls asleep wrapped up in her father's arms. This brief scene, presented in third-person omniscient discourse, reveals to its readers what the father is thinking as he hugs his daughter: "What will become of Joana?" In hindsight, we know, turning back to Lispector herself, that Joana/Clarice will come to occupy the place of her father, and that in the future she will be the one tapping away on the machine. This transfer finds an interesting correspondence in the historical fact we were discussing before: the invention of the typewriter brings with it a new centrality for women with respect to writing, putting into motion a seismic shift that is at once historical and ontological.

**The Machine Woman**

In his analysis of the typewriter's invention, Kittler presents his reader with a double sense of the word, which signifies both the machine itself and the person who uses it: "*Typewriter* is ambiguous. The word meant both typing machine and female typist: in the United States, a source of countless cartoons" (1990, 183). By means of this bivalency, Kittler examines the place of women at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. As he sees it, the typewriter makes possible the symbolic construction of women as *type-writers* insofar as they begin to occupy the spaces of textual production formerly occupied by men. Like something akin to a sonorous expansion of the piano (itself a percussion instrument), played predominantly by women in parlours and other domestic and quasi-domestic settings throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, one can justifiably argue that the female typist is the "pianist" of a writing by ear.[5] Lispector discusses this relation in the following, semi-autobiographical manner:

> Meu pai queria que as três filhas estudassem música. O instrumento escolhido foi o piano, comprado com grande dificuldade. […] Para mim as lições de piano eram uma tortura. […] Eu preferia inventar a estudar. Tinha nove anos e minha mãe morrera. A musiquinha que inventei, então, ainda consigo reproduzir com dedos lentos. Por que no ano em que morreu minha mãe? A música é dividida em duas partes: a primeira é suave, a segunda meio militar, meio violenta, uma revolta suponho. […] Eu também tocava de ouvido. (1999b, 52)

> (My father was keen that his three daughters should study music. The instrument of his choice was the piano, bought with enormous sacrifice.

> […] For me, those piano lessons were sheer torture. […] I preferred inventing things to studying. I was nine years old and my mother was dead. Even after all these years I can still play one of those tunes using two fingers. Why should this date from the year my mother died? The melody is divided into two parts: the first part is gentle, the second fierce and almost martial, perhaps expressing my rebellion. […] I could also play by ear.) (1992, 71)

Lispector also makes explicit the relation between writing and playing piano in the following passage of a *crônica* titled "Lembrança da feitura de um romance" ("The making of a novel," written in 1970): "Não me lembro mais onde foi o começo, sei que não comecei pelo começo: foi por assim dizer escrito todo ao mesmo tempo. Tudo estava ali, ou parecia estar, como no espaço-temporal de um piano aberto, nas teclas simultâneas do piano" (1999b, 284–5) ("I can no longer recall where it began but I know I did not start at the beginning. Everything was there, or appeared to be there, as if within the temporal space of an open piano with its simultaneous keys") (1992, 371). In fact, piano lessons prepared countless women to be more highly skilled and agile typists through the development of muscle memory and hand strength. Given this, Kittler argues that the mechanical typewriter served as a kind of "brand" for the ascent of women in literate societies and intersected with broader forms of feminine emancipation from masculine sign systems. Kittler considers scriptural phallocentrism, linked to the signifier *pen(is)*, to be destined for oblivion in the face of mechanical writing and to see itself replaced by feminine alternatives.[6] For Kittler, the feminine confronts here, for the first time in history, the masculine sign precisely by means of one of its strongest signifiers: a typewriter – a modern machine – built out of solid metal and producing a sharp and violent sonority through the quick impact of its keys (hammers) on a roller (anvil): "Hence sexual innovation followed technological innovation almost immediately. *Typewriter after all, signifies both: machine and woman*" (1999, 193). In this way, the framing of *typewriter* as an inherently bivalent term (machine/woman) alters in significant ways the established gendered order: "Machines do away with polar sexual difference and its symbols. An apparatus that can replace Man or the symbol of masculine production is also accessible to women" (351–2).

Kittler's analysis of the typewriter and other technologies is simultaneously fine-grained and startling (in the best sense of the term), due in large part to the original associations that he fashions throughout his work. According to his English translators, his argumentative style

can best be classified as having "mosaic-like qualities," making "sudden shifts," employing "jump-cutting," "free association," and "a series of leitmotifs" (1999, xxxi). This is a style that approximates Lispector's own, especially in *Água Viva*, which has itself often been classified as "kaleidoscopic." Given her persistent and detailed reflections on the typewriter, and in light of Kittler's analyses, one begins to understand the extent to which Lispector is a writer attentive to materialities of communication and their larger significance. Her writing, as I will be arguing in what follows, is that of a post-Nietzschean typewriter and, like her German predecessor, she would agree with the idea that "our writing materials contribute their part to our thinking," as one finds typed in one of Nietzsche's letters (quoted in Kittler 1990, 196).

For Kittler, the typewriter serves to eliminates the Romantic model of authorship while also undermining – if not wholly sabotaging – the primacy of sight, since, in models such as that used by Nietszche, one could not see the paper or, for the most part, the keys. Kittler also argues that the typewriter is ineluctably linked to dictation, which implies that writers become figures of active transmission or collaborators who inscribe hearing and the heard. It is from this that the notion of writing as a trace likewise emerges, an idea that would find robust expression in Derridean post-structuralism. As Wellbery (1990) puts it in the introduction to Kittler's first book: "Nietzsche's notion of moral inscription is modeled on the typewriter, one of the earliest versions of which he owned and used. Saussure's linguistics, in Derrida's reading a linguistics of arche-writing, has its technological correlate in the typewriter. Freud's psychic apparatus, as he called it, is a writing machine" (xxx). Lispector herself forms part of this mechanized tradition – she announces it and incorporates it at every turn, producing at once a machined poetics and a modern theory of writing.

## *Água Viva*: The Loud Object

It perhaps goes without saying that Lispector herself used a typewriter, and this machine makes an appearance and serves as the object of philosophical reflection in much of her written work. This is so much the case, I would argue, that she eventually ceases to speak *about* the machine as a separate instrument and becomes the machine herself, as she makes manifest in the following passage from *Água Viva*:

> 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. Objeto sujo de sangue. 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. Mas faltam lágrimas na máquina que sou. Sou um objeto sem destino. Sou um objeto nas mãos de quem? tal é o meu destino humano. O que me salva é grito. Eu protesto em nome do que está dentro do objeto atrás do atrás do pensamento-sentimento. Sou um objeto urgente.

Agora – silêncio e leve espanto. (78)

(What am I in this instant? I am a typewriter making the dry keys echo in the dark and humid early hours. For a long time I haven't been people. They wanted me to be an object. I'm an object. An object dirty with blood. That creates other objects and the typewriter creates all of us. It demands. The mechanism demands and demands my life. But I don't obey totally: if I must be an object let it be an object that screams. There's a thing inside me that hurts. Ah how it hurts and how it screams for help. But tears are missing in the typewriter that I am. I'm an object without destiny. I am an object in whose hands? such is my human destiny. What saves me is the scream. I protest in the name of whatever is inside the object beyond the beyond the thought-feeling. I am an urgent object.

Now – silence and slight amazement.) (78–9)

Here Lispector ceases to be human and transforms herself into a very particular sort of object. The metal keys of the typewriter generate an echo that expands in the dark humidity of the tropical night, and the dryness of the written finds itself melted down in the thick heat of early morning in Rio de Janeiro. Like a divine being, the machine acts as a mechanism that "creates us all" and makes its own demands. Lispector does not obey completely, however, as she accepts the machine's rule only as a means of transforming it and herself into an object that screams. She feels deep pain inside, and she begs for help, but the dry machine sheds no tears. What saves her, as she claims, is a scream that more often than not manifests itself in silence. One finds, for example, the following phrase early in *Near to the Wild Heart*: "E de repente toda a lassidão da espera concentrando-se num movimento nervoso e rápido do corpo, o grito mudo" ("And suddenly all the lassitude of waiting concentrating itself into a quick, nervous body movement, a silent scream") (32; 24). What exactly is this silent scream for Lispector? The short answer is *her*

*writing*, and from this emerges the great paradox of her career: to hear silences and shout them out silently on paper dry with mechanized logic and wet with ink and sweat. Put another way, written texts are silent and cannot speak; but insofar as they are hammered out on a typewriter, they cry out. Within this framework, Kittler would likely argue that, for Lispector, the Lacanian symbolic seeks out the real in the sound of that cry.

"Objeto gritante" ("Loud object") was one of the original titles of *Água Viva*, another being "Atrás do Pensamento: Monólogo com a Vida" ("Behind Thought: Monologue with Life"). The latter exists in a draft of 151 pages, while the former consists of 185 pages. From these drafts would emerge the much-edited final version of the novel. In the passage cited above, we thus have an explanation of the term *objeto gritante* and its origin: the loud object is at once the typewriter and the writing that emerges from the symbiotic relation between the writer and the machine, the two *typewriters* of Kittler's formulation. The result is a form of writing that listens to and understands the silence of the mute scream. It is for this reason that Lispector speaks of "silence and slight amazement."

The relation between object and scream coincides with the artistic theoretical formulation of Hélio Oiticica, an artist who would in 1968 point to many of the elements that would come to constitute *Água Viva*: "The Object is seen as an action in the environment, within which objects exist as signs and not simply as 'works.' It is the new phase of the pure vital exercise, where the role of the artist is to propose creative activities. The Object is the discovery of the world, and each instant. It does not have any a priori established existence but rather is the creation of what we would like it to be: *a sound, a scream can be the object. An ephemeral object, which exists to the extent it is experienced and cannot be repeated*" (Oiticica 1968, 97–8; my emphasis). There is a series of coincidences between Oiticica's formulation and that of Lispector, his contemporary. The phrase "discovery of the world" would be the title of the volume that brings together the *crónicas* that Lispector wrote for the *Jornal do Brasil* between 1967 and 1973, and she discusses the typewriter in many of these. The scream, as an immaterial sonorous object, is also an "ephemeral object" that is undone or disappears almost immediately and serves as the object of inquiry in *Água Viva*. For this reason, rather than the expression and creation of an individual work, her text, like the art of Oiticica and Lygia Clark, seeks out company and co-creation. The project is no longer to create works but rather signs or signals. Oiticica calls this approach "OBJETato" ("OBJECTate") in the same way that the typewriter brings writing into the vibrational and tactile sphere.

**Nietzsche and the Typewriter**

In *Discourse Networks* (1990), in the chapter devoted to Friedrich Nietzsche, Kittler tells how it was the onset of near-blindness that prompted the German philosopher to purchase one of the first typewriters: "Nietzsche as typist – the experiment lasted for a couple of weeks and was broken off, yet it was a turning point in the organization of discourse" (193). Nietzsche acquires the machine, which was built in Copenhagen by Malling Hansen for blind people, favouring the use of touch: "Type hits paper, leaving an impression, or sometimes even a hole. Not for nothing was the typewriter born in the realm of blindness. Whereas handwriting is subject to the eye, a sense that works across distance, the typewriter uses a blind, tactile power" (194). In this way, Nietzsche moves from writing to inscription, and he installs himself in the field of "unconscious writing" (194). In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1999), Kittler even reproduces the facsimile of what he describes as a poem written by Nietzsche to his typewriter. The text is from 1882, and it is reproduced in capital letters just as it appeared in Nietzsche's original typewritten text. In it, one sees almost immediately the connections between Nietzsche's understanding of typewriting and that developed by Lispector: "THE WRITING BALL IS A THING LIKE ME: MADE OF / IRON / YET EASILY TWISTED ON JOURNEYS. / PATIENCE AND TACT ARE REQUIRED IN ABUNDANCE, / AS WELL AS FINE FINGERS, TO USE US" (207). For Lispector, the machine is also "a thing like me" that requires touch, patience, and "fine fingers to use us," a formulation that confuses subject and object, since in this case it seems to refer at once to the machine and to its user. Here is Kittler's commentary: "Writing in Nietzsche is no longer a natural extension of humans who bring forth their voice, soul, individuality through their handwriting. On the contrary: just as in the stanza on the delicate Malling Hansen, humans change their position – they turn from the agency of writing to become an inscription surface. Conversely, all the agency of writing passes on in its violence to an inhuman media engineer" (210). As Kittler sees this relation, the typewriter even comes to alter one's style of writing: "Indeed: Nietzsche, as proud of the publication of his mechanization as any philosopher, changed from arguments to aphorisms, from thoughts to puns, from rhetoric to telegram style. That is precisely what is meant by the sentence that our writing tools are also working on our thoughts. Malling Hansen's writing ball, with its operating difficulties, made Nietzsche into a laconic" (203).

**The Machine Humanized, the Human Burned**

If Lispector transforms herself into an object that writes, the machine becomes humanized and transforms itself into *gente* (people): "Escrevendo praticamente a vida toda, a máquina de escrever ganha uma importância enorme. Irrito-me com esta auxiliar ou então agradeço-lhe fazer o papel de reproduzir bem o que sinto: humanizo-a" (1999b, 475); ("Since it spends most of its life writing, the typewriter acquires exceptional importance. I find myself becoming irritated with my typewriter or thanking it for faithfully printing out the things I feel. In a word: I humanize my typewriter") (1992, 303). In various *crônicas*, Lispector uses the expression "ao correr da máquina" ("by the machine's rhythm") in order to refer to texts that follow the rhythm of typing without pause for any conscious reflection, much like automatic writing. A variant of this expression is "Máquina escrevendo" ("Words from the Typewriter") from May 29, 1971: "A máquina continua escrevendo. Por exemplo, ela vai escrever o seguinte: quem atinge um alto nível de abstração está em fronteira com a loucura … Agora a máquina vai parar" (1999b, 348–9); ("My typewriter carries on typing. It types out the following: Anyone who achieves a high level of abstraction has reached the frontiers of madness … My typewriter is coming to a halt") (1992, 458).

Lispector's relation with the machine suffered a strong alteration after a dramatic episode in her life that would likewise have significant consequences for the elaboration of her final books. On September 14, 1966, Lispector fell asleep while smoking in bed, setting fire to her apartment:

> She awoke to find the room in flames. In a panicked attempt to save her papers, she tried to put out the fire with her own hands … For three days, in the company of Tania, Elisa, and Rosa, Clarice hovered between life and death. Her right hand, her writing hand, was so badly damaged that there was talk of amputation. Tania pleaded with the doctors to wait another day, and the danger passed … Clarice had to stay in the hospital for three full months, enduring surgery, skin grafts, and physiotherapy, which enabled her eventually to regain the use of her hand, at least for typing. For the rest of her life it would resemble a blackened claw. (Moser 2009, 283–4)

As Carlos Mendes de Sousa describes it, it was necessary for Lispector to learn how to write once again, and the violent impact of this tragedy would generate for her a new attitude with respect to writing (2002, 11–12). Lispector herself would discuss this new reality in her *crônica* "Ao Linotipista" ("Note to the Typesetter") published on February 4, 1968:

"Desculpe eu estar errando tanto na máquina. Primeiro é porque minha mão direita foi queimada. Segundo, não sei por quê" (1999b, 74); ("Please forgive all the mistakes in my typescript. First of all, because I have severe burns on my right hand. And secondly for no reason I can explain") (1992, 101). In fact, the books that she published in the 1970s would be the result of a team effort. *Água Viva* (1973), *The Hour of the Star* (1977), and *A Breath of Life* (1978) were put together by Olga Borelli from loose notes, either written out by hand or typed by Lispector. In an interview that Borelli gave to Arnaldo Franco Junior, quoted in *Discovering the World* (1992), she explains: "When Clarice wrote *A Hora da Estrela*, she no longer worked with a typewriter, it was absolutely crazy, the texts were all handwritten and she managed to produce some sequential pages only because it is a book with a storyline" (101). Even with the difficulties that Lispector experienced in writing with a typewriter, in the *crônica* dated December 15, 1973, one is struck by the description that she offers of the machines that she had in her life, as if they were something like a series of marriages, and the corresponding generation of books whose authorship belongs as much to the machines. It is in fact worth reading the passage at length:

> Quando, há muito tempo, comecei a ser uma profissional de imprensa, tive uma máquina Underwood semiportátil. Essa máquina eu amei mesmo: ela durou tanto que aguentou eu escrever sete livros. […] Comprei então uma Olympia portátil. Essa escreveu cinco livros, fora todas as muitas outras coisas que escrevi. Depois pareceu cansada e adoecia de vez em quando, precisando de um mecânico para auxiliá-la a continuar. […] Tive depois uma Remington portátil mas fazia ao bater dos dedos um barulho de lata velha que me cansava. Troquei-a com Tati de Morais por uma Olivetti que é uma beleza em matéria de som: abafado, leve, discreto. Posso bater máquina à noite porque ela não acorda ninguém. Não me ofende com um som agudo que outras máquinas têm. Acho que de agora em diante só vou escrever nela. E se ela se cansar, compro outra igual. Como máquina é parecida com uma pessoa e às vezes de puro cansaço enguiça, o ideal era comprar outra Olivetti como máquina suplente porque não posso me dar ao luxo de parar de escrever. Máquinas, qualquer uma, são um mistério para mim. Respeito-lhes o mistério. E voltei, agora, não sei por quê, à velhinha Olympia portátil. Sou volúvel em matéria de máquinas. (1999b, 475)

> (When I first became a journalist, I had a semi-portable Underwood. How I loved that typewriter. It served me so well and typed no fewer than seven books. […] After completing seven books […] my beloved Underwood felt the strain and began to behave as if it were suffering from rheumatism. I

> then bought a portable Olympia. This helped me to complete another five books in addition to all the other items I published in between times. Then my Olympia started to show signs of fatigue. I had it repaired and my Olympia was as good as new. But now it was my turn to get tired of those minute characters. So I acquired a portable Remington, but it rattled so much that the noise began to get on my nerves. So I did a swop with Tati de Morais who gave me her Olivetti, which is a dream: the sound is low, restful and discreet. It allows me to type during the night without disturbing anyone. And there is none of that rattling one gets with other typewriters. In future, I shall stick to an Olivetti. And once it begins to show signs of wearing out, I shall replace it with another Olivetti. Typewriters are just like people and they often break down from sheer exhaustion. The best solution would be to buy another Olivetti to keep in reserve because I cannot permit myself the luxury of giving up writing. Machines, whatever their use, are mysterious. I respect their mystery. And now I have gone back to using my old portable Olympia. I really am fickle when it comes to machines.) (1992, 624–5)

Lispector wrote seven books with an Underwood, and with an Olympia she wrote five; afterward came the Remigton, until the appearance of a newer machine, the Olivetti, and then finally the return of the Olympia. One also notes the importance of the sonority of the keys, and how this affects what is written. Lispector at once respects the mystery of machines and their constancy and admits her own capriciousness in her amorous relations with them. Beyond this, like living beings, these machines fall ill and must be healed. In the following passage, from a *crônica* published on February 5, 1972, and titled "Até a máquina?" ("Even the Typewriter?"), one finds the following:

> Mandei consertar minha máquina de escrever. Inserido ao redor do rolo (ou como quer que se chame o que vocês sabem) ainda estava o papel onde o consertador de máquinas tentara escrever para ver se já estava sem defeito. No papel estava escrito: "s d f g ç l k j a e v que Deus seja louvado p oy 3 coisa." (1999b, 404)

> (I had my typewriter repaired. Inserted around the roller (or whatever it is that that thing is called) there was still the sheet of paper where the repairman had tried to write to see if the machine was fixed or not. On the paper was written:

> "s d f g ç l k j a e v may God be praised p oy 3 thing") (1992, 533)[7]

The assignment of agency to a machine, or even the hint of such an assignment, serves to produce texts, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari might argue, that appear as aleatory notes. This is so because, in the absence of a person controlling the keys to write a text that emerges from a concrete indexical *origo* and contains within it the human voice "uttering" a "may God be praised," the text comes to the reader among symbolic traces that appear to speak a language we do not know but possess nonetheless in some sense as spells, when what speaks is, in effect, the "thing" itself: *þ oy 3 thing*. This thing that speaks effectively establishes an epistemic break that inaugurates our time, a break that separates the human hand from writing, that means the end of calligraphy and the beginning of keystrokes.

The mechanical inscription of writing separates the hand from paper; and in this way, what is interrupted is the entire apparatus by which subjectivity (inscribed in calligraphy) comes to be – for with a typewriter, each letter is the same for everyone. Beyond this, the machine makes it so that what is written is also immediately printed. This is quite different from the use of a pen; when one's first, most preliminary thoughts emerge already as printed letters, this favours the expression of the immediacy of thought: "According to Marshall McLuhan, the fact that 'the typewriter fuses composition and publication' brought about 'an entirely new attitude to the written and printed word'" (Kittler 1990, 259). Lispector refers precisely to this when she states that the typewriter

> me transmite, sem eu ter que me enredar no emaranhado de minha letra. Por assim dizer provoca meus sentimentos e pensamentos. E ajuda-me como uma pessoa. […] Inclusive parece captar sutilezas. Além de que, através dela, sai logo impresso o que escrevo, o que me torna mais objetiva. (1999b, 69)

> (transmits me without my having to become involved in the muddle of my own handwriting. In a manner of speaking, the typewriter provokes my thoughts and feelings. And it helps me as if it were human. […] It even seems to capture subtleties. Even more, it is thanks to my typewriter that everything I write comes out already printed, which makes me more objective.) (1992, 94)

**The Machine on Her Lap**

Considering that the symbolic field is the sphere of linguistic signs, the typewriter makes possible their materiality in letters and uniform printed figures: "in contrast to the flow of handwriting, we now have discrete

elements separated by spaces" (Kittler 1999, 16). The typewriter appears not only as the signifying materialization of the symbolic world but also as the possibility of a deconstructive game put into motion by the same literary writing associated with the established symbolic order. Lispector enjoyed telling people that she wrote with a typewriter on her lap: "uso uma máquina de escrever portátil Olympia que é leve bastante para o meu estranho hábito: o de escrever com a máquina no colo" (1999b, 69); ("I use a portable Olympia typewriter that is light enough for my strange habit: writing with the machine on my lap") (1992, 94). The image that comes to mind is that of a person cradling language itself by means of a desire to keep the typewriter close to her body. It is as if the act of writing were nothing but the fruit of a corporeal vibration that emerges from the hitting of the typewriter's keys while it lies in the lap of a woman. In this joining, language as the result of structured conventions associated with a patriarchal society no longer has importance; rather, what matters is "lalangue," the complex and resonant expression of "it." In this context, what matters rests in one's lap, and there is no longer any referential dominion over the signified. As I have explained up to this point, the relation that Lispector maintained with her typewriter finds itself situated and expressed through many forms of representation: through the bivalent term *typewriter* itself (as both machine and woman), as narratives that make the father reappear through the mechanical expression of modernity, and as a humanized being that writes not because of but rather in spite of the human who presses its keys.

**Typewriter x Voice**

"– A minha intimidade? Ela é máquina de escrever" ("– My intimacy? It is my typewriter"). These are the words of Lispector's final protagonist, Angela, in *A Breath of Life*. With the typewriter, "in principle it is possible to inscribe more and different sorts of things than any voice has ever spoken" (Kittler 1990, 212). He later points out that "voice remains the other of typescripts" (1999, 228). This discussion, of intimacy, others, typescripts, and voice, is of extreme importance given that it signifies the end of the scene that Kittler refers to as the "Mother's Mouth": "script, instead of continuing to be translation from a Mother's Mouth, has become an irreducible medium among media, has become the typewriter" (1999, 199). It is possible to return now to the image of Joana describing the typewriter as an old mouth closing. In the episteme of 1900, the Mother's Mouth *has become the typewriter*, and intimacy no

longer emerges from an interior voice but rather is *produced* through the machine.

What is this "Mother's Mouth"? In the discursive field of 1800, Kittler historicizes the pedagogical reforms of the educational system in the context of the then-recent invention of the phonetic alphabet method, no longer based on reading written language but on speech, transmitted through the "mouth of the mother" and trained to pronounce letters. The phonetic method "substituted for the textuality of the book and alphabet a Voice that neither read aloud nor imitated, but instead spontaneously created the pure sounds of the high idiom or mother tongue" (1990, 53). It is in this way that the "Mother's voice" becomes an "inner sense." For Kittler, with the oralization or naturalization of the alphabet, "all arbitrariness disappeared in an inner sense called the Mother's voice" (29). As a consequence, in the discourse network of 1800, "woman is constructed as the source of poetic language" (25). For this reason, Kittler's chapter "The Mother's Mouth," from *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, begins by stating: "Nature, in the discourse network of 1800, is The Woman. Her function consists in getting people – that is, men – to speak" (25). On one hand, women remain "voices without writing" (and they can only serve as authors through the adoption of a male pseudonym); on the other, men create poetry to honour women, nature, and love. What is thus created is a "system of polar sexual difference" (63): "The difference between the sexes therefore coincided in a mathematically exact way with the dichotomy between writing and authorhood on the one hand, and with that between the voice and motherhood on the other. The difference allowed the Woman as the Mother's Mouth every right to be a Voice, but no right to have one" (66).

In contrast, "typescript amounts to the desexualization of writing, sacrificing its metaphysics and turning it into word processing" (63). If in the discourse network of 1800, the "Woman" is presented as the source of poetic language, in the discourse network of 1900, women become producers themselves. The second part of Kittler's analysis, dedicated to the episteme of 1900, begins with the chapter, "Nietzsche: Incipit Tragoedia." It begins: "When the one Mother gave way to a plurality of women, when the alphabetization-made-flesh gave way to technological media, and when philosophy gave way to the psychophysical or psychoanalytic decomposition of language, Poetry also disintegrated" (177–8).

What is born, then, is "the world of dictated, typed literature – that is, modern literature" (1999, 214). The first expression of this new universe belongs to Nietzsche, writing from Sils Maria, through the persona of

Zarathustra: "Alone, crying in the wilderness, Nietzsche discovered the material basis of any literary work and, in particular, of his own" (Kittler 1990, 180). As Kittler goes on to argue: "Thus the classical-romantic discourse network ended in megalomania and desperation. A fragment, not accidentally sets the courtly signature beneath a self-portrait of naked despair" (180). Here I reproduce Nietzsche's 1862 fragment, titled "Euphorion" and signed as "F W v Nietzky, homme etudie en lettres," ("F W v Nietzky, a man knowledgeable in letters.") It evokes a scene that Kittler describes as "primal":

> It is deathly still in the room – the one sound is the pen scratching across the paper – for I love to think by writing, given that the machine that could imprint our thoughts into some material without their being spoken or written has yet to be invented. In front of me is an inkwell in which I can drown the sorrows of my black heart, a pair of scissors to accustom me to the idea of slitting my throat, manuscripts with which I can wipe myself, and a chamber pot. (Quoted in Kittler 1990, 181)

The network of voice and Poetry disappears, and "the scratching of the pen exposes a function that had never been described: writing in its materiality" (Kittler 1990, 181–2): "If something precedes its materiality, it is only the materiality of sound itself. An isolated, early observation by Nietzsche records the deafening noise in this still scene of writing: 'What I fear is not the horrible shape behind my chair but its voice: not the words, but the frighteningly inarticulate and inhuman tone of that shape. If only it would speak as people speak!'"(183). White noise, hums, and inarticulate tone now occupy the forefront of the writing apparatus: "Within the realm of all sounds and words, all organisms, white noise appears, the incessant and ineradicable background of information. For the very channels through which information must pass emit noise" (183).

What might be the connection between these observations and the work of Lispector? According to Kittler, the formulation of the episteme of 1800 had as a central characteristic the "phonetic method" of language socialization; and "the phonetic method culminated in the description or prescription of a new body. […] This body has eyes and ears only in order to be a large mouth" (1990, 33). It is here, significantly, that the "Mother's Mouth" gives way to the ears: "The frightening, inarticulate tone that Nietzsche heard behind his back hums in the ears themselves" (184). In Nietszche's dithyramb, "Ariadne's Lament," Dionysus acts as a

"typewriter myth," according to Kittler. In responding to Ariadne, "the god speaks and thus materializes the logic of media" (196):

> Be wise, Ariadne! …
> You have small ears, you have my ears:
> stick a wise word in! –
> Must we not first hate each other, if we are to love one another …
> *I am your labyrinth* … (Quoted in Kittler 1990, 198)

Ariadne's tiny ears will not receive, as Kittler puts it, the wise word in the form of elegies, monologues, or epiphanies; however, she does hear in the form of dictation: "Nietzsche, who was proud of his small ears just as Mallarmé was proud of his satyr's ears, thus wrote the program of his program. […] it is a dictated word. Nietzsche as lyric poet, or 'How to Write Poetry with a Hammer'" (198).

**Lispector, Onomatopoeia, and Silence**

In the case of Lispector, the ear grows, in accord with the image explored in the previous chapter. As I understand it, the "dead" ear of *Near to the Wild Heart* (and so for the rest of Lispector's *oeuvre*) represents, on the one hand, the loss of the maternal voice; on the other, it points to the expansion of audition, since even though the ear is lifeless it can nonetheless hear. In the end, the dead ear represents the end of a voice and the beginning of listening. The voice that comes to its end is a particular one: the Romantic voice understood as an expression of Truth, Spirit, and Soul. What meets its end is the voice as an ideal, a transmitter of signifiers. What remains is the audition of the *clack-clack-clack* of the typewriter keys, the *tin-dlen* of the clock, the zzzz of silence that a listening ear picks up – that this ear *hears*. What also remains is the language of "lalande," onomatopoeic inscription, the marking down of sounds. It is true that Lispector affirms more than once the importance of voice in writing, but this voice is no longer that of expression; it is, instead, a voice of impression. The word will be for Lispector a kind of lure for drawing in and registering the not-said of animals, plants, and flowers; it is for this reason, too, that her writing will be associated with witchcraft and magic. What comes to be within the new episteme of the typewriter is automatic and "blind" writing, a listening to the unconscious, a privileging of children's speech, dictation, the typewriter bundled up in the lap of the typist. What is born here is the woman as author, a woman armed with a

dexterity acquired in piano class. What remains is writing orphaned by the dissolution of authority.

There is a question that is common to many of Lispector's readers: how is it that she manages to write in this way? How is she able to write with such freedom of impression? Her writing is at once deeply personal and detached, biographical and cosmogonic, feminist and animal, feminine and mechanical. For this reason, Helène Cixous sings Lispector's praises, wishing that all women should write like her, as if she had opened up a portal in Rio de Janeiro through which all women could pass – their typewriters in tow – and gain access to the "it," the impersonal, the neuter gender.

At the same time that Lispector works within the sphere of the "natureza íntima das coisas" ("intimate nature of things"), her work also produces a dizzying proliferation of techniques: "E esta é uma festa de palavras. Escrevo em signos que são mais um gesto que voz" ("And this is a feast of words. I write in signs that are more a gesture than voice") (24; 17). Just a few lines after this statement, however, the narrator of *Água Viva* claims the following in the context of explaining her shift from painting to writing: "Tenho uma voz" ("I have a voice"). This voice is not what one might think it is; it is a voice of breathing and of the signifier rather than the signified: "O mundo não tem ordem visível e eu só tenho a ordem da respiração. Deixo-me acontecer" ("The world has no visible order and all I have is the order of my breath. I let myself happen"). The voice is now the voice of the world itself: "Eu me ultrapasso abdicando de mim e então sou o mundo: sigo a voz do mundo, eu mesma de súbito com voz única. O mundo: um emaranhado de fios teleféricos em eriçamento" ("I surpass myself abdicating myself and am therefore the world: I follow the voice of the world, I myself suddenly with a unique voice. The world: a tangle of bristling telephone wires") (24; 18). In this way, "o erotismo próprio do que é vivo está espalhado no ar, no mar, nas plantas, em nós, espalhado na veemência de minha voz, eu te escrevo com minha voz" ("The eroticism that belongs to whatever is living is scattered in the air, in the sea, in the plants, in us, scattered in the vehemence of my voice, I write you with my voice") (40; 34). Lispector goes on to write:

> Há um som que de longe faz: psiu! psiu! […] Nenhum homem da terra poderia ouvi-lo sem enlouquecer e começar a sorrir para sempre. […] E o ser feminino estendido na praia não pensa. Um novo personagem atravessa a planície deserta e desaparece mancando. Ouve-se: psiu; psiu! E chama-se ninguém. (91–2)

> (There's a sound in the distance going: psst, psst! […] No man on earth could hear it without going mad and starting to smile forever. […] And the feminine being stretched out on the beach isn't thinking. A new character crosses the deserted plain and disappears limping. You hear: psst; psst! And no one is called.) (87–8).

**Hearing in the Loud Object**

In the following passage of *Água Viva*, the act of listening to the scarcely articulated song of the housekeeper relates audition to an anonymous mode of composition without authorship (or authority), since it is based solely on the reception of sound:

> Ontem eu estava tomando café e ouvi a empregada na área de serviço a pendurar roupa na corda e a cantar uma melodia sem palavras. Espécie de cantilena extremamente plangente. Perguntei-lhe de quem era a canção e ela respondeu: é bobagem minha mesmo, não é de ninguém. Sim, o que te escrevo não é de ninguém. E essa liberdade de ninguém é muito perigosa. (83)

> (Yesterday I was drinking coffee and heard the maid in the laundry room hanging up clothes and singing a melody without words. A kind of extremely mournful dirge. I asked her whose song it was, and she replied: it's just my own nonsense, it's nobody's. Yes, what I'm writing you is nobody's. And this nobody's freedom is very dangerous.) (75–6)

The comparison with the housekeeper's song, which belongs to no one in particular and yet wholly to her – that is, it has no authorial intentionality – reveals that the narrator's writing is likewise the result of her proximity to the sounds that come from the depths of her house, from the service area, and from her personal relationship with her domestic help. It is also through them, by extension, that the narrator connects with the poor and the dispossessed. The (absent) presence of the housekeeper would come to be absolutely fundamental in *The Passion According to G.H.* (1964), and it finds even further elaboration in Macabéa, the poor Northeastern Brazilian immigrant at the centre of *The Hour of the Star* (1977). The housekeeper's song, at once anonymous and personal, forms part of the deep and sonorous well of popular Brazilian music that consistently accompanies Lispector's literary work. It is also linked to other sources of music that shape Lispector's writing: classical

European music as well as more recent experiments in atonal and twelve-tone compositions.

What matters most for the present study is that Lispector seems to believe in the possibility of arriving at a state of "loud objectivity" through hearing. In her writing, one consistently finds direct references to auditory composition and reception capable of hearing the text. In this way, the words enunciated by the narrator are chosen according to their sound, independent from the semantic meaning that they carry: "Meu corpo incógnito te diz: dinossauros, ictiossauros e plessiossauros, com sentido apenas auditivo" ("My secret body tells you: dinosaurs, ichthyosaurs, and plesiosaurs, meaning nothing but their sound") (12; 6). It is the sense of audition that finds itself privileged and carries the weight of onomatopoeic writing, the same sense with which Lispector initiates her writing career in 1943, and it is this sense that finds perhaps its clearest expression in yet another passage from *Água Viva*:

> Entende-me: escrevo-te uma onomatopéia, convulsão da linguagem. Transmito-te não uma história mas apenas palavras que vivem do som. Digo-te assim:
>
> "Tronco luxurioso."
>
> E banho-me nele. Ele está ligado à raiz que penetra em nós na terra. Tudo o que te escrevo é tenso. Uso palavras soltas que são em si mesmas um dardo livre: "selvagens, bárbaros, nobres decadentes e marginais." Isto te diz alguma coisa? A mim fala. (27–8)

> (Understand me: I write you an onomatopoeia, convulsion of language. I'm not transmitting to you a story but just words that live from sound. I speak to you thus: "Lustful trunk." And I bathe within it. It is linked to the root that penetrates inside us into the earth. All that I write you is taut. I use stray words that are in themselves a free dart: savages, barbarians, decadent noblemen and gangsters. Does that mean anything to you? It speaks to me.) (21)

Language in a state of convulsion is precisely Lispector's definition of onomatopoeia: "words that live from sound" and not their referential connection to a story. "Lustful trunk" not only corresponds to a specific referent but also signifies through its ideophonic vocality. Her technique calls also for the use of "loose words" ("palavras soltas") as in a sequence of words that, even if aleatory, reveal the proximity of her writing to a whole tradition of creators made up of "selvagens, bárbaros, nobres decadentes e marginais" ("savages, barbarians, decadent noblemen, and gangsters") (27–8; 20).

It follows that the manner in which one feels silence matters a great deal for Lispector's poetics and will thus find expression through a number of different linguistic formulae: "Encarno-me nas frases voluptuosas e ininteligíveis que se enovelam para além das palavras. E um silêncio se evola sutil do entrechoque das frases" ("I incarnate myself in the voluptuous and unintelligible phrases that tangle up beyond the words. And a silence rises subtly from the knock of the phrases") (21; 15). On another occasion, Lispector asks her readers the following: "Ouve-me, ouve o silêncio. O que eu te falo nunca é o que te falo e sim outra coisa. Capta essa coisa que me escapa e no entanto vivo dela e estou à tona de brilhante escuridão" ("Listen to me, listen to the silence. What I say to you is never what I say to you but something else instead. It captures the thing that escapes me and yet I live from it and am above a shining darkness") (14; 8). She goes on to warn her readers: "E eu vivo de lado – lugar onde a luz central não me cresta. E falo bem baixo para que os ouvidos sejam obrigados a ficar atentos e a me ouvir" ("And I live to the side – a place where the central light doesn't burn me. And I speak quietly so that ears have to pay attention and hear me") (70; 63). She continues:

> Ouve apenas superficialmente o que digo e da falta de sentido nascerá um sentido como de mim nasce inexplicavelmente vida alta e leve. A densa selva de palavras envolve espessamente o que sinto e vivo, e transforma tudo o que sou em alguma coisa minha que fica fora de mim. A natureza é envolvente: ela me enovela toda e é sexualmente viva, apenas isto: viva. Também eu estou truculentamente viva – e lambo o meu focinho como o tigre depois de ter devorado o veado. (25)
>
> (Listen only superficially to what I say and from the lack of meaning a meaning will be born as from me a high and light life is inexplicably born. The dense jungle of words thickly envelops what I feel and live, and transforms everything I am into some thing of mine that remains outside me. Nature is enveloping: it entangles me entirely and is sexually alive, just that: alive. I too am ferociously alive – and I lick my snout like a tiger who has just devoured a deer.) (18).

Going even further, she requires God himself to serve as her attentive listener:

> Não vou morrer, ouviu, Deus? Não tenho coragem, ouviu? Não me mate, ouviu? Porque é uma infâmia nascer para morrer não se sabe quando nem

> onde. Vou ficar muito alegre, ouviu? Como resposta, como insulto. Uma coisa eu garanto: nós não somos culpados. E preciso entender enquanto estou viva, ouviu? porque depois será tarde demais. (94)
>
> (I'm not going to die, you hear, God? I don't have the courage, you hear? Don't kill me, you hear? Because it's a disgrace to be born in order to die without knowing when or where. I'm going to stay very happy, you hear? As a reply, as an insult. I guarantee one thing: we are not guilty. And I have to understand while I'm alive, you hear? because afterwards it will be too late.) (86).

If writing is an entrance into the "heart of death," and the abyss of silence for its readers, it is, at the same time, an "unlimited silent field" in which she, like Icarus, "unfold[s] her wings; free to live," for, in that place, something vibrates: what she refers to as "it." The following passage clarifies this movement:

> Minha voz cai no abismo de teu silêncio. Tu me lês em silêncio. Mas nesse ilimitado campo mudo desdobro as asas, livre para viver. Então aceito o pior e entro no âmago da morte e para isto estou viva. O âmago sensível. E vibra-me esse it. (56)
>
> (My voice falls into the abyss of your silence. You read me in silence. But in this unlimited silent field I unfurl my wings, free to live. So I accept the worst and enter the core of death and that is why I'm alive. The feeling core. And that it makes me quiver.) (49).

From here one comprehends better the working title for *Água Viva*: "Objeto Gritante," "Loud Object." The conformity with the death of voice in writing is what makes Lispector search to create a writing by ear, that is, a writing elaborated as if it were a speech occurring here and now, to be heard in writing, and in a book that also calls out, "[e] screvo por profundamente querer falar. Embora escrever só esteja me dando a grande medida do silêncio" ("I write because I so deeply want to speak. Though writing only gives me the full measure of silence") (12–13; 6). Unlike the symbolic order in which speech determines the place of the Law, here the symbolic order of the *typewriter* (as both woman and machine) is a partner to silence, for whom constant reverberation is more important than the original sound, and the object of desire more relevant than the Law. The affirmation of silence in Lispector's writing

is paradoxically populated with sound, or as she puts it in *Near to the Wild Heart*: "O silêncio, porque essa música seria a necessária, a única possível, projeção vibrante da matéria" ("Silence, because this music would be the necessary, the only possible, vibrant projection of matter") (83; 75).

Hearing is what brings humans close to the animal because it is this that tears us from articulated human speech; the ear is an organ of sonorous alimentation, the organ most like an antenna designed to capture signals. It is where we are most *other* insofar as we cease enunciating in order to receive what comes to us from outside, in echoes and reverberations, and from inside as pulsations, as Lispector points out in *Água Viva*: "Eu é que estou escutando o assobio no escuro. Eu que sou doente da condição humana. Eu me revolto: não quero mais ser gente" ("I am the one listening to the whistling in the dark. I who am sick with the human condition. I revolt: I no longer want to be a person") (93; 85). The listening ear and the typewriter valorize in this way a state of receptivity that broadens and connects writing (which remains mute) to the vegetable and animal world, the world of objects: "Só uma doçura me possui: a conivência com o mundo" ("A single sweetness possesses me: complicity with the world") (36; 33). She goes on to write: "Às vezes eletrizo-me ao ver bicho. Estou agora ouvindo o grito ancestral dentro de mim: parece que não sei quem é mais a criatura, se eu ou o bicho. E confundo-me toda. Fico ao que parece com medo de encarar instintos abafados que diante do bicho sou obrigada a assumir" ("Sometimes I get electrified when I see animals. I'm now hearing the ancestral cry within me: I no longer seem to know who is the creature, the animal or me. And I get all confused. It seems I get scared of facing up to stifled instincts that I'm forced to acknowledge in the presence of the animal") (49; 42).

Thus, the dead-yet-listening ear and the typewriter together allegorize the paradoxical relationship between sound and silence in Lispector's writing. The silence of writing and the links between writing and silence, central themes in Lispector's work, would thus have a kind of allegorical and formational figure in that ear "grande, cor-de-rosa, e morta" together with the typewriter.[8] It is no longer a matter of a "first" or originating voice but rather the echo of a voice never before listened to. Lispector's reader thus arrives finally at the echo, and at a form of writing that functions as an "echopoetics." In articulating this poetics, in *Água Viva* Lispector argues as follows:

> Quero também te dizer que depois da liberdade do estado de graça também acontece a liberdade da imaginação. Agora mesmo estou livre.

E acima da liberdade, acima de certo vazio crio ondas musicais calmíssimas e repetidas. A loucura do invento livre. Quer ver comigo? Paisagem onde se passa essa música? ar, talos verdes, o mar estendido, silêncio de domingo de manhã. Um homem fino de um pé só tem um grande olho transparente no meio da testa. Um ente feminino se aproxima engatinhando, diz com voz que parece vir de outro espaço, *voz que soa não como a primeira voz mas em eco de uma voz primeira que não se ouviu.* (91, my emphasis)

(I want to tell you that after the liberty of the state of grace there occurs the liberty of imagination. Right now I am free.

And above liberty, above a certain void I create very calm and repeated musical waves. The madness of free invention. Do you want to see it with me? Landscape where this music happens? air, green stems, the spread-out sea, silence of a Sunday morning. A feminine entity slinks up on all fours, says in a voice that seems to come from another space, *voice that sounds not like the first voice but in echo of a primary voice that was never heard.*) (83, my emphasis)

# 6 The Echopoetics of G.H.

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

(Listen, faced with the living cockroach, the worst discovery was that the world is not human, and that we are not human)

Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*

Não há ser, tudo é mudança, ecos, revérberos, câmbios perpétuos …

(There is no being; all is change, echoes, reverberations, perpetual mutations …)

Leminski, *Metaformose*

In the present chapter, I offer the term *echopoetics* as a way of conceptualizing the reverberations of sound and silence in Lispector's signature novel, *The Passion According to G.H.* (first published in 1964).[1] From the start, this implies a focused consideration of the mythical figure of Echo, a (feminine) personification of the effects of sonorous reverberation. Just as Ovid's nymph loses her bodily form and is transformed into pure resonance and repetition, Lispector's first-person narrator in *The Passion* similarly loses her "montagem humana" ("human setup") upon entering her former maid's room (4). Within this room, which she describes as an "estômago vazio" ("empty stomach"), the narrator ingests living (insect) matter and is transformed into an echo for the silent, wild vibrations that fill the room. Instead of narcissistic identity (self-centred, egotistic, and authorial – "I burn with love for my own self," cries Narcissus in Ovid's text [1993, 96]), Echo offers

a differential repetition of a resonant, responsive, and auditory non-identity, a diapason-subject.[2]

In literary terms, an echopoetics requires one to rethink the notion of utterance, authorship, and, by extension, authority and originality. This is so because those who echo always come after (in all senses of the term) those who first enunciate. Seen this way, authorship through echo can rightly be considered a contradiction of sorts, and it is Lispector who allows us to "push forward" beyond this impasse. Put simply, the narrator G.H. wishes to act as someone who only reproduces sound. Nonetheless (and this is the key point of my proposed reading), unlike her mythical predecessor, G.H. seeks to reproduce *mute sounds*, a difference that makes her poetics – her writing – even closer to the ear, framed as an organ open to receive vibrations. In the repetition and reverberations of an echopoetics (here the rewriting of Plato's cave should not be far from our minds), the one who speaks is a listener; that is, the one who speaks is always an Other who resonates. Echo is s/he who speaks from a receptive rather than authorial footing, just as Lispector writes as one who hears.

In *Just Gaming*, the transcript of an interview with Jean-Loup Thébaud (Lyotard and Thébaud 1985), Jean-François Lyotard distinguishes between three types of language game: the first, dominated by the implied speaker of Western philosophy, is what he calls the "Parmenides game"; the second, built around the listener, is the "Moses game"; and the third, in which the position of speaker is occupied by the addressee, who speaks as one who hears, is the "Pagan game" (*pagan* being a term that for Lyotard is synonymous with postmodernism). In the first game, one speaks, enunciates, and generally holds forth with a voice of authority, and knowledge is in this way transmitted to disciples. In the second, one hears an utterance and must simply obey, since there is as yet no justification that might explain what one is to do beyond a command "to be just." In the third game, one speaks by listening in such a way that the authorial footing remains vacant, and the addressee speaks through what s/he receives without ever assuming a position of authority or building on earlier prescriptions. The second and the third games are similar in that they privilege listening, but they also differ in that the second assumes the presence of a single God and the third assumes a divine array. The result of this difference is a form of justice considered in the second case to be universal, and, in the third, multiplicitous. If Lyotard's second game is explicitly linked to Judaism, the third comes much closer to Amerindian thought and culture, as reflected in the narratives of the Kashinawá, which Lyotard cites directly.

Following Lyotard's formulation, one can rightly say that Lispector finds herself working somewhere between the second and third games. We have seen already how the Eastern European Jewish culture in which Lispector was raised can be thought of through the ear, above all given her exposure to spoken Yiddish as a child, and through her troubled link to the maternal voice (i.e., the tragic story of her gestation and the subsequent death of her mother), which finds itself commented on in many of Lispector's texts. At the same time, it is possible to approach Lispector's poetics of echo from the perspective of echolalia and notions of metamorphosis common to Amerindian thought. To develop these ideas would require another book altogether; however, it is worth at least making mention of the fact that the poetics of listening and an echopoetics can at the very least make a contribution to the philosophy of anti-Narcissus as it has been framed by the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2009).

To begin, it makes sense to situate Lispector's fine-tuned ear in the interstices of the last two games laid out by Lyotard – that of her silenced Judaism (in this sense, it is inherently even more auditory for being unspoken and only manifested between the lines of her work, as academic critics frequently point out) and that of her life spent in Brazil. And what does *Brazil* mean? Here I understand it as an enormous, continental ear in which Indigenous, *caboclo*, and African sonorities, oralities, and auralities resonate like the drums and Afro-Brazilian imagery that Lispector incorporates into and cites in her fiction. Of particular importance are Indigenous languages, echolalias, and metamorphoses, in spite of (or perhaps because of) these being the almost constant target of harassment and attack in the Brazil in which Lispector lived and worked.

Returning to Lyotard and Thébaud, it is worth citing all of what they have to say about the "pagan game," given its importance for my theorization of echopoetics:

> For us, a language is first and foremost someone talking. But there are language games in which the important thing is to listen, in which the rule deals with audition. Such a game is the game of the just. And in this game, one speaks only inasmuch as one listens; that is, one speaks as a listener, and not as an author. It is a game without an author. In the same way as the speculative game of the West is a game without a listener, because the only listener tolerated by the speculative philosopher is the disciple. Well, what is a disciple? Someone who can become an author, who will be able to take the master's place … One of the basic rules [of the listening game]

> is indeed that the position of sender must remain empty. No one may put herself or himself there; no one may be the authority. (71–2)

Lyotard's point is crucial to describe what a poetics of echo might be insofar as Echo herself represents the impossibility of occupying the position of speaker/author, since she is capable only of sending back what she receives, repeating portions of utterances for which she is not ultimately responsible. Echo cannot occupy the position of authorship, and in my reading, G.H is similarly afflicted. What I propose in this chapter is to follow and to describe the *figurations* of Lispector's echopoetics in *The Passion*.[3] I begin with a few words regarding the context of its publication before briefly reviewing the novel's plot. I then move on to the novel's diverse configurations of listening and echo.

## The Passion

*The Passion* is Lispector's fifth novel. It was published in 1964, and the seismic shift that it caused in Brazilian literature was accompanied by dramatic changes in the social and political spheres. Although it was written at the end of 1963, the novel was released shortly after the March 31, 1964 military coup that closed off Brazilian democracy for over two decades (although the full repressive force of the new regime would not be felt until 1968). The political wreckage and countless personal traumas of this period, which have still been only very poorly digested in Brazil, continue to return as phantasms that haunt and torment the country. Lispector's novel, which she hoped might be read by "pessoas de alma já formada" ("people whose souls are already formed"), shows a kind of prescience in that it responds to the farces and fictions of history (which Brazilians would come to know first-hand in the years between 1964 and 1985) with the highest level of sophistication and subtlety.

I intentionally use the terms *farce* and *fiction* here to describe history because both are squarely situated within the semantic range of the term *fingere*, a Latin term that brings together the Greek words *poeisis* and *mimesis* and which serves as the creative kernel of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a work that itself serves in turn as the comparative backdrop for my reading of *The Passion*. The first sense of *fingere* is "to give form," or "to create from chaos" as in the biblical narrative of creation. From this broader sense, at once divine and diabolical, *fingere* also refers to the conceit of imitation, of artistic representation, and from there even to a sense of deceit and feigning. The question for G.H. as a narrator is essentially

how to give narrative form to an occurrence that rests beyond the range of semantico-referential language. Speaking of Ovid, Karlheinz Stierle (2006) has argued: "For the formation of the consciousness of fiction in modern literature, no work has been as important as *The Metamorphoses*, which are in themselves like the fiction of fictions" (12). The metamorphosis that takes place in *The Passion* is not, however, like that of Gregor Samsa in Kafka's book; if in Prague there is a transformation of a man into an insect, in Lispector's Rio de Janeiro the transformation is multiple exactly because it is incomplete, a mere potentiality. In this way it is perhaps closer to the notion of "becoming" in the sense that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have given it, or the notion of *intensity* as Lyotard employs the term.[4] I use the term *metamorphosis*, however, as much to call attention to the workings of "forms undergoing change" as to emphasize the link between the *form* of Ovid's work, the sense of *fingere* as a way to agree with the terms, and the metamorphic metaphors present in the novel itself and in its unfolding. With respect to Kafka's *Metamorphosis* there is yet another difference: one of Samsa's traits when he becomes an insect is that he loses the capacity for human speech and assumes the indecipherable voice of an animal.[5] For G.H., as we will see, it is not simply voice (human or otherwise) that is in question: her proximity to the animal, to the insect, and to the world is given through muteness and silence in such a way that she is reduced to the faculty of hearing, which brings us necessarily to the space of receptive listening.

**The Metamorphoses in G.H.**

*The Passion* is a narrative that revolves around a transformation, or rather several transformations, that are at once spatio-temporal and formal in nature. It is a narrative about a metamorphosis that occurs after an unexpected encounter in the back bedroom of the narrator's Rio de Janeiro apartment. As G.H. herself puts it: "É uma metamorfose em que perco tudo o que eu tinha, e o que eu tinha era eu – só tenho o que sou" ("It's a metamorphosis in which I lose everything I had, and what I had was me – I only have what I am") (67; 63). It is this intense process that forms the material for the narrative that G.H. decides to compose the following day: "Ontem, no entanto, perdi durante horas e horas a minha montagem humana" ("Yesterday however I lost my human setup for hours and hours") (12; 4). The same idea is then repeated: "Fico tão assustada quando percebo que durante horas perdi minha formação humana" ("I get so scared when I realize I lost my human form for several hours")

(14; 6). This matter of *montagem* or *formação* is key for Lispector, and it links her ontological inquiry directly to the question of language and speech. For now, in order not to remain undelineated by her experience in the maid's former room, G.H. must give some manner of narrative form to what happened to her. But how to narrate through language the experience of losing one's humanity when language is precisely that which is surrendered when one is separated from one's human setup or formation? Lispector's entire novel revolves around this back-and-forth between saying and unsaying, given that words cannot adequately express a mode of life beyond or anterior to them. As G.H. herself frames her (impossible) narrative project: "Será preciso coragem para fazer o que vou fazer: dizer. E me arriscar à enorme surpresa que sentirei com a pobreza da coisa dita. Mal a direi, e terei que acrescentar: não é isso, não é isso!" ("I shall need courage to do what I'm about to do: speak. And risk the enormous surprise I shall feel at the poverty of the spoken thing. As soon as it's out of my mouth, I'll have to add: that's not it, that's not it!") (20; 11). For G.H., words cannot recount the experience one has with living matter: "Mas que abismo entre a palavra e o que ela tentava, que abismo entre a palavra amor e o amor que não tem sequer sentido humano – porque – porque amor é a matéria viva. Amor é a matéria viva?" ("But what an abyss between the word and what it attempted, what an abyss between the word *love* and the love that doesn't even make human sense – because – because love is living matter. Love is living matter?") (67; 63). She needs to give form to her experience by narrating it, in spite of the fact that, as she admits, "viver não é relatável" ("life cannot be retold") (21; 12). To aid in her difficult task, she decides to narrate her experience to an imaginary reader, one who is with her and holding her hand. Similar to the image of a detached ear in *Near to the Wild Heart*, here Lispector offers her reader an amputated hand: "Por enquanto preciso segurar esta tua mão – mesmo que não consiga inventar teu rosto e teus olhos e tua boca. Mas embora decepada, esta mão não me assusta" ("For now I must hold this hand of yours – though I can't invent your face and your eyes and your mouth. Yet even if amputated, that hand doesn't scare me") (18; 10).

**The Plot According to G.H.**

What happened the day before? G.H (these initials are customarily read as "gênero humano" ("human genus"), which is unmistakably ironic given that a departure from humanity is at the centre of her experience),

lives on the top floor of a thirteen-story building in the Copacabana neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro. Janair, her live-in maid, has left the day before, and G.H. decides to clean the service quarters.[6] The walk from the living room to the service quarters is the inaugural moment of a process of self-immersion: "O prazer sempre interdito de arrumar uma casa me era tão grande que, ainda quando sentada à mesa, eu já começara a ter prazer no mero planejar. Olhara o apartamento: por onde começaria? E também para que depois, na sétima hora como no sétimo dia, ficasse livre para descansar e ter um resto de dia de calma" ("The always forbidden pleasure of arranging a house was so great that, still sitting at the table, I was already savoring the feeling in the mere planning of it. I looked around the apartment: where would I begin? And also so that afterward, in the seventh hour as on the seventh day, I would be free to rest and enjoy the calm remainder of the day") (33–4; 25–6). The short walk within the interior of her apartment becomes a kind of metaphor for the myth of creation, considering that the seventh day or the seventh hour represents a moment of rest. In the short walk that G.H. takes from the living room through the hallway and then into the service quarters, the apartment assumes the condition of a world resignified, recreated, which in turn signifies a process of resignification and recreation of G.H. herself. Not only does she undergo a metamorphosis but the entire space of her apartment undergoes a transformation, becoming one thing, and then another, and then another.

The space of the building becomes a space of gorges and canyons, but it is also a mountain and a minaret: "O quarto parecia estar em nível incomparavelmente acima do próprio apartamento. Como um minarete. Começara então a minha primeira impressão de minarete, solto acima de uma extensão ilimitada" ("The room seemed to be on a level incomparably higher than the apartment itself. Like a minaret. So began my first impression of a minaret, free above a limitless expanse") (38; 30). Entering the room, however, the narrator finds herself faced with figures drawn with black charcoal on the white wall; she recognizes the form of a man, a woman, and a dog: "Na parede caiada, contígua à porta – e por isso eu ainda não o tinha visto – estava quase em tamanho natural o contorno a carvão de um homem nu, de uma mulher nua, e de um cão que era mais nu do que um cão" ("On the whitewashed wall, beside the door – and that's why I hadn't seen it – were nearly life-sized charcoal outlines of a naked man, a naked woman, and a dog that was more naked than a dog") (38–9; 30–1). Upon opening the door to the wardrobe, she sees a plump, old cockroach attempt to make its exit. With a quick movement,

she slams the door on the insect, smashing it but not killing it entirely: "Mas deixara-a viva. Viva e olhando para mim. Desviei rapidamente os olhos, em repulsa violenta" ("But I'd left it alive. Alive and looking at me. I quickly averted my eyes, with violent revulsion") (54; 47). She is about to slam the door again, and it is then that she sees the cockroach's face:

> Mas foi então que vi a cara da barata. [...] Era uma cara sem contorno. As antenas saíam em bigodes dos lados da boca. A boca marrom era bem delineada. Os finos e longos bigodes mexiam-se lentos e secos. Seus olhos pretos facetados olhavam. Era uma barata tão velha como um peixe fossilizado. Era uma barata tão velha como salamandras e quimeras e grifos e leviatãs. Ela era antiga como uma lenda. Olhei a boca: lá estava a boca real. (55)

> (But that was when I saw the roach's face. [...] It was a face without a contour. The antennae stuck out in whiskers on either side of its mouth. Its brown mouth was well-drawn. The long and slender whiskers were moving slow and dry. Its black faceted eyes were looking. It was a cockroach as old as a fossilized fish. It was a cockroach as old as salamanders and chimeras and griffins and leviathans. It was as ancient as a legend. I looked at its mouth: there was the real mouth.) (48)

The roach assumes diverse forms, from that of a fossil to that of a mythical creature. Upon observing the smashed roach there begins for G.H. a process of identification and a simultaneous loss and discovery of herself in the other: "É que eu olhara a barata viva e nela descobria a identidade de minha vida mais profunda" ("Because I'd looked at the living roach and was discovering inside it the identity of my deepest life") (57; 51–2). The entire novel then revolves around that encounter until, almost at the end of the narrative, G.H. finally ingests some of the milky hemolymph seeping out of the dying cockroach. Before this, however, she feels nausea and vomits, her nausea only dissipating when she decides to ingest part of the "impure" or "unclean" animal.[7] G.H. feels then like a little girl, and she commits the act by which she transgresses her limits: "Teria que ser assim, como uma menina que estava sem querer alegre, que eu ia comer a massa da barata" ("It would have to be this way, like a girl who was unintentionally happy, that I would eat the paste of the roach") (165; 173). It is not by chance that the segment of the book (*The Passion* has no chapters, but it is divided into thirty-six segments) in which this intake occurs begins with the phrase "É que não contei tudo" ("Because I haven't told everything") (163; 171). And in fact the narrator never does

"tell everything," as the scene of actual ingestion is not described. We are only informed that soon after eating some of the cockroach's fluid, G.H. feels dizzy:

> Mas eu sabia, antes mesmo de pensar, que, enquanto me ausentara na vertigem, "alguma coisa se tinha feito." [...] E tinha medo de olhar para a barata – que agora devia ter menos massa branca sobre o dorso opaco ... Eu tinha vergonha de me ter tornado vertiginosa e inconsciente para fazer aquilo que nunca mais eu ia saber como tinha feito. (166)

> (But I knew, even before thinking, that, while I took leave of myself in the dizziness, "something had been done." [...] And I was afraid of looking at the roach – which now should have less white paste upon its opaque back ... I was ashamed of having gone dizzy and unconscious in order to do something that I would never again know how I had done.) (174)

The segment ends with the following reflection, which is subsequently developed over the three final segments of the novel: "E, como quem volta de uma viagem, voltei a me sentar quieta na cama. Eu que pensara que a maior prova de transmutação de mim em mim mesma seria botar na boca a massa branca da barata. E que assim me aproximaria do ... divino? do que é real? O divino para mim é o real" ("And, like someone returning from a journey, I returned to sitting quietly on the bed. I who had thought that the best proof of the transmutation of me into myself would be putting the white paste of the roach in my mouth. And that that way I would draw near to whatever is ... divine? to whatever is real? The divine for me is whatever is real") (167; 175).

**Life Itselfs Me (A Vida Se Me É)**

What does the "transmutation of me into myself" mean? It is worth considering that the space between "me" and "myself" is precisely the space of echo, a repetition of the same that is also always a difference. Coming back to Jean-Luc Nancy (2007), this is the space of a "resonant subject, an intensive spacing of a rebound that does not end in any return to self without immediately relaunching, *as an echo*, a call to the same self" (21–2). In *The Passion*, the duplication of the pronouns me/myself is repeated in the final phrase of the novel, when the Portuguese personal pronoun *me* is linked, in a very strange and uncommon way, to the reflexive pronoun *se*: "A vida se me é" (189). This phrase is basically untranslatable. How

might one even begin to translate this complex phrase, which summarizes the transmutative process that is the book itself? Ronald W. Sousa, the novel's first translator into English, has rendered it "Life is itself for me," while Idra Novey offers "Life just is for me." Chris Daniels (Daniels and Johnson 2006), who is also a translator of Fernando Pessoa (the poet who multiplied itself in several *personae*), offers a critique of the first solution and a more radical alternative:

> Am I to suppose that "A vida se me é" – a very strange, "untranslatable" sentence characterized by a confusing, ungrammatical use of reflexive pronouns with a verb of being – should be translated as "Life is itself for me," which is a grossly exegetical domestication? "Life itselfs me" or "life is itselfed for me"; a pronoun becomes a verb; the disrupt exists in English and the reader is left wondering what the hell that means while understanding it perfectly. To paraphrase Benjamin, I could say that in this case the translation fits like a loose covering of transparent gauze, which allows the texture of Portuguese to show through the surface of English. (s/n)

What this phrase seems to point to is that having seen, heard, and tasted the cockroach, G.H. experiences, just for an instant, as she puts it, a "vitalizing death": "A fina morte que me fez manusear o proibido tecido da vida. É proibido dizer o nome da vida. E eu quase o disse. Quase não me pude desembaraçar de seu tecido, o que seria a destruição dentro de mim de minha época" ("The fine death that let me brush up against the forbidden fabric of life. It's forbidden to say the name of life. And I almost said it. I almost couldn't untangle myself from its fabric, which would be the destruction of my age within me") (15; 7–8). This is perhaps best understood as a death-life, a death that nonetheless reinvigorates and establishes a transformative or metamorphic mode of being that never ends but rather manifests as endless reverberation or as a continuous and incessant becoming. The "untranslatable" phrase, which is precisely the translation of the sense of that experience, leads inexorably to the only example of explicit metamorphosis in the book: the scene of the butterfly larva.

**From Pupa to Larva**

One of the metamorphoses that Lispector mentions in *The Passion* involves a butterfly's chrysalis. What she gives us, however, is an inverse metamorphosis: the cocooned pupa does not transform itself into a

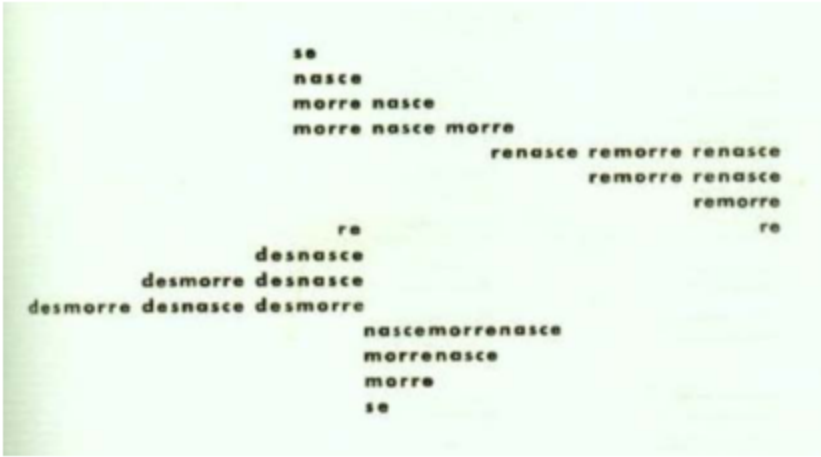


Figure 6.1 "nascemorre" (1958 and 1971) by Haroldo de Campos. With permission from the heir of the author's estate, Ivan P. de Arruda Campos.

butterfly as expected; rather, it returns to its earlier larval stage: "Eu assistia à minha transformação de crisálida em larva úmida, as asas aos poucos encolhiam-se crestadas. E um ventre todo novo e feito para o chão, um ventre novo renascia" ("I was watching my transformation from chrysalis into moist larva, my wings were slowly shrinking back scorched. And a belly entirely new and made for the ground, a new belly was being reborn") (75; 72). The chrysalid stage is one of latency, resting between the initial larval stage and the final adult stage of the butterfly. Within its protective capsule, the insect endures a waiting period, remaining immobile and without food or water. As Lispector sees it, the following adult stage is interrupted by a return to the earlier stage, corresponding to a death or at least to an un-birth through its reoccurrence. One can thus consider what happens to G.H. to be a devolution, a return to the earlier moment of initial transformation, as if it were possible to return to childhood, or even to the womb, to the stage before birth. The pupa that returns to its larval stage is a creature that is at once reborn and *re-dies*, to paraphrase a line from an important concrete poem written in 1958 by Haroldo de Campos, "nascemorre."

Read here in parallel with Lispector's entomological image, and in resonance with it, we can (almost) make out in the visual geometry of

Campos's poem the form of a butterfly's wings. This poem makes use of verbal forms related to birth and death in a combinatory manner that creates neologisms such as *re-die* and *re-be-born*, but also *un-be-born* and *un-die* (Perrone 1996). It is worth noting that Lispector's G.H. uses similar verbal expressions: *re-morrer* ("re-die") (16; 8) and *reviver* ("reliving") (21; 12): "Para sabê-lo de novo, precisaria agora re-morrer. E saber será talvez o assassinato de minha alma humana" ("To learn it again, I would now have to re-die. And knowing might be the murder of my human soul" (16; 8). In fact, Campos's visual poem can be read as a kind of translation and lyrical interpretation of the metamorphosis that G.H. undergoes. Insofar as we are to take seriously the notion that her initials stand for "genus humanum" (*gênero humano*), her mutation from the micro-level space of her apartment expands outward to the world itself, folding all beings into an incessant process of birth-and-death-and-birth and so on. As Charles Perrone puts it: "Through these verbal unfoldings, the birth-death cycle is constituted, not as a progression with starting and ending points, but rather as a process of continuity and circularity with occurrences, emphases (re-), and reversals (des-). The binomial semantic (life-death), then, does not comprise a simple split, dichotomy, or opposition" (1996, 42). Beyond this, it bears mentioning that while the Portuguese pronoun *se* that opens up Campos's poem signifies "if" in English, it is also the third-person reflexive pronoun, the same that appears in Lispector's "A vida se me é."

Like the pupa pushed back to its larval stage, G.H. devolves and, in effect, loses her humanity. What sort of text might G.H. create to bring her imagined companion to some closer understanding of what she experienced the day before? To create or invent is not to lie, she says, in a sentence that has became famous as a defence of the art of fiction: "Criar não é imaginação, é correr o grande risco de se ter a realidade" ("Creating isn't imagination, it's taking the great risk of grasping reality") (21; 12). What then, is the reality that G.H. must try to grasp and present to her reader? My sense is that her text, although inarguably written with letters of the alphabet and in a language, refers to, or even more accurately *reveals*, the echoes of what she has learned to hear. G.H. (and Lispector with her) needs to create (and/or uncreate) a text, a story, an account that will somehow edge closer to the mute but vibrant "natural word" that she heard in her former maid's room: "Quero saber o que mais, ao perder, eu ganhei. Por enquanto não sei: só ao me reviver é que vou viver. Mas como me reviver? Se não tenho uma palavra natural a

dizer. Terei que fazer a palavra como se fosse criar o que me aconteceu?" ("I want to know what else, in losing, I've gained. At the moment, I don't know yet: only by reliving myself shall I live. But how to revive myself? If I don't have a natural word to say. Will I have to make the word as if I were creating what happened to me?") (20; 12).

There is a clear paradox implicit in a writing that, in order to be faithful to what it attempts to relate, must transform itself into a "natural" utterance, into a saying that takes place at the level of nature and the world, anterior to or beyond words and signification, or even events. Among the many possible readings of *The Passion*, what interests me most is how G.H.'s ingestion of the cockroach's hemolymph affects her capacity to produce language and effects a devolution – from a speaking human to something inhuman, like an insect with antennae sensitive to vibration and silence. If G.H. in fact loses her "human setup," it is the sense of hearing that comes to occupy the centre of her field of perception. As the narrator puts it: "Só minha parte auricular sentia" ("Only my hearing part was feeling") (82; 79). As we will see, this hearing part links G.H. to the cockroach, to nature, to God, and to the expansion of herself into the world: "O mundo só não me amedrontaria se eu passasse a ser o mundo. Se eu for o mundo, não terei medo. Se a gente é o mundo, a gente é movida por um delicado radar que guia" ("The world would only cease to terrify me if I became the world. If I were the world, I wouldn't be afraid. If we are the world, we are moved by a delicate radar that guides") (91; 90).

**Authorial Antennae**

What sort of storyteller must G.H. become? Less than an author, she is in fact the translator or echo chamber of a language that she does not understand: "Precisarei com esforço traduzir sinais de telégrafo – traduzir o desconhecido para uma língua que desconheço, e sem sequer entender para que valem os sinais. Falarei nessa linguagem sonâmbula que se eu estivesse acordada não seria linguagem" ("I'll have to make the effort to translate telegraph signals – to translate the unknown into a language I don't speak, and without even understanding what the signals mean. I shall speak that sleepwalker's language that would not be a language if I were awake") (21; 13). To make that material speak, G.H. must act as a transmitter of signals and not as the origin of speech. She becomes its receptor and its echo: "Os sinais de telégrafo. O mundo

eriçado de antenas, e eu captando o sinal. Só poderei fazer a transcrição fonética. Há três mil anos desvairei-me, e o que restaram foram fragmentos fonéticos de mim" ("The telegraph signals. The world bristling with antennas, and I picking up the signal. I can only make the phonetic transcription. Three thousand years ago I went astray, and what was left were phonetic fragments of me") (22; 13–14). Her writing will thus be a scratching out of signs, a series of dots and dashes: "Até criar a verdade do que me aconteceu. Ah, será mais um grafismo que uma escrita, pois tento mais uma reprodução do que uma expressão" ("Until I create the truth of what happened to me. Ah, it will be more scratching than writing, since I'm attempting a reproduction more than an expression") (21; 13). Who more than Ovid's Echo is the disembodied figure whose talk is a reproduction of others' utterances? And like Echo, G.H. is a deeply unmoored figure who captures and echoes the signals she hears. To sum up, her new status comes with two consequences for her telling. First, G.H. is compelled to act more as a receiver than a producer of signals; and second, as she is a receptive agent, her talk – her saying or telling – echoes the signals she receives and becomes the expression and the impression of the reception of resonances. Before moving on, it is useful to recall Ovid's mythical text.

**The Myth of Echo**

The myth of Echo appears in book 3 (lines 339–510) of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[8] Ovid is the earliest narrator of the myth to unite Echo with Narcissus, and his source for this pairing is Lucretius, who in book 4 of his *De rerum natura* (2011) describes mirror images as *simulacra* and acoustic images as *reflections* (he uses the Latin verb *repulso* to speak of echo, uniting sound with touch). Insofar as acoustic and visual reflection are of the same genus, Ovid's juxtaposition of Echo and Narcissus makes philosophical as well as narrative sense. Echo was a wood nymph who spoke too much and too well. Her primary function, according to Ovid, was to keep Juno busy in conversation so that the latter would not discover or interrupt Jupiter's dalliances with other nymphs: "[Echo would] talk and talk, / to give her sister nymphs just time enough / to slip away before they were found out" (Ovid 1993, 91). Once Juno discovered what Echo was up to, she resolved to punish her, taking away her speech: "As soon as Juno had seen through that plot, / she menaced Echo: 'From now on you'll not / have much use of the voice that tricked me so.' / The threat was followed by the fact. / And Echo can mime no more than

the concluding sounds/of any words she's heard" (92). Once a skilled speaker, Echo now finds herself incapable of beginning a dialogue with anyone, and she is able only to repeat the final words pronounced by others: "she cannot begin / to speak: her nature has forbidden this; / and so she waits for what her state permits: / to catch the sounds that she can then give back / with her own voice" (92). Her punishment is double: on one hand, she loses the autonomy (and authority) of speech; on the other, she cannot remain silent, as she is compelled to repeat the words of others. It is in that condition, but still with corporeal form, that she meets and falls in love with Narcissus:

> One day, as he was driving frightened deer
> into his nets, Narcissus met a nymph:
> resounding Echo, one whose speech was strange;
> for when she heard the words of others, she
> could not keep silent, yet she could not be
> the first to speak. Then she still had a body –
> she was not just a voice. Though talkative,
> she used her voice as she still uses it:
> of many words her ears have caught, she just
> repeats the final part of what she has heard. (91)

With immense poetic skill, however, Ovid makes it so that Echo's repetition of Narcissus's final words appears to be a response. This is the detail that was of such interest to Jacques Derrida (2001), who read it as an allegory of any and all appropriation of language, since, following Jacques Lacan, and as Bruce Fink (1997) writes, we do not speak but we are instead spoken by language. However, to repeat, Echo tricks this submission to which language obligates us, since what she repeats, even if the same words, differs in terms of the sense that they have when pronounced. That is, Narcissus's "Let's meet" (*coemus*) does not mean the same thing as Echo's "let's meet" (*coemus*), and the same is true with respect to the rest of their exchange. Narcissus says:

> "Let's meet." And with the happiest reply
> that ever was to leave her lips, she cries:
> "let's meet"; then, seconding her words, she rushed
> out of the woods, that she might fling her arms
> around the neck she longed to clasp. But he
> retreats and, fleeing, shouts: "Do not touch me!

> Don't cling to me! I'd sooner die than say
> I'm yours!"; and Echo answered him: "I'm yours." (92–3)

The end of the myth brings with it other consequences. Inconsolable after being rejected by Narcissus, Echo goes on to lose her human form and become merely stone and sound, and in this condition she spreads out and expands throughout the world:

> Since then she lives in lonely caves …
> Her voice and bones are all that's left; and then
> her voice alone: her bones, they say, were turned
> to stone. So she is hidden in the woods
> and never can be seen on mountain slopes,
> though everywhere she can be heard
> the power of sound still lives in her. (93)

Linked to caverns, rocks, mountains, and forests, Echo spreads as a sound that reverberates. Narcissus, upon falling in love with himself, likewise loses his human form and is transformed into a flower. The end of the impossible love that Echo has for Narcissus and which Narcissus has for himself makes up a short canticle of echoes: "There's nothing left of the entrancing flesh that / once had won the love of Echo. Yet, / faced with the sight of him, she feels deep pity; each / time he cries 'Ah, me!' the nymph repeats 'Ah me!' … / And when he cried 'Farewell,' 'Farewell' was just what / Echo mimed" (97).

**The Structure in Echo**

Idra Novey, the most recent translator of *The Passion*, has made the point that "the lyrical use of repetition is … essential to what makes this novel such a hypnotizing book" (2012b, 192). First, let us say that Echo is not simply a metaphor by which to read G.H.; rather, it is part of the structure of the book, a formative literary device. In fact, *The Passion* is organized according to the structure of an echo – the last words of each segment will be the first of the following one, creating a channel of transmission, an eternal return. To give an example, the first segment of the book ends with "É que um mundo todo vivo tem a força de um inferno" ("Because a world fully alive has the power of a Hell") (22; 14), and the next segment begins with the same phrase. The subsequent segments continue the same pattern, repeating at each beginning the end of the preceding

segment. Sometimes, as we see in the passage from segment 2 to 3, and others, what is repeated is only the last part of the sentence, as if it were consciously meant to reproduce an Ovidian echo: "terei toda a aparência de quem falhou, e só eu saberei se foi a falha necessária" ("I'll have every appearance of a failure, and only I will know if that was the failure I needed") (32; 24). And then the next segment begins: "Só eu saberei se foi a falha necessária" ("Only I will know if that was the failure I needed") (33; 25). Everything echoes from one passage of a segment to another, and the effect of the echo compels the reader to follow each step of the path of G.H's passion. Finally, the last sentence of the book connects to the first sentence, and we are left with a circular structure. The last sentence is: "A vida se me é, e eu não entendo o que digo. E então adoro – – – – – – " ("Life just is for me, and I don't understand what I'm saying. And so I adore it – – – – – – ") (179; 189). After/before this, the first sentence of the novel responds to the open thought with which the book "closes." In concrete terms, it gives continuation to the dashes: "– – – – – – estou procurando, estou procurando. Estou tentando entender" ("– – – – – – I'm searching, I'm searching. I'm trying to understand") (11; 3). As we see, what echoes from the end to the beginning are the dashes. What echoes is a trace, a rhythm, a breath (a sigh), a silence, a signal captured by the antennae of the "insect" and author: a silent text reverberating on the page.

**The Language of Muteness, or Voice and Audition**

In the final three segments, G.H. turns explicitly to her imaginary interlocutor, whose hand she had requested, and she spells out the senses of her "journey." What does she achieve with this act? The terms that she employs are "despersonalização" ("depersonalization"), "deseroização" ("de-heroing"), and "inumano" ("inhuman"). Having passed through hell and its corresponding horrors, G.H. reaches something close to a blessed state. In a certain way, we can say that she recounts the narrative of Genesis: the ingestion of the "forbidden fruit" leads her to a state of plenitude, anterior to humanity, and of the expansion of living matter. It is in fact precisely this muteness and audition that link her to other, nonhuman living creatures: "É exatamente através do malogro da voz que se vai pela primeira vez ouvir a própria mudez e a dos outros e a das coisas, e aceitá-la como a possível linguagem" ("It is exactly through the failure of the voice that one comes to hear for the first time one's own muteness and that of others and of things, and accepts it as the possible

language") (175; 185). This *language of muteness* helps to explain why the book begins and ends not with words but with traces, dashes, mute marks that can also be read as the path of the passion towards a vibrant silence. It is worth mentioning that this mute text visually signals vibration, somewhere between the verbal, the sonorous, and the visual.

**Listening to the Sculpture**

Presented to the reader only by her initials, G.H. is also, we are told, a sculptor. It is worth lingering over this aspect of her being, which links Lispector's verbal aesthetic to that of the plastic arts and sculpture. This is so because it is here as well that the sonorous question appears linked to the listening to silence. As in sculpture, the best analytical expression of this work should be developed in a three-dimensional environment in which we might turn back, interrupt, associate, and recompose our senses and the images of many transformations that occur there. In Lispector's case, however, it is necessary to deal with the technology of print on paper, in order to speak of the immersion in a creative chaos constituted by overlapping spaces and temporalities with no end (but not without finality). In a dramatic departure from her work with solid matter, G.H. attempts to use words to reveal – as one might disclose form from bronze or alabaster – the transformative event that occurred to her the day before. Her work with sculpture is presented as a foreshadowing of the climax that she witnesses in the service quarters. Even if G.H. were just a part-time or amateur sculptor, working with clay and stone would at least partially prepare her to recount the radically transformative experience from the day before. Sculpture, as G.H. puts it, has developed in her "o uso de um certo tipo de atenção" ("the use of a certain kind of attention") (26; 18). It also has habituated her to the "experiência de desgastar pacientemente a matéria até gradativamente encontrar sua escultura imanente" ("experience of patiently wearing down the material until gradually finding its immanent sculpture") (26; 18), as well as to the "objetividade forçada de lidar com aquilo que já não era eu" ("forced objectivity of dealing with something that was no longer myself") (26; 18). For an inquiry into "writing by ear," what is most interesting is the fact that G.H. claims to be a sculptor who self-consciously "listens to/sculpts" objects. The verb in Portuguese is the neologism *auscultar*, which (un)consciously blends *escutar* (to listen) with *esculpir* (to sculpt): "Tudo isso me deu o leve tom de pré-climax de quem sabe que, auscultando os objetos, algo desses objetos virá que me será

dado e por sua vez dado de volta aos objetos" (26–7). Novey translates the verb into English as "to get the bottom": "All this gave me the light tone of pre-climax of someone who knows that, if I get to the bottom of objects, something of those objects will be given to me and in turn given back to the objects" (18). *Auscultar* also possesses a very specific technical meaning, in that it refers to the audition of the internal sounds of the body, above all the sounds of the heart, the lungs (respiration), and the gastro-intestinal system, especially with the aid of an instrument such as the stethoscope. Transferred to the literary field, *auscultar* would signify that special attention, that hearing of the material to be sculpted as if it were a living organism that breathed and whose heart beat in rhythm. This is the experience of *auscultar* that will reach its climax in G.H.'s encounter with the cockroach. It is this same *auscultar* that is present in Lispector's mode of writing, and in the reading that she solicits – a reading capable of hearing the text's internal sounds, its respiration and the constant appeal to her readers that they listen for the silence and its pulsations.

The confluence of artistic disciplines and media brings G.H. close to another of Lispector's fictional creations, one of her alter egos: the narrator-painter of *Água Viva*, whose name we are never given. *Água Viva* was published in 1973, a full nine years after *The Passion*, and there is an intimate link between the two novels, which can be presented in the following way. The process experienced by G.H. initiates a narrative that seeks to give form to the chaos of the previous day. As the sculptor creates an object from clay (*fingere*), the narrator must give form to what has occurred to her, as she repeats several times throughout the opening segment of the novel. Even if the result is not a linear narrative (in large measure because it is the story of a metamorphosis that advances and returns in time and alludes to different spaces), it nonetheless possesses a plot. In *Água Viva*, the painter who transforms herself into a narrator acts like someone who places isolated brushstrokes on the canvas so as to create something wholly abstract. There is no longer any plot, but only the text's free flight, which resembles a diary, a jazz improvisation, a collection of fragments, or a book of essays in such a way that *Água Viva* escapes any sort of generic definition.

Lispector encodes within her work a confluence of artistic domains: text + painting + sculpture + music. It is worth investigating this further: what is it that unites these arts in Lispector's writing? What trace might unite written words, colour and form in painting, physical form in sculpting, and the sonorous arts? My sense is that the most productive route

is to begin with the element that is perhaps most commonly associated with Lispector and repeatedly analysed in criticism devoted to her work: silence. What does *silence* in fact mean for Lispector? What is its relation to the ear and the notion of *auscultar* that so defines G.H. before her transformation?

**The Vibrant Room: An Anechoic Chamber**

If we take a closer look at the room where G.H. meets the cockroach, we will see that the "clean and vibrant" room (30) is also a metamorphic place where resonance and reverberations are accentuated. When she enters the room, G.H. finds herself in a space that is disturbingly clean: "Mas ao abrir a porta meus olhos se franziram em reverberação e desagrado físico. É que em vez da penumbra confusa que esperara, eu esbarrava na visão de um quarto que era um quadrilátero de branca luz" ("But when I opened the door my eyes winced in reverberations and physical displeasure. Because instead of the confused murk I was expecting, I bumped into the vision of a room that was a quadrilateral of white light" (37; 29). This is a space of total luminosity, and as a blazing room, everything in there vibrates: "A vibração do calor era como a vibração de um oratório cantado. Só minha parte auricular sentia. Cântico de boca fechada, som vibrando surdo como o que está preso e contido, amém, amém" ("The vibration of the heat was like the vibration of a sung oratorio. Only my hearing part was feeling. Closed-mouth canticle, sound vibrating deaf like something imprisoned and contained, amen, amen") (82; 79). It is within this vibrant room that G.H. manages to travel through time and space: the room is a minaret, a laboratory where a scientific experiment will take place, a sarcophagus, the inside of a clock. Like Lewis Carroll's Alice, G.H. also falls down a hole, but her fall is oddly horizontal.

In 1951, John Cage spent some time in an anechoic chamber at Harvard University. What happened there is recounted by Seth Kim-Cohen: "In the dead acoustic environment of the chamber, Cage experienced an epiphany. After a while, against the silence of the room, he became aware of two sounds, one high-pitched and the other low. Later, the technician on duty informed Cage that the sounds he heard were, respectively, his nervous and circulatory systems at work. Cage told the story repeatedly for the rest of his life. It is the creation myth of his aesthetics: an aesthetics summed up by his proclamation 'let sounds be themselves'" (2009, 164).

Cage's experiment resembles that of *auscultar* as Lispector frames it. In a space where silence dominates, he hears the noise of his nervous system and of the circulation of his blood. As Kim-Cohen describes it: "Cage's notion of letting sounds be themselves, of not distinguishing between good sounds and bad sounds, seems to make an egalitarian, democratic proposal" (2009, 164). Cixous underscores this aspect of silence in Lispector, which matters greatly, given that it is a silence at once resonant and echoing. Cixous states: "There is no silence. The music of things always resounds" (1991a, 71). Paradoxically, in order for this silence to exist, it is necessary to be in an anechoic chamber, which impedes the return of sound in such a way as to make audible what was before inaudible. As Kim-Cohen describes it: "An anechoic chamber is a room designed to absorb any and all sound waves, to diffuse any echoes or reverberation, making it as close to silent (or 'dead,' in the parlance of audio engineers) as possible" (2009, 160). *The Passion*, as well as the room which G.H. enters, is a kind of anechoic chamber that makes silence audible.[9] This room serves as a space of inaudible sounds, of muteness, but where vibration is felt and resonates: "Vagueei o olhar pelo quarto nu. Nenhum ruído, nenhum sinal: mas quantas? Nenhum ruído e no entanto eu bem sentia uma ressonância enfática, que era a do silêncio roçando o silêncio" ("I let my gaze wander over the naked room. No sound, no sign: but how many? No sound and yet I distinctly felt an emphatic resonance, which was that of silence chafing against silence") (48–9; 41). And, "O som inaudível do quarto era como o de uma agulha rodando no disco quando a faixa de música já acabou. Um chiado neutro de coisa, era o que fazia a matéria de seu silêncio" ("The room's inaudible sound was like a needle sweeping across a record after the music has stopped. A neutral hissing of things was what made up the substance of its silence") (43; 34–5). It is at this point that the cockroach begins to emerge. And we have again the oxymoronic union of sound and silence: "toda uma vida de atenção acuada reunia-se agora em mim e batia como um sino mudo cujas vibrações eu não precisava ouvir, eu as reconhecia. Como se pela primeira vez enfim eu estivesse ao nível da Natureza" ("a whole lifetime of tamed awareness was now collecting inside me and banging like a mute bell whose vibrations I didn't need to hear, I was recognizing them. As if for the first time I was finally on the level of Nature") (53; 46). G.H. is now "on the level of Nature," where no words can exist: "A natureza, o que eu gostava na natureza, era o seu inexpressivo vibrante" ("Nature, what I liked about nature, was

its vibrating inexpressiveness") (142; 148). When G.H sees the cockroach, her first reaction is a mute scream (one imagines the famous painting by Edvard Munch, but transported to an interior space): "De encontro ao rosto que eu pusera dentro da abertura, bem próximo de meus olhos, na meia escuridão, movera-se a barata grossa. Meu grito foi tão abafado que só pelo silêncio contrastante percebi que não havia gritado, O grito ficara me batendo dentro do peito" ("Meeting the face I had put inside the opening, right near my eyes, in the half-darkness, the fat cockroach had moved. My cry was so muffled that only the contrasting silence let me know I hadn't screamed. The scream had stayed beating in my chest") (47; 39).

**Repetition and Difference**

G.H. defines herself as "minha própria fonte e repetição" ("my own source and repetition") (22; 13). In myth, repetition is present as much in the reduplication of Narcissus's image in the water as in the voice of the nymph Echo; that is, the existence of the two characters is constrained in such a way that to exist each must engage in repetition. However, with each repetition differences are introduced. When Echo repeats the final words of Narcissus, the sense of what she says differs from (or negates) the sense of the words when they are pronounced for the first time. Echo must tolerate the fact that the inaugural voice is not hers, as she requires the voice of the other in order to speak. In this context, the only place that simulates identity is in the repetition or reverberation of the other's voice. The compulsion to repeat (*anadiplose*) installs itself within a fissure in which to hear, to hear oneself, and to become heard do not coincide. From this fissure, in which the voice is simultaneously hers and not hers, there emerges a corporeality without subjectivity, belonging to nature. As G.H. puts it: "Parece que vou ter que desistir de tudo o que deixo atrás dos portões. E sei, eu sabia, que se atravessasse os portões que estão sempre abertos, entraria no seio da natureza" ("It seems I shall have to give up everything I leave behind the gates. And I know, I knew, that if I went through the gates that are always open, I would enter the heart of nature") (81; 78). Echo disembodies herself in a scene of originary dispossession, or of originary alienation, defined by Derrida as an "alienation without alienation" (2001, 85).

The metamorphosis occurs by means of the transformation of the echo of the voice into the voice's echo. While the utterance has its origin in an enunciating subject (still present in the loquacious nymph),

echo is a pure chamber of resonance; she requires another to exist, in her echo-graphic existence. If Echo has been read above all as a voice, which in fact she is, my interest lies elsewhere: in an attempt to foreground the fact that in the position of echo it is listening (the ear) that speaks, or it is a speech that only becomes possible with and through listening. In this sense, I argue that both the writing and the reading of Lispector inhabit this space-time of echo. As one can repeatedly see in *The Passion*, what shapes all experience in the service quarters is the space-time of an echo chamber. The more the narrator/protagonist retreats from her humanity, the more the echo transforms itself into pure reverberation within the interior of a generalized muteness.

Here we are faced with a definitive radicalization of the emptying-out of an enunciating subject (the owner of the voice) and of the voice of the echo as a pure sonorous expression. Self-consciousness is not possible within this mute latency of the absent "I." It is in this sense that the in-volution manifested through retroactive metamorphosis places the narrator on a devolutionary path, which could only occur in a world that is mute and vibrant, in a world in which the inverse of life is not death but rather the last and first stage of life, situated in the encounter with the almost absence of life, or in the experience, in a moment, of a "vivificadora morte" ("vivifying death"). Almost dead and almost alive are equivalent, just as reverberation expresses almost sound through silence:

> Ah, falar comigo e contigo está sendo mudo. Falar com o Deus é o que de mais mudo existe. Falar com as coisas, é mudo. Eu sei que isso te soa triste, e a mim também, pois ainda estou viciada pelo condimento da palavra. E é por isso que a mudez está me doendo como uma destituição. (161)
>
> (Ah, speaking to me and to you is being mute. Speaking to the God is the mutest that exists. Speaking to things is mute. I know this sounds sad to you, and to me too, since I am still addicted to the condiment of the word. And that is why muteness hurts me like a dismissal.) (169)

On the other hand, in that state of total contact, G.H. can hear the words of God, words that are but an echo:

> Mas agora eu entendia que não a vendera [a minha alma] ao demônio, mas muito mais perigosamente: a Deus. Que me deixara ver. Pois Ele sabia que

> eu não saberia ver o que visse: a explicação de um enigma é a repetição do enigma. O que És? e a resposta é: És. O que existes? e a resposta é: o que existes. (134)

> (But now I was understanding that I had not sold it [my soul] to the devil, but much more dangerously: to God. Who had let me see. Since He knew that I would not know how to see whatever I saw: the explanation of an enigma is the repetition of the enigma. What art Thou? and the answer is: Thou art. What do Thou existest? and the answer is: what thou existest.) (139)

**Metaformoses**

Coming back to the notion of an echopoetics that we can extract from Lispector's book, I would like to compare her text to a poem by Paulo Leminski. I conclude by recalling Leminski's poetic-literary insight into how the nymph Echo is transformed into voice and stone. Leminski (1994) suggests that an echo is essentially "a transformacão de uma voz em pedra, no eternamente idêntico a si mesmo, como fazem as letras do alfabeto" ("the transformation of a voice into stone, into that which is forever identical to itself, just as the alphabet letters") (31). When Echo turns into stone, she effectively turns into letters, he says – into a piece of writing, into a text marked on a fixed base, into an inscription. The point of departure for what I propose as echopoetics is precisely the relation between echo (voice, reverberation, resonance, vibration) and texts, especially fictional prose. Leminski's text, a poetic-fictional essay on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, was written between 1986 and 1987, and published posthumously in 1994. In his book, Leminski recounts and condenses in very few pages the hundreds of transformations that occur in fifteen books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The text is written from the point of view of Narcissus. As he stares at himself in the water, the myths begin to take form and be seen, reviewed, and recounted; and they remain echoing in the waters in which Narcissus gazes at himself. Contrary to the idea that a stone or a letter would be "forever identical to itself," the poem shows that all things are constantly being transformed into other things. The poem itself resembles a philosopher's stone, or even a funeral stone, as it shapes a poetics that both originates from and is destined for metamorphosis.

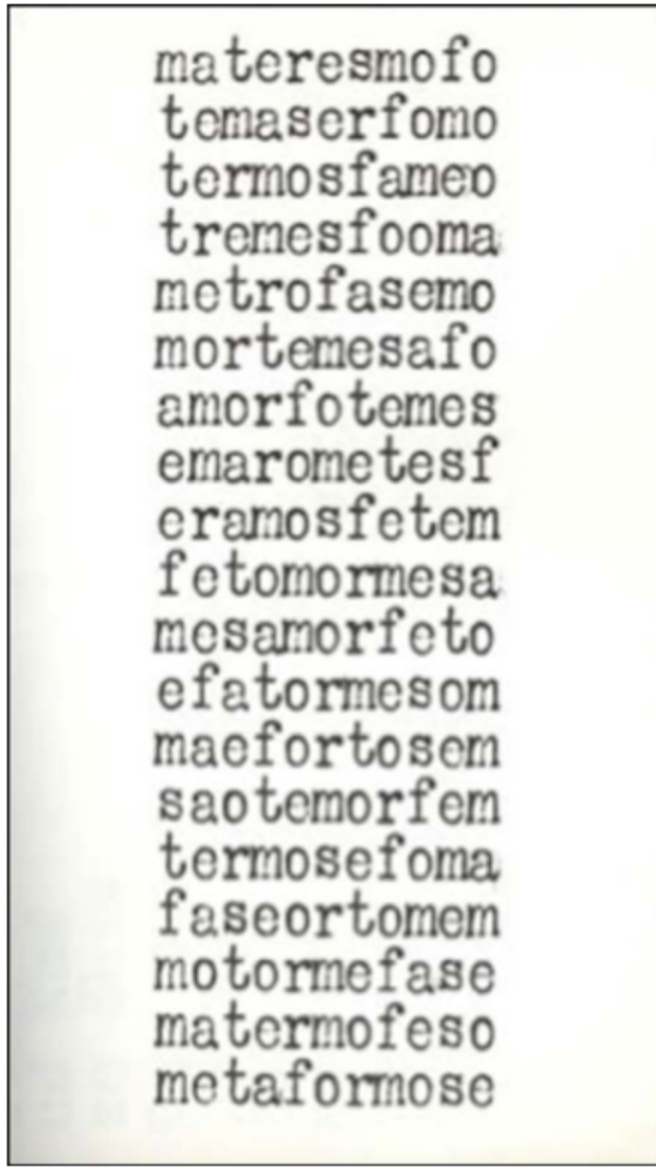


Figure 6.2 "Metaformose" (1994) by Paulo Leminski. With permission of the heir of the author's estate, Alice Ruiz.

It is good to keep in mind that Leminski's poem was published in the journal *Invenção*, a venue for concrete poets, on December 4, 1964, very shortly after *The Passion* itself was published.

## The Echo of the Subject

Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's "The Echo of the Subject" (1998) is a long essay that focuses primarily on the importance of listening in psychoanalysis. As a corollary of this broader concern, Lacoue-Labarthe also examines the relationship between autobiography and "musical obsession" by which an analysand might give some form of expression to the unconscious through listening.[10] It is worth noting that Lacoue-Labarthe's essay starts with an epigraph by Paul Valéry that reads: "It must be confessed that the self is / nothing but an echo" (139). It ends with a poem by Wallace Stevens, "The Woman That Had More Babies Than That," a text in which echo is the central theme:

> The self is a cloister full of remembered sounds
> And of sounds so far forgotten, like her voice,
> That they return unrecognized. The self
> Detects the sound of a voice that doubles its own,
> In the images of desire. (Stevens 1988, 192)

A voice that doubles its own is an echo. Adriana Cavarero (2005) analyses the mythical figure of Echo, reminding us of the latter's absence in theory, and of her subordination to Narcissus; and she also relates the effect of echo to the speech of mothers (or whoever occupies this maternal position) to their babies, where what matters is the reverberation of the voice and not the meaning of what is said, like the "humming" and the "lullaby" of which Stevens speaks. What is at stake in Stevens's passage, in fact, is what Lacoue-Labarthe asks in his reading of Theodor Reik's work focused on the "third ear" and the analytical ear in psychoanalysis: "To refer to our mythology – I mean psychoanalysis – I would like to know (if this can be *known*) what happens when one moves back from Narcissus to Echo. I would ask, then, this simple question: What is a reverberation or a resonance? What is a 'catacoustic phenomenon?'" (Lacoue-Labarthe 1998, 146). *Catacoustics*, according to Lacoue-Labarthe, "bears an affinity to the perception of a kind of inner echo and is comparable … to all the phenomena of reminiscence, musical or not" (150–1). A "catacoustic interpretation" is thus "a listening by echo"

(164). In my reading, this is what we have in *The Passion*: "a listening by echo."

Together with the important contributions of Cavarero and Lacoue-Labarthe, very briefly mentioned above, it is in Peter Sloterdijk (2011) that I find perhaps the most promising direction in which to develop a poetics of echo and the question of writing by ear that forms the central focus of the present book. This is the case because while others begin their inquiry with an a priori subject formed through its relation with the object, Sloterdijk develops his theory of bubbles from the relation of the fetus with the amniotic environment. Here, according to him, we find a locus with which psychoanalysis has failed to form any real engagement: the experience of the unborn, anterior to concepts such as narcissism that presuppose a subject-object relation. As Sloterdijk frames the question: "The confused narcissism concepts of psychoanalysis are above all an expression of its fundamentally skewed conceptual disposition, and of the way it was misled by the object and imago concepts. The true issues of the primary fetal and peri-natal world – blood, amniotic fluid, voice, sonic bubble and breath – are media of a pre-visual universe in which mirror concepts and their libidinous connotations are entirely out of place. The child 'auto' eroticisms are *eo ipso* based on games of resonance, not mirrorings of the self" (320).

Here the acoustic experience precedes the separation of the I and the other. Following this idea, one might say that in order to theorize listening, it is necessary to position oneself before the subject-object division insofar as speech and sounds are not things but rather *vibration*: "From the physiology of listening as a state of being set in sympathetic vibration, it is evident that acoustic experiences are media processes which cannot possibly be represented in languages of object relationships" (296). Sloterdijk uses the term "nobject" to refer to this stage of fluctuation. As he puts it: "the floating being in the amniotic waters inhabits an acoustic event space in which its sense of hearing is subjected to constant stimulation" (318). Only mystical experience is capable of reviving the position of the unborn, a mode of being for which there is effectively no possibility of verbal description, given its foundation solely in audition. The possibility of thinking through this unthinkable state without passing through mystical experience is what Sloterdijk proposes as a "negative gynecology." This is, as he puts it, a question of simulating the presence of a fetus capable of describing its experience, an experience that R.D. Laing (1976) describes as sympathetic vibrations. Sloterdijk presents the broader proposal for the first volume of his spherical

trilogy in the following way: "the focus of our investigation does not lie in the aim to produce mystical experience here and now, but rather in the project of advancing a theory of dyadic intimacy to the point where speaking theory has normally turned into silent theory … This arrangement involves conceding to the mystical tradition that the one inside will, indeed, inevitably repeat the insurmountable cave-truth: that here, the One is everything" (285–6). The possibility of thinking through this unthinkable state is what Lispector offers us in *The Passion*.

**Barata/Aborto**

G.H. faces two unexpected consequences. First, she loses her human makeup, and then she becomes (or reverts to) a fetus precisely when she begins to feel only through her auditive sense. As David Toop (2010) reminds us: "This is the first of our senses to function: hearing dominates amniotic life and yet after birth its importance is overtaken by seeing" (ix). The scene can also be read in reverse, from the perspective of the cockroach: the insect, unclean and abject, goes from an infernal bug to a kind of Eucharistic wafer, a divine being that becomes, once ingested, part of the being of G.H., fertilizing her. Is this return to the fetal stage, or the return of the fetus, one of the unconscious scenes that orient G.H.'s experience of inverse metamorphosis? In a book focused on the question of the auditory in writing, I cannot fail to ask the following question: what is the relation between the cockroach (*barata*) and the abortion (*aborto*) that G.H. chooses to have and which appears in the segment that begins with the phrase: "Neutro artesanato de vida" ("Neutral crafting of life") (90; 89)? One sees immediately that in Portuguese there is great proximity between the words for cockroach and abortion: switching around the letters of the second word, we get *baroto*, from which *barata* and *baroto/aborto* resonate with one another. It seems that this return of the fetus or return to the condition of fetus would be an inverse repetition of the abortion scene: instead of an expulsion of the other, G.H. takes it in and is fundamentally altered by the return. From here also is seen the association of the cockroach with the figure of the mother, in the prayer that G.H offers it: "De dentro do invólucro está saindo um coração grosso e branco e vivo com pus, mãe, bendita sois entre as baratas, agora e na hora desta tua minha morte, barata e jóia" ("From inside the hard casing is emerging a heart thick and white and alive with pus, mother, blessed art thou among the roaches, now and in the hour of this thy my death, and jewel") (94; 93).

**Janair/Janaina**

In a seminal study, Berta Waldman (1999) shows that the figuration of maternity in *The Passion* is linked to the maid, to the cockroach, and to the Virgin Mary:

> I call attention to the overlapping of Janair/*barata*/*Virgem Maria* within the same semantic axis that configures maternity. The chain Janair/Janaína/Iemenjá, through the last term, is represented as a figure of the matron with voluminous breasts, symbol of fertile motherhood; the cockroach is presented as a kind of ancestral mother, whose blood is as white as milk; and the Virgin Mary – archetype of maternity – comes to the text in the form of a truncated prayer (*Ave Maria*) that overlaps with the insect, and with the narrator herself, as an aborted mother. (161)

In relation to the maid's name, Waldman also calls attention to Echo, given that the name Janair "resonates with Janaina, another denomination of Iemanjá, an *orixá* that comes from the Yoruba people, and in Brazil is syncretized with Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. As the Mother of the Waters, she is frequently represented in the Latinized form of a mermaid, with long, loose hair blowing in the wind" (159). Waldman also recalls the echo of Afro-Brazilian religions, such as *candomblé*, in the decisive event in the narrative of *The Passion*: "One is struck by the use that Clarice Lispector makes of different religions in the organization of her text, bringing together Christianity, the official and hegemonic religion of the state, Judaism, the tradition in which she was raised, and Afro-Brazilian religions, whose popular and magical qualities disseminate forms that become enlaced with others in a whole where echoes and the memory of their difference resound" (150–1). We can also understand in this way why it is that horses reappear in the text, echoing. At a certain point in the novel, G.H. states:

> Nunca mais repousarei: roubei o cavalo de caçada do rei do sabath. Se adormeço um instante, o eco de um relincho me desperta. E é inútil não ir. […] Sei que o primeiro tambor na montanha fará a noite, sei que o terceiro já me terá envolvido na sua trovoada.
>
> E ao quinto tambor já estarei inconsciente na minha cobiça. Até que de madrugada, aos últimos tambores levíssimos, me encontrarei sem saber como junto a um regato, sem jamais saber o que fiz, ao lado da enorme e cansada cabeça do cavalo. (127–8)

> (I shall never rest again: I stole the hunting horse from the Sabbath king. If I fall asleep for an instant, the echo of a whinny wakes me. And it is useless not to go. […] I know that the first drum on the mountain will make the night, I know that the third will already wrap me in its thunder.
>
> And by the fifth drum I shall already be unconscious inside my greed. Until at dawn, by the last lightest drums, I shall end up without knowing how beside a creek, without ever knowing what I did, beside the enormous and tired head of the horse.) (132–3)

Waldman relates the presence of the horse in this passage to African cult rituals in Brazil, as a possible allusion to which G.H.'s narrative would refer and echo: "On the other hand, horses also have an important role in Brazilian rituals. They represent those that have the privilege to be 'mounted' (therefore, horses) by the *orixá*, becoming the vehicle that permits the divinity to return to the earth to bestow blessings, resolve problems, as well as heal and offer consolement to the sick and unfortunate" (163). We thus see the transformation of the chrysalis back into a larva, along with the metamorphosis of the fetus into a womb, of the mother into a horse, of the cockroach into a mother, of Janair into Janaína, of Janair into a cockroach, of the cockroach into G.H., of G.H. into a horse. We see, therefore, a succession of metamorphoses, which makes of Lispector not an essentialist writer but rather a metamorphic one, since things are not said through their fixity but rather through their mutability. Lispector's feminism can also be read in this vein, in the "key" of metamorphosis: one thing can become another. "A vida se me é" in this sense: that of creating/generating other lives that re-create themselves (*se re-criam*) or begin anew (*incriam*). Pregnancy in these cases would be not only an attribute of the female body but also the very possibility of engendering perpetual change, as if one became pregnant each time one is transformed into something else, a mode of beginning anew and re-creation, and thus also an echo.

**The Anti-Narcissus**

G.H. follows the path of an anti-representation – a representation that is profoundly retroactive, from writing to graphics, from speech to hearing, from echo to pulsation. For this reason, it is also possible to read the transformations in *The Passion* through the work of Viveiros de Castro (2009), in particular his idea of the anti-Narcissus, in line with an anti-writing as well as an *ante-writing* defined by hearing. Here the narrator

is oriented by the ear and not by authorial writing. Not a hearing that reflexively picks up sonorities and transmits them as nerve impulses to the brain so that the latter might decode the messages received from the tympanum, on the contrary it is a hearing that transforms listening into a labyrinth and a silence – into the only form of comprehension possible. From here, the narrator of *The Passion* metamorphoses into the inverse of verbal language; more than just reflecting on it, she actually experiences the contradictory condition of having to speak by means of an echolalia, a form of writing that consistently transforms itself into an echo that inevitably empties out the human in order to construct a world in which the human is but one of many possible points of reference. It is not a matter of reconfiguring the human, but rather the world, adding the human to the nonhuman; and for this to be possible, the only path available is the metamorphosis of writing into listening and of Narcissus into an anti-Narcissus who finds his footing by means of the deconstruction of Echo. From this it follows that the other should not be seen as "like us" but rather as an emptying out of the "like us" that takes form through listening and through silence. The question can no longer be "what is a human?" The question rather has to do with that which resides in the nonhuman defined as the human by means of what s/he is not. This situation can be at least partially expressed through the maxim "I am where I do not think" (the cockroach), and from this it also follows that "I can only think where I am not." At stake is the derailing of authorial subjectivity, of a writing that, through the ear, dethrones the voice, loses it within the auricular labyrinth.

Echopoetics corresponds to what Rosalind Krauss (1979) has described as an "expanded field."[11] On the most basic level, we have the text echoing its authors in the readers, and from the readers it expands throughout the world. In the opposite way, the external world echoes in the text, or to use one of Lispector's preferred images, the beating of the heart and the pulsing of the veins echo on the surface of the page. In a poetics of echo everything is linked to everything, and it is characterized by a fundamental interactivity. On the other hand, without a body, echo expands and spreads through the world: she lives in forests, rocks, trees, and caves as reverberation, resonance, voice, and vibration.

# Coda: Hearing Horses

It was a Thursday evening, and the young German scholar had already started his presentation.[1] I arrived a little late, but I managed to find a seat and began listening. He was talking about Nietzsche and – horses. Horses? Why not? Nietzsche and horses; horses and Nietzsche, it might just make sense, I first thought. But when I heard from this scholar that the horse in question had said or written something, I immediately discarded this option. I pricked up my ears, and I finally got it: "Horse" was, in fact, the great first-century BCE Roman orator and poet Horace, who had written about poetry as the most fragile but also as the most durable of objects, as a permanent monument of beauty made by words, but stronger than bronze: "Exegi monumentum aere perennius" ("I have created a monument more lasting than bronze") (1997, 254–5). It is by no means an exaggeration to claim (as I do) that the present book was conceived precisely at this moment. I had recently arrived from Brazil, and this equivocal situation confirmed for me once again that the main sense and organ of survival and composition outside my language-home was, first and foremost, my ears.

My Horace anecdote allows me to show, in conclusion, how "writing by ear" works through a series of chance encounters guided by the flow of sonorities, when unconscious connections emerge on the page. My sonic mistake between *horse* and *Horace* (which later came to remind me of a Marx Brothers routine revolving around a confusion between dollars/taxes and Dallas, Texas – and here Chico Marx plays the part of the Latin immigrant with the foreign ear) can lead us towards an articulation of endless experiments in a writing that is ear-oriented. For it just so happens, beyond matters related to Nietzsche's biography, that *horse* and *Horace* are not that distant.

**Ars Poetica**

Quintus Horatius Flaccus, better known as Horace, is perhaps best known as the author of a first-century AD letter to the Pisos family (*Epistola ad Pisones*) that has become, along with Aristotle's *Poetica*, one of the most influential Western treatises of poetry and literature. At the letter's beginning, Horace speaks of horses, or at least of horse parts:

> If a painter were willing to join a horse's neck to a human head and spread on multicolored feathers, with different parts of the body brought in from anywhere and everywhere, so that what starts out above as a beautiful woman ends up horribly as a black fish, could you my friends, if you had been admitted to the spectacle, hold back your laughter? Believe me, dear Pisos, that very similar to such a painting would be a literary work in which meaningless images are fashioned, like the dreams of someone who is mentally ill, so that neither the foot nor the head can be attributed to a single form. "Painters and poets," someone objects, "have always had an equal right to dare to do whatever they wanted." We know it and we both seek this indulgence and grant it in turn. But not to the degree that the savage mate with the gentle, nor that snakes be paired with birds, nor lambs with tigers. (1994, 7)

In keeping with his principle of *ut pictura poesis* ("as painting, so poetry"), Horace establishes a kind of mimetic and aesthetic maxim regarding what one should *not* do in a poem, namely, combine elements of disparate discursive types within a single text. For Horace, such a mixture of styles threatens decorum and generates only incoherence. Should the poet fashion such a composition, s/he will, as Horace has it, produce only a ridiculous monster, a creation as laughable and ugly as the pictorial figure with the head of a woman, the neck of a horse, the breast of a bird, and the tail of a fish. As R.M. Rosado Fernandes argues in his commentary on the Portuguese edition of Horace's work: "With this beginning, in which is presented an impressive hybridity, Horace attempts to defend, as the Aristotelians had done, a preference for the verisimilar. This might seem contradictory given the tendency in classical mythology to create fabulous and hybrid creatures such as centaurs, mermaids, chimeras, etc. For Horace, these creatures can exist in myth; however, the poetic work should not resemble them in terms of its structure. On the contrary, the poetic work must be *simple* and *unitary*, forming a *whole*" (Horace 1984, 50–1).

In this way, according to Horace, there is freedom in invention, but it should not reach a point that it unites parts that are so disparate that the result is a text in which "neither the foot nor the head can be attributed to a single form." The well-wrought book must be coherent, articulate, and follow the conventions of verisimilitude. As we already know, such precepts, which we customarily refer to as "classics," are the foundation of the poetics that will orient high-brow literary production up to at least the end of the eighteenth century, and which only begins to diminish with European Romanticism.

It happens that a writing based on audition draws its energy and life from a process that is exactly the opposite of that proposed by Horace. We might even say that a writing-by-ear is closer to a kind of schizography, that is, the hearing of voices onto paper, and it follows more closely unconscious proximities and sonorous games than those that are controlled solely by reason. Writing by ear is, in this sense, anti-Horatian. This is so because writing by ear follows auditory orientations, detours, and errors, as well as faulty acts, but also because its model is much more Ovidian: emerging from poetic processes and the recounting of transformations, and resulting in plurivocal texts, forms in flux, and a whole range of monsters – some mythological, such as centaurs and sirens, and some woven together in novel settings of juxtaposition and co-presence such as my (hoarse) Horace-horse.

**The Woman and the Horse**

> Lembro-me de mim de pé com a mesma altivez do cavalo e a passar a mão pelo seu pelo nu. Pela sua crina agreste. Eu me sentia assim: a mulher e o cavalo.
>
> (I remember standing with the same haughtiness as the horse and running my hand through its naked fur. Through its wild mane. I felt like this: the woman and the horse.)
>
> Lispector, *Água Viva*

The figure depicted (and negated) by Horace could be an allegory of the images in Lispector's writings: half woman, half horse, like a Centaur, but also like a bird, and a siren. We may also take as a kind of concluding provocation the following, from Lispector's third novel, *A cidade sitiada* (*The Besieged City*): "Nela e num cavalo a impressão era a expressão"

("In her, as in a horse, impression was expression") (19). This sentence appears early on as part of a lengthy description of Lucrécia, a character who, as it happens, morphs into a horse. In a personal letter, published as a *crônica*, Lispector would later attempt to explain this sentence, her claim being that it refers to a way of life that aspires to

> essa espécie de integridade espiritual de um cavalo, que não "reparte" o que vê, que não tem uma "visão vocabular" ou mental das coisas, que não sente a necessidade de completar a impressão com a expressão – cavalo em que há o milagre de a impressão ser total – tal [sic] real – que nele a impressão já é a expressão. (1999b, 273)

> (the kind of spiritual integrity of a horse, not "sharing" what he sees, not having a mental or "vocabular" vision of things, not feeling the need to complete an impression with an expression – a horse, in which there is the miracle of the impression being total – so real – that in him an impression is already an expression.) (1992, 354)

The immediate connection between impression and expression can be read as part of a poetics that wishes to overcome the gap between language and perception, which is also part of a Dionysian materialism, as we will see shortly. The way of being of a horse is thus for Lispector the ideal state to be attained.[2]

**Brazilian Portuguese: A Language-Horse**

Lispector's use of equine imagery should not surprise us. She stated at one point, after all, that she would like to have been born a horse, and she even uses the image of the horse (as an active receptor of signs and signals) to describe her relationship with the Portuguese language – or, more precisely, the Brazilian language, which she consistently considered to be a language in the process of formation, a language to be worked on by thought in order to generate subtleties; a language-animal to be tamed:

> Esta é uma confissão de amor: amo a língua portuguesa. Ela não é fácil. Não é maleável. E, como não foi profundamente trabalhada pelo pensamento, a sua tendência é a de não ter sutilezas e de reagir às vezes com um verdadeiro pontapé contra os que temerariamente ousam transformá-la numa linguagem de sentimento e de alerteza. E de amor. A língua portuguesa é

> um verdadeiro desafio para quem escreve. Sobretudo para quem escreve tirando das coisas e das pessoas a primeira capa de superficialismo. Às vezes ela reage diante de um pensamento mais complicado. Às vezes se assusta com o imprevisível de uma frase. Eu gosto de manejá-la – como gostava de estar montada num cavalo e guiá-lo pelas rédeas, às vezes lentamente, às vezes a galope. (1999b, 100–1).

> (This is a confession of love: I love the Portuguese language. It is not easy. It is not malleable. And, as it has not been deeply worked over by thought, its tendency is not to have subtlety and to react at times with a veritable kick against those who foolishly dare to transform it into a language of emotion and alertness. And of love. The Portuguese language is a true challenge for the writer. Above all for the writer who seeks to remove from things and people their top layer of superficiality. Sometimes it reacts when faced with a more complicated thought. Sometimes it takes fright at the unpredictable character of a sentence. I enjoy handling it – just as I used to enjoy riding a horse and guiding it by the reins, at times slowly, at times at a full gallop.) (1992, 134)

Lispector combines her confession of love with a statement of artistic prowess: Portuguese is for her a living creature to be steered, controlled, and bent to her will. Lurking not far below her horse analogy, however, is the danger of the horse's enigma (to paraphrase Maurice Blanchot) – the animal's resistance to any attempt at manipulation and the very real possibility that it may, at any moment, throw its rider. The relation that Lispector suggests, in fact, is not so much one of control (Portuguese is no machine to be methodically driven) as of participation and contagion – a back-and-forth between rider/writer and horse, a *listening* framed as simultaneous reception or attention and deliberate action.

As I have discussed in previous chapters, the way Lispector created her own literary language within Brazilian Portuguese is related to her childhood hearing experiences of Yiddish and Russian, complicating her "maternal" language affiliation together with her subsequent life outside Brazil for sixteen years, increasing her multilingualism. Turning back to Horace and his *Ars poetica*, we may agree that both the poet and his text have as their original context the Roman Empire under Octavian and the rapid expansion/evolution of the Latin language that came with it. Out of this process of growth and change would eventually emerge the Romance vernaculars that found themselves transported to the Americas on Portuguese and Spanish (and, to a lesser extent, French) ships. Once

here (or *there*, depending on one's perspective), these vernaculars would find themselves mixed together with Amerindian languages already being spoken when the Europeans arrived and with African languages – Kimbundu, Umbundu, Kikongo, and others – that emerged from slavers' ships. The result was a fertile new language that would come to be known (somewhat reductively) as Brazilian Portuguese. This language would in turn find itself reinvented yet again, as I have argued throughout the present book, by means of the distinctively manifold and productive ear of Lispector.

**Lucrécia and the Horse**

The horse motif appears in practically all of Lispector's novels; however, it is in *The Besieged City* that this motif manifests itself with particular force. The book was written between 1946 and 1948, while Lispector was living in Bern, Switzerland. In a 1971 interview, Lispector admits that *The Besieged City* was the most difficult of her books to write, claiming that she rewrote it close to twenty times (quoted in Moser 2009, 194).[3] Written between the animal world and the developed context of the city, the book presents a young girl/horse, and the way in which she sees and hears both the city and the countryside around her.[4] The text thus operates at the wide intersection between the surreal and the technological, between the wildness of the horse and the domesticity of the urban environment, with characters bearing names from Greek myth, such as Perseus and Iphigenia. Within the narrative itself, the temporality of the horse does not coincide with that of the suburb under development, with its cars, radio lines, trains, and the power plant pushing horses from the horizon.[5]

*The Besieged City* is in reality a book of transformations, in which one passes "de uma natureza a outra" ("from one nature to another") (101). It is thus of particular significance that the central event in this novel is the Ocyrhoe-like transformation of a provincial woman into a horse. As Ovid tells it, Ocyrhoe is the daughter of the centaur Chiron, and according to prophecy, she will be transformed into a mare. As more than one of its commentators has remarked, it is an "odd little story" that speaks to "the remarkable details of the physical transformation from prophesying nymph to silent horse" (Heath 1994, 340). Lucrécia is also transformed into a horse and sees things only to each side of her. The relation of the "poetics of vision" (Pontieri 1999) in this book has been analysed above all with respect to painting (Sousa 2013). In the present coda, following

the mode of association between Lispector and the horse that I have already begun to establish, what most interests me is the link between this focus on vision and photography. Also of great interest (and importance) is the notion of form and movement in writing by ear and its potential for forging the notion of a literature that is in a more or less radical sense irresolvably hybrid.

**Photographs of a Horse**

Lispector attempts, from the publication of her first novel, to unite form and movement. In this way, she works to move past the traditional binary of form and theme. Against the fixity of the written text, her consistent (even obsessive) aim was to create texts able to capture the instant of time in movement. Here I suggest an analogy to what Eadweard Muybridge managed to do in the late nineteenth century through the use of stop-motion photography with the funding of Leland Stanford. The ear in writing thus has a relation both to the non-human world, to modern technologies of sound and image, and (above all) to the way in which focused attention on both has shaped the production of modern fictional prose.

Eadweard Muybridge's photographs of a horse and rider in movement, taken during the 1870s, are in a real sense the genesis of cinema. For this reason, they likewise establish a new relation between form and movement. This is precisely how the story is told by Rebecca Solnit (2003): "It all began with photographs of a horse in California" (4). The horse, a Standard-bred harness trotter named Occident, was one of the fastest of its kind in the United States, and Muybridge photographed it in 1872 on what is now the Stanford University campus. A series of other images and experiments was undertaken later to test the hypothesis further, and it was finally confirmed that horses maintained their four hooves simultaneously in the air in the course of their galloping. At these moments, it was as if they flew, even if the movement was too quick and too brief to be caught by the naked human eye. The speed of the horse required the invention of a technology that was as fast as or even faster than the movement of equine hooves, and that was able to capture that movement as if it were frozen in time. The idea was then to make the horse run again by placing the images in a chronological sequence. Muybridge was thus the first person to produce photographs with high shutter speeds, capturing in fractions of a second the movement of an extremely fast animal: "It was the first time photographs had dissected and reanimated actual

motion, and it was the foundation of cinema, which emerged tentatively in 1889, in full force in France and the United States by 1895. Motion pictures proper were invented by others, but no matter which way the medium's genealogy is traced, it comes straight back to Muybridge" (Solnit 2003, 4). Solnit makes explicit the three pieces that were necessary for Muybridge's invention: "The first was the achievement of a photographic process fast enough to capture bodies in motion. The second was the creation of successive images that, mounted together, reconstituted a whole cycle of motion rather than isolating a single moment. And the third was their reanimation as a moving picture" (185).

If Muybridge's photographs of Occident with his rider are the genesis of cinema, their effect on painters was immediate. Solnit writes,

> Muybridge created a crisis of representation for realist painters: they had always insisted that they represented their subjects with maximum accuracy, but that accuracy had always been based on the observations of the eye … Only artists such as Claude Monet, whose images of the same subject transformed by time of day or season were akin to the motion studies, were at ease with Muybridge's revelations. Edgar Degas made a number of drawings based on the equestrian photographs. What a high-speed photograph showed and what the eye saw were in conflict, but the evidence of the camera was incontrovertible to those who had dedicated themselves to realism. (197)

The following passage from a text by Lispector titled "Seco estudo de cavalos" ("Dry sketch of horses"), in a section titled "Na rua seca de sol" ("On the sun-baked street"), can be read as a commentary on Muybridge's 1872 experiments in California:

> Mas de repente – no silêncio do sol de duas horas da tarde e quase ninguém nas ruas do suburbio – uma parelha de cavalos desembocou de uma esquina. Por um momento imobilizou-se de patas. […] Ali, como estátuas. […] Passara o instante de vislumbramento. Instante imobilizado como por uma máquina fotográfica que tivesse captado alguma coisa que jamais as palavras dirão. (2016, 472–3)

> (But suddenly – in the silence of the two o'clock sun and with almost no one on the street in those outskirts – a pair of horses emerged from around a corner. For a moment they froze with legs slightly raised. […] There, like statues. […] The glimmering instant had passed. An instant frozen as by a camera that had captured something words will never say. (2015, 450)

What words cannot say will be shown for the first time through photographic technology. The horse in movement, photographed by Muybridge in front of a white background (and not with any scenery behind it), is for Lispector like a text written on a blank page, but one that must be read as form in movement and not as static, fixed form and content.

**Form and Movement**

In *Near to the Wild Heart*, Lispector announces, through her alter ego Joana, a static revelation that will accompany her to the end: "Então Joana compreendia subitamente que na sucessão encontrava-se o máximo de beleza, que o movimento explicava a forma – era tão alto e puro gritar: o movimento explica a forma!" ("Then Joana suddenly understood that the utmost beauty was to be found in succession, that movement explained form – it was so high and pure to cry: movement explains form!" (44; 36). The importance of this revelation is confirmed through the repetition of the same expression in another moment of the book, when Joana feels life fully: "São raros os instantes. Quando ontem, na aula, repentinamente pensei, quase sem antecedentes, quase sem ligação com as coisas: o movimento explica a forma. A clara noção do perfeito, a liberdade súbita que senti" ("These instants are rare. When yesterday, in class, I suddenly thought, almost without antecedents, almost without connection to things: movement explains form. The clear notion of perfection, the sudden freedom I felt") (70–1; 62).

If movement explains form, how to inscribe it within writing? The difficulty is in expressing through words something that is born as a sensation. The question, as emerges through the present discussion, is not a matter of content and form but rather of content and movement, as in music and moving pictures (cinema). Through this revelation, Lispector's poetics is instituted as forms in movement, forms in transition, forms under constant metamorphosis. One of the answers that Lispector will give to the challenge of articulating movement and text is a close approximation to music:

> Certos momentos da música. A música era da categoria do pensamento, ambos vibravam no mesmo movimento e espécie. Da mesma qualidade do pensamento tão íntimo que ao ouvi-la, este se revelava. Do pensamento tão íntimo que ouvindo alguém repetir as ligeiras nuances dos sons, Joana se surpreendia como se fora invadida e espalhada. (44–5)

(Certain moments in music. Music was of the same category as thought, both vibrated in the same movement and kind. Of the same quality as a thought so intimate that when heard, it revealed itself. As a thought so intimate that when she heard someone repeat the slightest nuances of its sounds, Joana was surprised at how she had been invaded and scattered.) (36–7)

Beyond music, there is the magic of photography and of cinema, which capture the uncapturable moment of constant movement and alteration. In *A Breath of Life*, Angela states:

Angela. – De súbito a estranheza. Estranho-me como se uma câmera de cinema estivesse filmando meus passos e parasse de súbito, deixando-me imóvel no meio de um gesto: presa em flagrante. Eu? Eu sou aquela que sou? Mas isto é um doido faltar de sentido. Parte de mim é mecânica e automática – é neurovegetativa, é o equilíbrio entre não querer e o querer, do não poder e de poder, tudo isso deslizando em plena rotina do mecanicismo. A câmera fotográfica singularizou o instante. E eis que automaticamente saí de mim para captar tonta de meu enigma, diante de mim, que é insólito e estarrecedor por ser extremamente verdadeiro, profundamente *vida nua amalgamada na minha identidade*. E esse encontro da vida com a minha identidade forma um minúsculo diamante inquebrável e radioso indivisível, um único átomo […] (1999a, 74; my emphasis)

(ANGELA: Suddenly an odd feeling. I find myself odd as though a movie camera were filming my steps and suddenly stopped, leaving me immobile in the middle of a gesture: caught in the act. Me? Am I the one who is I? But this is a mad senselessness! Part of me is mechanical and automatic – neurovegetative, the balance between not wanting and wanting, of not being able and being able, all of it sliding along in the routine of mechanism. The camera singled out the instant. And so it is that I automatically left myself in order to capture myself dazed by my own enigma, right there before me, which is unprecedented and terrifying because it's extremely true, profoundly *naked life merged into my identity*. And this encounter between life and my identity forms a minuscule unbreakable and radiant indivisible diamond, a single atom […] (2012d, 62; my emphasis)

What Lispector wishes to do with writing is to achieve this: "O que me importa são instantâneos fotográficos das sensações – pensadas" ("What matters to me are the snapshots of sensations – sensations that are thought") (25; 11). Therefore it is also a subconscious writing: "E

que estou na vida fotografando o sonho" ("And that I am alive photographing the dream") (73; 69). In capturing movement, the camera takes hold of the eternal that resides in the instant that passes and immobilizes it in such a way that through the camera we have access to "naked life" – the "naked life" that the horse also announces, as Lispector articulates when she writes "O cavalo é nu" ("The horse is naked") (2016a, 473; 2016, 447).

**Nietzsche and Horse**

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes writes:

> In the love stirred by Photography (by certain photographs), another music is heard, its name oddly old-fashioned: Pity. I collected in a last thought the images which had "pricked" me (since this is the action of the *punctum*), like that of the black woman with the gold necklace and the strapped pumps. In each of them, inescapably, I passed beyond the unreality of the thing represented, I entered crazily into the spectacle, into the image, taking into my arms what is dead, what is going to die, as Nietzsche did when, as Podach tells us, on January 3, 1889, he threw himself in tears on the neck of a beaten horse: gone mad for Pity's sake. (1981, 116–17)

The photograph that "embraces" the living through "still-life" portraiture is precisely the same idea that Lispector presents through her fictional author in *A Breath of Life*:

> Autor. – Angela tem medo de viajar por receio de perder o seu eu numa viagem. Ela precisa de pelo menos por um minuto para pegar a si mesma em flagrante. Pegar o vivo e tirar o seu imóvel retrato e olhar-se no retrato e pensar que o flagrante deixou uma prova, a desse retrato já morto. (68)
>
> (AUTHOR: Angela is afraid to travel for fear of losing her I during the trip. She needs for at least one minute in her life to catch herself in the act. To catch what's living and take her immobile picture and look at herself in the picture and think that the snapshot left a proof, that of the already-dead picture.) (61–2)

In his passage, Barthes is referring to the famous (and perhaps apocryphal) scene of the horse Nietzsche saw being beaten in Turin. As detailed by one of Nietzsche's biographers:

> On January 3, 1889, just after Nietzsche left his apartment, he caught sight of a carriage driver beating his horse on the Piazza Carlo Alberto. Nietzsche, weeping, threw himself around the horse's neck to protect it. He collapsed in compassion with the horse. A few days later, Franz Overbeck came to collect his mentally deranged friend. Nietzsche lived on for one more decade. Nietzsche's philosophical history ended in January 1889. Then commenced the other history, the history of his influence and resonance. (Safranski 2002, 316)[6]

What's taking place here is the collapse of Nietzsche's life before his internment in the asylums where he will spend his last eleven years, immersed in madness until his death on August 25, 1900. An enigmatic episode in the philosopher's destiny, the final scene of his productive life or the initial scene of his entrance into madness, it is in the end a fundamental encounter that Nietzsche has with the horse, as Jacques Derrida reminds his readers in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*: "as you know, he [Nietzsche] was mad enough to cry in conjunction with an animal, under the gaze of, or cheek by jowl with a horse. Sometimes I think I see him call that horse as a witness, and primarily in order to call it as a witness to his compassion, I think I see him take its heads in his hands" (2008, 35).

Therefore, when I heard Nietzsche and horse (and not Horace), the error was correct, and what was correct resided in the error, confirming a mode of oblique action – because it is unconscious – of a writing (or reading) by ear. I wish now, finally, to analyse the consequences of this episode in the life of modern literature through an analogy between Lispector and Nietzsche. Peter Sloterdijk speaks of the episode as Nietzsche's "Dionysian farewell performance" (1986, 96), and explicitly unites the body of the philosopher and that of the horse as if they were but one being: "What would he not have given for the chance to breathe a sigh of relief … and no longer violate his body, the miserable carriage horse" (96). Like van Gogh's act of self-mutilation, according to the reading of Georges Bataille, Sloterdijk makes explicit the collective sense of madness in Nietzsche, and the sacrifice that he made before the possibility of bringing an end to the theatre of metaphysics:

> No one who has glanced even briefly behind the curtain of Western rationality can still pretend that Nietzsche's descent into madness was a private affair. This descent was, on the contrary, the individual recapitulation of an entire civilization, an exemplary sacrifice that, next to the death of Socrates and the slaughter of Jesus, represents a third unforgettable statement on the relationship between the empowered word and the expression of life within Western culture. (72)

## The Centauric Writing

For Lispector, as we see, it also happens that the horse is by far (and perhaps not incidentally for the personal anecdote with which I began this chapter) the most important figure in her extensive bestiary. Silviano Santiago (2004), in his essay "Bestiário," undertakes an intense analysis of animals in Lispector's work, and he gives special emphasis to the signifier *horse* (208). His text begins with an analysis of a letter that Lispector sent in 1941 to the writer Lucio Cardoso, and it goes on to analyse a series of the author's works and letters, identifying within them two movements: the self-modelling of the human as an animal and the transformation of the human animal into a wild one. Santiago establishes in this way a mode of reading Lispector's work, one that I largely follow in the present book: "With the passing of the years, metamorphosis would acquire symbolic and allegoric tonalities, worthy of the highest literature produced in Brazil. The reader must try to follow these metamorphoses and tonalities, make them explicit, differentiate between them, analyze and interpret them" (193). Metamorphosis, he claims, can just as easily indicate repose and happiness as it can point to conflict and drama. In both cases, what one finds is a "dramatic reflection on the mishaps of a life lived intensely and the terrifying risk of death" (194).

Lispector was born on December 10, 1920, and she died on December 9, 1977. She was born and died under the sign of Sagittarius, represented by the image of a centaur:

> Eu vou morrer: há uma tensão como a de um arco prestes a disparar a flecha. Lembro-me do signo Sagitário: metade homem e metade animal. A parte humana em rigidez clássica segura a flecha. O arco pode disparar a qualquer instante e atingir o alvo. Sei que vou atingir o alvo. (1998d, 48)

> (I'm going to die: there's that tension like that of a bow about to loose an arrow. I remember the sign of Sagittarius: half man and half animal. The human part in classical rigidity holds the bow and arrow. The bow could shoot at any instant and hit the target. I know that I shall hit the target.) (2012c, 46)

What most matters to me is to present Lispector's work as that of a centaur writer, novelist, and philosopher, much like Nietzsche himself, who, in a letter to Erwin Rodhe, wrote: "Scholarship, art, and philosophy are growing together inside me to such an extent that one day I'm bound to

give birth to centaurs" (quoted in Sloterdijk 1986, 10). For this reason, I will follow fairly closely the reading that Sloterdijk gives to Nietzsche. Sloterdijk associates the unmistakable originality of *The Birth of Tragedy* with the emergence of a form of "centaur thought," a thinking of double enunciation, thinking in a form of writing that transcends disciplinary limits, constituting a robust hybridity – the same hybridity that Horace had criticized: "Nietzsche's most prophetic characteristic was his inability to be a specialist in any one discipline" (Sloterdijk 1986, 6). It is not a question, Sloterdijk says, of having multiple talents side by side, but the fact that "he did not practice the one discipline alongside the other, but practiced the one *by* practicing the other" (6). It is the emergence of this double or multiple elocution that Nietzsche brings to light: "For whatever the combination of sources and prototypes, the decisive element in it was the centauric birth, that is, the setting loose of an infinitely consequential artistic and philosophical double-natured eloquence within which Nietzsche's powers were bound together effectively for the first time" (10). From this point onward, with Nietzsche serving as "an artist *as* scholar-scientist and a scholar-scientist *as* artist," one witnesses the establishment of what Sloterdijk defines as "centauric literary tendencies" (10).

Nietzsche's originality, according to Sloterdijk, "is evident in the fact that he developed a literary staging process" (1986, 7). This process consists in expressing through writing that which does not necessarily pertain to writing, much like the synaesthesia produced by Wagner in his operatic work. In this way, Nietzsche had "to compress the entire spectrum of his impulses into the narrow medium of writing" (7), using writing for a project that was not solely literary. Lispector's literary work can also be linked to this definition: to make writing operate according to the logic of other modes and forms, as something else, whether this be painting, sculpture, photography, radio and/or cinema. It is this multiplicitous project, carried out via literary writing, that I wish to understand through the term *resonance*.

Centaur thought, for Sloterdijk, is the definition of the field of literature from this moment, "staged not in terms of narrative but of in terms of theatre" (1986, 20). This field involves an intimate, and up to that point unique, correlation between existence and language. The two passages that I cite below are fundamental for an adequate understanding of Lispector's literary project: "Perhaps literature is simply, in the broadest sense[,] the universal element within the centauric phenomenon. It would in that case be the *lingua franca* for free spirits, for those who

cross the borders between spheres that shift away from each other, and for defenders of coherence. There have been sufficient indications for a long time now that this true" (20). One might also add:

> Always, whenever authors inspire a dual perspective through their own polylingualism, there comes into play the literary general eloquence of intelligent minds who seem to see the only value in limits as lying in the fact that these limits afford us the opportunity to exceed them. From E.T.A. Hoffmann to Sigmund Freud, from Søren Kierkegaard to Theodor W. Adorno, from Novalis to Robert Musil, from Heinrich Heine to Alexander Kluge, from Paul Valery to Octavio Paz, from Bertolt Brecht to Michel Foucault, and from Walter Benjamin to Roland Barthes – in each instance, the most communicative minds have presented themselves as temperaments and variations of the centauric genius. (13)

Lispector's *oeuvre*, as I have shown, is also a *variation of the centauric genius*, a definition par excellence of the type of (mixed) text she produced. As noted by the majority of her critics, few writers will be able to achieve as she did such a meaningful correspondence between existence and language. The answer that Lispector offers to the question "Why should we die?" will be similar to that which Sloterdijk states regarding Nietzsche: "the dynamic between the search for self and the attempt to release oneself from it" (21). At stake is the creation of a literature that proposes an answer to the death of the "I" through its expansion into the not-I, the animal, and the planetary. For this reason, metamorphosis, as a simultaneous mode of incarnating, bringing to life, and causing to be reborn, is fundamentally important. As Sloterdijk puts it, Nietzsche can "play the role of the one who is again giving birth. In the ardor of his prophecy, he simultaneously becomes the pregnant mother, the gynecologist, and the divine child" (20). This is the Dionysian materialism of which Sloterdijk speaks, the passage of the individual body into a universal, planetary one, and its ecstatic character: "The fundamental question for modern psychologies, which the Dionysians of an active materialism must render animate from the outside in, is the following: how can individuals who are imprinted by regionality, finiteness and fear of death in any way endure being affiliated with a planetary fact?" (84–5).

In this centauric text, each and every one is believed to be "a medium for a singularly phenomenal, dramatic universality. It knows that it has been incorporated into a planetary magnetism of physical universal candor" (84). Given this, Sloterdijk considers that after Nietzsche there

would be developed what came to be, by the turn of the twenty-first century, "a modern ecology of expression" (85), which could unite "the three decisive revolutions of the nineteenth century: the politicization of the proletariat, the cultural seizing of language by women, and the discovery of the unconscious" (84–5).

Lispector's work is continuously contemporary, and it is continually reborn today in various studies and translations, just like that "ecology of expression" to which the present study has attempted to contribute through an emphasis on hearing and the auditory sense, as well as what I have termed *echopoetics*. This echopoetics implies an opening to the point of disappearance of the limits of the psyche, language, and the individual body, as in the myth of the nymph Echo:

> Within the phenomenon of Dionysian materialism, the individual psyche must be confronted with the advent of an increasingly violent and subtle contextualization of what constitutes the "world." … It must learn to accept into itself the impact of the much-too-much which "arrives" from without, in order to correspond to the external opening of worlds through an increase in inner openness to the world. (Sloterdijk 1986, 85)

Echo, as I have shown, is but the expansion of the "I" within the world. For this reason, once again, it is regressive metamorphoses that most matter in any attempt to reach an expression of the magnetism of the universal:

> The unconscious is the name for the sources at which the modern (i.e. postreligious) retrogressive metamorphoses of subjectivity lead back to that which preceded it. The body and the drama are the material foundations of this modern consciousness of retrogressive metamorphoses; we experience in them the way in which the narrowness of the subject breaks open when it resigns itself *nolens volens* to the universal context, of which it has long since unconsciously been a part and from which it will never be permitted to escape. Any inwardness is interwoven deeply and somatically into the magnetism of the universal. (84–5)

The theory of the will to power, in this case, must be rethought as the assumption not of a force but rather of a stimulating fragility: "But nothing in Nietzsche's writing can have as great a continuing effect as his own refutation of his theory of the will to power. His whole life contradicts it and testifies to a stimulating fragility that is turned toward us like the

hardly disguised interior of the terrible truth" (91). The following text can be transposed to Lispector without needing to alter even one phrase of what Sloterdijk says about Nietzsche:

> There are no longer any semantics, only gesticulations; no longer any ideas, only tropes of energy; no longer any higher meaning, only temporal stimulation; no *logos*, only orality. There is no longer anything holy, only heartbeats; no longer any spirit, only breath; no longer a god, only the movements of a mouth … It is the language of the postmetaphysical human being, and perhaps only a sort of children's language as well – a return to a joyful orality at the heights of culture? (69).

And, finally, there is the question of listening as a source of that opening-up to the other:

> The spoken language is, indeed, not my own, or at least not *entirely* my own; it is always the others who have made me speak and listen to a language. *Real speaking always occurs only in relation to hearing – above all, to having been heard.* These inspired verbal emotions (*Wortergriffenheiten*) result in the effect, as strange as it is understandable, that, through the speaker, the Other only now, as it were[,] begins to speak. We call these strange episodes of linguistic life "inspiration" in which the designations and inscriptions that *logos* has left behind within the individual begin to resound against the instrument of the body as if they were our own property. (69)

*Real speaking always occurs only in relation to hearing – above all, to having been heard.* "E a pergunta é: como escrevo? Verifico que escrevo de ouvido assim como aprendi inglês e francês de ouvido" ("And the question is: how do I write? I can confirm that I write by ear as I learned English and French by ear"). As readers, we learn with Lispector that it is possible to listen to happiness within ourselves and to put it down in writing, "para não esquecer" ("so as not to forget"):[7]

> O cavalo de onde eu caíra esperava-me junto ao rio. Montei-o e voei pelas encostas que a sombra já invadia e refrescava. Freei as rédeas, passei a mão pelo pescoço latejante e quente do animal. Continuei a passo lento, escutando dentro de mim a felicidade, alta e pura como um céu de verão. Alisei meus braços, onde ainda escorria a água. Sentia o cavalo vivo perto de mim, uma continuação do meu corpo. Ambos respirávamos palpitantes e novos. Uma cor maciamente sombria deitara-se sobre as campinas mornas

do último sol e a brisa leve voava devagar. É preciso que eu não esqueça, pensei, que fui feliz, que estou sendo feliz mais do que se pode ser. Mas esqueci, sempre esqueci. (1998a, 201–2).

(The horse from which I had fallen was waiting for me by the river. I mounted it and flew down slopes that shadows had already invaded and cooled. I reined it in, ran my hand along the animal's warm, throbbing neck. I continued at a slow pace, listening to the happiness inside me, as high and pure as a summer sky. I stroked my arms, where water still dripped. I felt the horse alive near me, an extension of my body. Both of us breathed palpitating and new. A softly somber color had settled on the fields warm from the last sunlight and the light breeze flew slowly. I must not forget, I thought, that I have been happy, that I am being happier than one can be. But I forgot, I've always forgotten.) (2012a, 194)

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# Notes

## 1. Introduction: A Certain Intimate Sense

1 The page numbers refer, first, to the cited version of the original Portuguese text and then to the English version. This is explained more fully in the "Note on Copyright and Translations."

2 For a psychoanalytic approach to silence in Lispector's work, see Maria Homem (2012). Dany Al-Behy Kanaan's *À escuta de Clarice Lispector* (2003) establishes a link between the author's biography and the biblical themes in her work; however, he does so without offering a close analysis of listening. Over the past ten years, translations of Lispector's writing have enjoyed a great deal of success, and the present book is the result of this new and exciting moment in Lispector's international career. Both Benjamin Moser's 2009 biography and the new translations of her work by New Directions have enjoyed critical and commercial success in the United States. Other English-language books devoted to Lispector's work, such as Lucia Villares's *Examining Whiteness: Reading Clarice Lispector through Bessie Head and Toni Morrison* (2011), Claire Williams's *Encounter between Opposites in the Works of Clarice Lispector* (2006), and Cláudia Pazos Alonso and Claire Williams's co-edited *Closer to the Wild Heart: Essays on Clarice Lispector* (2002), have likewise contributed much to this growing area of inquiry. All other English-language monographs on Lispector (no more than a handful) saw publication over a decade ago, and the most important of these are Marta Peixoto's *Passionate Fictions: Gender, Narrative and Violence in Clarice Lispector* (1994) and Earl E. Fitz's *Sexuality and Being in the Poststructuralist Universe of Clarice Lispector: The Différance of Desire* (2001). On the scope of Lispector's critical fortune, see Marting (1993), Montero (2002), and Gotlib (2002).

3 I will discuss the relation between sculpture and listening in Lispector's *The Passion According to G.H.* (see chapter 6).
4 The 1980s "discovery" of Lispector in France, and from there in the rest of the world, occurred thanks in large measure to Cixous. That said, her reading of Lispector's "feminine writing" ("écriture feminine") came under serious criticism. On one hand, it was considered too close to Cixous herself, as if Lispector had been "speaking" Cixous's own thought *avant la lettre*; on the other, Cixous was seen to be associating Lispector with a feminism considered by that time to be overly essentialist. For a dense and balanced reading of these positions, see Peixoto (1994) and Klobucka (1994). For my own part, I opted to defend Cixous's reading at a time when in Brazil it was being most violently criticized. See Librandi (1999).
5 Jean-Luc Nancy, as well as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, after Nietszche and Heidegger belongs to a philosophical tradition that tries to put aside the "*speculative* apparatus," "which, from Plato to Lacan, is a specular instrument" (Lacoue-Labarthe 1998, 145). About that tradition, see the excellent account by Adrienne Janus (2011).
6 The most detailed description of Lispector's family and the traumatic circumstances surrounding their departure from Europe is found in the biography of Lispector by Benjamin Moser (2009). In Portuguese, the most widely recognized biography was written by Nadia Batella Gotlib (1995), who is also the author and organizer of *Clarice fotobiografia* (2007).
7 The circumstances surrounding Clarice's mother's illness are controversial. For a critique of Moser's hypotheses, see Abdala Júnior (2010).
8 See the comment by Deleuze (1997), based on a sentence by Marcel Proust in *Against Sainte-Beuve*: "beautiful books are written in a sort of foreign language" (93).
9 By *cosmopolitan*, I mean, along with Abel Barros Baptista (2009), an "opening of a space of unconditional hospitality." By *literary field*, I refer to a space that "abstains from delimiting and imposing conditions of entry and residence upon the outsider" (67).

**2. Writing by Ear**

1 My use here of the term "quality" follows that of Roland Barthes in "Music, Voice, Language": "Then what is music? … A *quality of language*. But this quality of language in no way derives from the sciences of language (poetics, rhetoric, semiology), for in becoming a quality, what is promoted in language is what it does not say, does not articulate" (1985, 284).

2 Among the vast and important bibliography on music and literature in Brazil, see the studies by José Miguel Wisnik (2004), Luiz Tatit (2004), and Charles Perrone (1989, 2010).
3 See, for example, Moreira (2013) and Dahrer (2012). Marcello Moreira points to the "dominance of hearing" in the colony within "a pragmatic regime of strong orality" while also pointing to "the growing muting of an orality that was increasingly domesticated by the action of writing" through the production of grammar books by the Jesuits.
4 The passage can be found in Andrade's "Manifesto antropófago": "Contra o Padre Vieira. Autor do nosso primeiro empréstimo, para ganhar comissão. O rei analfabeto dissera-lhe: ponha isso no papel mas sem muita lábia. Fez-se o empréstimo. Vieira deixou o dinheiro em Portugal e nos trouxe a lábia" (2011, 69) ("Against Father Vieira. Author of our first loan, so that he could earn his commission. The illiterate king had told him: put it on paper but don't be too wordy. The loan was made. Brazilian sugar was taxed. Vieira left the money in Portugal and brough us wordiness." Translation by Marques in Andrade 2014, 101).
5 A facsimile of Helio Oiticica's 1972 typewritten translation of the manifesto into English is available at the blog http://cotidianocarnaval.blogspot.com.br.
6 The text, "Objeto e fim da presente obra," was first published in *Revista do Brasil*, in November 1926, and then included as the preface of Andrade's novel, published in 1933.
7 Lispector uses many ellipses in her works; those ellipses that indicate my omissions in quotations from her works will be enclosed in square brackets.

### 3. The Aural Novel

1 In their notes on the unpublished essay, the editors state: "Bakhtin gives two possible titles for the piece: 'The Other's Word as the Specific Object of Investigation in the Human Sciences' and 'The Problem of the Other's Word (Other's Speech) in Culture and Literature: From Essays on Metalinguistics'" (Bakhtin 1986, 157).
2 In her book *Examining Whiteness* (2011), Lúcia Villares suggests, for the first time, a comparison between Lispector's and Morrison's works through the performativity of racial boundaries in their fictions. The question of the aural, however, is not addressed.
3 This is an online interview and appears at http://www.paginab.com.br/mundo/escutas-de-mia-couto#.Wf3T8BNSw1h.
4 Nelson Vieira (1989) found in *The Hour of the Star* a "Talmudic style" of composition.

5 The parenthetical structure of authorship in this novel has been addressed by Helene Cixous (1991a).

6 In this last book, one more element becomes prominent: the presence of Lispector's friend and secretary, Olga Borelli, who, after Lispector's death, collected the scattered fragments and published them in *Um Sopro de Vida* (*A Breath of Life*), thus contributing an additional voice to speak for and with Lispector.

7 For an excellent analysis of Lispector's final books, see Roncador (2002). She questions the notion of improvisation applied to Lispector's texts, especially *Água Viva*, the book that resulted from the revision of a prior manuscript titled "Screaming Object." However, she relates Lispector's last texts to the practice of *crônicas* and to the informality of a conversation: she finds in these texts not a unity of action but a continuity of theme and tone (72). I think of improvisation as a method that is strictly related to the production of a tone and a rhythm, and not as a synonym for spontaneity or a text published without revision.

8 For more, see Gurgel (2001).

9 Here I am thinking about the presence of the blind man in the story "Love," published in the collection *Laços de Familia* (*Family Ties*, 1960), as the ultimate example of the importance of blindness in Lispector's work. For an analysis of vision in other works by Lispector, see Pontieri (1999). Also important is Peretz (2008) on vision and blindness in art.

10 See my study "Machado de Assis e o eco fonográfico" (2016).

11 "What is listened to here and there (chiefly in the field of art, whose function is often utopian) is not the advent of the signified, object of a recognition or of a deciphering, but the very dispersion, the *shimmering* of signifiers, ceaselessly restored to a listening which ceaselessly produces new ones from them without ever arresting their meaning: this phenomenon of shimmering is called *signifying* [*signifiance*], as distinct from signification … it compels the subject to renounce his 'inwardness'" (Barthes 1985, 259).

12 For more on this, see Galvão (1972).

13 Marepe was born in 1970 in Santo Antônio de Jesus, Bahia. He has exhibited his work nationally and internationally since the early 1990s, and his creations come from a strong connection to the local traditions, customs, and materials of Bahia, where he has lived and worked for his whole life.

14 "Marepe infuses his work with the area's culturally specific hybrid of African and European traditions. A sculptor by training, Marepe invokes in his methodology both the influence of Marcel Duchamp's readymade and the challenges to the barriers between art and life launched by the Brazilian

Neo-concretists of the 1950s and 1960s. In Marepe's case, however, the transformative gesture of the Duchampian readymade takes on a social and poetic significance that calls into question the institutional status of the art object while simultaneously investing everyday objects with an almost spiritual power" (Fogle 2003, 168).

**4. Hearing the Wild Heart**

1 Brazilian psychoanalyst Hélio Pellegrino has been alone so far in linking Lispector's work to that of Vincent van Gogh: "Like van Gogh, she knew – in her flesh and in her soul – that a fire rages beneath everything. And she devoted herself to expressing this, by means of language" (Pellegrino 1987 quoted in Sousa 2013, 61). On Lispector's paintings, see Iannace (2009) and Sousa (2013).

2 "The fullest portrait of this bright, impish child can be found in her own first novel, *Near to the Wild Heart*, published when she was twenty-three. Like so many of Clarice's fictional manufactures, the main character, Joana, bears a striking resemblance to her creator: the same family circumstances, the same headstrong personality, the same resistance to convention" (Moser 2009, 55).

3 In the Introduction to the English edition of the book, Moser writes: "Lúcio [Cardoso] suggested a title, borrowed from James Joyce … This became the book's epigraph, which, together with the occasional use of the stream-of-consciousness method, led certain critics to describe the book as Joycean. The comparison annoyed Clarice. 'I discovered the quote, the title of the book, and Joyce himself once the book was already finished. I wrote it in eight or nine months, while I was studying, working, and getting engaged – but the book has no direct influence from my studies, my engagement, Joyce, or my work'" (Lispector 2012a, viii).

4 Her career as a writer started in the year her father died, in 1940. Clarice wrote *Near to the Wild Heart* in 1942 and published it at the end of 1943, the year she married Mauricio Gurgel Valente, when she was twenty-three. The book was initially rejected by her publisher, José Olympio, and published by the newspaper *A Noite*, where Clarice worked as a journalist when she was still a law student. It was well received by critics, selling out its first print run of one thousand copies. In 1944, it won the Graça Aranha prize for best novel. See Nadia Gotlib (1995) for more on the critical reception (174–85).

5 The original text says "gênero não me pega mais," translated as "no label will stick." It is worth noting that the term "gênero" in Portuguese means both literary genre and gender.

6 The painter's "suicide" was questioned in a recent biography (Naifeh and Smith 2011) that talks instead of an errant bullet from some youths who were practising their shooting in the painter's locale.

7 According to Adam Gopnik (2010), "It is, in its strange way, at once the Nativity fable and the Passion story of modern art … When, after van Gogh's suicide, in 1890, his fame grew, and the story of the severed ear began to circulate, it became a talisman of modern painting. Before that moment, modernism in the popular imagination was a sophisticated recreation; afterward, it was a substitute religion, an inspiring story of sacrifices made and sainthood attained by artists willing to lose their sanity, and their ears, on its behalf." It is also worth noting that *A orelha de Van Gogh* is the title of a story by the Brazilian writer Moacyr Scliar (1989), who is, like Lispector, of Jewish origin.

8 For Strebe, "The recreation was for sure *not* the fascination with van Gogh's ear. Central stands the question about the cliché of the stereotypic romantic image of the artist as a genius. In this sense the simple, banal step to regrow the ear *is an act of demystification*" (personal e-mail, June 2017).

9 After releasing her first novel, Clarice went to live in Italy. Moser (2009) writes: "In that language, she renewed her acquaintance with Katherine Mansfield … Now, in Naples, reading Mansfield's letters, she wrote Lúcio, 'There can be no greater life than hers, and I simply don't know what to do. What an absolutely extraordinary thing she is'" (143–4).

10 The original reads: "1 – Ler tirando o excesso de adjetivos brilhantes; 2 – Ler tirando as palavras 'modernas' … ; 3 – Ler tirando tudo o que sinceramente nao parecer bem … ; 4 – Se puder, em alguns casos, deixar os fatos indicativos tirando a ideia; 5 – Ler tirando o que parece com Joana; 6 – Retirar paradoxos … ; 7 – Tirar certo grandioso; 8 – Modificar frases excessivamente ricas; 10 – Tirar o excesso do primeiro capitulo … ; 11 – Tirar os brinquedos, o tom falsamente inocente … ; 12 – Tirar os 'como' da analogia … ; 15 – Apagar os vestigios de qualquer processo."

11 *Água Viva* effectively begins with an epigraph by the Belgian artist Michel Seuphor that says: "Tinha que existir uma pintura totalmente livre da dependência da figura – o objeto – que, como a música, não ilustra coisa alguma, não conta uma história e não lança um mito. Tal pintura contenta-se em evocar os reinos incomunicáveis do espírito, onde o sonho se torna pensamento, onde o traço se torna existência" ("There must be a kind of painting totally free of the dependence on the figure – or object – which, like music, illustrates nothing, tells no story, and launches no myth. Such painting would simply evoke the incommunicable kingdoms of the spirit, where dream becomes thought, where line becomes existence").

12 In Brazilian Portuguese, *paz* (peace) is a homophone of *pais* (parents).
13 Clarice was born Chaya Pinkhasovna Lispector. In the chapter "A Missing Name," Moser (2009) explains: "The name she received in Chechelnik, Chaya, which in Hebrew means 'life' – and which also has the appropriate connotation 'animal' – would disappear, reappearing only in Hebrew on her tombstone and not widely known in Brazil until decades after her death" (33).
14 For more about the importance of the image of the uterus in Lispector, see the wonderful catalogue and text by Veronica Stigger (2016).
15 As Moser (2009) comments: "Joana pushes her Spinozistic conception further. Just as there is no meaningful separation between man and animal, between Joana and the cat or the snake, neither man nor animal is separate from God, the single, infinite, and eternal 'one substance' that is synonymous with Nature: one substance in constant transition, linked in an infinite chain of cause and effect. The idea is the foundation of Spinoza's thought, and in the ecstatic passage that closes Clarice Lispector's book it recurs clearly as the narration shifts, almost imperceptibly, from Joana's third person into the author's first" (123).

**5. Loud Object**

1 As Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz put it in their introduction to the English edition of Kittler's *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1999), during the "Age of Goethe" (1770–1830), one sees "not only the spread of the nuclear family, but also the growth of literacy, [and] the notion of authorship as the expression of ineffable individuality" (xxi). As Kittler himself puts it in the same volume: "the age of Goethe: authority and authorship, handwriting and rereading, the narcissism of creation and reader obedience" (188).
2 In terms of the pen as a synecdoche for male dominance, Kittler (1990) refers explicitly to "the sacredness of the words and the erection of the stylus" (68).
3 For a distinct and yet complementary reading of Lispector's work and the typewriter, with an analysis of the semi-literate typist character Macabéa in *The Hour of the Star*, see Sousa (2012).
4 The full passage reads: "Dentro de si sentiu de novo acumular-se o tempo vivido. A sensação era flutuante como a lembrança de uma casa em que se morou. Não da casa propriamente, mas da posição da casa dentro de si, em relação ao pai batendo na máquina, em relação ao quintal do vizinho e ao sol de tardinha. Vago, longínquo mudo. Um instante … acabou-se.

E não podia saber se depois desse tempo vivido viria uma continuação ou uma renovação ou nada, como uma barreira" ("Inside her she felt the time lived piling up again. The feeling was floaty like the memory of a house in which one has lived. Not the house itself, but the position of the house inside her, in relation to her father pounding at the typewriter, in relation to the neighbor's yard and the late afternoon sun. Vague, faraway, mute. An instant … it was over. And she had no way of knowing if after the time lived there would be a continuation or a renewal or nothing, like a barrier") (196; 189).

5 Piano lessons made young girls all the more skilled as typists. Kittler cites the following text from 1895, in which two economists discuss this fact: "Today, the typist has evolved into a kind of type: she is generally very high in demand and is the ruling queen in this domain not only in America but in Germany as well. It may come as a surprise to find a practical use for what has become a veritable plague across the country, namely, piano lessons for young girls: the resultant dexterity is very useful for the operation of the typewriter. Rapid typing on it can be achieved only through the dexterous use of all fingers" (1999, 95).

6 In Kittler's words: "If only because of that, an omnipresent metaphor equated women with the white sheet of nature or virginity onto which a very male stylus could then inscribe the glory of its authorship" (1999, 183). Focusing on the German example, Kittler argues: "The monopoly of script in serial data processing was a privilege of men … Even though more and more women were taught letters in the wake of general educational reform, being able to read was not the same as being allowed to write. Prior to the invention of the typewriter, all poets, secretaries, and typesetters were of the same sex … One's own or dictated script was processed by male typesetters, binders, publishers, and so on, in order finally to reach in print the girls for whom Goethe wrote" (183–4).

7 In this case, I have provided my own English translation, as Pontiero's rendering of "No papel estava escrito" effectively removes the intentional ambiguity regarding who had in fact done the writing – the repairman, the typewriter or paper itself, or some other person.

8 For more on the question of silence in Lispector's work, see Nunes (1969), Waldman (1999), Fitz (2001), and Wasserman (2007).

### 6. The Echopoetics of G.H.

1 The translations in this chapter come from Idra Novey (Lispector 2012b). Lispector's text is hereafter referred to as *The Passion*.

2 In his later essays, Jacques Derrida will direct his attention to Echo. An excellent synthesis and comment about his approach can be found in Pleshette DeArmitt, "Resonances of Echo: A Derridean Allegory" (2009).
3 I use the term "figurations" (*figurações*) in the same sense as that proposed by Carlos Mendes de Sousa (2012) in *Figurações da Escrita: Clarice Lispector*.
4 For an analysis of "becoming-animal" in *The Passion*, see Irving Goh (2012).
5 For an analysis of Lispector's biopolitics in the context of Latin American literatures, see Giorgi (2014).
6 The Portuguese text reads: "No dia anterior a empregada se despedira" (24). The use of the reflexive pronoun *se* here causes ambiguity; the phrase can mean that the maid simply quit the job, or that she said goodbye to G.H. after having been fired.
7 There is a direct reference to the Bible here: "Eu me sentia imunda como a Bíblia fala dos imundos. Por que foi que a Bíblia se ocupou tanto dos imundos, e fez uma lista dos animais imundos e proibidos? por que se, como os outros, também eles haviam sido criados? E por que o imundo era proibido? Eu fizera o ato proibido de tocar no que é imundo" ("I was feeling unclean as the Bible speaks of the unclean. Why was the Bible so concerned with the unclean, and made a list of unclean and forbidden animals? why, if those animals, just like the rest, had been created too? And why was the unclean forbidden? I had committed the forbidden act of touching the unclean") (71; 67).
8 I'm quoting the translation of the poem by Allen Mandelbaum (Ovid 1993).
9 Kim-Cohen's book analyses sound art with the aim of conceptualizing non-sonorous sound, what he calls non-cochlear sound: "The expanded situation of sound is the idea that I have been trying to bring into play – … so that the implications of thinking sound-beyond-sound and/or sound-without-sound might take root" (2009, xix). Antecedents of sound art, which Kim-Cohen studies, are contemporary with Lispector's first book, published in 1944: "Pierre Schaeffer's initial experiments with musique concrète, John Cage's first silent composition, and Muddy Waters's pioneering electric recordings – all occurred in the same year: 1948" (xix).
10 In his rich analysis of the notion of "the third ear" by Theodor Reik, and the analytic listening, Lacoue-Labarthe (1998) writes: "such a faculty of listening should at the most primitive level regulate the simple perception of the other as an unconscious perception, one that is capable of offering infinitely greater material, according to Reik, than what is given to us by conscious perception." He adds, "All perception is at bottom listening. Or … listening is the paradigm (not the metaphor) of perception in general. The unconscious *speaks*. And the voice, that is, the lexis, is that by which it

speaks – which presuppose, in a perfectly classical manner, that language is determined essentially as a language of gesture, a *mimicry*" (162).

11 Krauss theorizes sculpture as an "expanded field" based on the sonic sculptures created by Robert Morris. For the relation of this idea to Lispector, the idea of "expanded situation," as formulated by Kim-Cohen, is especially important: "Perhaps the most important aspect common to these evolutions is the expansion of the understanding of the self beyond an auto-identical, auto-confirming form of experience to a sense of self predicated on the connection with other selves" (2009, 83). Or, as Krauss puts it: "The revelation of this leads away from any notion of consciousness as unified within itself. For the self is understood as completed only after it has surfaced into the world – and the very existence and meaning of the 'I' is thus dependent on its manifestation to the other" (1979, xx).

**Coda: Hearing Horses**

1 This was one of the sessions of the Philosophical Reading Group at Stanford, known as the PRG, coordinated by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Robert Pogue Harrison. It was also during one of these sessions that the theme of nuance (inspired by a reading of Albert Camus's *The Rebel*) proved to be inspirational for my ideas about Brazilian culture and literature, further developed in a radio conversation I had with Robert Harrison (Librandi and Harrison 2009), and in an essay on latency and nuance in João Guimarães Rosa's fiction (Librandi 2011a and 2011b).

2 As Benjamin Moser comments: "What a horse feels, its 'impressions,' cannot be corrupted by the verbal, linguistic 'expressions' that can only dilute or distort those original, authentic feelings. Lucrécia sees only surfaces and herself *is* nothing but surface, another means for Clarice to approach the same goal: the 'word that has its own light,' in which meaning and expression are finally united" (2009, 181).

3 As Moser quotes from the interview: "it demanded an exegesis I am incapable of performing. It's a dense, closed book. I was chasing after something and there was nobody to tell me what it was" (2009, 194).

4 Again with Moser: "For Clarice, in this book as in so many others, the horse is a perfect creature, and becoming like a horse is a mystical goal, uniting soul and body, matter and spirit. A horse acts only according to its nature, free of the artifices of thought and analysis, and this is the freedom Clarice seems to long for" (2009, 181).

5 Moser suggests a relationship between São Geraldo, a city in transformation, and the city of Chechelnik, where Lispector was born: "During Lucrécia's

lifetime, the small settlement of São Geraldo becomes a full-fledged city. When she is a child, São Geraldo, rather like Chechelnik, is a little place, populated by wild horses. The history of the town's growth is the story of the expulsion of these horses; as it takes on ever more civilized airs, finally acquiring a viaduct and an embankment, the horses progressively emigrate, delivering the metropolis to the Glory of its mechanism" (2009, 178).

6 See also Chamberlain's (1999) discussion of the horse episode.

7 *Para não esquecer* is the title of Lispector's posthumous book, published in 1978. It is a collection of *crônicas* previously published in *A legião estrangeira* and in *A descoberta do mundo*.

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# Works Cited


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*In Portuguese*

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