

# Introduction: Clarice Lispector and the Press

MARIELA MÉNDEZ  
*University of Richmond*

---

The year 2020 will be marked by numerous events commemorating the centennial birthday of Clarice Lispector (1920-1977), a writer that has been oftentimes praised as the best Brazilian fiction writer of the twentieth century. Ever since Antonio Candido's critical essay on Lispector's first novel, *Perto do coração selvagem*, right after the novel's publication in 1943, there has been a steady flow of scholarly and academic studies approaching the writer's fiction from a wide array of fields and disciplines. More recently, however, critical reception of her work has veered towards those areas of her production considered more marginal, or more distanced from the texts that have entered the literary canon. Among these texts, described by Vilma Arêas as written "with the tips of the fingers," or rushed, as it were, prompted in many cases by financial need, one finds some of Lispector's contributions to newspapers and journals. Lispector's relationship with the press in the form of chronicles, short stories, translations, interviews, women's pages, and fragmentary, anecdotal pieces, began before the publication of her first novel and lasted her entire life.

While it is true that studies like Arêas's, or Sônia Roncador's on the figure of the maid in Lispector's literature and journalism, have been crucial in offering new critical paths into Lispector's work, examination of her press contributions has been at best sparse. The famous novelist's participation in the periodical press has typically been considered by critics to be supplementary, and, therefore, secondary, to her fictional output. This is a critical slight that affects a host of Latin American women writers who developed life-long associations with the press alongside their careers as poets, dramatists or novelists throughout the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup> As the field of Periodical Studies continues to gain strength and recognition,<sup>2</sup> with large-circulation magazines and newspapers no longer the exclusive object of study of journalism schools, it becomes ever more evident that the work of women in periodicals, either as editors or contributors, still merits due attention. This special issue of the *Journal of Lusophone Studies* aims to fill in this gap in criticism of Lispector's work, hoping also to provide a template for understanding similar gestures by other women writers.

Lispector's first contribution to the Brazilian press dates back to 1940, when she published her story "Triunfo" in the magazine *Pan*. In that same year, a couple of her stories would also appear in the magazine *Vamos Ler!*, from the publishing group A Noite, where she would subsequently contribute as a reporter, translator, and interviewer. The writer would take up the latter role later in *Manchete* (1968) and *Fatos e Fotos/Gente* (1976), where she would interview artists, musicians, politicians, writers, and other celebrities. In the 40s, her texts would appear in other venues besides *Vamos Ler!*, both in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, like *A Noite*, *Diário do Povo*, and *Dom Casmurro*. Upon her return to Rio in the 60s, after having spent several years abroad with her diplomat husband, she would accept the offer to write for the women's pages of two newspapers, prompted in large part by the financial need to support herself, now separated, and her two children.<sup>3</sup> The women's pages that she crafted under pseudonyms for *Correio da Manhã* and *Diário da Noite* from 1959 to 1961—"Correio feminino: Feira de utilidades" and "Só para Mulheres," respectively—continued a practice that she had taken up briefly in 1952, during a visit to Brazil, for the journal *Comício*. Her longest and most sustained participation in the press, however, would come in the form of her "Conversas de sábado" in the *Jornal do Brasil* from 1967 to 1973, where she gained a larger, more heterogeneous audience. This chronology, by no means exhaustive, shows how substantial and meaningful her journalistic production was, but also, and most importantly, it hints at the numerous ways in which her fiction and her journalism constantly

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Bassanezi (*Mulheres, Virando as páginas*); Buitoni (*Imprensa feminina, Mulher de papel*); Cruz; Diz; Masiello; Méndez; Montero; and Nunes.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Latham and Scholes.

<sup>3</sup> For more biographical information on Lispector, see Teresa Cristina Montero and Nádia Battella Gotlib.

bled into each other, defying genre distinctions.

This dossier expands upon the work initiated by previous edited volumes like *Closer to the Wild Heart* (Pazos Alonso and Williams) and *Clarice Lispector: Novos aportes críticos* (Ferreira-Pinto Bailey and Zilberman). In both of these, a handful of essays engage Lispector's *crônicas*, mostly those appearing in *Jornal do Brasil* and later collected in *A descoberta do mundo* (1984), to underline the importance of this corpus for a re-appraisal of her entire oeuvre. Of Lispector's journalistic pieces, these *crônicas* usually tend to be the only ones considered worthy of some attention, in large part because they were also published under various iterations in volumes like *A legião estrangeira* (1964) and *A descoberta do mundo*.<sup>4</sup> Even Thais Torres de Souza's *Clarice Lispector: Uma plagiadora de si mesma*, the only comprehensive study of Lispector's *crônicas* to date, shows interest in the *crônicas* only insofar as they give us an insight into her short stories in the raw, before later transformations.

The collection of essays comprising this dossier takes up where the two collections just mentioned left off both by enlisting newer methodologies and theoretical approaches as well as via inclusion of other press contributions besides the *crônicas*, like interviews, children's stories, women's pages, and the section "Children's Corner" in the magazine *Senhor*, among others. The dossier's organizational structure speaks to the wide scope of Lispector's non-fiction oeuvre. Aparecida Maria Nunes's pioneering work on Lispector's journalism is foundational to all the contributions included, so it is only fitting that the collection open with her article, "O jornalismo feminino de Clarice Lispector: em busca do inesperado e da desordem." Re-visiting her substantial previous research on Lispector's journalism, the author grants Lispector's press contributions their earned prestige within Brazilian journalism, while focusing on how the writer's page for the journal *Comício*—"Entre Mulheres"—became a platform for advancing what can be considered today a feminist agenda.

Following Nunes's study is an assemblage of articles on Lispector's contributions to the *Jornal do Brasil* that continues the trajectory initiated by some of the pieces in the two collections aforementioned. The articles by Claudia Darrigrandi, Luiza Lobo, and Yudith Rosenbaum embark upon newer

---

<sup>4</sup> It is worth mentioning that the first version of *A legião estrangeira* contained a second part under the title "Fundo de gaveta," which was later published on its own in 1978 as *Para não esquecer*.

interpretations of this corpus. In her article, “Writing from Home: Clarice Lispector’s Chronicles in the *Jornal do Brasil*,” Darrigrandi analyzes the presence of domesticity in Lispector’s *crônicas* for the *Jornal*. Inspired by feminist new materialist theories, Darrigrandi’s contribution to the dossier reveals how this presence not only shapes the subject matter but also translates into a mode of thinking and a writing style that conflate thought and emotion. Lobo’s article, like Darrigrandi’s, underscores the uniqueness of Lispector’s *crônicas* when compared with those of other established practitioners of the genre. For Lobo, however, the exceptional nature of the *crônicas* lies in a hybrid and fragmentary style that is nourished by the Jewish mysticism Lispector absorbed as a child, by Sartre’s existentialism, and by Heidegger’s phenomenology. “Existentialism, Ontology, and Mysticism in *A descoberta do mundo*” unveils how it is hybridization and fragmentation that brings Lispector closer to women readers and ushers in as well a new type of chronicle aligned with postmodern thought. Darrigrandi’s and Lobo’s contributions are complemented by Rosenbaum’s article, “Entre a loucura e a lucidez: Crônicas de Clarice Lispector no *Jornal de Brasil*,” which explores madness and unreason in a series of texts originally published in the *Jornal* that, unlike others, never made it into Lispector’s novels or short stories except in scattered form. *Desrazão*—as differentiated from *loucura como doença*—in Rosenbaum’s opinion, informs Lispector’s practice, defying hegemonic rationality and, most importantly, gives us an insight into Lispector’s thoughts on art, subjectivity, culture, courage, and freedom in the midst of Brazil’s military dictatorship, which started in 1964.

The articles that follow concentrate on short prose pieces of Lispector’s that originally appeared in periodicals that have scarcely been studied. In “A especularidade na produção jornalística de Clarice Lispector,” Mariângela Alonso zooms in on the narrative technique of *mise en abyme* to unravel the specular and spiral nature of Lispector’s writing. To this effect, Alonso focuses on the recipe/story on killing cockroaches “A quinta história,” in its first appearance in *Casa e Jardim* in 1960 and in its later re-appearance in slightly different form in *Senhor* in 1962, to conclude that *mise en abyme* becomes a seminal and foundational force shaping Lispector’s work. In turn, Méndez’s article, “O sucesso do inacabado: Clarice Lispector e sua ‘Children’s Corner’ na revista *Senhor*,” recovers from oblivion the seemingly unassuming fragmentary pieces that the writer published in “Children’s Corner” from 1962 to 1964,

among them “A quinta história” analyzed by Alonso. Borrowing Jack Halberstam’s terminology and the concepts of “actant” and “intra-action” from feminist new materialist theories, Méndez reads these pieces as interventions that unsettle the narrative of growth and progress geared towards a heteroreproductive future underlying the socio-economic project of *desenvolvimento*. Several of these pieces from “Children’s Corner” would later appear in “Fundo de gaveta,” the second part of the volume *A legião estrangeira* (1964), a corpus rarely examined yet revealing of Clarice’s innermost feelings around language and writing.

The sixties were an incredibly prolific decade for Lispector; alongside her fiction and her contributions to *Senhor*, she was crafting the women’s pages of two newspapers. The following article in this dossier focuses on this unconventional corpus of Lispector’s, the section or page explicitly targeted at women on so-called women’s issues. “Livros e filhos: políticas de gênero e imaginação sociocultural da infância nas colunas de Clarice Lispector,” by Alejandra Josiowicz, analyzes the sociocultural paradigm shift in the relationships between Brazilian parents and children of the late 1950s and early 1960s. For Josiowicz, the transformation in family models and the expansion of psychoanalytic thought during these decades lead to new conceptions on child-rearing that appear in tension with more traditional ones in Lispector’s women’s pages for *Correio da Manhã* and *Diário da Noite*.

The final cluster of articles revolves around Lispector’s interviews. Anna Katsnelson’s essay examines Lispector’s interviews with artists, writers, and other celebrities, as opportunities to shed light on the writer’s Jewishness. In “Clarice Lispector’s Interviews with Brazilian Jewish Cultural Figures,” Katsnelson argues that in her interviews Lispector felt freer than on other occasions to probe into her own identity in so far as this was largely shaped by her Jewish origins. Regina Zilberman in turn views Lispector’s interviews in *Manchete* during the 1960s as confessional pieces that in turn ratify the coherence of her entire trajectory as a writer and an intellectual. “Confissões de uma entrevistadora” focuses on the collections of interviews *De corpo inteiro* and *Clarice Lispector: Entrevistas* to unpack the writer’s thoughts on literary creation and artistic production and reception in her dialogues with celebrities, famous writers, and recent and longtime friends. Claire Williams’s “Possible and Impossible Dialogues: Interpreting Clarice Lispector’s Interviews for *Manchete*

and *Fatos e Fotos*” compliments these two articles through an approach that seeks to rationalize Lispector’s choice of interviewees while delving into a series of unpublished interviews to unearth both aesthetic and personal preferences.

It is our hope to get ahead of the numerous celebrations around Clarice’s birthday by proving with this dossier that there is still a large part of her work that entices critical attention and invites us to embark upon new theoretical terrains. Lispector’s work has never ceased to be an object of wonder in the fullest sense of this word, as a corpus that surprises us, intrigues us, puzzles us, and moves us to ask endless questions about the process of creation, about identity formation, about what it means to be human and more than human, about the limits of language and representation. May her writings for the press help us navigate these turbulent times when we are ever more tormented by these questions.

### ***Works Cited***

- Alonso, Cláudia Pazos, and Claire Williams, editors. *Closer to the Wild Heart: Essays on Clarice Lispector*. Legenda, 2002.
- Arêas, Vilma. *Clarice com a ponta dos dedos*. Companhia das Letras, 2005.
- Bassanezi Pinsky, Carla. *Mulheres dos anos dourados*. Contexto, 2014.
- . *Virando as páginas, revendo as mulheres: revistas femininas e relações homem-mulher (1945-1964)*. Civilização Brasileira, 1996.
- Buitoni, Dulcília Helena Schroeder. *Imprensa feminina*. Ática, 1986.
- . *Mulher de papel: a representação da mulher pela imprensa feminina brasileira*. Loyola, 1981.
- Candido, Antonio. *Vários escritos*. Duas Cidades, 1970.
- Cruz, Luz Marina. *Entre repeticiones sin origen y diferencias insumisas: escrituras y re-escrituras del signo mujer en la prensa femenina de habla hispana (1826-1889)*. Fundación Celag, 2013.
- Diz, Tania. *Alfonsina periodista: ironía y sexualidad en la prensa argentina (1915-1925)*. Libros del Rojas, 2006.
- Ferreira-Pinto Bailey, Cristina, and Regina Zilberman, editors. *Clarice Lispector: novos aportes críticos*. Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, 2007.
- Gotlib, Nádía Battella. *Clarice: uma vida que se conta*. Ática, 2009.

- Latham, Sean, and Robert Scholes. "The Rise of Periodical Studies." *PMLA*, vol. 121, no. 2, 2006, pp. 517-31.
- Lispector, Clarice. *A descoberta do mundo*. Nova Fronteira, 1984.
- . *A legião estrangeira*. Ática, 1977.
- . *Para não esquecer*. Ática, 1978.
- Méndez, Mariela. *Crônicas travestis: el periodismo transgresor de Alfonsina Storni, Clarice Lispector y María Moreno*. Beatriz Viterbo, 2017.
- Montero, Claudia. *Y también hicieron periódicos: cien años de prensa de mujeres en Chile (1850-1950)*. Hueders, 2018.
- Montero, Teresa Cristina. *Eu sou uma pergunta: uma biografia de Clarice Lispector*. Rocco, 1999.
- Nunes, Aparecida Maria. *Clarice Lispector jornalista: páginas femininas e outras páginas*. SENAC, 2006.
- Roncador, Sônia. *A doméstica imaginária: literatura, testemunhos e a invenção da empregada doméstica no Brasil (1889-1999)*. U de Brasília, 2008.
- Souza, Thais Torres de. *Clarice Lispector, uma plagiadora de si mesma: republicação nas crônicas do Jornal do Brasil (1967-1973)*. 2008. U de São Paulo. MA Thesis, 10.11606/D.8.2008.tde-05082009-144657.