A New Conception of Childhood and the Psychoanalytic Gesture in Clarice Lispector

SOFIA MASDEU
Yale University

Abstract: This article examines the emerging centrality of the child's experience as manifested in selected stories from Clarice Lispector's *The Foreign Legion* and *Covert Joy*. The publication of both these works overlapped with an emerging psychological and psychoanalytical discourse in Brazilian mass media in the mid-twentieth century, during which a new conception of childhood was arising. In addition to this, Clarice's own articles and columns on the topic demonstrate her affinity with the new paradigm, in particular her questioning of the mother-son hierarchy. Ultimately, this work aims for an interimplication of psychoanalysis and literature, frightening off the demons of interdisciplinary approaches.

Keywords: Child's Experience, Foreign Legion, Covert Joy, Psychoanalysis, Intersubjectivity

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Despite the steady stream of psychoanalytical hints throughout Clarice Lispector's oeuvre, as well as the wealth of available information revealing the close bond between the writer and the discipline founded by Sigmund Freud, her work is no exception to the general tendency from the literary field to actively reject any psychoanalytical reading of literature.[1] Be that as it may, Lispector's short stories are replete with episodes in which overlooking the psychoanalytical framework could be detrimental, depriving us of a pertinent hermeneutic view

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from our criticism toolkit. The employer of this method, though, must avoid falling into the trap of a simplistic psychoanalytic-biographical approach and aim instead for an analysis where the interimplication of psychoanalysis and literature brings out the best of the two. It should not be a mere application of one into the other, but rather a dialogical treatment of both fields.

The specific psychoanalysis-related aspect that is portrayed in Lispector's narrative and which constitutes the main focus of this work is the emerging centrality of the child's experience. Although an array of psychoanalytic concepts and gestures can be spotted throughout her entire short story collection, this particular issue is mainly depicted in *The Foreign Legion* and *Covert Joy*. Interestingly enough, the publication of both these works overlaps with an emerging psychological and psychoanalytical discourse in Brazilian mass media, through which a new conception of childhood was arising. Whereas *The Foreign Legion* was published in 1964 and *Covert Joy* in 1971, in "Psychoanalysis and the Transformations of Childhood in the Articles and Columns Written by Clarice Lispector, 1952-1973," Alejandra Josiowicz identifies the years spanning 1950 to 1970 as the key period during which the concept of childhood turned into a "symbol of the new centrality of individual subjectivity" (Josiowicz 2). This is precisely what Lispector explores in some of her stories as well as some of her *crônicas*. The chronicles exhibit a questioning of the mother-son hierarchy, where the psychoanalytical semantic field intends to "function as a tool for investigating the subjectivity of children and the manifestations of their unconscious" (10). Evidence of Clarice's affiliation with psychoanalysis in her fiction can be found in her treatment of the impossibility of language, the importance she concedes to the gaze, and the establishment of a non-fixed signifier, among other notions. Nonetheless, devoting most of our attention to the child's experience as portrayed by the writer necessitates a special focus on "The Disasters of Sofia" and "The Foreign Legion" from the latter's homonymous collection, plus "Eat Up, My Son," "A Hope," and "Boy in Pen and Ink" of *Covert Joy*.

Clarice's short story collection can be sorted into three moments. The first, composed of her most immature attempts, embodies a cruder stage. A curious parallel between this first moment and the last suggests unity, in spite of the latter not being part of Lispector's program. At the beginning of her career, amid the most naïve endeavors, the writer does not reveal categorical concerns about congruity, yet she will gradually distance herself from this pursuit in an explicit

manner. As uttered by the young woman in "The Departure of the Train" (*Where Were You at Night*, 1973) while looking back at her life, "Coherence, I don't want it anymore. Coherence is mutilation" (Lispector 444), the writer will express the same idea in interviews as well as in her most biographical pieces. The unity suggested emerges from rawness in both stages, even if it implies two decidedly dissimilar efforts. At the early stage, the crudeness is connected to a lack of experience and to the opening of indefinite literary possibilities; the writer is at a point where she is undertaking the quest for her own voice, an enterprise that will prove obsolete as time passes by. *First Stories* and *Family Ties* make up this first stage, admitting that a story such as "The Buffalo" already contains brushstrokes of a more introspective and mature Clarice yet to appear. Nevertheless, for the most part, there is a sequential logic starting from the first collection and following through until the last one.

The second moment we identify in Clarice's short story production—this outline does not take into account the writer's novels—applies to *The Foreign Legion* and *Covert Joy*. This transitional moment comprises aspects of both the first and the third cut. It resembles the first insofar as the artist is still pursuing a holistic project where the lead role is absorbed by the storytelling itself. Although this might sound like an obvious remark when referring to literature, it is not such when it comes to Lispector, whose focus on the narrative component will not survive throughout her entire oeuvre. So, this second stage bears resemblances to the previous one at the same time that it projects a more settled approach than its antecedent. For instance, the childish anxieties governing the first two collections are now fading out in order to make room for long pauses which are intertwined with mystical glares. At this precise moment, Lispector's distinctive and renowned silence is penetrating as an inaugural step toward introspection. In *A Bio-Bibliography*, when referring specifically to *The Foreign Legion*, a point is made about the universe created here: "characters do not dialogue: they monologue" (Lopes 77). Monologues frequently become an interior exercise; that is to say, characters do not only manifest independence from a responsive audience but from the notion of an audience in general. Regarding the connections to the third moment, the patent similarities belong to the realm of psychoanalysis. However, while the third stage incorporates psychoanalysis into its very structural program—incoherence or incompleteness are not used as material for debate and thus delineated through the moral of the story, so instead the story itself is inherently and purposely incoherent or incomplete—the second

one articulates it within the tale. For instance, "Boy in Pen and Ink" narrates the story of a baby in its emergence into intersubjectivity. It is not a story where intersubjectivity is represented from its structure but from a coherent narration in which a psychoanalytic frame is meant to be detected.

The third stage includes *Where Were You at Night*, *The Via Crucis of the Body*, *Vision of Splendor*, and *Final Stories*. The paradoxical intersection between this last moment and the first one is defined by a reigning state of crudeness, as has been mentioned previously. While in the first two collections this feature is a mere consequence of a primitive stage of the artist's narrative as such—where the writer is assuming the challenge of creating something that is her own—in the last collections, which build what we have identified as the third stage, the raw state is linked to a new conception of narrative and of literature as a whole. Most of the pieces included in these final books are conceived as sketches, unfinished texts, open diatribes, or even soliloquies where the line separating the narrator from the author has become deliberately obscure. In other words, there is a premeditated attempt to dismantle the conception of literature as an artifice and replace it with a more nude and even cathartic use of it. From *The Via Crucis of the Body*, in a piece that assumes a function closer to an epilogue than a fictional short story, the narrator reflects on this matter: "I don't know why people think literature is so important" (547). From the previous collection, *Where Were You at Night*, "Dry Sketch of Horses" also represents the beginning of Lispector's latest stage. Fragments compose a text where there is no pursuance of integrity. Deviating from the psychoanalytic frame as it was executed during the second stage, this last stage reveals a Lacanian subtext in its plain assumption of incoherence. There is a highly fertile territory to explore here where psychoanalysis plays a more subtle yet seemingly enriched role.

"The Disasters of Sofia" inaugurates a series of tales throughout Lispector's narrative in which children take the lead, either as protagonists or by being incorporated into the axis of narration through the main character. This long narration is composed of three different times within it: the present of the narration in which adult Sofia tells the story, the main story in which the events happen, and a very brief but key moment in the past in which thirteen-year-old Sofia is informed about the death of her childhood object of desire. As in many of Clarice's stories, the plot is fairly simple, yet it is the style and the complexities of the characters that make it remarkable. The story is about a nine-year-old girl who is in love with her schoolteacher. Even so, Sofia is in love with him in a very

particular way and for a very particular reason. These two aspects, though superficial at first sight, define the story's distinctiveness, while simultaneously encapsulating an array of psychoanalytic concepts. The operation of displacement as well as the role of the gaze are prominent psychoanalytic features depicted in the story, yet concerning the specific purpose of this work and given the fact that Sofia is a girl who has been immersed in intersubjectivity long since, it is the treatment of Sofia's manifestation of a prior alienation that makes it relevant.

According to Yudith Rosenbaum's *Metamorfoses Do Mal*, "The Disasters of Sofia" displays the incorporation of sadism in Lispector's narrative. Beyond the thorough psychoanalytic analysis provided on that matter, it is the author's comprehensive exposure of the avant-garde gesture that interests us the most. The "falência do narrador onisciente" (Rosenbaum 52) owes to the experimental literature movement from the early and middle 20th century that questions the foundations of realism—with particular emphasis on the narrator's omniscience—while at the same time preventing the reader from a settled and soothing interpretation of the events. Strictly speaking, the peculiar manner in which Sofia manifests her love for the teacher suggests an operation of *displacement*. She is the most disobedient of the children, perceiving herself as a symbol of the hell it must be for the teacher to cope with the class, and she deliberately attempts to make his life miserable. However loyal to the story's plot those statements are, let us retrace our steps. Is the nine-year-old Sofia deliberately doing all this, or is it instead that the adult narrator who is processing this information at the present time ascribes these premeditated moves to the child she once was? Because of the open nature of these inquiries, it is particularly hard to determine whether the character's reactions stem from repression or from suppression. By way of explanation, due to the temporal hiatus between the actual events and the moment of narration, it becomes slightly problematic to establish whether Sofia is suppressing her feelings—namely, whether she is conscious of what is happening and that this is the path she has chosen to deal with her emotions—or she is repressing them, that is to say: "In the realm of phantasy, repression remains all-powerful; it brings about the inhibition of ideas *in statu nascendi* before they can be noticed by consciousness" (Freud 223). The notion of displacement translates into the story as the operation through which the character places her affectionate feelings toward the teacher on what can be considered its antipode.

In the climax of the story, Sofia finds herself trapped inside a room and facing an impossible gaze. She has almost managed to step out of the door when the sound of her name brusquely pulls her back in. Sofia has been alienated since long before, yet it is only during this scene that the consequences of such an inexorable process become manifest. According to psychoanalysis, for a person to enter language, there needs to be an identification with a signifier (i.e., a name) which leaves aside all the others. If the subject identifies him or herself with one signifier, he or she does not identify with another. During the course of alienation, the subject is asked to identify him or herself with a name, ergo, not with other. This name does not mean anything to the subject. Ideally, the moment the subject has successfully gotten stuck within this hollow signifier is the moment which psychoanalysis would refer to as *petrification*. Absolute success comes at the time when the baby realizes that there is a sentence addressed to it. Intersubjectivity—namely, entering the discourse of the Other—has dragged Sofia back into the classroom and has drawn attention to a long-standing acquired petrification.

From the same collection, "The Foreign Legion" tells the story of Ofélia, an eight-year-old who bears certain resemblances to the character of Sofia. This time, the story is told by an external narrator who incorporates the child into the story and makes her the key term of the equation. If Lispector had made old people into protagonists before, now she is giving children a voice. There is a deliberate operation through which the writer incorporates marginalized figures into her stories and grants them a central role. Naturally, it is not uncommon to find old people or children as main characters throughout literature; the difference is that Lispector makes them genuinely express themselves as such, instead of having them occupying a blank spot where "old" or "child" as a broad category is meant to be filled.

In every stage of Clarice's narrative there is a story where old people are shown in their most vulnerable disguises. In the first collections they are mostly portrayed as forgotten, while in the last ones the characters take the lead and timidly speak up to inconvenience the reader by expressing their true emotions and carnal appetites. Both efforts shake the hypocritical foundations of the reader. With regard to the first endeavor, being ignored by the family assumes two abruptly different forms—one kind is depicted in "Happy Birthday" (*Family Ties*) and another one in "Journey to Petrópolis" (*The Foreign Legion*)—yet they both synthesize Clarice's first attempt to incorporate this type of character into

her narrative. In the first story, the indifference operation is sheltered behind a party which repeats itself every year and where the ancient guest of honor is systematically unnoticed in favor of the rest of the family members' personal interests. In the second case, ignoring the character means moving the old sack from one point to the other all through the country, as no one wishes to take care of the burden. From *Where Were You at Night*, "In Search of a Dignity," and "The Departure of the Train" constitute initial attempts at Lispector's second procedure. Yet the epitome of this second move by which the old character expresses desires and sexual needs comes from "The Sound of Footsteps" from *The Via Crucis of the Body*. In this two-page-long story, Mrs. Cândida Raposo, eighty-one years old, decides to reach out to her gynecologist to shamefully ask when the desire of pleasure will go away. Resignation, due to her situation as an elderly person and the impossibility of fulfilling her desire, brings her even closer to death.

It is imperative to establish the analogy between the elderly and the child in Lispector's narrative before entering the analysis of the second story, because both of these types of characters symbolize a move inherently linked to the process of introspection. "The Foreign Legion" tells the story of Ofélia, who, in the words of the adult narrator, has lived "eight haughty and experienced years" (333). Yet prior to Ofélia's appearance in the scene, we are introduced to a family whose constitution and façade are triggered by the presence of a chick in the household. The incorporation of animals and their particular relevance is not a rare finding in Clarice's narrative. The chick in this story, chickens ("A Chicken," "The Egg and the Chicken"), monkeys ("Monkeys"), a cricket ("A Hope"), the entire zoo where the protagonist from "The Buffalo" turns to in pursuit of carnage and discovers instead the free nakedness of the monkeys, the potential—yet discarded—capacity of the elephant to crush anyone, and the tender love between the lion and the lioness all compose a separate peculiar aspect of the Brazilian's narrative which should be examined. Supplementary to the voice given to the elderly and the children, this other particular sort of narration takes it one step further by exploring the behavior and emotions of animals. The chick in "The Foreign Legion" sets in motion the different roles that are already actively functioning within the family (the role of the mother, the role of the father, the distance between the children and the grown-ups) and as a whole, the flux of a Heraclitean existence as expressed in these lines:

> Yet feelings are the water of an instant. Soon—as the same water is already different when the sun turns it clear, and different when it gets riled up trying to bite a stone, and different over a submerged foot—soon our faces no longer held only aura and illumination [...] In a little while the same water was different, and we watched with strained looks, tangled in our clumsiness at being good. (328)

The narrator is examining existence from its fundamental ephemeral component, while at the same time reflecting on the palpable transition from childhood to adulthood. This second telluric Russian doll emerges as the result of the ties generated between the chick and the grown-ups, and between the chick and the children: "We, the adults, had already shut down our feelings [...] With us, father and mother, the increasingly endless peeping had already led to an embarrassed resignation: that's just how things are. But we had never told the boys this, we were ashamed" (328). Moreover, the narrator questions the role of the mother and defines it as an existential prerogative.

According to Luiza Lobo's "Feminism or the Ambiguities of the Feminine in Clarice Lispector," there is an ambiguous resonance of the "feminine" in Lispector's prose. Although this assertion is not completely inaccurate, from this work we reject the inclination toward demonizing writers for not waving certain flags. The feminine is part of Clarice's pursuit within human introspection. Many of her characters explore their role as women in different aspects: as wives, as mothers, as workers, as artists, as bearers of desire. Lobo takes it further by underscoring the fact that the Brazilian writer never refers to "feminism" in a direct manner (Lobo 91). She explains "Lispector's lack of direct involvement with feminist movements [...] [as] something she shared with many intellectuals of the 1970s" (91). At any rate, Lobo's main contribution is her insightful analysis of the *crônica*, its historical importance in Brazilian literature, and the merit conceded to Lispector's treatment of the genre. The modern Brazilian *crônica* arose in the 1870s, and its main purpose was to provide information by combining "the form of the serial novels published in newspapers and magazines with that of the short story" (91). As stated by Lobo, "Lispector's development of a female narrator is her greatest contribution to the *crônica* genre" (98), along with permitting the entrance of her personal experience into the public sphere (93). This is part of Clarice's revolution, and as can be observed, her writings took it beyond the fictional sphere.

Following the family portrait, the external main character is introduced. Ofélia's presence is unusual, even beyond the exotic. She constitutes an almost uncanny type of figure who puts everyone else in an uncomfortable position. If in "The Disasters of Sofia" the main strategy in order to control the situation is the child's gaze—"I took in harassing him, I also hounded him with my gaze: I responded to everything he said with a simple, direct gaze [...]. It was a gaze I made quite limpid and angelic, very open, like the gaze of purity upon crime" (244)—in "The Foreign Legion," Ofélia's weapon is silence. The narrator acknowledges her position as a slave who is irremediably attracted to the child and confesses, "The worst part of the inquisition was the silence" (334).

In "A Discourse of Silence: The Postmodernism of Clarice Lispector," Earl E. Fitz defines Clarice's entire fiction as a discourse of silence (Fitz 420). The critic states that the Brazilian writer's characters "are reduced to a state of frustrated silence, of inexpression and isolation" (428). In this case, it is not the adult who imposes silence but the child, even if the adult is the possessor of the voice throughout the story. Silence in Lispector is, to say the least, paradoxical. From Fitz's perspective, silence, gaps, and soliloquy tendencies are to be associated with the poststructuralist paradigm. In terms of our work, these concepts open up a dialogue with psychoanalytic theories. For instance, in "The Split between the Eye and the Gaze," a definition of that which enables the entrance to language is provided by its author as the following: "something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it—that is what we call the gaze" (Lacan 73). A concept we ought to clarify due to its centrality in each one of these stories is the notion of *intersubjectivity*. What binds the new conception of childhood with psychoanalysis is the precise moment in which the child enters into language. In "The Disasters of Sofia," as much as in "The Foreign Legion," both characters have already been introduced into the sphere of the Other. Yet this concept needs to be retained for "Boy in Pen and Ink," where the process of intersubjectivity will be on display.

In "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," Jacques Lacan reports that the child, at an age where he is outdone by the chimpanzee in instrumental intelligence, can already recognize his own image as such in the mirror. The mirror-stage, an event that can develop from the age of six months, is defined as "the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" (Lacan 503). By the time these characters—Sofia, Ofélia, Paulinho in "Eat Up, My Son," and the unnamed

boy from "A Hope"—are introduced in the story, they have all made their entrance into subjectivity and the Other's discourse. The mirror-stage is not a symbolic or a social process but a precondition for intersubjectivity. In the process of identification, I see myself in the eyes of others. It could be the mirror or it could be the eyes of the observer. According to Lacan, we are born prematurely. That is to say, the Ideal-I "situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction," and "he must resolve as *I* his discourse with his own reality" (503). During the mirror-stage, a relation has been established between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt* (505). These excerpts from Lacan will find their narrative parallel in "Boy in Pen and Ink," especially at the beginning of the story, where the infant is still unattainable for the narrator. The hypothetical yet predictable future of the child resembles the present time of the other stories' characters: "One day we'll domesticate him into a human, and then we can sketch him" (397-98). For Lacan, the breakdown is provoked by the entrance into the symbolic order; as soon as a child enters into the discourse of the Other, it loses a part of life. The child replaces a part of life with a word, with a demand. Now the child will be satisfied by discourse.

With "Eat Up, My Son," we move past *The Foreign Legion* to enter *Covert Joy*. However, these two collections are very much entwined—a fact that reinforces the categorization exhibited at the beginning of this work where both of them merged into what we defined as Clarice's second narrative stage—as only three *Covert Joy* stories had not been published before: "Covert Joy," "Remnants of Carnival,' and "One Hundred Years of Forgiveness" (Lidmilová 33). Even though all three new compositions could support our analysis given their nature and theme, "Eat Up, My Son" exceeds the others in its concise structure which, incidentally, announces the type of narrative to be undertaken by the writer in the near future. As has been pointed out in *A Bio-Bibliography* when referring to the three new stories, "In each, a narrator tells a brief episode lived by a little girl, with probable autobiographical sources. From the perspective of an adult, she recreates a moment and reflects on it [...]. In the two first texts, the narrator scrutinizes the effects of the infantile frustrations" (Lidmilová 33). So, all four narrations manifest the centrality of childhood, yet it is in "Eat Up, My Son" that the psychoanalytic aspect, whereby the child is cannibalized by the Other, is truly visible and thus demands from us a closer examination.

The familiar scene where one can still trace Lispector's attempt to produce an actual narration distinguishes this moment in her narrative from the third stage previously described, in which the conception of literature as an artifice is dismantled. That being said, it is a peculiar story, as it is mostly composed of a plain dialogue. Narrations are becoming shorter in length and more schematized in nature, but still we are able to identify a scene, characters, and a plot in each. The same cannot be said in regard to a considerable number of stories from *Where Were You at Night* or *The Via Crucis of the Body*. "Eat Up, My Son" portrays a quotidian scene during which a mother and a son are having a conversation while eating. For the most part, he asks about trivial issues and expects her approval or their coincidence in opinions and taste. Nonetheless, he also tries to engage her in a deeper exchange whereby he manifests certain anxieties about the big issues, such as the true shape of earth. As is fairly common when it comes to witty toddlers, the son shares enlightening reflections and embodies the bountiful curiosity that inevitably clashes with his mother's tiredness and resignation. The fundamental contrast between childhood and adulthood has been previously detected when examining "The Foreign Legion." By establishing a parallel between both narrations—essentially concerned with the same topic—it becomes clear which path Clarice is turning to. Whereas in "The Foreign Legion" the narrator meditates on the transition from childhood to adulthood and points at the fraud that she has not been able to inform her sons about, in this down-the-road story there are fewer words that could possibly translate into introspection. Rather than allowing the characters to reflect, the writer has decided to portray the same issue through a fairly ordinary situation and with less mediation on her part.

Aside from reproducing a familiar scene where the child possesses a voice of his own and is able to articulate feelings of trepidation, the most relevant aspect of this story regarding the centrality of childhood is the censorious operation executed from the adult sphere. To eat up implies to stop talking, to cease the questioning, to forbid the attempt of bringing a new perspective. To eat up means swallowing the food, swallowing what has been given to the subject in the exact form in which it has been given to the subject. There is no point in losing oneself in obsolete philosophical debates. Swallowing deprives the subject of chewing. Swallowing prevents the subject from fervent enterprises that will irremediably end up nowhere. "Eat up, Paulinho" (382).

"A Hope" can almost be considered an extension of the previous story in terms of scenery, yet it stands somewhere in between "Eat Up, My Son" and "The Foreign Legion" in terms of paradigm. Once again, a mother and a son engage in a conversation, but this time it is a cricket (like the chick of the previous collection) that triggers the chain of events. The brief narration is filled with aphoristic statements, and it embodies more of an extended metaphor than a story itself. The polysemic component is lost in translation ("Uma esperança"), as "esperança" means both "hope" and "cricket" in Portuguese; still, the wordplay does not seem to ambition more than an exposition on the concept of hope. The adult narrator proves to be more accessible than the one from "Eat Up, My Son," and she even ruminates on the reflections displayed by the child. Like the narrator from "The Foreign Legion" with respect to Ofélia, the mother allows herself to be surprised by the witty remarks of her son: "since children are a surprise to us, I realized in surprise that he was talking about both kinds of hope" (391). This child, to whom no name has been given, enacts a similar role to the one previously performed by Sofia, Ofélia, and Paulinho. Perhaps the hope not only refers to the cricket and the notion of hope in an abstract way, but also to the way challenging established beliefs could come to fruition.

The final story considered for analysis constitutes the epitome of intersubjectivity, the entrance into language, the cannibalization by means of the gaze of the Other. Still, before exploring it in detail, let us address the historical circumstances that frame this work. We have mentioned Alejandra Josiowicz's article, "Psychoanalysis and the Transformations of Childhood in the Articles and Columns Written by Clarice Lispector, 1952-1973," where the influence of psychology and psychoanalysis on the conceptions of childhood in mid-twentieth-century Brazilian society is explored. According to her work, the psychological and psychoanalytical discourse in mass media proved to be "central in transforming family relationships, subverting traditional educational parameters, roles of authority and obedience, and changes in how childhood was understood" (2). Even though a new consumer society emerged and the middle class solidified, the traditional division of gender roles persisted (4). Despite significant changes that contributed to the development of modern women, women are still not necessarily independent (6). All these remarks take us back to Luiza Lobo's observations. However, the more we inspect Clarice's oeuvre, the more we detect gradual changes that exhibit a harmonious parallel with the events occurring at a societal level.

In her chronicles, Lispector reveals intimate aspects about her relationship with her own children through a psychoanalytic writing that is employed in such a way that it aims to reach a broad audience, thus contributing to the uncovering of situations from everyday life. The mother-son hierarchy under dispute is manifested very clearly in the articles and columns where the progenitor and the child embody the possession of equal rights. For instance, in one chronicle the mother becomes a psychologist inside her home, analyzing the upbringing of her children. In addition, she acknowledges and explores the children's frustrations.[2] The resemblance of the reflections uttered in this chronicle to all the stories analyzed so far is remarkable. In another chronicle, the child complains about his mother having an ugly haircut, to which Clarice responds that he has "a right to not have an ugly mother" (10). Before being blinded by the anger that emanates from the almighty twenty-first century parameters, let us connect this piece with the following one. A third chronicle narrates the surprisingly simple yet epiphanic moment in which the child sees the mother as an individual for the first time: "In this process, each family members' individuality is reinvented: the children become real protagonists, their perceptions are valued and their voices are listened within the family" (10). It is not the mother's nor the woman's haircut but the individual's, and the son has now been granted the right to utter his feelings even if they constitute a direct attack against the figure of authority. This is precisely what Sofia and Ofélia accomplish, and what Paulinho intends.

There are two crucial moments in the life of a child that interest Clarice the most as manifested by her chronicles: "birth and access to language" (Josiowicz 11). Again, it is not a coincidence that Lispector's journalistic contribution overlaps with the stories that this work examines or that, at the same time, there is an emerging discourse where children become central to the general narrative. In addition, there is the influence of psychoanalysis as the conspicuous subtext feeding this novel paradigm. The childhood events which Lispector is attempting to decipher are precisely the ones that concern Lacan and his school. Referring to another chronicle, Josiowicz illustrates the Brazilian writer's perspective on the issue:

> "O terror" (The terror) is written from the perspective of a newborn child, in an unformed world of lights, colors, sounds, voices, and physical sensations without linguistic articulation. Birth is not seen as

[2] For a poetic manifestation of this conception of childhood in 1965, see Pizarnik, p. 205.

> idyllic or as a time of fulfillment, but rather as the "death of one being divided into two solitary ones," which inaugurates a "secret terror that lasts until death. A secret terror of being on earth, like a longing for heaven". (Josiowicz 11)

Clarice is speaking of alienation, of immersion into the Other's discourse as brought up before when referring to Sofia's terminated state and Lacan's theory on this moment in the life of a child. Before language, there is no trauma. This will be illustrated in the upcoming story. From the moment the child utters its first sounds by imitating the ones coming from the progenitor, something slips and lack enters. Satisfaction in the symbolic order assumes the shape of desire, the form of a word. That word or desire equals lack: the presence of an absence. It is the impossibility of language.

"Boy in Pen and Ink" is one of Lispector's finest and most distinctive stories. Following the tendency that will characterize her later work, it is a fairly short composition, even if longer than "Eat Up, My Son" and "A Hope." Like those two, the narration is also powerfully condensed—a remark that does not bear a pleonastic nature. The reason why stating this is pertinent is because this set of stories establishes a double contrast with the preceding sample as well as with the following one. The stories from *The Foreign Legion* that have been examined—"The Disasters of Sofia" and "The Foreign Legion"—are comparable to this trio in terms of topic, yet they differ in style. Both texts from *The Foreign Legion* are longer compositions in which the narrator spends as much time as needed in building up the story. In contrast, the texts appearing in subsequent collections after the *Covert Joy* trio, while comparable to the latter in terms of length, no longer take a condensed and holistic form. So, these three stories differ in length and setting with the ones with which they share mutual concerns and a concise theme ("The Disasters of Sofia," and "The Foreign Legion"). On the other hand, they share the fragmentary length of the ones with which they differ in terms of efforts and principles (the collections after *Covert Joy*). The latest Claricean stories abdicate the right to the artifice.

That being said, "Boy in Pen and Ink" brings echoes of one of the chronicles introduced by Josiowicz, "The Terror," in which the prosaic, albeit appalling, events are told from the perspective of the newborn child. Unlike the fiction introduced in the chronicle, this story does not grant the narrating privilege to the child. However, it does offer the description of certain scenes from a greatly zoomed-in angle, suggesting a one-to-one correspondence with what the child is

seeing. The most remarkable aspect of "Boy in Pen and Ink" is the fact that it constitutes an innovative reproduction of the moment where the infant is standing on the verge of entrance into language. The narrator will repeatedly confess his limitations in terms of apprehending the baby's self because "it's impossible to sketch him in charcoal, for even pen and ink bleed on the paper beyond the incredibly fine line of extreme presentness in which he lives" (397). The barrier established from this pure present state implies that the child is currently at a stage prior to the acquisition of language. The notions of past and future only exist in speech; that is, past and future are concepts created and developed with the entrance of language. Neither the narrator nor the child are able to capture the ephemeral moment as a result of two radically distant impediments. The baby can only exist through the moment, not name it. The narrator, meanwhile, can merely observe and believe in the illusion of grasping something that he will never be capable of reaching.

The reflection on the fugacity of time composes the introductory share of the story. Following this, the child is already advancing toward the paradoxical alienation: "The boy himself will aid in his domestication: he's diligent and cooperates. He cooperates without knowing that this aid we seek of him goes toward his self-sacrifice" (398). These behaviors that are normally celebrated and encouraged at the same time embody a paradoxical essence as they guarantee the child's survival while simultaneously constituting his eternal loss. The baby has made some progress, ergo it has withdrawn from presentness. As the narrator puts it, "he'll go from present time to routine time, from meditation to expression, from existence to life" (398). From a psychoanalytic perspective, the phenomenon detected here is what Sigmund Freud calls *repetition automatism*. In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Freud introduces this notion and addresses it as a problem by which patients tend to mechanically repeat unpleasant experiences in disregard of what Freud himself has established before as the pleasure principle. The explanation provided alleges that there is a force belonging to the human psyche more fundamental than the pleasure principle, namely the death instinct. This aspect will be appreciated closer to the end of the narration, at a time when the baby has already proven to be apt for the paradoxical success.

The clumsiness associated with the baby's immature motor skills is depicted through an opulent stylistic display, whereby the narrator submerges the reader into a kind of zoomed-in description of events. Prior to the detailed passages, the

undeveloped motor skills element is filtered through a psychoanalytic angle: "He wobbles on his legs, his full attention turned inward: all his balance is internal" (398). After this brilliant resolution, the narrator describes the immediately subsequent outward development thus: "For standing brings all sorts of consequences: the ground shifts uncertainly, a chair looms over him, the wall delimits him" (398), and blinking means that the balance is lost: "Blinking cuts him off for a fraction of a second from the portrait propping him up [...] He loses is balance—in a single complete motion he falls into sitting" (398). The writer details this fraction of a second in order to capture this tiny and distant world. It is the same universe that the mother in "The Foreign Legion," while dealing with her children and with Ofélia, recognizes as lost, just like the mother in dialogue with her son while observing the cricket in "A Hope." A second passage displays the same resources while describing the moment when the baby is crying. The narrator forces the reader to penetrate into the baby's eyes and see from the inside: "While crying, he sees the room distorted and refracted by his tears, its white mass expanding until reaching him—Mother!" (399). Both these scenes are proof of Clarice's narrative mastery.

In the following episode, before the baby reaches the final stage and is immersed into language, there is a representation of what we know by the name of mirror-stage. The narrator says, "While crying, he begins to recognize himself, transforming into something his mother will recognize" (399). The emergence of the Ego, as heteronomy, plays a major role here. It comes not only from the investment in an image, but also from the fact that someone else is telling the baby, "That is you." The Other gives the infant a sense of self, and, if all goes well, the person also needs to acquire a sense of difference from that memory. The baby is reflecting on that mirror or on the gaze of the mother. He is like that image, yet he is not that image. There is a tension that needs to develop with it. There needs to be a moment as an infant in which a sense of self is separated from the Other, where it is alienated in that image and then separated from that alienation. In the process of identification, the baby is seeing itself in the eyes of the Other: the mirror, or the mother. As depicted in the story, "he must transform into something comprehensible or else no one will understand him [...]. I'll do whatever it takes to belong to others and for others to be mine, I'll give up my real happiness that would only bring abandonment" (400). This is the process that has been called *intersubjectivity*.

Finally, in the last scene, the baby utters the sounds that correspond to an image from reality and which will grant him the entrance into language and life as we know it. The boy reproduces the sound of a vehicle, and as a result of this receives the approval that will keep him away from death: the approval of the mother, because a mother means "not dying" (400). "'That's it!' his mother says proudly, 'that's it, my darling, it's beep beep that went by in the street just now, I'm going to tell Papa what you've learned, that's exactly how you say it: beep, beep, my darling!'" (400). Clarice can thus be considered a sender and recipient of the novel message spreading in Brazilian society at that time. The question of why she felt compelled to explore this issue remains open, although one could infer that both her parental role and her position as a writer merged and blurred the line separating each other as it occurred during her narrative's third stage with the division between author and narrator.

The purpose of this work has been to analyze selected short stories from Clarice Lispector's oeuvre in order to demonstrate the role of a novel mass media discourse regarding childhood departing from her compositions—chronicles—while at the same time landing in her fiction. The circulation of this psychological and psychoanalytical discourse was carried out "through wide-reaching publications such as magazines and newspapers" (Josiowicz 2), so the form of the discourse invokes Lispector's duty as a writer. Several critics have revealed that Clarice's library included an extensive bibliography on psychology, psychoanalysis, the education of children, and even self-help books. One of the methodological principles of this work has been to avoid an application of psychoanalysis into literature, but rather an interimplication of these fields. With any luck, we have contributed to frightening off the demons of interdisciplinary approaches.

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