

REMEMBER ME:
IDENTITY FORMATION IN CLARICE LISPECTOR, ISABEL ALLENDE, AND
MICHELLE CLIFF.

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ABSTRACT

JEANINE LUCIANA LINO COSTA: Remember Me:
Identity Formation in Clarice Lispector, Isabel Allende, and Michelle Cliff
(Under the direction of Diane R. Leonard)

This dissertation deals with contemporary women writing in Spanish America, Brazil, and the Caribbean. I explore how identity is constructed in Clarice Lispector's Perto do coração selvagem [Near to the Wild Heart], A paixão segundo G.H. [The Passion According to G.H.], Água viva [The Stream of Life], and A hora da estrela [The Hour of the Star]; Isabel Allende's Eva Luna, Hija de la fortuna [Daughter of Fortune], Retrato en sepia [Portrait in Sepia], and La casa de los espíritus [The House of the Spirits]; Michelle Cliff's Abeng, No Telephone to Heaven, and Free Enterprise. In these texts the characters have difficulty accepting their compulsory gender roles, which are for the most part attributable to a hierarchical, male-dominated society and perpetuated by almost everyone. I argue that this process of gender identity formation is both particular (individual, formed by the inner strength of each character) and collective (shaped by society's demands). Since gender identity formation is an open-ended process, none of the characters can be said to have clearly defined their genders or to have definitively shaped their identities. Other issues, such as class and race, also play an important role in shaping identity and are dealt with in my analysis. The role of history is questioned in the works of Isabel Allende and Michelle Cliff, who attempt to bring new perspectives to historical facts. My theoretical approach

synthesizes various analyses by scholars such as Judith Butler, Benedito Nunes, Hélène Cixous, Nancy Chodorow, and Stuart Hall.

Chapter I discusses some complexities regarding the definition of gender as well as gender relations in Latin America and the necessity of mutual support among genders. Chapter II reads Clarice Lispector's novels, paying particular attention to the journey within that composes the characters' search for identity. The third chapter argues that Isabel Allende's texts encompass a search for the self with rewritings of history from a woman's point of view. Chapter IV examines Michelle Cliff's novels, which present strong awakenings concerning racial as well as gender identity and the struggle for power in the relation between colonized and colonizer.

To the great women in my life:

my grandmother *Jandira*,
my great-aunt *Alice*,
my mother *Jeanete*,
my aunt *Joanice*,
and my daughters *Joyce* and *Gabrielle*.

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CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

“This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing room.”
- Virginia Woolf¹

*“Genders can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived. As credible bearers of those attributes, however, genders can also be rendered thoroughly and radically **incredible**.”*
- Judith Butler²

Clarice Lispector, Isabel Allende, and Michelle Cliff are twentieth-century writers from three different cultural backgrounds. Lispector (1920-1977) was born into a Russian-Jewish family; she grew up in Brazil, becoming officially Brazilian as an adult. She traveled extensively around Europe while married to a diplomat; at that time she had already published her first novel and several short stories. Isabel Allende was born in Peru, grew up in Chile (where her family originated) and has lived abroad for most of her life, now residing in Southern California. Michelle Cliff was born in Jamaica, and grew up on that island and in the United States. She attended graduate school in England and now lives in the United States. These three women writers with such diverse backgrounds have written a great deal about women's journeys in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe. Their work contains reflections on women's conditions in their home countries and elsewhere.

¹ Woolf 128.

² Butler, Gender Trouble 141.

Women struggle to balance their desires to care for others, to have positive relationships, and to seek knowledge with the need to claim their own identities. This dynamic lies at the center of Clarice Lispector's Perto do coração selvagem [Near to the Wild Heart], A paixão segundo G.H. [The Passion According to G.H.], Água viva [The Stream of Life], and A hora da estrela [The Hour of the Star]; Isabel Allende's Eva Luna, Hija de la fortuna [Daughter of Fortune], Retrato en sepia [Portrait in Sepia], and La casa de los espíritus [The House of the Spirits]; Michelle Cliff's Abeng, No Telephone to Heaven, and Free Enterprise.

This study investigates the work of the three novelists in relation to the manner in which some of the characters—protagonists or not—develop their identities. I am concerned with the ways through which identity is shaped. The process of identity formation involves issues such as gender, class, and race. More specifically, my point of view focuses on the study of how much the environment where the characters develop influences their formation. Due to the cultural background of each country, characters learn different values and fight for different causes. One of my main aims in doing this study is to draw attention to the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean have in fact many points of convergence in the ways that characters form their identities. Brazil is often left outside discourses on Latin America due to the fact that its language is not Spanish. The Caribbean also is usually dealt with separately from Latin America. It is important to foster dialogue among Latin American and Caribbean countries. This study is a corrective step in the direction of building such relationships.

The number of studies on Latin American and Caribbean women writers has flourished in the last few decades, although there are still few that include Brazilian authors.³ A few works compare Brazilian and Spanish American literature, such as Judith Payne and Earl E. Fitz's Ambiguity and Gender in the New Novel of Brazil and Spanish America: a Comparative Assessment. The authors claim that some of Isabel Allende's novels are examples of texts that redefine traditional gender roles and relationships, a phenomenon which they claim has long been noticeable in Brazilian narratives by women. They also maintain that Brazilian literary traditions differ considerably from Spanish American traditions (193), and cite Clarice Lispector as an outstanding writer. Lispector is one of the few Brazilian novelists sometimes included in studies about Latin American novels. Lucia Guerra Cunningham, for instance, edited a book of essays on Latin American Women Writers, Splintering Darkness: Latin American Women Writers in Search of Themselves (1990), in which there are two essays on Lispector's work: "Post-Feminist Discourse in Clarice Lispector's *A Hora da Estrela*" by Mara Gálvez-Breton and "Liberating the Rose: Clarice Lispector's *Água Viva* [*The Stream of Life*] as a Political Statement" by Elizabeth Lowe, who was one of the translators of Lispector's Água viva. Similarly, Debra A. Castillo includes in her volume, Talking Back: Toward a Latin American Feminist Literary Criticism (1992), one essay on Lispector ("Negation: Clarice Lispector") and several on Hispanic American female writers.

Caribbean women writers, who in the past had received little critical attention, have been given some recognition in recent years. As Caribbean critic Simone James Alexander notes, the Caribbean women writers who arguably occupy center stage of Caribbean writings

³ In fact, this study represents the first time texts written by Clarice Lispector, Isabel Allende, and Michelle Cliff have been drawn together and compared in the light of identity formation focusing on race, class, and gender.

in the Western Hemisphere are Paule Marshall, Maryse Condé, and Jamaica Kincaid. (1)

Alexander is one of the critics who has been in search of “Caribbeanness” or, as she calls it, a “Caribbean sensibility” (3). Her work discusses the role of the mother in Caribbean literature, including the motherland Africa, the Caribbean and sometimes South Asia, where many of the present Caribbeans find their origins. She naturally takes into consideration the power roles that countries such as England, France, and the United States play in the region.

Alexander offers a comparative and critical analysis of the works of Marshall, Condé, and Kincaid in terms of the black woman’s quest and struggle for subjecthood, self-realization, and representation. She argues that the work of these three writers challenges and critiques Eurocentric values, colonialism, patriarchy, and linear narrative. She adds that they share a common geographic home space, a Caribbean motherland, and that they present to us a female cultural space, a mother’s land, where patriarchal orders and Eurocentrism are fiercely interrogated. (27)

Similarly, Caroline Rody, in The Daughter’s Return: African-American and Caribbean Women’s Fictions of History (2001), writes about motherland in Caribbean women’s fictions, to which she adds African-American women’s fictions in order to trace their common routes of struggle against oppression. Rody searches for identity in the histories of those women. In her eyes, mother-daughter relationships are the site for transhistorical contact. She concentrates her study on the daughter, who “embodies the newly born power of feminist imagination” (4), and on writers such as Toni Morrison, Jean Rhys, Michelle Cliff, Maryse Condé, and Bharaki Mukherjee.

In the same light, Harold Bloom (1997) has edited a collection, Caribbean Women Writers, that encompasses critical extracts written about Rhys, Condé, Kincaid, and Cliff, as

well as the white West Indian Phyllis Shand Allfrey, the Grenadian political activist Merle Collins, and the Haitian Edwidge Danticat (who describes the turmoil between Haitians and Dominicans and the efforts made by Haitians to assimilate when they move to the U.S.). Mary Condé⁴ and Thorunn Lonsdale offer readers a collection of fiction written by Caribbean women writers, Caribbean Women Writers: Fiction in English (1999), which includes some literary criticism of diverse nature as well as a guide to their fiction. Mary Condé discusses issues such as immigration by Caribbeans, the use of colloquial voice and local idiom, history, literary borrowing and lending, and social realism.

In Brazil the question of female gender identity has been motivating critics in the last few years as well. Elódia Xavier, in her work Tudo no feminino [Everything in the Feminine], reflects on narratives of female authorship from the 1960s on. She points out that there are several common characteristics in those narratives which do not annul each writer's artistic originality. The representation of the world is traced by a female view, a different perspective in relation to texts of male authorship. There is no "masculine" discourse because there is no "masculine condition," Xavier argues. (11) Women, living in a special condition, represent the world in a different manner. Xavier recognizes that women writers often give their own voices to the first-person narrators and the confessional tone confuses the reader. When that does not occur, however, the intimacy between narrator and character is such that introspection is guaranteed. (12) She adds that women's characters have trouble setting themselves loose because they are in search of identity, in search of a space of self-realization. Xavier analyses works by modern Brazilian writers such as Clarice Lispector, Lya Luft, Sonia Coutinho, Helena Parente Cunha, and Patrícia Bins, and even goes back to

⁴ This is not Maryse Condé, who writes Caribbean fiction in English, but a literary Anglophone Caribbean literary critic.

Júlia Lopes de Almeida (1862-1934) who in her *oeuvre* tried to make people enjoy reading without questioning social values, but left here and there certain gaps in this artificial ideological block. Xavier believes Clarice Lispector is the first writer who occupies a significant space in the Brazilian literary scenario. With her the female condition begins to be problematized, questioning the dominant ideology, and women's domesticity is examined. Other women writers follow such problematization: female characters live through interior conflicts, and the constant presence of mirrors reveals their search for identity. As the paths are left behind, Xavier believes, other themes will be sought, other language used as a means of expression. (16)⁵

Cristina Ferreira Pinto is a Brazilian literary critic who analyzes four examples of the female *Bildungsroman* in Brazilian literature: two nineteen-thirties novels, Amanhecer (1938) by Lúcia Miguel Pereira and As três Marias (1939) by Raquel de Queiroz, and two mid-twentieth-century ones: Lispector's Perto do Coração Selvagem (1944) and Lygia Fagundes Telles's Ciranda de pedra (1954). Pinto finds some similarities among these novels: the constant conflict of the protagonists with their mothers (whereas in the masculine novels the conflict is usually with the father); the search for identity (the protagonists search for self-affirmation and relate conflictingly with exterior reality); the failure of the female protagonists to integrate both personally and socially (whereas in the male *Bildungsroman*, the protagonists usually have a happier ending); and the recurrent theme of travel at the end of each work (sometimes metaphoric). All novels analyzed by Pinto, she claims, act as

⁵ Also contributing to Xavier's book are the following: Maria Helena Mendonça, studying the works of Helena Parente Cunha, Lya Luft, and Patrícia Bins; Maria Angélica Alves, analyzing two of Néida Piñon's short stories in terms of relationships and love; Marita Deeke Sasse, discussing seduction in Maria Adelaide Amaral's novel; Vera Lúcia dos Reis, reading Rachel Jardim's O Penhoar Chinês (1985) in light of the public and the private; Maria Osana de Medeiros Costa, discussing the female condition in Lya Luft's Exílio [Exile]; and Angela Maria Oliva Girardi, analyzing language in Lispector's A hora da estrela [The Hour of the Star].

possible vehicles of future social transformation, since they establish behavior models that the readers and society in general may slowly accept and follow. (150)

There are several female Brazilianists publishing in the United States and Europe, such as Susan Canty Quinlan, Judith Still, Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira, Sandra Goulart Almeida, and Darlene Sadlier. Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira and Judith Still have edited a collection of essays, Brazilian Feminisms, that include analyses of several “Brazilian feminisms” in literary works produced by both male and female authors. Susan Canty Quinlan’s The Female Voice in Contemporary Brazilian Narrative analyzes the female voice in select Brazilian narrative, including in her study three writers from three different Brazilian traditions: Lya Luft, representative of the Germanic population found in the extreme southern part of the country; Márcia Denser, representative of the urban feminine experiences; and Sônia Coutinho, whose narrative illustrates the multiracial and historical environments of the Brazilian Northeast.

Some of the main arguments made by theorist Judith Butler are that gender is culturally constructed and that it is performative; it is “doing” rather than “being” and not limited to the binary opposition of masculine/feminine,⁶ “woman” itself being a shifting term.⁷ Based on her analysis, I would like to explore how gender is constructed and who contributes to that process for some of the characters in texts written by Latin American (Brazilian and Chilean) and Caribbean (Jamaican) writers. In these novels the characters

⁶ “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results” (Butler, Gender Trouble 25).

⁷ “*woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or end” (Butler, Gender Trouble 33).

have difficulty in facing their compulsory roles in society, which are for the most part attributable to a hierarchical male-dominated society and perpetuated by almost everyone. I argue that this process of gender identity formation is both particular (individual, formed by the inner strength of each woman) and collective (shaped by society's demands), and I agree with Simone de Beauvoir⁸ and Judith Butler that it is an open-ended process; thus none of the characters can be said to have definitively achieved a certain gender. Furthermore, in most cases for women to lead successful lives, men and women have to support each other, as can be seen in literature and in life; thus I examine the relationships between female and male characters, or the absence of such relationships, and what the consequences of that presence/absence are in their lives.

Since Mary Wollstonecraft published her 1792 A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, linking true freedom to women's rights in terms of equality of men and women and claiming that the education of girls is as important for society as the education of boys,⁹ much has changed in the world in terms of gender relations. However, there is much still that needs to change so that masculine and feminine and whatever other genders exist may be equally accepted and respected.¹⁰ Following the same point of view proposed by Wollstonecraft—that passion is more encouraged for girls than for boys—Nancy Chodorow argues that feminine identity is “ascribed,” whereas masculine identity is “achieved,” and

⁸ Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1953) analyses the role of women in society. It is still today an important piece to be taken seriously, since she works with the ideas that women are the "other" and that "woman is not born, but made."

⁹ Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz did so in her "Respuesta a Sor Filotea" even earlier.

¹⁰ Göran Therborn points out that:

Gender inequality can be predicted a longer life expectancy than patriarchy, because of its deep embeddedness in structurally gendered income patterns and in ancient asymmetries of family responsibilities. However, it was significantly cut down in the second half, and especially in the last third, of the past century. There seem to be no strong reasons for doubting that that process of equalization can continue (311).

that this has extreme consequences in the lives of women, who have a tendency to over-value maleness in relation to femaleness.¹¹ Therborn and Chodorow, though, do not take into consideration the existence of other genders besides the basic two and both link gender to biological sex (male/female).

Some ideas articulated by Michel Foucault in relation to power and sex, and power and hierarchy in society, are important to keep in mind when issues such as the ones in this study are developed.¹² Foucault claims that “never have there existed more centers of power” and “never more sites where the intensity of pleasures and the persistency of power catch hold, only to spread elsewhere.”¹³ Further, he believes that to be “sexed” is to obey a set of rules imposed by society in relation to sex, gender, pleasures, and desires. The very category of sex is extremely regulative, as can be shown in some of the texts that form the subject of this research, where characters either accept or reject the gender definitions imposed upon them. As Butler points out, both Nietzsche and Foucault believe that cultural values are inscribed on bodies as if they were initially a blank page.¹⁴

Barbara Loach, in Power and Women’s Writing in Chile (1994), presents an historical account of several theories about power and gender that range from the Renaissance with Niccolò Machiavelli to Foucault and some feminists of the 1970s and 1980s. It is interesting to notice the shift from a “phallogentric” pattern to a woman-centered theory of power, which in most cases questions ideas that had been usually accepted as true. Loach’s view is that “a

¹¹ The Reproduction of Mothering (1978), Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory (1989), and The Power of Feelings: Personal Meaning in Psychoanalysis, Gender, and Culture (1999).

¹² Stuart Hall (“Who Needs Identity?”) has a similar view—identities emerge within the play of specific modalities of power.

¹³ “The Repressive Hypothesis,” The Foucault Reader 328.

¹⁴ Butler, Gender Trouble 79-141.

woman-centered theory of power based particularly on the recognition and re-evaluation of women's ways of thinking and acting can serve to complement and humanize a traditional patriarchal view of power as force and control" (33).

Cultural aspects that model the behavior expected from men and women in Latin America are the concepts of *machismo* and *marianismo*, terms which describe tendencies to idolize men as powerful and dominant and women as passive and obedient, as in the Catholic model of the Virgin Mary. *Marianismo* also glorifies motherhood and dedication to the home and family. Many Latin-American men and women still believe this is the way men and women are supposed to be, either *machos* or *marias*.¹⁵ However, a number of things have been accomplished in recent years to redress women's condition of passivity both in politics and in gender relations. This is slowly changing Latin-American society. Women in Latin America still suffer a lot of prejudice for being single mothers or for cohabiting with men, whereas the same does not apply to men who do these things, regardless of class. Octavio Paz has claimed that "[i]n a world made in man's image, woman is only a reflection of masculine will and desire" (35), as well as "[t]he Mexican woman quite simply has no will of her own" (37). If women are seen as completely passive beings, it is extremely hard to acknowledge that they may be able to take action to change the world or even to survive independently from man.

On the whole, official Latin American norms remained strongly patriarchal in the early twentieth century and certainly remain so today. Göran Therborn points out how little

¹⁵ Evelyn P. Stevens explain that *marianismo* is "the cult of feminine spiritual superiority, which teaches that women are semi-divine, morally superior to and spiritually stronger than men" (91). It is an ideal to be followed, but it does not mean that all women in Latin America see themselves that way. Stevens reveals her concern about *marianismo*: she sees it "as prevalent as and symbiotic with machismo, but less understood, and, far from being victims, Latin American women are conscious beneficiaries of that myth" (89). She also thinks that "*marianismo* is not for some time yet destined to disappear as a cultural pattern in Latin America" (100) since they are "not yet ready to relinquish their female chauvinism."

gender rights were affected by World War I, even though women gained the right to vote in the mid-twentieth century in several Latin American countries. He believes women gained much less with World War I than they did with the feminist movement of the late sixties and early seventies.¹⁶

Sara Castro-Klarén has warned readers against comparing Latin American women's writing with Anglo-American women's writing without taking into account cultural differences, such as religious ones (Protestant/Catholic and the implications derived from that dichotomy) and family relations (nuclear family versus extended kinship ties). She acknowledges the presence and power of *marianismo* in both Latin American society and writing. Often, however, the cult of Mary gives place to the degradation of women. Further, women do not seem to be moving upwards in terms of class, even though female participation in the Latin American paid labor force is increasing dramatically, a fact that does not help women improve their life conditions. Even though they are working more, they do not have better lives in terms of their financial situations.¹⁷ Debra Castillo notices that the very independent existence of women, though real, is "still perceived as a fiction, as an imaginary, incomplete derivative of the self duplication-the derivative of Adam's rib, the Freudian castrate, the Jungian anima-of an overwhelmingly male ideological frame" (10).

Gloria Anzaldúa writes about the power of *machismo* in the culture in which she was raised (as a Chicana). She defines "Cultural Tyranny" the way women are forced to behave, obeying the rules dictated by males and transmitted by women (38). She denounces the fact

¹⁶ See Therborn 73-106, where he discusses how much patriarchy lost ground worldwide in the twentieth century.

¹⁷ See Hite and Viterna for a study on the inclusion of gender in analyses of changes in the Latin American class structure.

that some women tell their sons to beat their wives for reasons such as gossiping and expecting their husbands to help with the rearing of children and housework (exactly what Stevens points out concerning *marianismo*). Further, she claims that the culture expects women to accept and be committed to the value system more than men (40). She (like Barbara Loach and others) adds the church to the list of those who reinforce these notions of women's subservience. She acknowledges that today a few women have a fourth choice besides being a nun, a prostitute, or a mother; that choice is through education and a career, entering the world and becoming autonomous. As a lesbian, she still seems to identify with heterosexual women, even though she often criticizes their perpetuation of *machismo*.

Barbara Loach points out that some Latin American feminists believe that "only as men and women recognize the benefits of complementary relationships and full participation by both sexes in all social spheres, public and private. . . the need for mutual exploitation will disappear" (41-42). This is the ideal relationship between sexes of which women like Allende, Cliff, and Lispector dream, but to which they see several obstacles. Sometimes in their works such a relationship occurs, as well as a growing awareness on the part of the female characters of the need for individual development through independence.

In terms of cultural specificity, from what the reader can grasp from the novels we are studying, Latin American and Caribbean cultural gender relations are very much alike. There are contributions from several cultures to the ethnic groups existing in these regions at present. Still the mixture and cohabiting among groups has produced a society that—like societies where there has not been much mixing—praises much more the efforts and achievement of men, and especially white men, than those of women, even though this situation has been changing slowly. Fortunately there are men and women who encourage

women to be successful outside the home and in the political arena, which is essential for the improvement of society as a whole. Women who hold top positions in society are still a minority.

The achievements of women characters differ in the works of Allende, Lispector, and Cliff. In Allende women characters from various social classes fight for social justice. This has indeed been the trend in Latin American feminist campaigns, which “were directed primarily at social reform, such as legal and social equality for women, and protective legislation for working women and children, with suffrage accorded only secondary importance.”¹⁸ In Lispector the most important achievements are personal and individual, whereas in Cliff the social-political stands out. The reasons for these different tendencies have to do with the socio-economic reality of each country, and in Lispector it has to do with her belief that the personal is extremely important. Her work reveals that a woman’s inner world is enormous. Also, one of the reasons that may explain why Lispector is more philosophical in approach is that she is more like North American and European women, more liberated politically, socially and economically.

Besides problems in the area of gender relations in Latin America, there are also concerns about class achievements. Thus not only do women there struggle to be equals with

¹⁸ Loach 49. One example of women who have gotten together to protest in Latin America are “The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo:”

A group of women who became a symbol of human rights activism and courage. Dressed in black, they have been demonstrating for years every Thursday at 3:30 in the afternoon, in the famous Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, demanding to know the fates of their loved ones. Marching around the statue of liberty, in front of the presidential palace, they used to tie white handkerchiefs imprinted with names of disappeared sons and daughters, around their heads, and carry signs emblazoned with photographs of those about whose destinies they sought information. The Mothers' use of the imagery of Christian motherhood made them particularly effective against the professedly Catholic military regime. The mothers are a symbol of courage; leading the struggle for justice, they started their demonstrations while the junta was still in power. Several of them, including their founder, Azucena Villaflor de Vicenti, disappeared themselves as a result. (“The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo”)

men, but there is also exploitation between classes: it is still common that upper and middle-class women hire servants and thus exploit them, so that they can enjoy more freedom (from household duties and childbearing) to achieve their goals in life. As Loach observes: “it is hard to justify the subordination of one group of women for the benefit of another” (51).¹⁹ Still a lot must be done to change that, especially since most women who can afford to hire servants do not think of that as exploitation, even though such servants often work extended hours for a minimum wage.

Exactly how and why people make the choices they do in relation to gender identity as well as who influences these decisions is seen in our three authors. It is clear that, as Butler claims, the category of woman is produced and repressed. Thus becoming a woman is a difficult process, as can be seen in the novels of these writers studied here.

In terms of shifting gender identity there is also much room for discussion, and both Allende and Cliff portray characters that make such changes. Allende with Férula, Count de Satigny, and Melécio/Mimi, and Cliff with Clare and one of Clare’s uncles reveal how there is gender shifting in Latin American and Caribbean societies (even though in some cases the shift is not permanent, there is a desire expressed for someone of the same sex). Hence some discussion will be devoted here to such transformations. No attempt will be made to categorize genders, since doing so is a fallacy, as pointed out by Susie Bright and Biddy Martin, who claim that “investments in sexual identity categories become stumbling blocks in current discussions of sexual practices and pleasures” (Martin 97). There are problems in categorizing homosexuality and lesbianism as a third sex (not to mention bisexual or trans-

¹⁹ For an interesting depiction of the contrasting lives of wealthy women in Chile and their female servants, see Elizabeth Subercaseaux’s La rebelión de las nanas [The Nannies’ Rebellion] as well as Debra Castillo’s Talking Back.

gendered people, etc.), since doing so leaves conventional assumptions of gender polarity and normal heterosexuality intact, as Martin notices.

This study does not intend to establish either that there are only two genders or that all women are equal. Women are, on the contrary, very different from each other and should not be categorized simply in terms of being born with a female sex. As a consequence of such facts as environment, the way children are raised, class, and culture, the gender identity formation process differs from country to country, novel to novel, and from character to character. As Stuart Hall points out, “identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions.”²⁰ Because gender is not constructed in a vacuum, and because of the particularities of the individual cultures of these three novelists, I shall also touch on issues such as class, relationships, race (a discursive and socially constructed-concept), environment, diaspora, and the ways through which these issues contribute to the development of the identity of the characters analyzed here.

²⁰ Hall, “Who Needs Identity?” 4.

CHAPTER II

CLARICE LISPECTOR: FEMALE AWAKENINGS

Visão de Clarice Lispector
Carlos Drummond de Andrade

*Clarice,
veio de um mistério, partiu para outro.
Ficamos sem saber a essência do mistério.*

*Ou o mistério não era essencial,
era Clarice viajando nele.
Era Clarice bulindo no fundo mais fundo,
onde a palavra parece encontrar
sua razão de ser, e retratar o homem.²¹*

Vision of Clarice Lispector

*Clarice,
came from one mystery, left to another.
We end up not knowing the essence of
the mystery.*

*Or the mystery was not essential,
It was Clarice traveling in it.
It was Clarice dealing with the deepest deep,
where the word seems to meet its reason for
being and portraying man.²²*

A. Perto do coração selvagem [Near to the Wild Heart], A Paixão segundo G.H. [The Passion According to G.H.], and Água viva [The Stream of Life]

Clarice Lispector (1920-1977) was the daughter of a Russian farm worker whose wife became handicapped and decided to have a third child, believing that having a child would cure her. Clarice was born, but her mother never recovered.²³ Her birth occurred in the Ukraine while her parents, of Jewish heritage and Russian nationality, were on the way to South America.²⁴ She spent her childhood in the poorest region in Brazil, the Northeast, and

²¹ Andrade 820-822.

²² All translations from the Portuguese and Spanish are my own, unless otherwise noted.

²³ Clarice later found out with happiness that her mother wrote diaries, but she claimed that no one else in the family besides herself and her oldest sister Elisa wrote.

moved with her father and sister to Rio de Janeiro as an adolescent. Thus her family was made of immigrants who tried hard to adapt to a new country. She started writing at a very early age, but none of her early stories were published, even though she frequently sent them to a local newspaper.²⁵ In Rio, Lispector began to work for a newspaper, *A Noite*, while she attended law school (simply because she dreamed of reforming the penitentiaries) and wrote her first novel, Perto do coração selvagem [Near to the Wild Heart]. Following the advice of a colleague and friend, Lúcio Cardoso,²⁶ she published her first novel a few days after leaving Rio with her husband. She read reviews of her novel while in the northeast, in the city of Belém, where she spent some time and wrote her second novel, O lustre [The Chandelier], before beginning her travels with her husband, the lawyer and diplomat Maury Gurgel Valente. Those travels lasted sixteen years, and included places such as Italy, Switzerland, and the United States (though she never enjoyed staying away from Brazil, as she stated on various occasions.)²⁷ During that time she had her two sons and wrote constantly, managing to publish many works. She also kept up a correspondence with many writers in Brazil, such as Fernando Sabino. After her separation from Gurgel Valente she

²⁴ In October of 1976 Lispector commented: “Eu nasci na Ucrânia, mas já em fuga. Meus pais pararam em uma aldeia que nem aparece no mapa, chamada Tchetchelnik, para eu nascer, e vieram para o Brasil, onde cheguei com dois meses de idade. De modo que me chamar de estrangeira é bobagem. Eu sou mais brasileira do que russa, obviamente” (qtd. in Outros Escritos 137) (“I was born in Ukraine, but already escaping. My parents stopped in a village that is not even on the map, named Tchetchelnik, for me to be born, and came to Brazil, where I arrived at two months old. Thus calling me a foreigner is silly. I am more Brazilian than Russian, obviously.”)

²⁵ *O Diário de Pernambuco* [*Daily Pernambuco*], which had a column for short stories written by children. Lispector thinks her stories were never published because they were “sensações” (“feelings.”)

²⁶ Lúcio Cardoso was the one who suggested Lispector use the lines from James Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man as a suitable title for her first novel; she says she had not read Joyce at the time.

²⁷ See, for instance, “Depoimento da escritora Clarice Lispector” [“Statement from the writer Clarice Lispector”] in Outros escritos [Other Writings], where she states: “Eu detestava, mas eu cumpria com minhas obrigações para auxiliar meu ex-marido. Eu dava jantares, fazia todas as coisas que se devia fazer, mas com um enjôo...” (161) (“I detested it, but I accomplished my obligations to help my ex-husband. I prepared dinner parties, did everything that needed to be done, but with apathy...”)

established herself in an apartment in Rio, where she dedicated herself to journalism and to writing her short stories and novels. She died of cancer in 1977.²⁸

Among the international critics that have noticed the depth of her *oeuvre* is Hélène Cixous. It was only in 1977, the year of Lispector's death, that Cixous started reading her work. Since then she has written and spoken a great deal about her, and has brought her work to a wider audience.²⁹ On the other hand, Brazilian critics have always (since the publication of her first novel) been interested in Lispector's literary production. Benedito Nunes and Jose Henrique Pessanha are two of those critics whose profound analyses of her works have appeared much earlier.

It is undeniable that Clarice Lispector wrote an unintentional autobiography within her literary production, revealing her inner world to the reader, even though she often felt that was an invasion.³⁰ The characters of her stories and her writing style still today, over twenty years after her death, remain intriguing. What happens with these characters in their development differs from the treatment of characters in works by Allende and Cliff.

Lispector's are described in depth; thus the reader learns not only about what happens to them but also what they felt and thought at almost every step of the works. It is fascinating to

²⁸ Clarice Lispector claimed there were no particular influences on her writing; she read Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment and Herman Hesse's Steppenwolf in her adolescence. She felt a deep connection with Katherine Mansfield. Later on she read Joyce, Woolf, and Kafka, but only after having written many of her books ("Clarice Entrevistada," Outros escritos 144-145).

²⁹ Cixous has described her impressions of Lispector's works: "I glanced at some fragments of texts, I was dazzled. . . And then as I went on in the text I discovered an immense writer, the equivalent for me of Kafka, with something more: this was a woman, writing as a woman. I discovered Kafka and it was a woman" (Cixous, "Coming to Writing" and Other Essays xiii). Other texts by Cixous that discuss Lispector's work are "Extreme Fidelity," "Reaching the Point of Wheat, or, A Portrait of the Artist as a Maturing Woman," Reading with Clarice Lispector, Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, Kleist, Lispector, and Tsvetayeva, and Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing.

³⁰ See De corpo inteiro [With the whole body], a collection of interviews given by Lispector where she talks about her own feelings in relation to literature and other issues, while interviewing doctors, writers, artists, politicians and other personalities.

analyze these characters because they are at the same time very accessible to the reader and very hard to predict. The way they develop themes of gender identity and the limits imposed by society on each and every person is sometimes almost cruel. In terms of relationships it seems that there is a lack, since in most cases the characters do not interact well with others, and even when they do their own interior world dominates the scenes.

The quest for identity is constant among several of Lispector's characters.³¹ Nonetheless, as Earl E. Fitz (2001) perceives, concepts of identity found throughout her work are not supposed to be wrestled with and then resolved but should be dealt with as “irreconcilable paradoxes, self-inquisitorial discourses that are as insoluble for the author and characters as they are for the reader” (11). Further, José Américo Motta Pessanha sees the search for identity in the works of Lispector as a search for the origin, for the egg Lispector wrote so much about. Pessanha, in “Itinerário da Paixão” finds what he calls “um rio subterrâneo” (“a subterranean river”) in the work of Lispector, a river which brings together many of the characters of her novels and short stories. These critics have noticed how deep Lispector's writing is, full of anguish sometimes, anguish that mirrors the writer's real search for her own identity.

Perto do coração selvagem [Near to the Wild Heart] was the first novel written by Lispector. According to an interview Lispector gave, she wrote it in nine months in the year 1942, and she felt it was like a gestation.³² The novel's structure seems at first to be quite

³¹ For instance, Telma Maria Vieira notices that Joana, from Perto do coração selvagem [Near to the Wild Heart], Virgínia, from O lustre [The Chandelier], Lucrécia, from A cidade sitiada [The Besieged City], Martim, from A maçã no escuro [Apple in the Dark], Lori, from Uma aprendizagem, ou o livro dos prazeres [An Apprenticeship, or the Book of Delights], as well as the narrators-characters of A paixão segundo G.H. [The Passion According to G.H.], Água viva [The Stream of Life], A hora da estrela [The Hour of the Star], and Um sopro de vida [Stream of Life] look for their identity in a game between real life and their souls. (57) These are all of Lispector's novels, and the same issue is present in most of her short stories.

simple, since it is divided into two parts, simply entitled “First” and “Second” parts, with nine and ten chapters, respectively. However, each chapter reveals itself as an ocean of internal experiences: the few events that occur open themselves to the reader through Joana’s observations and feelings, and occasionally other characters display the same stream of thoughts (such as Lúcia in the chapter “Lúcia” and Otávio in the chapter “... Otávio...”).

Several critics have noticed that Perto do coração selvagem [Near to the Wild Heart] continues its development in Água viva [The Stream of Life], published in 1973. Hélène Cixous, for instance, points out that “What has changed in the meantime is not the system of the coming onto the surface and of the inscription of signification, but form.”³³ She adds that in Perto do coração selvagem Lispector “had recourse to the geometric form of the circle of life,” and Água Viva “is its realization and its representation, which in style is rendered through the ubiquitous gerunds and present participles” (Foreword to The Stream of Life x). Água Viva is completely abstract, a dense poem in prose; all that is left is a narrator, a voice, communicating with the reader, but there are no characters, and the word becomes both the mediator between the “I” and the world and the origin of both, as Araújo claims. The long poem that Água Viva reveals the feelings of the narrator, who is a woman with a strong voice, a sincere voice that touches the reader.

B. Historical and Literary Context

The political and literary context of Brazil are important keys to understanding Lispector’s work as well as how common Brazilian citizens were seen and treated at the time

³² However, this is only one version she gave of the writing of that book, just as there are several versions for the date of her birth. The mysteries that surround her life and career even today are subjects of discussion. (See Gotlib 58-63, 172)

³³ Cixous, Reading with Clarice Lispector 30.

by the authorities. At the time Lispector wrote Perto do Coração Selvagem [Near to the Wild Heart], Brazil was under a dictatorial regime. The president, Getúlio Vargas, had imposed the system that was called “Estado Novo” [New State]. Under this system, which ran from 1937 to 1945, Vargas abolished opposition political parties, imposed rigid censorship, established a centralized police force, and filled prisons with political dissidents, while evoking a sense of nationalism that transcended class and bound the masses to the state. The Constitution he created was inspired by Fascism, which guaranteed ample powers to the President.

Literary modernism in Brazil officially started in 1922, with the “Semana de Arte Moderna” (“Modern Art Week”), a weeklong event that aimed at exploring the national richness of art.³⁴ The movement searched for a Brazilian original language, with the absorption of international elements as well as an attempt to rediscover indigenous themes in nature, and not importations of foreign material. Lispector’s work was, however, very different from the regional type of literature that was being produced at the time by canonical writers such as Guimarães Rosa, José Lins do Rêgo, Raquel de Queirós, and Graciliano Ramos. Theirs was strongly committed to social justice, whereas hers was aimed at interior themes and was also innovative in technical and stylistic terms. Fitz thinks that Lispector, even though possessing a social conscience, was not overtly political in her work. He also notices that she was a pioneer in dissecting the psychological state of Brazilian men and women. Her writings are truly remarkable in this sense. Carlos Haag states that:

quando cobrada pela suposta alienação social de seus textos, respondia que não discutia a miséria—no Brasil, esta era óbvia demais, e “sobre o óbvio eu não sei escrever”. Em seu tempo, Clarice nadava contra a corrente. Ainda havia a Guerra Fria, quando a maioria dos seus pares defendia o ideal sartriano do “escritor engajado”. Hoje, os narizes mais sensíveis se torcem com a lembrança desse passado. (Bravo! Online)

when questioned about the supposed social alienation of her texts, she replied that she did not discuss misery—in Brazil, this was too obvious, and “about the obvious I do not

³⁴ This is the “official” date; however, Modernism as a movement in Brazil began earlier than that.

know how to write.” In her time, Clarice swam against the current. Besides, there was the Cold War, when most critics defended the Sartrean ideal of the “engaged writer.” Today noses flip with the memory of this past.

Her first novel, Perto do coração selvagem, was controversial because she dealt with themes of existential anguish, so different from the norm at the time. Lícia Manzo, in her book ERA UMA VEZ: EU: a não ficção na obra de Clarice Lispector [Once Upon a Time: I: non-fiction in the work of Clarice Lispector], in which she searches for the author in the works of fiction, states that:

É importante ressaltar ainda que Joana surgia numa época em que a literatura brasileira encontrava-se profundamente marcada pelo documentarismo social da década de 30: uma literatura madura, de sólidos conteúdos e extremamente realista em sua forma. Joana, abstrata, cheia de matizes e mistérios era, portanto, um personagem inconcebível. Tão inconcebível quanto outra *personagem* que surgia em seu encaixe: a escritora Clarice Lispector. (5-6)

It is important to highlight that Joana appeared at a time when Brazilian literature was profoundly marked by the social documentarism of the thirties: a mature literature, of solid contents and extremely realistic in its format. Joana, lyrical, abstract, full of nuances and mysteries was, thus, an inconceivable character. As inconceivable as another *character* came up in her trail: the writer Clarice Lispector.

Manzo’s argument is that Lispector is one of the characters of Perto do coração selvagem, that her own identity and Joana’s are twin souls who share the same world vision.

Stage Two of Brazilian Modernism was also called the “Novel of the Northeast.” It lasted for about fifteen years, from 1930 to 1945, and was dominated by prose fiction, in opposition to Stage One (1920-1930), dominated by iconoclastic poetry and concerned thematically with advocating Brazil’s cultural independence, and to Stage Three, marked by the production of great prose and poetry, as well as growth in criticism and the essay.³⁵

³⁵ Fitz, Clarice Lispector 22.

Lispector later published several works that are considered to be part of Stage Three of Brazilian Modernism.³⁶

1964 was a very difficult year for many Brazilians, whether they were for or against the coup that started twenty-one years of a dictatorial regime that praised itself for bringing economical development, but also ended individual freedom and tortured and killed an unknown number of civilians, including several intellectuals and artists. Lispector published A paixão segundo G.H. [The Passion According to G.H.] in 1964, and the whole passion of G.H. taking place in a maid's room, a very claustrophobic space, is a perfect symbol of a dictatorship that is able to enclose an individual but not dominate her soul, as is the case of the transformation that occurs with the protagonist, an upper-class woman the reader knows simply as G.H. Lispector claims that the story of G.H. had surprised even herself (the author): “É, fugiu do controle quando... eu de repente percebi que a mulher G.H. ia ter que comer o interior da barata, eu estremeci. De susto! (qtd. in Gotlib 358) (“Yes, it ran out of control when... I suddenly realized that the woman G.H. was going to have to eat the interior of the cockroach, I trembled. Of bewilderment!”)

At the time Lispector wrote and published Água viva [The Stream of Life], between 1970 and 1973, Brazil was still under the dictatorial regime that began with the 1964 coup. The president then, Garrastazu Médici (1969-1973), was considered one of the harshest and Lispector, established in Rio de Janeiro, was undoubtedly aware of the danger of censorship limiting any artist's work. According to the historian Edgard Luis de Barros: “o regime militar de 1969 a 1973 foi o reino do contraponto bíblico do Leviatã, o império do ainda mais

³⁶ Including the novels O lustre [The Chandelier], A maçã no escuro [The Apple in the Dark], A paixão segundo G.H. [The Passion According to G.H.], Uma aprendizagem, ou o livro dos prazeres [An Apprenticeship, or the Book of Delights], Água viva [The Stream of Life], and A hora da estrela [The Hour of the Star] as well as several short stories and articles.

monstruoso *Behemoth*: a violência solta, desbragada” (62) [the military regime of 1969-1973 was the kingdom of the Biblic counterpoint of Leviatan, the empire of the even more monstrous *Behemoth*: loose, unchained violence].

The only novel Lispector published that showed social commitment was A hora da estrela [The Hour of the Star], the last she published before her death in 1977. The protagonist, Macabéa, is a very humble single woman from the Northeast of Brazil (like Lispector), who migrates to the Southeast to work only to suffer even more than during her childhood years. While in Rio, where she goes to work and to live a more decent life, she only encounters people who mistreat her.

In terms of the place Lispector occupies in Western Literature, Earl E. Fitz asks himself whether Lispector should be placed in the context of lyrical narrative, the phenomenological tradition, or the feminist (31)³⁷ Fitz believes Lispector figures among the true masters of the lyrical novel genre in the Western lyrical tradition, and cites Perto do coração selvagem and Água viva as examples of the genre. He compares Lispector to writers such as Hesse, Woolf, and Gide in this aspect. (32) He adds that the phenomenological fiction of Lispector is a meditation around the cognitive act of the human being, an always-reciprocal act in which the subject (the human consciousness) and the object (the other “things” in the world) relate dynamically. (34) Thus, Fitz also believes that the narrator Lispector is situated among the most powerful phenomenological narrators of our time. Finally, Fitz places Lispector among the greatest feminist writers: he claims that the feminist presence is always there in the Claricean fiction, giving to it, finally, a vital and even revolutionary power. He notes that Lispector fights against the various forms of oppression (sexual, economic, cultural, and psychological) that still exist in our world. Fitz concludes

³⁷ Fitz, “O lugar de Clarice Lispector na história da literatura ocidental: uma avaliação comparativa.”

that Lispector's work is lyrical, philosophical, and feminist: "Lírica, filosófica a feminista, a sua obra perdurará" (36).

C. Perto do coração selvagem [Near to the Wild Heart]: Paths of Awareness

1. Joana and her personal quest(s)

*O que Clarice disse, o que Clarice
viveu por nós em forma de história
em forma de sonho de história
em forma de sonho de sonho de história
(no meio havia uma barata
ou um anjo?)
não sabemos repetir nem inventar.
São coisas, são jóias particulares de
Clarice que usamos de empréstimo,
ela dona de tudo.*

*What Clarice said, what Clarice
lived for us in the form of history
in the form of a dream of history
in the form of a dream of a dream of history
(in the middle was there a cockroach
or an angel?)
we do not know how to repeat or invent.
They are things, they are particular jewels
of Clarice that we borrow,
she is the owner of everything.*

In terms of structure Perto do coração selvagem is divided in two parts. Whereas the story itself is small in both parts the amount of introspection and the nature of the problems approached make of the novel a gnoseological narrative (under the species of subjectivity, of perceptions, of interior positions). It is gnoseological because its goal is to search for the meaning of life; it is an adventure of gnosis, of knowledge. In the background, as Olga de Sá points out, the narrative focus reveals the first person. It is invaded by direct monologues, free indirect speech and verbs in the present tense.

Life is an apprenticeship for most of Lispector's characters. For Joana, protagonist of Perto do coração selvagem, this is no exception. She had had since she was a child a strong inclination to question notions and to rebel against what she thought was wrong, but she always counted on somebody to help her through with the course of action. Her father at first helped her, even though he did not have the patience she longed for; then after his death she

had the teacher at the boarding school who, like her father, could not understand her but assisted her by encouraging her to ask questions and to go deeper into her own feelings.

Because gender is culturally constructed and Joana is very sensitive to learning about gender categorizations, she questions whether objects are male or female. By asking “‘Nunca’ é homem ou mulher?” (17) (“Is ‘never’ a man or a woman?”) (15), the little girl is trying to make sense of what she has so far understood about gender.³⁸ Such a task is, certainly, overwhelming for her and the results of her questions usually make her father lose his temper. With time she is going to understand that categorizing words as either masculine or feminine does not make more sense than categorizing all human beings in the same way.

One of Joana’s distinguishing features is her restlessness. She is always hungry for answers to her questions, always in search of her place in the world. The philosopher Benedito Nunes notices that in Clarice Lispector’s writing the characters share certain similarities in the sense that they are restless characters, and the restlessness which consumes them overlays their personal identities. Joana is indeed very restless.³⁹ She is also a highly introspective character who is described by her father as “um ovo vivo” (13) (“a tiny, living egg”) (15); by her aunt as “uma víbora fria” (51) (“a cold-blooded viper”) (47); by her teacher as “talo frágil e ardente” (58) (“fragile and ardent stem”) (53); and by her husband Otávio as “um pássaro fino numa camisola branca” (121) (“a slender bird in a white nightdress”) (112). All these symbols (egg-viper-stem-bird) express movement and an implication of life and growth (that is, nature), and Joana is certainly at first a fragile but inquisitive creature who will eventually grow into a self-reliant woman.

³⁸ Besides trying to understand about gender in general she is also trying to make sense of (the Portuguese) language.

³⁹ Nunes claims she is the very image of human restlessness. (114)

Ellen J. Douglass⁴⁰ asks how a woman can undertake her own quest. In mythology woman is the one who can be known, whereas man is the one who is able to know. Lispector makes it clear throughout her work that the woman's quest also exists. It is easy to conclude that for Joana the role model of an adult was only the father, since her mother died young and left Joana an orphan, the only person she could attach herself to was her father. He was certainly a hero to her, and naturally she wanted to be like him, that is, a hero. Joana wants to be a hero, to be able to know. Her quest for knowledge is mixed with her search for identity, which started in her childhood years. At one point, during this phase of "the quest of the heroine," Joana has an insight of what an independent woman is like, and envies her. In the chapter "A Mulher da Voz e Joana" ["The Woman of the Voice and Joana"], Joana meets a woman who does not think it is sad to live without a man in the house. However, Joana is

⁴⁰ In "Female Quest Toward 'Água Pura' [pure water] in Clarice Lispector's *Perto do Coração Selvagem*," Douglass proposes three stages of quest in the novel: "the quest of the heroine," "the quest of the female hero," and "the feminist quest." This analysis proves what Judith Butler has claimed concerning how people change gender identity through life. In "the quest of the heroine" the quest myth is "feminized" in order to accommodate the protagonist's conventional feminine identity. In "the quest of the female hero" the protagonist is "masculinized" in order to accommodate the conventional masculine-centrism of the mythic paradigm, and in "the feminist quest" there is a rejection of notions of gender identity as the protagonist travels toward a non-gendered variety of identity.

Douglass believes that in the first chapters of *Perto do coração selvagem* an exploration of the "feminine side" of the patriarchal quest narrative occurs. She notices how between the chapters "O Pai..." ["The Father"] and "... Otávio..." the protagonist's journey is revealed: Joana plays "the role of the feminine other in the quest of a masculine hero" (47). Through her questioning of whether genderless words are masculine or feminine as well as her wish to be a "hero" (and not a heroin), Joana shows her desire to play the role of the masculine hero on quest, Douglass claims.

Douglass classifies the stage of "the quest of the female hero" as the stage in which Joana most resembles her namesake Joan of Arc, whose life was a mark of respect to the male principle that women should remain virgins if single: "Joana, like Saint Joan, rejects her patriarchally defined identity as feminine other, not with the intention of conceiving a new identity uninformed by patriarchal gender constructs, but in order to adopt the role of the masculine hero" (53). Thus in this second stage of development Joana is like a feminized male. She distances from that position shifting to the third stage after her relationship with "the man" is over.

The third stage of *Perto do coração selvagem*, "the Feminist Quest," according to Douglass, happens when Joana is distant from both Otávio and the man. In the last chapter, "A Viagem" 'The Journey,' Joana undertakes a journey beyond "masculinity" and "femininity." She has already begun to think about death, something she had discarded completely before. The men's departure coincides with her acceptance of her own death, "simples como o pássaro voara" (193) ("as simple as the bird had flown.") Carlos Mendes de Sousa, in *Clarice Lispector: figuras da escrita*, notices that in this chapter there is a clear allusion to Psalm 129 (Heb. 130), *De Profundis*. This Psalm is usually recited as a prayer to the dead. To Sousa this allusion comes to underline the night of the character (174); he defends that the metaphor of the night is suitable to characterize the writer's work, which is full of obscurities with moments of clarity.

still far from realizing that she herself can be as free as that woman of the voice, or even freer. That woman had a voice that sounded like earth to Joana (another implication of the strong connection between woman and nature). Joana could not forget that woman, since she had something to teach Joana about self-confidence. The woman of the voice could listen to life inside her, she enjoyed spending time with herself only at the window, but it is going to take Joana some time before she really understands why the woman seemed so important to her, even though she only spends a few minutes with her.

Joana's mother is talked about only briefly in the chapter "... A Mãe..." ["The Mother"]. She is described by Joana's father to his friend, Alfredo, who had come for a visit and seemed surprised to find out that his friend had a daughter. Elza, the mother, had, according to the father, a name that made him think of an empty sack. He says she was "cheia de poder" (27) ("full of power"), "rápida e áspera nas conclusões" ("so quick and harsh in making judgments"), "independente e amarga" ("independent and embittered"). She was the devil to him at the same time that she had hatred and contempt for others and was good. In this sense Joana and her mother are alike, they seem to encompass good and evil and they both had the same effect on other people. Joana had a negative impact on her aunt and uncle after she stole a book, they felt she was horrible, a cold-blooded viper. Elza was brought once by her husband to visit his family, and the reaction was similar, as he puts it to Alfredo: "Imagine então a impressão causada na minha pobre e escassa família: foi como se eu tivesse trazido para o seu rosado e farto seio—lembras-te, Alfredo?—os dois riram—foi como se eu tivesse trazido o micróbio da varíola, um herege, nem sei o quê..." (28) ("So you can imagine the impression she made on the few miserable relatives I possess: it was as if I had

brought into their rosy and ample bosom—do you remember, Alfredo?—they both laughed—it was as if I had brought in some contagious virus, a heretic, I don't know what...” (26).

Elza is different from other women, especially from other Latin American women, and her husband's family thought she was something like a virus. However, taking a close look at the few descriptions the reader has of her, it is easy to notice that Elza is the opposite of the submissive woman that men usually have (tamed) at home. Adrienne Rich states that the man has power over things, beginning with a woman and her children. Nonetheless, Elza is a woman who is full of power, independent (she did not really need her husband for anything), and is described as being the devil. Even though she is inside the house with her husband she seems distant; her husband is always intrigued by her since she spends so much time thinking: he had a constant vision of Elza walking in the beach, with “o rosto fechado e longínquo” (27) (“her expression sullen and remote”). She does not fit the descriptions usually given of a Latin American woman, of being either the “angel in the house” or “the monster in the street” (a whore). She is the devil himself, she is intimidating, embittered, and to her husband she is shrewish. She did not seem even to be able to sleep, but all she did was think. Silence was certainly her strongest tool, because of which she is referred to as intimidating. Joana follows her mother's example of having remained silent often since she was a child, when she realized that sometimes it was better not to tell her stories to her father or to Ruth, the maid: “nunca se permitiria contar, mesmo a papai, que não conseguia pegar ‘a coisa’” (16) (“She would never permit herself to confide, even to daddy, that she was unable to catch ‘the thing’”) (13-14).

One of the symbols in the novel that can be clearly linked with Joana gaining maturity is water. Water has a powerful meaning of cleansing, of re-birth. In the chapter

“...O Banho...” [“The Bath”] such scenes happen at least twice: first, Joana has a bath from which she leaves feeling something happened, she is unknown to herself and feels unloved, humiliated, and poor (64-66); second, she falls from a horse in a river and feels happiness (71). Water is the element of nature that most strongly influences Joana. Further, the writing style of Lispector can be said to be like the flow of water. This can be noticed in Perto do coração selvagem and much more in Água viva, which translates literally into “Living Water,” even though it was translated as The Stream of Life into English.

At the end of the novel, Joana is getting ready to leave in a ship after her father and then her lover abandon her. That moment is an acclamation of her liberation from everything that was attaching her to a world untrue to her essence. Further, in this final stage, as Douglass points out, Lispector, in the last lines of the novel, uses the metaphor of the horse to reveal that Joana and God are almost identical at the end (since the horse is the mythological symbol for God): “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) (“I shall transcend myself in waves, oh, God, for I need only fulfill myself and then nothing will impede my path until death-without-fear; from whatever struggle or truce, I shall arise as strong and comely as a young colt”) (186). The figure of the horse had already played an important role for Joana, when she was still living the stage of “the quest of the heroine.” She was in the farm of her uncle riding a horse, from which she fell in the river and was bathed with waters that brought to her a sense of happiness: “Antes estava fechada, opaca. Mas, quando me levantei, foi como se tivesse nascido da água” (71) (“Before I was impenetrable and opaque. But when I clambered out, it

was as if I had been born from water”) (65). The horse waits for her and, as she rides it, she feels close to it: “Alisei meus braços, onde ainda escorria a água. Sentia o cavalo vivo perto de mim, uma continuação do meu corpo” (“I stroked my arms where there were still trickles of water. I could feel the animal close to me, an extension of my body”). This brief experience gives Joana an insight of what she is going to achieve in the final chapter, as she is going on a journey that will claim who she really has become, an independent, assertive woman.

Joana realizes in the final lines of “the journey” that she is powerful, maybe even more powerful than God, since she claims she wants to be alone: “Que terminaria uma vez a longa gestação da infância e de sua dolorosa imaturidade rebentaria seu próprio ser, enfim livre! *Não, não, nenhum Deus, quero estar só*” (201) (“That she would terminate once and for all the prolonged gestation of childhood and that from her painful immaturity her own being would explode, free at last, at long last! No, no, no God, I want to be alone”) (185). At this point, even though the novel is open-ended, the reader feels that Joana has achieved the highest level of confidence to which one may ever rise, of having the feelings of God-like strength.

In the last chapter of Perto do coração selvagem Joana emerges bigger than she was during her childhood, and there is a suggestion that childhood and death are connected through “a strange symbiosis,” as Olga de Sá puts it. (186) Further, Sá perceives that Lispector wrote specifically about the horse in one of her short stories published in the collection entitled Onde estivestes de noite? [Where you Were at Night?]. In the short story, named “Seco estudo de cavalos” [“Dry point of horses”], there is a passage about how the horse *pretends* to be docile, since its inner nature is always fierce. The passage is entitled

“Falsa domesticação” [“False domestication”]: “O que é cavalo? É liberdade tão indomável que se torna inútil aprisioná-lo para que sirva ao homem: deixa-se domesticar mas com um simples movimento de safanão rebelde de cabeça – sacudindo a crina como a uma solta cabeleira – mostra que sua íntima natureza é sempre bravia e límpia e livre” (49) (“What is horse? It is freedom so indomitable that it becomes useless to imprison it to serve man: it lets itself be domesticated, but with a simple, rebellious toss of head—shaking its mane like an abundance of free-flowing hair—it shows that its inner nature is always wild, translucent, and free”) (106). A connection between a woman and a horse is also clear due to the loose hair; thus this connection can be traced also in the last part of Perto do coração selvagem, where there is a relation between the horse to God and to the woman. Hence, the feminist quest⁴¹ is complete.

In the same study the narrator (or maybe Lispector herself) reveals interesting facts about her own connection with horses: “Tenho um cavalo dentro de mim que raramente se exprime. Mas quando vejo outro cavalo então o meu se expressa” (49) (“I have a horse inside me that rarely expresses itself. But when I see other horse then mine expresses itself”). The same identification with horses is noticed in the following passage: “Já me relacionei de modo perfeito com cavalo. Lembro-me de mim-adolescente. De pé com a mesma altivez do cavalo e a passar a mão pelo seu pêlo lustroso. Pela sua agreste crina agressiva. Eu me sentia como se algo meu nos visse de longe. – Assim: ‘A Moça e o Cavalo’” (51) (“I already got along perfectly with horses. I remember myself as me-adolescent. Standing straight with the same haughtiness of the horse and passing my hand over his glistening hide. Through its aggressive, rugged mane. I felt as if something of me were seeing us from far away: ‘The Girl and the Horse’”) (107-108). The connection is extremely deep; the narrator imagines

⁴¹ See note 41.

herself seeing things the way a horse does. As the story progresses this connection becomes even devilish as horse and narrator turn into accomplices of the murder of the king, and the horse invites the narrator to perform Sabbath rituals of sacrifice. Together they go to hell: she cannot resist the call of the horse she stole from the king and confesses she was forced to kill the king, as well as her pleasure of performing robberies. She is then “feiticeira do horror” (58) (“witch of horror”) (113).⁴² It is interesting to notice that there is a picture of a horse ridden by a woman on the cover of Lispector’s book, Onde estivestes de noite? [Where you were at Night?] (1974) portraying the narrator with the demonic horse, since its eyes are bright red and the moon is full. That image is directly connected with the feelings Joana reveals early in Perto do coração selvagem, when she thinks of how evil is pleasurable for her. (18)

Connecting female characters with horses is constant in Lispector’s work, a union which reveals that these animals and the female characters share extreme freedom and power as main characteristics. A strong link between a woman and horses is also found in Lispector’s third novel, A cidade sitiada [The Besieged City], published in 1949. Lucrécia Neves, the protagonist, who after getting married becomes Lucrécia Neves Correia, is a woman strongly connected to the suburb where she was born and to which she returns after she becomes a widow of a foreigner she always hated. In several passages Lucrécia is described as having horse paws, revealing the posture, or sounding like horses.⁴³ The setting of the novel is a suburb, São Geraldo, which is growing in the twenties but there are a lot of free horses everywhere. After its growth with the construction of a bridge, São Geraldo was

⁴² This term follows the common stereotype of woman as witch.

⁴³ Concerning this novel Nunes points out that its characters seem to be puppets involved in an atmosphere of dreams (Leitura 20). To Sá, similarly, Lucrécia is a caricature of both Joana and Virgínia (of O lustre). (189) She also points out that the narrator in third person in this novel distances herself from the protagonist.

not a suburb anymore and Lucrécia, like everybody else, including the horses, decides to leave for good. The city has nothing to offer, and Lucrécia leaves searching for the woman in the photograph--herself. For most of the novel she seems to be not one character but several--the one who enjoys dating different men, the sarcastic one, the good wife, the lover, and the dreamer. Now that she is about to leave she wants to find her true self. Gotlib notices that the photo draws an instant form, which soon is taken to pieces and from which the map of a destiny is traced, for Lucrécia feels free after taking it. (266) Lucrécia aims at being the woman in the photo--the free, strong Lucrécia, who is going to leave just like the horses before being tamed, her inspiration. When she was married she was slowly being tamed just like the horses, but there is a sense of freedom after her husband dies.⁴⁴

An aspect of the narrative of Clarice Lispector, which reveals a continuous search for truth and for identity, is found in some of her works, such as “A Quinta História” [“The Fifth Story:”] there are infinite re-beginnings. The story is similar in essence to the structure of Perto do coração selvagem. Nevertheless, there is one difference: in “A Quinta História” the last line is exactly the same as the first. Regina Pontieri thinks that such a literary device of paradoxical non-ending is radical; the story closes upon itself through the same movement that opens it up to the infinitude. (163) In Perto do coração selvagem Joana is symbolically born again, in a similar circular movement. She is going someplace in a voyage, and knows that she does not need anybody to help her in her quest (which she is still performing when

⁴⁴ Schulenberg links horses to desire, stating, in “The Feminine Identity as an Urban Exploration: *A Cidade Sitiada* and the case of Lucrécia Neves,” that “the constant appearance of the symbolic figure of the horse assures that this idealized masculine control over the desires and movements of women is no longer a viable possibility” (62), and that there is a relationship between the sexualized image of the horse, the feminine narration of the city, and the steady increase of Lucrécia’s discursive subjectivity.

the novel ends.) She does not need either her father or her husband or her lover; she only needs to penetrate herself.⁴⁵

2. Evil and Joana

Childhood for Joana was a time she cherished and always kept alive inside herself. She seemed to have been a precocious child, and among her constant questionings was whether things were masculine or feminine. Thinking had always been something she enjoyed doing, including meditating about impossible notions such as the gender of genderless words. Besides this urgency for analyzing genderless terminology, Joana was inclined to do evil things, and admits that in a way that is peculiar but natural to her. The idea of the existence of an animal inside her was permanent, and towards the end of the novel it is further explored. But in the earlier chapters it is already mentioned, as in the chapter “O Dia de Joana” [“Joana’s Day”]:

A certeza de que dou para o mal, pensava Joana.

O que seria então aquela sensação de força contida, pronta para rebentar em violência, aquela sede de empregá-la de olhos fechados, inteira, com a segurança irrefletida de uma fera? Não era no mal apenas que alguém podia respirar sem medo, aceitando o ar e os pulmões? Nem o prazer me daria tanto prazer quanto o mal, pensava ela surpreendida. Sentia dentro de si um animal perfeito, cheio de inconseqüências, de egoísmo e vitalidade. (18)

The certainty that I’m heading for evil, thought Joana.

What else could that feeling be of restrained force, ready to explode into violence, that urge to use it with her eyes shut, all of it, with the unbridled confidence of a wild beast? Was it evil alone that one could breathe without fear, accepting the atmosphere and one’s lungs? Not even pleasure could give me as much satisfaction as evil, she thought with surprise. She could feel within herself the presence of a perfect animal, full of inconsistencies, of egoism and vitality (16).

⁴⁵ Maria Teresa Fortes proposes that this attempt of getting closer to her own identity is more pertinent for the novel’s project. (132) Fortes also defends the notion that the male characters of the novel constitute the background of the novel, since one of the fundamental problems of the work of Lispector is the problem of femininity (133) (most protagonists in Lispector’s *oeuvre* are female).

Joana does not always acknowledge that a wrongdoing is something evil.⁴⁶ When she is caught stealing a book and is confronted by her aunt, she simply replies: “-Sim, roubei porque quis. Só roubarei quando quiser. Não faz mal nenhum” (50) (“-That’s right, I stole because I wanted to. I only steal when I feel like it. I’m not doing any harm”) (45). In her mind what matters are her feelings after the wrongdoing: if she feels fear afterwards it would do harm, otherwise to her it is not evil: “- Quando a gente rouba e tem medo. Eu não estou contente nem triste” (“- Only if you steal and are frightened. It doesn’t make me feel either happy or sad”) (46). As Cixous, in the essay “Reaching the Point of Wheat, or A Portrait of the Artist as a Maturing Woman” stresses, in this way Joana is innocent, and she is actually outside the reach of the law and has a very strong position concerning her innocence. (44) Evil would have been done if she thought of those actions as evil.

There are several passages evolving around evil in Perto do coração selvagem that reveal a lot about Joana’s identity. The first of them is in the first paragraph of the novel: “Entre o relógio, a máquina e o silêncio havia uma orelha à escuta, grande, cor-de-rosa e morta” (13) (“Between the clock, the typewriter and the silence there was an ear listening out, large, flesh-pink and dead”) (11). The intrusion of this large, dead ear seems evil because it was not part of the system Joana was observing (formed by her dad’s typewriter, the clock, and the silence); the ear can be said to represent an outside force which was not invited to be part of the harmony of the house. Alternatively, it can represent the presence of Joana’s mother in the house, which scares Joana.

Whatever her reasons were for using the topic of evil so largely in her *oeuvre*, Lispector left a legacy of several works that deal with this topic, beginning with her first

⁴⁶ To Ivaldo Bittencourt evil is seen as something positive for Joana: “O mal querido é assumido. Além do valor, está o gesto de se gostar do interdito. Além da neurose, mas aquém da psicose” (83) (“The wanted evil is assumed. Besides value, lies the gesture of enjoying the forbidden. Beside neurosis, but beneath psychosis.”)

novel.⁴⁷ Ever since she was a child, Joana exercises her omnipotence as she manipulates her toys. The narrator explains that Joana does not need to be close to her doll in order to play with her, since even from a distance she possesses things. Melanie Klein, in Our Adult World and its Roots in Infancy, notices “an interesting instance of the influence of early attitudes throughout life is the fact that the relation to early figures keeps reappearing and problems that remain unresolved in infancy or early childhood are revived though in modified form” (11). Hence Joana-child feels that she can kill and give life back to her doll, and Joana-adult feels that stealing is a normal thing for her since she can do anything she likes.

As Joana grows up, she thinks frequently about evil, once responding to her teacher’s questioning about what is good and what is evil that “- Mau é não viver...” (53) ‘- Evil is not to live’ (49), which to her differs from dying, since for her “Morrer já é outra coisa. Morrer é diferente do bom e do mau” (“To die is something else. To die is different from good and evil.”) The doll Joana has, Arlete, and which she kills with a blue car before restoring it to life with the aid of a fairy, represents Joana, as well as the fairy and the blue car (both that which kills and that which restores life). Power is again present, and Joana is simultaneously

⁴⁷ Maria Bernadette Velloso Porto notices that the approximation between the feminine and the devilish suggests the choice of ways that dismisses the limits relative to the patriarchal logic. She advocates that the diabolic scene is a privileged space for the expansion of and experimentation with the possibilities of being. (279) Further, Porto believes that Lispector chose to write about themes such as black magic and evil to perform the trinity seduction-feminine-demonic in an attempt to fulfill the desire of leaving immobility (280). Yudith Rosembaum points out how strong evil is to Joana. It is an aspect of her realizing who she really is. She sees sadism as a remarkable feature of Joana, pointing out the second paragraph of Perto do coração selvagem, when Joana the child observes chickens thinking of them as “galinhas-que-não sabiam-que-iam-morrer” (13) (“chickens that did not know they would die”) (11). Rosembaum believes that Joana’s way of looking at the chickens, aware that they would be killed and eaten by humans, already reveals indistinctly the sadistic profile of the protagonist. That is, Joana is sensitive to what is wild in the relation between humans and animals and reveals pleasure because of that. Later in the narrative, after pleasurably eating chicken for dinner, Joana thinks of going to observe the live chickens: “A luz começava a piscar nos seus olhos e no dia seguinte, mal acordasse, iria espiar o quintal do vizinho, ver as galinhas porque ela hoje comera galinha assada” (27) (“The light began to twinkle in her eyes and next day, as soon as she awakened, she would go and visit the neighbour’s backyard and take a look at the chickens because today she had eaten roast chicken”) (24). Being able to do everything she wishes, as Joana herself puts it after confronted by her aunt about the stealing of the book (she explained to her aunt: “- Mas se eu estou dizendo que posso tudo” (50) (“But I’m telling you I can do what I like”) (46), is one of the manifestations of evil also noticed by Rosenbaum.

good and evil. But, following Joana's argument, dying is not evil; maybe being the car that kills is.

Even though the preoccupation with evil is constant in Joana's life, she rarely in fact does evil things. Evil lies in the background, in Joana's mind. It is true that she feels the presence of evil within her, and sometimes she actually does things such as stealing, finding a lover for herself, and throwing a book on an elderly man; also she does evil through her words, such as when she talks to her father or to her husband Otávio and ends up bringing them to a rage. However, for the most part evil is a force that is present but inactive.

Lispector develops the theme of evil much more deeply in a collection of stories published in 1974, A via crucis do corpo [The Stations of the Body], where the characters, mostly women, perform evil acts for pleasure, doing things such as desiring to be raped ("A língua do P" ["Pig Latin"]), revenge and murdering ("O corpo" ["The Body"]), engaging in prostitution for sheer pleasure ("Miss Algrave"), despair and alcohol abuse ("O homem que apareceu" ["The Man Who Appeared"]), envy ("Ele me bebeu" ["He Soaked Me Up"]) or exploitation ("Mas vai chover" ["But it is going to rain"]).

3. Yara-Lilith-Lídia

Lispector wrote a collection of Brazilian legends entitled Como nasceram as estrelas: doze lendas brasileiras [How the Stars Were Born: Twelve Brazilian Legends], which she based on Brazilian folk tales, most of which were indigenous tales. She wrote one legend for each month of the year, adding to the traditional tales a taste of her own wisdom. "A perigosa Yara" ["The Dangerous Yara"] was written for the month of May, when Yara tempts men to marry her. The story is a variation of the tale of the mermaid Yara, who tempted male

Indians to follow her under the waters of the river to be her fiancés. With her enchanting voice she bewitched whomever she pleased, and such was the fate of the dreamer and daring Tapuia. There was a party under the water, but later on in that month of May there came the beautiful brunette, Yara, adorned with roses and jasmines, looking for more fiancés.

Lispector finishes the legend with her comments: “Porque um só noivo, ao que parece, não lhe bastava./ Esta história não admite brincadeiras. Que se cuidem certos homens” (23) (“Because one bridegroom only, it seems, was not enough for her./ This story does not allow jokes. Certain men must watch out”).

Yara shares certain similarities with the character Lídia of Perto do coração selvagem and her attempt to be free to do what she pleases, even if having a lover is not acceptable by society. Yara also wants men, even against the norms of society. She does whatever she can to bring them to her realm. Lídia accepts Joana’s husband, her own previous fiancé, as her lover. There are more similarities between Lídia and Lilith, the first woman, according to some variants of the story. Lilith produced demon children (Monaghan 179), and Lídia was soon pregnant with Otávio’s child.

To Lídia Manzo, Lídia represents the woman Joana is not able to be: Lídia is the possibility of being down-to-earth, reasonable, quotidian, and distinct. (15) Lídia is always at home, sewing, thinking of marrying Otávio. Joana is the opposite: she was never sure about marriage for she knew she would never be alone as she needed. She does not allow Otávio to enter her world, so he looks for comfort to Lídia. Manzo also proposes that an alternate reading is that of Joana and Lídia forming two sides of Lispector:

Mas a constante oposição entre Lídia e Joana dentro do romance pode também ser lida como uma angustiante batalha empreendida por Clarice com ela mesma, onde a autora termina por cindir-se em duas partes distintas: a que quer se casar, viver ao lado do marido diplomata, ter filhos e ser uma boa dona-de-casa, e a que quer continuar seu

caminho de criadora sozinha, sem ruídos externos que a desconcentrem, aprofundando-se sempre no cerne de si própria, sem medo, intrépida como um animal selvagem. (16)

But the constant opposition between Lúdia and Joana in the novel can also be read as an anguishing battle undertaken by Clarice with herself, where the author ends up splitting into two distinct parts: the one who wants to marry, live with the diplomat husband, have children and be a good housewife, and the one who wants to pursue her career of a creator by herself, with no external sounds to disturb her, deepening always into herself, with no fear, fearless as a wild animal.

Similar to this point of view is that of Nádia Battella Gotlib, who finds support for it in a letter written by Lispector's ex-husband in 1959, in which he tries to convince Lispector to forgive him by means of comparing himself to Otávio and Lispector to Joana and Lúdia (Lúdia, to Maury, the ex-husband, is "uma faceta de Clarice" (qtd. in Gotlib 319) 'a facet of Clarice.'") Maury Gurgel Valente reveals in the letter that he blamed himself for not being able to join happily Joana and Lúdia in one woman – the complete Clarice Lispector -- that being among the reasons why Lispector wanted the divorce and settled herself back in Rio de Janeiro, where she lived until her death in 1977.

Lúdia and Joana do not hate each other; the former invites Joana through a note to visit her. Lúdia is firm, full of planes, whereas Joana is a line. They do seem to complete each other; nevertheless Lúdia is more powerful, self-assured, a mountain. She has full lips and an ample bosom where Otávio likes to rest his head (144) (Joana did not like him to do the same to her, as she needed her own space). She is as powerful, perhaps, as Lilith, the first woman of Adam, the tempting woman, the demon, the unconsciousness.⁴⁸ Both Lilith and Lúdia reveal their power through their appearance: Lúdia has "lovely, thick hair" (119) and Lilith is "an irresistible, long haired, she demon of the night."⁴⁹ Lilith also had a counterpart: Eve, a

⁴⁸ Silva 1.

⁴⁹ Koltuv xi.

subaltern woman, inferior, made of residues, subordinate to man, not like Lilith, the woman who was made of the same “material” man was made of.

Lilith is the one who denies she is depraved, like Lída, who proudly shows her pregnancy to Joana. However, Lída confesses that she would like to be married to Otávio. Lilith also longed for other beings in her own image,⁵⁰ godlike creatures, but was forced to go down to Eden to be with Man. Lilith and Lída share a strong similarity – both reveal their strength, their powerful bodies who seem to be stronger than Man’s (Lída confesses to Joana that she loves Otávio with her body). Joana could feel Lída’s strength, but Otávio would never be able to accept that, and Lída seems to be resigned about her position. Like Adam did not allow Lilith to be his equal, Otávio will never accept Lída as his equal, even though Joana knows that Lída is not afraid of pleasure. Further, like Lilith, Lída is happy to be pregnant, even outside marriage. Lilith captured Adam’s emissions to form little demon babies (Monaghan 180), and Lída expects Otávio’s baby. Joana also desires to become a mother, becoming closer to Lilith in this sense as well: “Eu terei um filho e depois lhe devolverei Otávio” (155) (“I could have a child and then give you back Otávio”) (144), Joana tells Lidia, to the latter’s amazement.

Lída had been Otávio’s fiancée and was abandoned by him when he decided to marry Joana. They were separated for some time, as Lilith was separated from Adam for some time to return later on and tempt him with pleasure. Little demons were produced out of that relation. Both Lilith and Lída are humiliated by man and God; however they are not afraid. Otávio can in terror see that there is a certain cruelty in Lída’s smile, a “crueldade distraída” (130) (“dispassionate cruelty”) (120). Perhaps he can see Lilith’s smile, indicative that her power prevails over all. Above all, her power is her freedom.

⁵⁰ Husain 3.

4. Desire in Perto do coração selvagem [Near to the Wild Heart]

Joana desires to be close to the woman of the voice and even to Lília. She was instantly attracted to the woman. With Lília she has similar feelings, an expression of same-sex eroticism that can be noticed in the following passage:

gostaria de passar pelo menos um dia vendo Lília andar da cozinha para a sala, depois almoçando ao seu lado numa sala quieta – algumas moscas, talheres tilintando -, onde não entrasse calor, vestida num largo e velho robe florido. Depois, de tarde, sentada e olhando-a coser, dando-lhe aqui e ali uma pequena ajuda, a tesoura, a linha, à espera do banho e do lanche, seria bom, seria largo e fresco. (147)

I should like to spend at least a day watching Lília go back and forth from the kitchen to the sitting-room, then have lunch with her in a quiet room – a few flies, the tinkling of cutlery – where no heat might penetrate, wearing an old baggy dressing-gown in a bold floral pattern. Later in the afternoon, sitting beside her and looking on as she sewed, giving her a little assistance here and there, the scissors, the thread, waiting until it was time for her bath and a cup of tea, it would be nice, leisurely and refreshing. (136-137)

But only watching Lília and offering her a little help would not satisfy Joana, she would also require to be bathed and taken care of by a woman who is “feia e limpa com seios grandes” (148) (“ugly but wholesome with large breasts”) (137)–Lília. Such desire felt by a woman toward another woman is indicative of Judith Butler’s point that it is possible to shift between genders, since gender is performative. Here Joana wants Lília, a sexual being of large breasts, to care for her.

There are very important men in her life that Joana loves and from whom she learns a lot: the father, the teacher, the husband, and the lover. Each of them helps her understand more about life and about herself; however, she is going to find out that something else is needed is order for her to really find her identity. The father is her hero and she does everything she can to please him and to attract his attention. She soon realizes he does not

understand her poems about the sun (the father) or herself. He is able to love her, pity her sometimes, but is not all she needs.

The teacher is a man whom Joana likes to see sometimes; for a while she thinks she is in love with him and envies his wife. She sees him once more when he is sick and she is about to marry Otávio, only to find out that the enchantment is broken. The figure of the teacher follows Lispector during her literary career. In a short story Lispector wrote while she worked for the magazine *Senhor*, which was re-published in 1964 in A Legião estrangeira [The Foreign Legion], “Os desastres de Sofia” [“The Misfortunes of Sofia”], for instance, the little nine-year-old narrator/protagonist confesses being attracted by the new teacher, even though he is “gordo, grande e silencioso, de ombros contraídos” (9) (“burly, enormous and silent, with rounded shoulders”) (The Foreign Legion 13). With that teacher, the ugly man, the little girl begins to learn to be loved, after he tells her he finds very beautiful the story she wrote about a secret treasure, and after that moment she realizes that “Ali estava eu, a menina esperta demais, e eis que tudo o que em mim não prestava servia a Deus e aos homens” (28) (“There I stood, the girl who was too knowing by far, and behold how all that was unworthy in me served both God and man”) (27). The girl learns that a plump teacher who at first seems to hate her in fact likes her, and that awakening is so strong that it makes her sick. Similarly, Joana begins to learn with her teacher what she later on is going to develop alone: that the quest for pleasure is the meaning of life.

Otávio, the husband, whom Joana likes and thinks handsome but to whom she is never really connected (he disturbs her peace, her desire to be alone), is someone who needs support Joana cannot provide. A bit insensitive both to Lúcia and to Joana, he is in fact afraid of them. Joana’s honesty makes him feel “inútil e afeminado” (91) (“useless and effeminate”)

(83) from their first encounter. Conversely, she foresees that he will embrace her and give her peace; happy at first as he kisses her, she then withdraws and becomes melancholic, then marries him, after knowing happiness will not be possible by his side. He leaves, but she had withdrawn first.

The lover is a man who follows Joana around for quite a while before their first encounter, when he takes her to his room. For him she is chaste, like a child or a virgin. Their relationship seems to have a quite paternal tone, since he is protective of her. They play word games together, as an echo of her childhood games she played alone or with her father. The man does not reveal his name to Joana, and she does not want him to; mysteries are essential to her. He is taken away (maybe to jail, Joana thinks), and his leaving motivates her to use her father's inheritance to travel, to humiliate herself in front of the world before dying, "De profundis..." The man's role is to indicate to Joana that she must go back to childhood, which she has always treasured, in order to prepare herself for the final journey of death. She sees that way open before her and at the end of the novel she is ready to go. As Roberto Schwarz points out: "Joana vê-se mas não se guia, voa às cegas com olhos abertos" (56) ("Joana sees herself but does not guide herself, she flies blindly with open eyes.") She seems to have found a way out, a way that will take her to freedom, her ultimate goal.

D. A paixão segundo G.H. [The Passion According to G.H.:] G.H.'s Re-Birth

*Clarice não foi um lugar-comum,
carteira de identidade, retrato.
De Chirico a pintou? Pois sim.
O mais puro retrato de Clarice
só se pode encontrá-lo atrás da nuvem
que o avião cortou, não se percebe mais.*

*Clarice was not a common place,
An identification card, a portrait.
Did De Chirico paint her? Certainly.
The most pure picture of Clarice
can only be found behind the cloud
that the airplane cut, it is no longer
noticeable.*

De Clarice guardamos gestos.

Gestos, tentativas de Clarice sair de Clarice *From Clarice we have saved gestures.*
Clarice

para ser igual a nós todos

to be like us all

em cortesia, cuidados, providências.

in courtesies, attentions, cares.

Clarice não saiu, mesmo sorrindo.

Clarice did not leave, even smiling.

As the reader opens the novel The Passion According to G.H., he/she encounters the following dedication:

A POSSÍVEIS LEITORES:

Este livro é como um livro qualquer. Mas eu ficaria contente se fosse lido apenas por pessoas de alma já formada. Aquelas que sabem que a aproximação, do que quer que seja, se faz gradualmente e penosamente – atravessando inclusive inclusive o oposto daquilo que se vai aproximar. Aquelas pessoas que, só elas, entenderão bem devagar que este livro nada tira de ninguém. A mim, por exemplo, o personagem G.H. foi dando pouco a pouco uma alegria difícil; mas chama-se alegria. C.L.

To Potential Readers:

This book is a book like any other book. But I would be happy if it were read only by people whose outlook is fully formed. Those who know that an approach - to anything whatsoever – must be carried out gradually and laboriously, that it must traverse even the very opposite of what is being approached. They and they alone will, slowly, come to understand that this book exacts nothing of anyone. Over time, the character G.H. came to give *me*, for example, a very difficult pleasure; but it *is* called pleasure. C.L. (Passion, translated by Ronald Souza)

Thus there is a clear concept of the necessity of a reader whose soul is already formed. That is challenging. However, the reader of this novel must allow him/herself to enjoy the voyage with G.H. slowly, in order to arrive at a certain happiness (perhaps this is the goal of G.H.'s journey).

The structure of the novel is circular. Its thirty-three chapters (the same number as the age of Jesus when he died and was resurrected) are connected through the repetition of the last sentence of the previous chapter. Also, the book begins and ends with six dashes, reinforcing the idea of circularity. The whole story happens within the timeframe of one

day.⁵¹ The narrator is mostly in the first person: G.H. tells her own journey. However, there are passages where a third-person narrator assumes the narrative (such as: “A G.H. vivera muito, quero dizer, vivera muitos fatos” (18) (“G.H. had lived a lot, I mean, had lived a lot of facts”) (17). Also, G.H. talks to the reader. Mostly it is a monologue, but there are passages of dialogue where it seems almost as if she were expecting a response, a real interaction with the reader.

G.H. is a character in search of her own identity. Her true name is unknown; the reader is only given her initials. She searches both for her name and for herself. The reader becomes aware that G.H. sees herself in the cockroach she at first fears, hates and smashes. In this novel there is an epiphanic moment (G.H.’s identification with the cockroach) that consists of the main event of the story. It is the moment when “a barata” (“the cockroach”)--female noun in Portuguese--and the woman become one. From that moment on G.H. is trapped into really seeing who she is, into finding her true identity.⁵²

With the intention of cleaning up her ex-maid’s room for her substitute, G.H. finds the room clean but, as she opens the wardrobe door, a large cockroach comes out. The insect does not have a chance to escape; G.H. smashes it. Later, she begins to realize how much she has in common with the cockroach. Cockroaches are undesired but fascinating beings, which are present in humans’ lives and see things that possibly most people would wish no one to see. The choice of this animal in literature is not uncommon—usually it is dealt with as an enemy. In Lispector’s novel understanding one’s own identity takes place in an uncommon

⁵¹ Luiza Lobo notices that this is one of reasons why *A paixão segundo G.H.* has been compared to Joyce’s *Ulysses* and to Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*. (See her review in *Clarice Lispector: A Bio-Bibliography* 115.)

⁵² To Cixous that is the moment when “it is the occasion to rethink the whole of human experience” (*Three Steps* 40). Cixous also notices that after actually eating the cockroach G.H. learns to think forward; G.H. walks “[t]hrough death, toward the recognition of love” (41).

manner, while the protagonist encounters the cockroach—thus the animal has a vital role here. It is nauseating to the protagonist and the reader, but through that nausea⁵³ G.H. will arrive at an enormous, incalculable ecstasy. The cockroach thus becomes almost a hero alongside the protagonist.⁵⁴

Jacques Lacan's essay, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," shows that the founding moment of the Imaginary is when the infant recognizes its image in the mirror. This moment represents an essential stage of the act of intelligence because the baby identifies with the wholeness of a reflected form, forgetting his own weakness. G.H.'s recognition of herself in the cockroach is similar

⁵³ Benedito Nunes points out that Lispector's nausea differs from Sartre's:

A partir desta experiência [a náusea], Jean-Paul Sartre conferiu aos seus personagens uma liberdade fundamental. Justamente porque a náusea revela o Absurdo, é preciso criar o sentido que a existência não possui. Este sentido, que deriva única e exclusivamente da liberdade, e é sustado pelos nossos atos, impõe-se apesar da *náusea* e contra o Absurdo. Para Clarice Lispector a náusea apodessa da liberdade e a destrói. É um estado excepcional e passageiro que, para a romancista, se transforma numa via de acesso à existência imemorial do Ser sem nome, que as relações sociais, a cultura e o pensamento apenas recobrem. Interessa-lhe o outro lado da náusea: o reverso da existência humana, ilimitado, caótico, originário. (Nunes, *O Dorso do Tigre* 101-102).

From that experience [the nausea], Jean Paul-Sartre reveals the Absurd; it's necessary to create the sense that existence does not possess. This sense, which is derived uniquely from freedom, and is sustained by our acts, imposes itself despite the *nausea* and against the Absurd. To Clarice Lispector the nausea possesses freedom and destroys it. It is an exceptional and passing state that, to the novelist, transforms into an access to the immemorial existence of the nameless Being, which social relations, culture and thought simply recover. The other side of nausea interests her: the reverse of human existence, without limits, chaotic, originary.

Lispector herself talks about her nausea in response to a question put to her by an interviewer about whether her book, *The Apple in the Dark*, were influenced by Existentialism:

Clarice Lispector: Não. Nenhuma. Minha náusea inclusive é diferente da náusea de Sartre. Minha náusea é sentida mesmo, porque quando eu era pequena não suportava leite, e quase vomitava quando tinha que beber. Pingavam limão na minha boca. Quer dizer, eu sei o que é a náusea no corpo todo, na alma toda. Não é sartreana (*Clarice Lispector: outros escritos* 151).

Affonso Romano de Sant'Anna: Still within this book [*The Apple in the Dark*], do you do readings or were influenced by existentialists?

Clarice Lispector: No. None. My nausea is in fact different from Sartre's nausea. My nausea is indeed felt, because when I was little I couldn't stand milk, and almost threw up when I had to drink some. They dropped lemon in my mouth. Thus, I know what nausea is like in the whole body, in the whole soul. It is not Sartrean.

⁵⁴ It is not uncommon in the arts to see roaches representing the plight of the minority—being constantly smashed upon but still able to survive. See, for instance, "appROACHES: an annotated bibliography of COCKROACHES in starring and cameo roles in the creative arts."

to this process of Lacan's Imaginary. The moment G.H. sees the shocking connection reveals her secret: "Era isso – era isso então. É que eu olhara a barata viva e nela descobria a identidade de minha vida mais profunda" (38) ("That's how it was, that's how it was, then. I had looked upon the live cockroach and had discovered in it my deepest life identity") (49-50). Further, for G.H. the process of identifying herself in the cockroach⁵⁵ was extremely difficult and contrary to her desires, but she could not help it: "Seus olhos continuavam monotonamente a me olhar, os dois ovários neutros e férteis. Neles eu reconhecia meus dois anônimos ovários neutros. E eu não queria, ah, como eu não queria!" (59) ("Its eyes kept looking at me monotonously, the two neutral, fertile ovaries. In them I recognized my own two anonymous neutral ovaries. And I didn't want to, oh how I didn't want to!") (83) G.H. remembers at that point that she had had an abortion, because she sees a similarity between the white mass coming out of the cockroach and the embryo she had inside her.

Lacan's concept of the mirror stage can be considered in two scenes concerning lapses of memory—G.H. forgets her maid's face (which she connects to the cockroach and, ultimately, to herself), even though she had seen Janair the day before. The opening lines of A Paixão Segundo G.H. are both about G.H.'s search and her fears about it: "----- estou procurando, estou procurando. Estou tentando entender. Tentando dar a alguém o que vivi e não sei a quem, mas não quero ficar com o que vivi. Não sei o que fazer do que vivi, tenho medo dessa desorganização profunda" (9) ("I keep looking, looking. Trying to understand. Trying to give what I have gone through to someone else, and I don't know who, but I don't

⁵⁵ According to de Vries's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery the cockroach is "a night-animal; also called ominously 'black beetle'" (106). Such a fact brings the cockroach close together to Kafka's metamorphosed insect which used to be the successful commercial traveler Gregor Samsa. Kafka's gigantic insect has numerous legs, a hard back, and a "domelike brown belly divided into stiff arched segments" (89). In Kafka a human being metamorphoses into a gigantic insect, whereas in *Lispector* a woman identifies with a cockroach and becomes more aware of nature and of her identity.

want to be alone with that experience. I don't know what to do with it, I'm terrified of that profound disorganization") (3). The reader is aware of her search from the very beginning.

G.H. is wealthy, friendly, resilient, and determined. She acknowledges that she lives in a place as elegant as herself, which makes her feel on the top of Rio de Janeiro: "O apartamento me reflete. É no último andar, o que é considerado uma elegância. É um verdadeiro prazer: de lá domina-se uma cidade" (21) ("The apartment reflects me. It's on the top floor, which is considered elegant. People in my circle try to live in the so-called penthouse. It's more than elegant. It's a real pleasure: you can command a city from up here") (22). G.H. also has an intense social life. Friends surround her, as she claims: "Sou agradável, tenho amizades sinceras, e ter consciência disso faz com que eu tenha por mim uma amizade aprazível, o que nunca excluiu um certo sentimento irônico por mim mesma, embora sem perseguições" (18) ("I am pleasant, I have sincere friendships, and my awareness of that gives me a gladsome friendship with myself that has never excluded a certain self-directed irony, albeit one that I don't push very far") (16). All that seems to be part of a performance that G.H. makes, and encountering her true self underneath the mask is a hardship for her. Slowly the reader learns a few things about her past, including the fact that G.H. had been a poor child.

The use of interior monologue in the novel enables the reader to detect the changes in the main character. G.H. constantly emphasizes that she begins to exist the day she opens the maid's closet and is forced to deal with the truths about life which the cockroach makes her see. Going through all the feelings she has after killing the cockroach makes her become a different person, one who can accept herself more easily and is braver than the previous G.H. The way she feels about the death of the cockroach reveals her strength.

It is interesting to notice how people from different worlds or social levels communicate in each novel: Janair, G.H.'s maid, communicates with her through a drawing she leaves on the wall of the maid's room, which scares G.H. but also makes her understand how Janair feels toward her. It is a drawing of three naked figures: a man, a woman, and a dog. She feels Janair's criticism, she sees herself in the man on the wall and she feels the sensation of Janair's silent hatred, "ódio isento" (28) ("indifferent hate") (33), as G.H. puts it, the absence of all compassion. That drawing is more than a simple drawing; it is a form of writing, a symbol for G.H. to recognize and interpret.

G.H. goes through a variety of feelings after the encounter with the cockroach and each of them is a step towards self-discovery. Scared at first, she starts to think about cockroaches: the way they can survive a month with no food or water, the way they come slowly apart after someone steps on them and keep on walking, the way they have managed to survive on earth more than many other animals. G.H. sees "a miragem de um deserto" ("a mirage of a desert") through the cockroach and knows that going through that desert is not going to be easy. She is afraid because she discovers that "o quarto morto era na verdade fecundo" ("the dead room was in fact fecund"), an indication of her becoming aware that she is not empty but a full person. After the first feeling of fear, G.H. is struck with horror--eleven o'clock is coming, she wants to stand up and leave after a fall, but first she has to shut the wardrobe door. She has to gather her strengths to leave that situation of danger, which she is not sure even if it really exists. Then she feels hope and resignation—she feels attentiveness just like a cockroach, whose only sense is attentiveness to living, and realizes that her own life process is related to her attentiveness.

After her feeling of impotence gives room to hope and resignation, G.H. is overcome by courage and joy. She quickly learns that her former fear was greater than it should have been and feels possessed by a desire to kill; it is hate that was growing inside her. She is in balance with nature, after fifteen centuries of attentiveness she finally grows strong enough to be in power. Killing the cockroach is just a step away, and she does that by closing the wardrobe door on the insect. At that moment she understands that she had done something not only to the cockroach but also to herself. Soon afterwards, however, she realized that she had not indeed killed it; it was still alive, looking at her. Loneliness and glory after life are the feelings that occur to G.H. as she sees the white mass coming out of the cockroach. Further, she questions life and death, seeing death as one of the stages of life.

The images of hell and desert are constant in G.H.'s stream of consciousness; she is taken through these places in her journey, but feels happiness on her way, for she knows she was about to relive. She wants to shout for help but cannot, due to her transformation, which is rapidly taking place: "E via, com fascínio e horror, os pedaços de minhas podres roupas de múmia caírem secas no chão, eu assistia à minha transformação de crisálida em larva úmida, as asas aos poucos encolhiam-se crestadas" (48-49) ("And I saw, in fascination and horror, the pieces of my rotten mummy clothes fall dry to the floor: I witnessed my own metamorphosis from chrysalis to moist larva, my wings slowly drying and opening out") (67).⁵⁶ She was going to be born again: "E um ventre todo novo e feito para o chão, um

⁵⁶ This passage can be compared with the transformation undergone by Gregor in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. The difference is that Gregor woke up as an insect (usually believed to be a cockroach, but that is questionable) which leads him to be repugnant by society—he becomes an insect that only brings him sadness and his own destruction—whereas G.H. slowly associates herself with the cockroach in Janair's room—which at the end brings her a high level of understanding who she is, in a close connection with nature which changes her into a new woman. Kafka's Gregor simply becomes an outsider (called "old dung beetle" (127) by the charwoman) who witnesses the pain he brings to his family after his own metamorphosis and ends up dying to the family's relief.

ventre novo renascia” (49) (“And a completely new belly made for the ground, a new belly was being reborn.”)

In a process that can be compared with the Passion of Jesus Christ, G.H. goes on experiencing her own Passion. Feeling trapped in a mine, she mentally asks for help and thinks of death, though she knows that she is alive and compares life to a gate that is constantly opening, maybe opening to the invisible, to the nothing that she finds out to be herself. Moreover, G.H. is aware that it is eleven o’clock in town. At that moment when she realizes that nothing is herself G.H. is scared. She knows that she has to feel; it seems she is about to give up everything there is behind the gates and enter into nature, no matter how risky this passage can be. The difference between her and the cockroach would then be non-existent. G.H. contrasts the mass that comes from the cockroach with Our Lady’s womb; the former does not promise either redemption or hope, whereas the latter holds out optimism for a better future, which G.H. certainly expects for herself as well.

In a touching moment for G.H., she decides to open her heart to love. Previously a woman who tried to avoid any sort of profound contact with others, now she does not want to fight against the force that made her succumb to love. In this erotic moment, G.H. remembers the moment she felt love for a man, and, about to kiss his eyes, she imagines herself weaving a man, just like that man had weaved her. G.H. does not let herself succumb to love easily; she still thinks of the possibility of the phone ringing and taking her away from the maid’s room. She had, though, turned the phone off so that she could work without being disturbed and now was forced to face the cockroach and surrender to its power over her, embracing all the feelings that formed the Passion which would raise her awareness of who she really was.

Holding hands with the reader, G.H. begins to narrate how her blind and secret search was, in a passage marked by musicality and poetry:

DÁ-ME a tua mão:

... - Sei, é ruim segurar minha mão. É ruim ficar sem ar nessa mina desabada para onde eu te trouxe sem piedade por ti, mas por piedade por mim. Mas juro que te tirarei ainda vivo daqui – nem que eu minta, nem que eu minta o que meus olhos viram. Eu te salvarei deste terror onde, por enquanto, eu te preciso. Que piedade agora por ti, a quem me agarrei. Deste-me inocentemente a mão, e porque eu a segurava é tive coragem de me afundar. Mas não procures entender-me, faze-me apenas companhia. Sei que tua mão me largaria, se soubesse. (64)

Give me your hand: . . . “I know, it’s awful to hold my hand. It’s awful to go without air in this collapsed mine into which I have brought you, without pity for you but because of pity for myself. But I swear that I shall get you out of here alive—even if I have to lie, even if I have to lie about what my eyes have seen. I’ll save you from this terror in which, for the moment, I need you. What pity I now have for you, a person I have simply latched on to. You gave me your hand innocently, and because I could hold on to it I have had the courage to plunge to the depths of myself. But don’t try to understand me, just keep me company. I know that your hand would let go if you knew” (90-91).

G.H. invites the reader to hold her hand because the company of the reader makes the process a little easier for her. At the same time, this holding of hands is difficult for the reader, to whom G.H. passes the responsibility of being strong and supportive.

The Passion goes on, scary once more, for G.H. feels the demoniac is taking her, that which is inexpressive. She believes that if someone is not compromised with hope she experiences the demoniac, and that if someone is brave enough to let go of feelings, she discovers the amplitude of life, the same amplitude that exists in the stars or in oneself. Remarkably, one is enflamed as if one saw God. G.H. claims, “A vida pré-humana divina é de uma atualidade que queima” (65) (“Prehuman divine life is a life of singeing nowness”) (93).

After twelve o’clock there are no more allusions to time; at that time G.H. “succumbed,” this all we find are allusions to light nuances. She mentally travels through different places and times, and goes even to places she has never been before. After G.H.’s

journeys, which include a visit to Hell, she feels that she no longer needs to hold hands with anyone; she can go on her way by herself: “Eu é que larguei a mão porque agora tenho que ir sozinha” (80) (“It was I who let go of the hand, because I now have to go on alone”) (116). Exultant, she claims that she knew the violence of the happy dark (hell), and she feels really happy about such an idea, of being demoniac herself. However, a bit later she once more wants to hold hands: “-Dá-me de novo a tua mão, não sei ainda como me consolar da verdade” (93) (“Give me your hand again, I still don’t know how to console myself about truth”) (138). She wants to be consoled for finding out the truth about losing her humanity: “E eu não quero perder a minha humanidade! Ah, perdê-la dói, meu amor, como largar um corpo ainda vivo e que se recusa a morrer como os pedaços cortados de uma lagartixa” (92) (“And I don’t want to lose my humanity! Oh, losing it hurts, my sweet, like leaving a still-living body that refuses to die, like the cut-up pieces of a lizard”) (137). She knows she has to accept the chance, but that process is too hard for her to walk alone.

G.H.’s relationships with men were brief and do not seem to have such a big effect to her. G.H. mentions about one of her affairs, a “wiser” man who knew the importance of doing nothing on holidays: “O tédio profundo—como um grande amor—nos unia” (100) (“The profound tedium—like a great love—bound us together”) (149). G.H. claims “Ah, as pessoas põem a idéia de pecado em sexo. Mas como é inocente e infantil esse pecado. O inferno mesmo é o do amor” (86) (“Oh, people attach the idea of sin to sex. But how innocent and infantile a sin that is. The real Hell is the Hell of love”) (126). G.H. does not love anyone, and this aspect draws her closer to Joana, who had been in a few relationships but never is in love. After the cockroach’s encounter, though, G.H. experiences love, which she describes as “aquele núcleo de rapacidade infernal” (85) (“that nucleous of Hellish rapacity”) (125).

G.H. reveals herself as a dual woman, once more like Joana: they both are at the same time, Heaven and Hell, angel and devil, strong and weak, brave and scared. As G.H. slowly realizes this, she becomes whole. Jung is aware of such processes on people's minds, which he says is the unconscious trying to become conscious: "The unconscious wants both: to divide and to unite... The unconscious wants to flow into consciousness in order to reach the light, but at the same time it continually thwarts itself, because it would rather remain unconscious" (166). If G.H.'s unconscious wants to remain this way; the reader has an explanation for her fear throughout the process.

G.H. finishes her process acknowledging the existence of a compulsory trajectory:

E é inútil encurtar caminho e querer começar já sabendo que a voz diz pouco, já começando por ser despesoal. Pois existe a trajetória, e a trajetória não é apenas um modo de ir. A trajetória somos nós mesmos. Em matéria de viver, nunca se pode chegar antes. A via-crucis não é um descaminho, é a passagem única, não se chega senão através dela e com ela. A insistência é o nosso esforço, a desistência é o prêmio. A este só se chega quando se experimentou o poder de construir e, apesar do gosto de poder, prefere-se a desistência. A desistência tem que ser uma escolha. Desistir é a escolha mais sagrada de uma vida. Desistir é o verdadeiro instante humano. E só esta, é a glória própria de minha condição.

A desistência é uma revelação. (113)

And it is useless to try to take a shortcut and start right in, knowing already that the voice says little, starting already with depersonalization. For the trajectory exists, and the trajectory is more than just a way of proceeding. We ourselves *are* the trajectory. In living one can never arrive ahead of time. The *via cruces* isn't a wrong way, it is the only way, you get there only through it and with it. Insistence is our effort, desistance is the prize. One gets the prize when she has experienced the power of building and, in spite of the taste of power, prefers desistance. Desistance has to be a choice. To desist is the true human moment. And it alone is the glory proper to my condition (170).

G.H. does not desist, though. Instead, she feels happy, she adores. She does not understand everything, but she goes on living: "a vida se me é. A vida se me é, e eu não entendo o que digo. E Então adoro. ----- " (115) ("Life is itself for me, and I don't understand what I am saying. And, therefore, I adore...") (173)

G.H.'s relationship with the lower class happens through her maids, who silently disapprove of her, or, like Janair did, communicate through symbols (the drawing Janair left on G.H.'s wardrobe is an example of this). G.H. had hidden a lot about her feelings, her true life, for many years before that day when she encountered the cockroach. Though there is no indication of her future, she is certainly going to be a different person, more aware of her own self and of her desires.

From a high-class woman who hides her feelings from herself, G.H. grows into a mature person who understands herself and seems to cope with the discoveries she slowly makes about herself. Such changes are crucial in the life of the protagonist, who goes through a process of growth into a mature, confident, and sensitive woman, one that gets as close as possible to her own roots (this journey is made with the aid of a barata 'cockroach,' which Cixous considers "the big immemorial Brazilian cockroach, our ancestor").⁵⁷ Furthermore, this "new woman" by an author Cixous calls "the female Kafka" is finally able to love and be happy.

E. Água viva [The Stream of Life]: Flow of Thoughts

*Dentro dela
o que havia de salões, escadarias,
tetos fosforescentes, longas estepes,
zimbórios, pontes do Recife em bruma envoltas,*

*formava um país, o país onde Clarice
vivia, só e ardente, construindo fábulas.*

*Não podíamos reter Clarice em nosso chão
salpicado de compromissos.
Os papéis, os cumprimentos falavam em agora,*

*Inside of her
What there was of halls, staircases,
fluorescent ceilings, long steppes,
cupolas, bridges of Recife wrapped
in mist,*

*formed a country, the country where
Clarice used to live alone and burning,
constructing fables.*

*We could not retain Clarice in our
land full of commitments.
The papers, the greetings talked
about now*

⁵⁷ Cixous, Coming to Writing 76.

*edições, possíveis coquetéis
à beira do abismo.*

*editions, possible cocktails
on the verge of abyss.*

1. The Writer, the Narrator, and the Style

Atrás do pensamento: monólogo com a vida [Behind Thought: Monologue with Life] was the first title of the long book which became Objeto gritante [Screaming Object] before finally being published with the name of Água viva, a much shorter version compared to the first. It is a novel that comes directly from the sensations of the writer, as Lícia Manzo (138) puts it. Lispector, in an interview, admits that it was a hard book to publish: “Este livro, Água Viva, eu passei três anos sem coragem de publicar achando que era ruim porque não tinha história, não tinha trama. . . . Foi o Álvaro Pacheco que publicou porque ninguém tinha coragem de publicar e o Álvaro quis, ele é arrojado . . . Ele publicou e saiu tudo muito bem” (qtd. in Manzo 157) (“I did not publish The Stream of Life for three years, thinking it was bad because there was no storyline, there was no plot. Álvaro Pacheco published it because no one else was brave enough to do it and Álvaro wanted to, he is brave. He published it and everything came out very well.”)

In fact, several critics (José Elias, Reinaldo Bairão, Léo Gibson among others) have questioned whether Água viva can be considered fiction, as the author wanted. In addition, in Água viva Lispector states: “Este não é um livro porque não é assim que se escreve. O que escrevo é só um clímax? Meus dias são um só clímax: vivo à beira” (12) (“This isn’t a book because this isn’t how one writes. Is what I write a single climax? My days are a single climax. I live on the edge”) (6).

Água viva is impossible to read without getting immersed in living water, without being taken into the fluidity of the text, as the reader becomes a listener of indescribable music and observer of a live painting:

Escrevo-te toda inteira e sinto um sabor em ser e o sabor-a-ti é abstrato como o instante. É também com o corpo todo que pinto os meus quadros e na tela fixo o incorpóreo, eu corpo-a-corpo comigo mesma. Não se compreende música: ouve-se. Ouve-me então com teu corpo inteiro. Quando vieres a me ler perguntarás por que não me restrinjo à pintura e às minhas exposições, já que escrevo tosco e sem ordem. É que agora sinto necessidade de palavras – e é novo para mim o que escrevo porque minha verdadeira palavra foi até agora intocada. A palavra é a minha quarta dimensão. (10)

I write you completely whole and I feel a pleasure in being and my pleasure of you is abstract, like the instant. And it's my entire body that I paint my pictures and on the canvas fix the incorporeal--me, body-to-body with myself. One doesn't understand music, one hears it. Hear me, then, with your whole body. When you come to read me you'll ask why I don't stick to painting and exhibiting my pictures, since my writing is coarse and orderless. It's just that now I feel for words--and what I write is new to me because my true word has remained untouched until now. The word is my fourth dimension. (4-5)

The narrator also wants a committed reader, one that will understand the narrator's "true words" even though there seems to be no logic in what she composes.

2. Recurrent Symbols and Evolution

There are quite a few elements that are recurring both in Perto do coração selvagem and Água viva, even though they were written about thirty years apart. One of them is the figure of the horse. Once more the horse appears in Água viva as a symbol of interior freedom, freedom of expression and freedom as a state of mind: "Deixo o cavalo livre correr fogueiro. Eu, que troto nervosa e só a realidade me delimita" (19) ("I let the freed horse run wildly. I, who trot on nervously, delimited only by reality") (12). The horses that appear in Perto do coração selvagem and in A cidade sitiada [The Besieged City] are in Água viva completely free.

However, freedom does not translate into good for Lispector. Evil is connected with happiness from the beginning of Água viva and occurs all through the text. The voice of Água viva is profoundly happy: "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) (“Hallelujah, I shout, a hallelujah that fuses with the darkest human howl of the pain of separation but is a shout of diabolical happiness. Because nobody holds me back anymore”) (3). Evil, thus, is strongly connected with freedom, bringing to the reader a sense that it is only when the voice of the text acknowledges that evil is a great part of her that she can feel free.

Death is also a recurring theme in Água viva. As Sá notes, the narrator sometimes asks to be excused in order to die, or to stop writing (208). The voice in Água viva dies several times and at the end of the novel the improvisation or narrative only ceases because the narrator decides to die a little as she finishes. But as a weapon against the fear of dying the voice challenges God, insisting on not-dying: “Aliás não quero morrer. Recuso-me contra ‘Deus.’ Vamos não morrer como desafio?” (95) (“Besides, I don’t want to die. I rebel against ‘God.’ Shall we not die as a challenge?”) (78)

The word is used in a more developed way in Água viva in relation to Perto do coração selvagem. The seed is found in the latter, but in the former the author is able to destroy all barriers between word and thought, between beginning and end. Ana Araújo, in “Os Múltiplos Aspectos da Palavra em Água viva e Perto do coração selvagem” points out that Lispector is able to pass from the abstract to the concrete without destroying the abstract in Água viva, something that was still an obstacle for her in Perto do coração selvagem. Also, Água viva finishes in a circular way, suggesting that there is no end to what has been written: “O que te escrevo continua e estou enfeitiçada” (97) (“What I write you continues on and I am bewitched”) (79).

Perto do coração selvagem can be read as a chain; it can be read starting at any page, even the last one. There are no barriers. Moreover, as Araújo observes, there are infinite gaps of meaning in the text of Água viva, gaps that exist in Perto do coração selvagem but are not found by Joana, who longs for but does not find the inexhaustible: “Entre ela e os objetos, havia alguma coisa mas quando agarrava essa coisa na mão, como a uma mosca, e depois espiava – só encontrava a própria mão, rósea e desapontada” (15-16) (“Between her and the objects there was something, but when she caught that thing in her hand like a fly and then looked—however much care she took not to let anything escape—all she found was her own hand, rosy and disheartened”) (13). In Água viva, on the other hand, the gaps are full of life, one can even get lost there:

Este texto que te dou não é para ser visto de perto: ganha sua secreta redondez antes invisível quando é visto de um avião em alto vôo. Então adivinha-se o jogo das ilhas e vêem-se canais e mares. 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)

This text that I’m giving you is not to be looked at up close: it takes on its secret, previously invisible totality only when it is seen from a high-flying airplane. Then it’s possible to discern the interplay of islands, see canals and lakes. Understand me: I’m writing you onomatopoeia, a convulsion of language. I’m transmitting to you not a story but only words which live off the sound. Thus, I say to you:

“Exuberant trunk.”

And I bathe in it. It’s linked to the root which penetrates through us down the earth. Everything I write you is tense. I use loose words that in themselves are free-flying darts – “savages, barbarians, ignoble decadents, marginal figures.” Does this say anything to you? It speaks to me. (19)

Besides the existence of a world of thoughts in-between words, the voice also conveys meaning from random, out of context words and phrases.

Pessanha is right to point out how close Água viva is to the second part of A legião estrangeira [Foreign Legion], a collection of short stories and chronicles Lispector published in 1964, which Lispector named “Fundo de gaveta” (“Bottom Drawer”).⁵⁸ Lispector considered those chronicles “o que não presta” (127) (“worthless”) (105). She confesses she likes “do inacabado, do malfeito, daquilo que desajeitadamente tenta um pequeno vôo e cai sem graça no chão” (“things which are incomplete or badly finished, things which awkwardly try to take flight only to fall clumsily to the ground”). The differences between Água viva and “Fundo de Gaveta” are that the former has no subtitles; it is more developed than the chronicles since it seems to be more of a whole. Furthermore, the ideas the reader encounters in Água viva flow better and are circular, whereas in the chronicles there is closure. Pessanha’s observation to Lispector concerning his impressions about Água viva is clear: “Você se transcendia e se “resolvia” em termos de criação literária; agora a “literatura” desce a você e fica (ou aparece) como imanente a seu cotidiano; você é seu próprio tema – como num divã de psicanalista” (qtd. in Ferreira 259) (“you transcended yourself and ‘solved yourself’ in terms of literary creation; now the ‘literature’ goes down on you and stays (or appears) as part of your quotidian; you are your own theme—like in a psychoanalyst’s couch”). The literary voice in Água viva is not only writing but also painting and creating an object, as she points out several times throughout the narrative. And what it is trying to express goes deeply into the mind of the reader, since it is composed by a series of abstract images and thoughts.

As illustrative of the search for identity in the chronicles of “Fundo de gaveta” it is worth taking a look at one of the shortest chronicles of the collection A legião estrangeira, “Aproximação gradativa” [“Gradual Approximation”], which indicates the narrator’s search

⁵⁸ Ferreira 259.

for a definition of her life, her identity: “Se eu tivesse que dar um título à minha vida seria: à procura da própria coisa” (221) (“If I had to give a title to my life, it would be the following: in search of my own thing”) (185). Uncertainty is constant, and the feeling that all appearances are deceiving is revealed in “As Aparências enganam” (234) [“Appearances are Deceiving”] (197), a one line long chronicle that simply states: “Minha aparência me engana” (“My appearance deceives me”). This sentence is a confession of how difficult it is to find one’s true self.

F. A hora da estrela [The Hour of the Star]: The Subtle Strength of a Certain Macabéa

<i>Levitando acima do abismo Clarice riscava um sulco rubro e cinza no ar e fascinava. Fascinava-nos, apenas.</i>	<i>Levitating above the abyss Clarice scratched out a ruby and gray ridge in the air and fascinated. She fascinated us, simply.</i>
<i>Deixamos para compreendê-la mais tarde. Mais tarde, um dia... saberemos amar Clarice.</i>	<i>We left it to understand her later. Later, one day... we will know how to love Clarice.</i>

Lispector did not write much about the place where she grew up, the northeast of Brazil, until A hora da estrela. She talked about the creative process of Macabéa, the protagonist of the novel, and also admitted she was tired of the character, in the interview to Affonso Romano de Sant’Anna and Marisa Colasanti: “Mas existe a pessoa, eu vejo a pessoa, e ela se comanda muito. Ela é nordestina e eu tinha que botar para fora um dia o Nordeste que eu vivi. Então estou fazendo, com muita preguiça, porque o que me interessa é anotar. Juntar é muito chato” (147) (“But the person exists, I see the person, and she commands herself a lot. She is northeastern and I had to bring out at some point the Northeast where I lived. Thus I am doing that, with much laziness, because what interests me is writing. Putting things together is very boring.”)

The novelty in terms of literary technique in A hora da estrela in relation to Lispector's previous work is the presence of an unreliable male narrator Lispector names Rodrigo S.M., who is sometimes ironic, at other times inquisitive, but always realistic.⁵⁹ He claims to feel a need to narrate the story of Macabéa, which has to be narrated by a man “porque escritora mulher pode lacrimejar piegas” (28) (“for a woman would weep her heart out”) (14). He is a writer, he claims, not successful, but since he needs to tell the northeastern's story he will do so, as simply as he can. He attempts to be like Macabéa in order to tell her story successfully (not even shaving, sleeping, or showering for some time). To Cixous, Clarice Lispector created the perfect author out of love: “Macabea [*sic*] needs a very special author. It is out of love for Macabea that Clarice Lispector will create the necessary author.”⁶⁰

Macabéa is described by Lispector in the interview mentioned above as a character who “só come cachorro-quente, café e refrigerante e ganha menos que um salário mínimo” (163) (“eats only hotdogs, coffee and soda and earns less than a minimum wage.”)⁶¹ This character, certainly a minority struggling in a big city (Rio de Janeiro) from a underprivileged background,⁶² poses questions of deep philosophical value. The narrator claims she is “empty” and enjoys being that way. Soon enough Rodrigo states:

Quero antes afiançar que essa moça não se conhece através de ir vivendo à toa. Se tivesse a tolice de se perguntar “quem sou eu?” cairia estatelada e em cheio no chão. É

⁵⁹ For a more complete analysis of the roles of the narrator-author in the novel see Earl E. Fitz's “Point of View in Clarice Lispector's A hora da estrela.”

⁶⁰ Cixous, “Coming to Writing” and Other Essays 138.

⁶¹ A minimum wage in Brazil corresponds to about US\$ 125 a month.

⁶² Earl E. Fitz notices that the theme chosen by Lispector, of overt social relevancy, “has to do with the ways Brazil's poverty-ridden Northeast blunts the lives of the people who live there, crippling them in ways that almost inevitably condemn them to unhappiness and frustration.” (Clarice Lispector 92)

que “quem sou eu?” provoca a necessidade. E como satisfazer a necessidade? Quem se indaga é incompleto (29-30)

First of all, I must make it clear that this girl does not know herself apart from the fact that she goes on living aimlessly. Were she foolish enough to ask herself “Who am I?”, she would fall flat on her face. For the question ‘Who am I?’ creates a need. And how does one satisfy that need? To probe oneself is to recognize that one is incomplete (15-16).

However, when she is about to die she curves into a fetal position and repeats mentally: “eu sou, eu sou, eu sou” (103) (“I am, I am, I am,”) (83) thus claiming she is somebody.

Somebody who cannot even claim a place in society, who survived during the time she did against all odds, but still concludes at the time of her passing that she was somebody.⁶³

Macabéa longs for culture. Barely literate, she makes many mistakes while typing (she has a job as a typist, which she is about to lose when the narration finally begins after Rodrigo S.M. talks about himself and his writing, slowly inserting the nameless girl from the North-east), and simply does not know the meaning of most of what she hears or reads (the narrator explains that she had only three years of elementary schooling.) One of her favorite pastimes is listening to the Radio Clock, where she learns much of what she knows.

However, listening to it makes her aware of how little she in fact understands of what she hears:

Todas as madrugadas ligava o rádio emprestado (...) invariavelmente para a Rádio Relógio, que dava “hora certa e cultura,” e nenhuma música, só pingava em som de gotas que caem – cada gota de minuto que passava. (...) Era rádio perfeita pois também entre os pingos de tempo dava curtos ensinamentos dos quais talvez algum dia viesse precisar saber. Foi assim que aprendeu que o Imperador Carlos Magno era na terra dele chamado Carolus. (53)

Every morning she switched on the transistor radio loaned by one of her room-mates . . . and she invariably tuned into Radio Clock, a channel that broadcast the correct time and educational programmes. There was no music, only a constant ping like drops of falling rain – a drop for every minute that passed. . . . It was the ideal programme for between each ping the announcer gave snippets of information that one day might stand her in good stead. This was how the girl learned, for example, that the Emperor Charlemagne was known as Carolus in his native land (37).

⁶³ Fitz sees Macabéa “[p]ossessed of an innocence and naiveté that is at once comical and pathetic” (93).

Listening to the Radio Clock leads her to ask her boyfriend questions he does not know how to answer either: “O que quer dizer álgebra?” (67) (“What does *elgebra* mean?”) (49) “Que quer dizer cultura?” (67) (“What does culture mean?”) (50) O que quer dizer “renda per capita?” (“What does ‘income per head’ mean?”) “O que quer dizer rua Conde de Bonfim? O que é conde? E príncipe?” (“What does Count of Bonfim Street mean? What’s a Count? Is that the same as a prince?”)

What Macabéa really longs to know is the meaning of her name. She complains she does not know what is in her name: “-Não sei bem o que sou, me acho um pouco... de quê?... Quer dizer não sei bem quem sou . . . [N]ão sei o que está dentro do meu nome” (73) (“I don’t know what I am. I think I’m a little . . . how can I put it? – Honestly, I don’t know what I am . . . I don’t know what’s inside my name”) (56). She does not know her name dialogues with the two Books of the Maccabees (1 and 2 Macc.), considered apocryphal by some churches but whose inspiration has been recognized by the Jewish and other Judeo-Christian churches. The two books treat of the Jewish struggle for religious and political independence against the Seleucid Kings.⁶⁴ The warrior Maccabees were heroes that stood up against the Greek King Antiochus Epiphanes, guided by Judas Maacabaeus (166-160 BCE) and his brothers, sons of Mattathias, who succeeded each other as leaders of the resistance movement. Judas was called Maccabeus and that name was passed on to his brothers. Like the Maccabees, Macabéa is determined to keep on living (the narrator Rodrigo S.M. states that in Macabéa there was no “miséria humana” (55) (“human misery”) (38) “Era apenas

⁶⁴ “Introduction to the Books of Maccabees,” The Jerusalem Bible 654.

fina matéria orgânica. Existia” (“Composed of fine organic matter, she existed.”) And in her own words, she explains to Olímpico⁶⁵ why she bore that name:

- E, se me desculpe, senhorinha, posso convidar a passear?
- Sim, respondeu atabalhoadamente com pressa antes que ele mudasse de idéia.
- E, se me permite, qual é mesmo a sua graça?
- Macabéa.
- Maca – o que?
- Bea, foi ela obrigada a completar.
- Me desculpe mas até parece doença, doença de pele.
- Eu também acho esquisito mas minha mãe botou ele por promessa a Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte se eu vingasse, até um ano de idade eu não era chamada porque não tinha nome, eu preferia continuar a nunca ser chamada em vez de ter um nome que ninguém tem mas parece que deu certo – parou um instante retomando o fôlego perdido e acrescentou desanimada e com pudor – pois como o senhor vê eu vinguei... pois é... (59-60)
- Excuse me, missy, but would you care to come for a walk?
- Yes, she replied in confusion and haste, before he could change his mind.
- If you don’t mind my asking, what’s your name?
- Macabéa.
- Maca – what?
- Béa, she was forced to repeat.
- Gosh, it sounds like the name of a disease . . . a skin disease.
- I agree but it’s the name my mother gave me because of a vow to Our Lady of Sorrows if I should survive. For the first year of my life, I wasn’t called anything because I didn’t have a name. I’d have preferred to go on being called nothing instead of having a name that nobody has ever heard of, yet it seems to suit me – she paused for a moment to catch her breath before adding shyly and a little downhearted – for as you can see, I’m still here . . . so that’s that. (43)

In Portuguese the verb “vingar” has a dual meaning: to be alive and to avenge. Macabéa is referring to the fact that she is still alive, but the interpretation that she has avenged something is also possible. She avenged the fact that some people would prefer that she had died, but she had revenge on them by surviving. Unfortunately for Macabéa she loses her parents while still very young and is brought up by a spinster aunt, who abuses her, hitting her constanly on the head.

⁶⁵ The northeastern young man who would become her boyfriend, the one who meets her by chance in the street on a rainy day, in fact the only person that ever notices her presence. They were “bichos da mesma espécie que se farejam” (59) (“creatures of the same species with unmistakable aura,”) (42) according to the narrator. However, Olímpico is soon going to despise her, not realizing they are alike.

Macabéa looks in the mirror, trying in vain to see who she is, to find the meaning of her life. She cannot identify with movie stars,⁶⁶ even when she puts on lipstick she is far from finding herself close to a star.⁶⁷ She can only become a star in death. Cixous sees the novel as “a discreet psalm, a song of thanksgiving to death.”⁶⁸ It does seem indeed that death should be thanked for coming to meet Macabéa, for at that moment she finally becomes certain that she is somebody, she becomes a star. The death scene takes about eight pages of the narrative (the whole book is only about eighty pages long). The reader sees those moments as the most important in the narrative, where she at first faces wild grass and thinks: “hoje é o primeiro dia de minha vida: nasci” (99) (“today is the dawn of my existence: I am born.”) (80) Soon it begins to rain (rain is constantly pouring in several passages in the novel; Olímpico even complains that whenever he meets Macabéa it is raining). The rain symbolically cleans Macabéa, who returns to a newborn state. People gather and for the first time Macabéa is noticed in the city: “o que lhe dava uma existência” (100) (“this gave her an existence”) (81). A man comes playing the violin in the corner—a sign of death, according to the narrator. Then she turns into a foetal position and knows at that instant that she is somebody and feels extremely happy: “teve uma úmida felicidade suprema, pois ela nascera para o abraço da morte” (103) (“she felt the warmth of supreme happiness, for she had been born for death’s embrace”) (83). She still utters clearly a phrase: “- Quanto ao futuro” (104) (“- As for the future”) (84), before almost vomiting something luminous, “estrela de mil pontas” (“star with

⁶⁶ Berta Waldman notices that such identification (between Macabéa and a movie star) is “grotesca e inviável” (101) (“grotesque and unworkable.”)

⁶⁷ Macabéa enjoys going to the movies and is fascinated with Marilyn Monroe.

⁶⁸ Cixous, “Coming to Writing” and Other Essays 137.

a thousand pointed rays.”) The narrator says he sees a little blood, and Macabéa dies. Or is crowned.

There is a peculiar relationship between the narrator – Rodrigo S.M. and Macabéa. He slowly learns to love her, and he identifies with her in several occasions, as he confesses: “ela se me grudou na pele qual melado pegajoso ou lama negra” (36) (“she has clung to my skin like some viscous glue or contaminating mud.”) (21) Once as she looks in the mirror he sees himself: “Vejo a nordestina se olhando ao espelho e – um ruflar de tambor – no espelho aparece o meu rosto cansado e barbudo. Tanto nós nos intertrocamos” (37) (“I see the girl from the North-east looking in the mirror and—the ruffle of a drum—in the mirror there appears my own face, weary and unshaven. We have reversed roles so completely”) (22). Furthermore, when she dies he also dies: “Macabéa me matou” (105) (“Macabéa has murdered me,”) (85) Rodrigo S.M. claims, and tells the reader: “Não vos assusteis, morrer é um instante, passa logo, eu sei porque acabo de morrer com a moça” (“Do not be frightened. Death is instantaneous and passes in a flash. I know, for I have just died with the girl.”)

It is only in the meeting with the angel of death that Macabéa meets her inner self and knows she is somebody. For the remainder of her life she does not even question who she is. For, as Cixous has stated, Maca “is in the place of a cockroach. Macabea is a talking cockroach, and as ancient, as primitive as the cockroach. And, like it, is destined to be ... crushed.”⁶⁹ Maca, soon after being hit by the yellow Mercedes,⁷⁰ is also compared with a chicken which, injured, runs around aimlessly in an attempt to escape from pain: “Como uma galinha de pescoço malcortado que corre espavorida pingando sangue” (100) (“Like a hen with its neck half-severed, running about in a panic and dripping blood”) (80).

⁶⁹ Cixous, “Coming to Writing” and Other Essays 171.

⁷⁰ Clarice Lispector often times deals with socio-political issues and this passages is one example of that.

Maca/cockroach/hen, the woman that is scarcely a woman, is close to being the most innocent woman on earth.⁷¹

It is clear that Joana, G.H., Macabéa (to a limited extent), and the voice of Água viva share similar identity formation processes. Joana is introduced to the reader as a very inquisitive young character who slowly learns to trust in herself and become free. She does not need anybody, especially not one man such as her teacher, her husband, or her lover, to guide her since she is powerful alone. Not even God serves as her company at the end; she demands to be alone to face the world. G.H. faces a moment of epiphany as she faces the cockroach and begins to rethink her whole life mirroring herself in the animal. She begins her own passion (like Christ's Passion in the Calvary), in the light of what the cockroach inspires in her. In terms of structure, A paixão segundo G.H. finishes and begins each chapter with the same sentence, reflecting the search G.H. undergoes to finally see herself as a whole. Like Joana, G.H. has nobody but misses nobody. The voice of Água viva has already formed her identity—it could be the author's, but not necessarily, since Lispector has denied it is an autobiographical novel. Água viva has been considered a more developed form of expression than other works by Lispector, since the narrator-character has already achieved a high level of maturity and speaks freely about death, about the writing process as a live painting, about questions of time and the fourth dimension, among others issues discussed in this chapter. The structure of the novel is fluid: the narrative is close to poetry and completely free, there are no chapters, only loose paragraphs that can be read beginning and finishing anywhere. It is closer in structure to A paixão segundo G.H., in which there is only one character and an imaginary interlocutor. A hora da estrela presents the reader with two characters, Rodrigo S.M. (also the narrator) and Macabéa that intermingle in search of an identity that is

⁷¹ Notice the close connection between woman and nature.

extremely hard to even acknowledge, since the character portrays a life of deeply oppressed people, those of the poor backlands of the Northeast of Brazil. Macabéa is very different from most of the other characters analyzed here. Perhaps she shares more similarities with Lucrécia, of A cidade sitiada,⁷² than with the other characters. Still Macabéa is able to search for her true identity, even though she is not capable of understanding most of what surrounds her, since she is a victim of a society that attempts to make individuals such as she as invisible as possible. Thus the work of Lispector flows naturally on several levels to raise important questions about the very existence of human kind, with its highs and lows, good and evil, exterior tidiness and interior untidiness walking side by side.

⁷² Olga de Sá has written about some of the similarities between the two protagonists: “Maca, como Lucrécia, é protagonista da cidade grande, da cidade sitiada. A moça e o cavalo, em Lucrécia viva; a moça e o cavalo, em Macabéa morta. Macabéa só sabe *espionar* como Lucrécia Neves Correia.” (215) (“Maca, like Lucrécia, is protagonist of the big city, of the besieged city. The young woman and the horse, in Lucrécia alive; the young woman and the horse, in Macabéa dead. Macabéa only observes like Lucrécia Neves Correia.”) When Macabéa dies, the narrator uses a metaphor to describe the car that runs over her – an ocean liner – and adds that at that very moment “em algum lugar do mundo um cavalo como resposta empinou-se em gargalhada de relincho” (98) (“in some remote corner of the world, a horse reared and gave a loud neigh, as if in response”) (79), a fact that brings to the reader’s memory Lispector’s previous novel, A cidade sitiada, with its free horses.

CHAPTER III

ISABEL ALLENDE AND WOMEN'S STRUGGLES FOR FAIR TREATMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

- A. The Novels: Eva Luna, Hija de la fortuna [Daughter of Fortune], Retrato en sepia [Portrait in Sepia], and La casa de los espíritus [The House of the Spirits]

Isabel Allende is the daughter of a Chilean diplomat; she was born in Peru while her father worked there. She considers herself Chilean and worked as a journalist for several years before writing her first novel, La casa de los espíritus [The House of the Spirits], which started out as a letter to her dying maternal grandfather that she wrote when she was around forty years of age. Her mother was abandoned by her father; left with three children she returned to her father's house in Chile, uniting to another diplomat who became Isabel Allende's stepfather. She was raised in her grandfather's house, which became the subject of La casa de los espíritus (along with her numerous and peculiar relatives). Isabel lived in Lebanon with her stepfather and mother during her teenage years. She went back to Chile while still an adolescent and married her first husband, Miguel Frías, with whom she traveled around Europe for a few years and had her two children, Paula and Nicolás. Back in Chile she worked as a journalist for the *Paula* magazine, serving as a member of the editorial team and being in charge of the humorous column "The impertinents." At the time (1967-1974) she also wrote feminist articles. Between 1970 and 1975 Isabel worked for Santiago's television, hosting a humorous program and an interview show, both of which enjoyed great

popularity. After the Chilean coup she decided to leave Chile due to her activism as a journalist. She went first to Venezuela, where she wrote her first three books, then to the United States, where she now lives, married to her second husband, the American Willie Gordon. She did not go back to Chile until 1990, when democracy was re-established and she went there to receive a literary prize, the Gabriela Mistral Award.

Allende's work has been translated into several languages and she has received many awards, including Best Novel (Mexico, 1985,) Author of the Year (Germany, 1986,) and Critics' Choice Award (USA, 1996.)⁷³ Her *oeuvre* encompasses various rewritings of history from a feminist's point of view, including memory, sexuality, magical realism, and other issues involving race, class, and gender relations.

The issue of identity is constant in Isabel Allende's *oeuvre*, especially female identity formation, as can be seen with the portrayal of the lives of so many interesting women, some from her native Chile, and some from other places in the world. Allende herself has claimed that the characters of her novels are in general special beings, and that she has chosen extraordinary women that symbolize her vision of feminism.⁷⁴ La casa de los espíritus [The

⁷³ Isabel Allende.

⁷⁴ Los personajes de las novelas son en general seres especiales. La gente común no constituye buen material para las novelas. Por eso elegí mujeres extraordinarias que simbolizaran mi visión de lo femenino, del destino de las mujeres en América Latina. Todas ellas escapan de alguna manera a la rutina, a las limitaciones impuestas a su sexo. Clara encuentra su realización en el mundo espiritual y la ayuda al prójimo, la caridad. Blanca se salva de la mediocridad por ese gran amor que ella vive como una tragedia y que marca todos sus pasos. Alba pertenece a la generación más joven y está proyectada hacia afuera, hacia al trabajo, la política, la preocupación social. Todas estas cosas están presentes en las mujeres de nuestro continente y han estado siempre. No inventé nada, sólo escogí los casos que saltan a la vista. (qtd. in Agosin 145)

The characters of the novels are in general special beings. Common people do not constitute good material for novels. That is why I chose extraordinary women who symbolized my vision of the feminine, of the destiny of the women in Latin America. All of those who somehow escaped the routine, the limitations imposed on their sex. Clara finds her fulfilment in the spiritual world and helping people, doing charity work. Blanca saves herself from mediocrity by this great love she experiences as a tragedy and that marks all her steps. Alba belongs to the younger generation and is projected out, to work, politics, social preoccupation. All these things are present in the women of our continent and have always been. I haven't invented anything, only chosen the cases that stand out.

House of the Spirits], Hija de la fortuna [Daughter of Fortune], and Retrato en sepia [Portrait in Sepia], as well as Eva Luna, contain interesting material for analyses of female literary identity formation. These novels trace the development of several women characters through periods of over 130 years, in the first three novels, and of several years of the history of Venezuela, in Eva Luna. Allende thus provides the reader with a rare view of history (which she often portrays in her novels) and of how women have been able to change over that time. It is clear from a close analysis of the fate of the women characters in Allende's novels that the most successful ones have the support of encouraging men.

Isabel Allende began writing novels late in her life; she was already in her forties when her first novel, La casa de los espíritus, still considered to be her masterpiece, was published in 1982. Since then she has published eleven more novels (including three for young adults that she dedicated to her teenage grandchildren), memoirs, short stories, children's stories, plays, as well as newspaper and magazine articles (she worked as a journalist before dedicating herself to literature). She has the intention of writing several more books ("at least ten more,") as she recently stated in an interview in Durham, NC.⁷⁵ One of the most common topics of Allende's fiction is politics, in particular the restrictions on freedom imposed by dictators in Latin America. In Allende's fiction the portrayal of the lives of women is constant, from their infancy to adulthood and sometimes even life after death. Further, Allende's writing encompasses a mixture of feminist agendas, magical realism, history, family matters, and other issues some of which are usually considered common to the "Post-Boom" in Hispanic America.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ She said so during a visit to the Durham Civic Center on 10/30/2004.

⁷⁶ Donald Shaw includes the work of Allende in the "Post-Boom" in Spanish American Fiction. He acknowledges that writing about the Post-Boom in the contemporary Spanish American novel means risking

B. Eva Luna: A Colorful Portrait of Latin America

Eva is one of Allende's protagonists who are able to thrive in life, even though she encounters various difficulties along the way, mainly due to financial reasons. The author wrote Eva Luna after having lived for several years in Venezuela, and she maintains that the character of Eva Luna can only be Caribbean. She feels that the tone of the novel is different from her previous writings: confident, green, exuberant, exaggerated. It was written at the time she decided to dedicate herself only to writing, and was more conscious about her own femininity and the feminist struggle.⁷⁷ Once more, as in her two previous novels, the female perspective dominates the reading, as a portrayal of a female consciousness within a patriarchal society. Further, Allende continues to use, as in La casa de los espíritus [The House of the Spirits] and in De amor y de sombra: novela [Of Love and Shadows], a "true"

generalizations, and also that there is no consensus about relevant authors, periodization, or methodology. He considers that above all the Boom writers were radically questioning reality and the writer's task. The Boom writing is not linear or conventional. The reader is constantly challenged. Furthermore, during the Boom period there was a tendency to replace an omniscient narrator by several narrators, as well as to employ symbolic elements. Raymond Williams examines some narrative strategies appropriated by Latin American modernists and concludes that they include "the use of interior monologues, stream of consciousness, varying points of view, neologisms, innovative narrative structures, and frequent lack of causality" (4).

Shaw believes that the Post-Boom writers tended to return "to fiction with greater emphasis on content, directness of impact, denunciation, documentality, or protest" (13). Post-Boom writing is more simple and direct than writing of the Boom, and has been seen by some as more realistic (and as such goes in opposition to the Boom). Since it is simpler it is more accessible and there is a return to love as a major theme. Youth culture has a strong impact in Post-Boom writing (accounts of the rites of passage into adult life through television and films, pop music, sport, casual sex, and drugs), and some of these are found in Eva Luna through the form of soap operas and casual sex (Rolf Carlé and his cousins). Alejo Carpentier was an author of the Boom who also saw the need for change in the late seventies (the end of the Boom). To him the next phase of the novel in Latin America should incorporate "melodrama, manicheism, political involvement, urban settings and finally 'la aceptación de giros sintácticos y de modismos esencialmente latinoamericanos' 'the acceptance of essentially Latin-American idioms and syntactic turns of phrase'" (qtd. in Shaw 7).

Shaw comments on Allende's work and acknowledges that her first novel was the single most important literary event in Spanish-American Literature in the 1980s. He specifically comments on the themes developed by Allende: love, social activism, and writing are the key activities he sees in the three first novels of Allende, and he believes these activities go closely together (59). Eva's initiation of love by Halabi circles around these activities, Shaw points out, since it brings forth in her mind an awareness of herself and Halabi was the one who made it possible for Eva to learn how to read and write.

⁷⁷ Rodden 194.

historical background together with the creation of remarkable characters (oftentimes based on real people she met). In the case of Eva Luna the setting is undoubtedly Venezuelan, with the portrayal of several dictatorships in that country, geographic descriptions, guerrilla warfare and the fight against it, as well as the amnesty given to the guerrilla by Raul Leonís.

Barbara Loach claims that the greatest contribution of Isabel Allende to literature has been the inclusion in her work of empowered female characters who triumph over abuse (103). Eva Luna is one of these characters. Allende calls her character not a self-portrait, but a wishful one, her “dreamself” (qtd. in Cox 72). Eva is, from her birth, a woman who struggles to survive and also struggles to be accepted by society as a person worthy of attention. From a very humble background, she was raised mainly by simple people like her godmother, a servant for a rich, eccentric man (Professor Jones, a foreign doctor who dedicated himself to embalming corpses). Because of such a background her only chance to succeed was by doing something that would attract attention to her, and the means she found was story-telling, as Allende herself explains in an interview: “Eva Luna exchanges them (her stories) first for food and shelter, later for friendship, and finally for love, because she seduces a man with one of her stories.”⁷⁸ Both Allende and Eva are like Scheherazade, a character Allende has been fascinated with since her youth.

Eva Luna never met her father, an Indian man who almost died when he was bitten by a snake and was saved by her mother, a simple virgin servant named, appropriately, Consuelo (consolation). The episode of Eva’s conception is one of the few examples of magical realism in Eva Luna, when Consuelo makes love for the first time in an attempt to console the dying Indian. Eva’s mother died a few years after her birth, leaving her alone in

⁷⁸ Rodden 205.

the world. The models she had to help her form her identity were the humble women she lived with, and at least some praise must also be given to the doctor who noticed the little Eva in his house and treated her well, providing her with some instruction. Even though she was largely mistreated by employers and ignored by society, she managed to encounter people who helped her accomplish something. The main theme of the novel is the triumph of poor, oppressed people through their personal quests (and the help they get from people who are or were, like them, poor and oppressed). The poor and oppressed groups are given a voice in the novel.

Eva is one of the narrators of the novel, narrating her own story in the third person first mostly in the past tense and then shifting to the present tense, mingling the narrator and the protagonist's voices.⁷⁹ She starts the novel by introducing herself and explaining the meaning of her name, "life:" "Me llamo Eva, que quiere decir vida, según un libro que mi madre consultó para escoger mi nombre" (9) ("*My name is Eva*, which means "life," according to a book of names my mother consulted") (3). Indeed Eva is full of life and is a very strong-willed woman from birth.⁸⁰ Even though she was poor she never seemed to be insecure and always stood for what she wished. As Karen Cox puts it: "Allende creates in Eva Luna a strong female artist, a woman true to herself and to her creativity" (71). Besides the explanation of the meaning of Eva's name, this first sentence also reveals the fact that Eva's mother, Consuelo, consulted books often, contrary to what is commonly thought of

⁷⁹ For a discussion about *Eva Luna*'s narrating styles, see Edna Aguirre Rehbein.

⁸⁰ Concerning the choice of the name Eva Luna, which is easily connected with the first woman created by God according to Genesis, see Ester Gimbernat de González. The critic also emphasizes that Eva's father has no name in the story, Luna (moon) in the name of his tribe (but the moon is also a symbol of femininity, especially since luna is a feminine noun in Spanish). The indian, Gimbernat de González claims, was the one who was seduced by the serpent (Consuelo) and had to leave the garden. Notice also the reading the critic does of Eva performing the role of a mother (to Dr. Jones, to Mimi, to Naranjo).

humble people. Thus, the reader has a hint at the beginning and can soon confirm that the influence of books as well as of the word itself was powerful in Eva's upbringing, since Consuelo had long conversations in private with her daughter, becoming a different person from the quiet Consuelo who worked for Professor Jones as a housekeeper and laboratory assistant. These teachings from Consuelo shape Eva's character, for she also is an avid reader, and later a writer. She uses story-telling to recreate the pasts of several people and to find pleasure in the world of fantasy when real life is too harsh (this habit was inherited by Eva from Consuelo, who believed that reality is not only what is seen on the surface.) Eva claims that Consuelo "sembró en mi cabeza la idea de que la realidad no es sólo como se percibe en la superficie, también tiene una dimensión mágica y, si a uno se antoja, es legítimo exagerarla y ponerle color para que el tránsito por esta vida no resulte tan aburrido" (28) ("She sowed in my mind the idea that reality is not only what we see on the surface; it has a magical dimension as well and, if we so desire, it is legitimate to enhance it and color it to make our journey through life less trying") (21).

In an interview with Celia Correas Zapata, Allende confesses: "I put in Eva's mouth everything I always wanted to say about the female condition; undoubtedly, she is very strong. But I think that hers is a practical feminism, assumed very naturally" (68). Eva was forced by the conditions she faced in life to work from the age of seven, and this fact certainly gave her the notion that everyone—man or woman—had to struggle to survive. She soon realizes that as a woman she would have to be strong, following her mother's teachings and support.⁸¹

⁸¹ Adrienne Rich acknowledges that "[b]ecause the conditions of life for many poor women demand a fighting spirit for sheer physical survival, such mothers have sometimes been able to give their daughters something to be valued far more highly than full-time mothering" (247). Eva's mother is an example of such mothers; Consuelo gives Eva support and even saves her daughter from giving up her life in despair. Rich's theory that

Allende confesses that she most identifies with Eva “because she rebels against her destiny and makes her way by using the one gift nature gave her: the gift of telling a story. Because she is feminine and feminist. Because she has a just heart, and does not fear her sensuality” (qtd. in Correas Zapata 70). Eva’s journey through life is full of challenges, disappointments, and problems, but it was also one of constant learning and evolution toward the goal of being respected as a woman, being successful as a story teller, and finding true love.

Eva has a strong relationship with Huberto Naranjo, a poor street boy who ends up becoming the popular El Comandante Rogelio, leader of the revolution against the cruel official national leaders. Naranjo is a brave man; however, he is not the right match for Eva since he is too “machista.” He cannot, for instance, accept the fact that Eva loses her virginity through consensual sex. She tells him that she was raped by government soldiers because she knows Naranjo would never accept the truth. Also, he never feels like listening to one of Eva’s stories, revealing his lack of interest in what she most liked. Eva later meets Rolf Carlé, a man committed to helping people and to social justice, a perfect match for her, since he understands and supports Eva on all levels.

To Eva’s growth and success the help and support of other marginalized characters like her is crucial. Hence characters such as her godmother, other humble servants, Huberto Naranjo, La Señora (a businesswoman who was in the sex business and gives her food and shelter when she needs), and Melecio (who later becomes the trans-sexual Mimi) constitute the initial helping hands she needed to develop. Even though they are part of marginalized groups, each of them helps Eva in life, contrary to common expectations that such groups

there are women who function as a second mother to a girl, women such as “an unmarried woman professor, alive with ideas, who represents the choice of a vigorous work life, of ‘living alone and liking it’” (248) is illustrated in Allende’s novel in the figure of Eva’s private teacher, the schoolteacher Inés.

cannot show solidarity toward each other and become an extended family. Thus the professor's cook becomes "la madrina" (Eva's godmother), and an older servant at the house where Eva worked for over three years of her childhood becomes "la abuela" ("grandmother.") Pilar V. Rotella⁸² notices that such groups are, in the novel, even better organized than the police force and "behave more decently than highly placed government officials" (129).

Eva meets a benefactor, a merchant who has his own personal problems but has a big heart and provides Eva not only with food and shelter but also with a birth certificate and a private teacher—very important tools for the accomplishments of anybody in life. Thus Eva is a heroine, but she is also lucky to encounter so many good people willing to help her. Riad Halabí is at first a father figure to Eva, and later is seduced by her, when she becomes a teenager and her body awakes for sensuality. She knows that she is ready for that moment and takes the initiative; however she at that point is not yet self-reliant enough to tell her boyfriend Naranjo that she did that for passion. Halabí teaches Eva the sensual belly dance, dancing it for her, and tells her to dance it only to the man she will love. He is a good man, and Allende in describing him expresses her fondness for the character:

Desde la sombra salió Riad Halabí. Él ya venía con un nombre, venía vestido con un traje café, tenía el labio leporino. Y pensé que tenía que borrar ese defecto porque era feo, pero no pude hacerlo. Ya tenía su tono de voz, su color, su olor, su enorme y generoso corazón. Y vino al rescate de Eva Luna. Yo creo que toda la parte de Eva Luna con Riad Halabí es la mejor del libro. Es lo que más me gusta de la novela porque allí hay algo que no lo hice yo sino Riad Halabí. A veces pienso que tal vez en el Líbano yo conocí a una persona así... (qtd. in Riquelme Rojas 196)

⁸² Rotella published an article that indicates that *Eva Luna* fits extremely well in the Spanish picaresque tradition, both in themes developed and in structure (some notable exceptions, though, are the love affairs lived by Eva and the fact that she is not a real picara, one who takes advantage of any situation no matter what means must be employed, and the final part of the novel, which sounds much more like romance, not like the chaos of the picaresque world). Gálvez-Carlisle also writes about the picaresque in the novel. See "El sabor picaresco en *Eva Luna*," where she points out that Eva and Huberto are both picares and that Allende in this novel incorporates a satirical and sometimes derogatory humor.

From the shade came out Riad Halabi. He already came with a name, dressed in coffee color clothes, he had a cleft lip. And I thought that I had to erase this defect because it was ugly, but I could not do that. He had his tone of voice, his color, his smell, his enormous and generous heart. And came to rescue Eva Luna. I believe that the whole part involving Eva Luna with Riad Halabí is the best in the book. It is what I like most in the novel because there is something that I did not do but he did. Sometimes I think that maybe in Lebanon I met someone like that...

Eva really develops into a woman with high self-esteem after she meets Riad Halabí, but their relationship ends abruptly due to pressures of society, and years later Halabí does not even look up to see her face when she comes back to see him. She leaves unrecognized by him.

When Eva meets by chance the hero of her childhood she immediately falls in love with him, as when they were young teenagers. Huberto Naranjo and Eva had not seen each other for over seven years; however their old, disguised love has now a chance to develop. The street boy is now the leader of the guerrillas, and spends most of the time in the mountains. The narrator Eva explains that Naranjo felt lonely and longed for a female companion: “Cuando podía ofrecerse el lujo de pensar en sí mismo, lo agobiaba el anhelo de tener en los brazos a una muchacha que fuera sólo suya, de poseerla por completo, de que ella lo esperara, lo deseara y le fuera fiel” (207) (“When he could allow himself the luxury of thinking about himself, he was overwhelmed with a desire to hold a girl in his arms who belonged to him, someone he could possess totally, someone who would wait for him, want only him, be faithful to him”) (197). From this passage the reader concludes that something was wrong with that relationship from the beginning – a girl who would wait and belong to him cannot be Eva. Maybe for some time, yes, and that is what happens. But Eva wants someone who can be an equal mate, not only someone who will come to see her every now and then, leaving her out of his doings. That person is still to arrive.

Eva meets her new companion, the hard-working reporter and film-maker, Rolf Carlé. Whereas Eva narrates her own story in the first person, the story of Rolf is narrated in the third person in alternation with hers; thus the reader is already acquainted with Rolf Carlé's and Eva Luna's stories when they first meet. Together they fight for social justice, and this is one of the main reasons why their love is strong—because they both show they care for other people and support anti-government guerrillas. Eva, however, is not as idealistic as “El Comandante Rogelio” and the guerrilla group: she thinks they cannot win the battle that way; she wants and believes in social justice.

Eva helps Rolf heal wounds from his past, when he, his mother, brother and sister were constantly victims of physical and emotional abuse from his father. Eva is his first listener, as he reveals his trust in her. Rolf also listens sympathetically to Eva's stories – both the real ones and the ones she crafts. He supports her in her profession of creator of the soap opera that tells the events that happen during the guerrilla warfare, and this is the kind of support Eva and other women need to succeed in their careers and feel really loved. He respects and loves her, but it is only in the final pages of the novel, after they withdraw in fear of being punished because of the soap opera events, that they realize their love and kiss for the first time:

Sentí que me observaba de lejos durante unos minutos. Supongo que al fin decidió que bastaba de rodeos, y se dispuso a exponerme sus puntos de vista con la mayor claridad, dentro de las normas de cortesía que le eran habituales. Se acercó a grandes pasos y procedió a besarme tal como ocurre en las novelas románticas, tal como yo esperaba que lo hiciera desde hacía un siglo y tal como estaba describiendo momentos antes el encuentro de mis protagonistas en *Bolero*. Aproveché la cercanía para husmearlo con disimulo y así identifiqué el olor de mi pareja. Comprendí entonces por qué desde la primera vez creí haberlo conocido antes. A fin de cuentas, todo se reducía al hecho elemental de haber encontrado a mi hombre, después de tanto andar escudriñando por todos lados en su búsqueda. Parece que el tuvo la misma impresión y posiblemente llegó a una conclusión similar, aunque con algunas reservas, teniendo en cuenta su temperamento racional. Seguimos acariciándonos y susurrando esas palabras que sólo los

nuevos amantes se atreven a pronunciar porque aún son inmunes al prejuicio de la cursilería. (284-285)

I could feel him observing me from a distance. I suppose that finally he decided there had been enough time wasted and it was the moment to demonstrate his thoughts in clearer terms, always within the bounds of his usual courtliness. He strode forward, and kissed me exactly as it happens in romantic novels, exactly as I had been wanting him to do for a century, and exactly as I had been describing moments before in a scene between the protagonists of my *Bolero*. Once we were close, I was able unobtrusively to drink in the smell of the man, recognizing, at long last, the scent of the other half of my being. I understood then why from the first I thought I had known him before. Quite simply, it all came down to the elemental fact that I had found my mate, after so many weary years searching for him. It seemed that he felt the same, and may have reached the identical conclusion, although—always bearing in mind his rational temperament—perhaps with some small reservations. We stood caressing and whispering those words that only new lovers, to whom all the familiar words sound freshly coined, dare speak (270-271).

This passage is romantic, but also central to the notion that first they meet and learn a lot about each other and see how well they complete and support each other. Only later they actually begin a romantic relationship, when they are sure about their feelings. Wolfgang Karrer believes that Eva is perpetuating what her mother did when mating with an Indian man, when she joins Rolf: “By mating with a European immigrant she follows her parents’ act of creation. The cultural code of ‘mestizaje’ ... writes the beginning and the end of Eva’s story” (157).

Eva helps Rolf heal his wounds, and this is not the first time she works as a healer or mother-figure. As she matures she is able to assist several people, as Karrer points out: “It is Eva Luna who rescues Rolf Carlé from the dragon of his past, who brings the treasure to Mimi, helps to free the prisoners and take the good news to the people” (157). Eva’s development marks her transformation from one who sought help from others to one who helps others.

The novel’s structure is peculiar. It is composed of eleven chapters and “A Final Word,” where Eva and Rolf realize their love and Eva proposes different endings for her

relationship with Rolf. Reality and fiction intermingle in Eva Luna: Eva does not know sometimes if she created events or if they really happened. She also invents happy stories to substitute for sad realities, as she did for Rolf's sister (242-243). Further, the final pages of her story describe more than one possible alternative:

Y después nos amamos simplemente por un tiempo prudente, hasta que el amor se fue desgastando y se deshizo en hilachas. O tal vez las cosas no ocurrieron así. Tal vez tuvimos la suerte de tropezar con un amor excepcional y yo no tuve necesidad de inventarlo, sino sólo vestirlo de gala para que perdurara en la memoria, de acuerdo al principio de que es posible construir la realidad a la medida de las propias apetencias. (285)

Later, for a judicious period of time, we loved each other more modestly until that love wore thin and nothing was left but shreds. /Or maybe that isn't how it happened. Perhaps we had the good fortune to stumble into an exceptional love, a love I did not have to invent, only clothe in all its glory so it could endure in memory – in keeping with the principle that we can construct reality in the image of our desires. (271)

It may be that Eva is talking about the future and wishes her relationship with Rolf to be always positive. What this passage conveys, however, is that even if that desire does not correspond to truth, she can always imagine and believe to be true an alternative, good story for her. This can be considered beneficial in any case. Further, it indicates that the reader may choose whichever ending he or she pleases, for both possibilities are given. This technique fits in with the post-boom.

Eva's journey is full of ups and downs. When she is in love with a man who does not notice her and sees a woman (Zulema) killing herself for love and is blamed for that death, she sees the dark side of human nature. She is tortured and feels hopeless, but healing comes slowly (she does not get a period for years, in fear of being loved). When her period finally comes back, after she meets Rolf and during the time she helps "El Comandante Rogelio" and the guerrilla group escape from prison, she knows she is not afraid of loving anymore.

That is a crucial step to her progress, and having a romantic relationship with Rolf Carlé seems to be essential for her as well.

Eva's development is marked by various events that lead her to become a strong and sensitive woman. True to her senses, she never forgets her origins but tries to evolve into a woman who supports and cares for other people. Aware of her environment and of the problems poor people face in her country, she is also aware of the fact that Latin-American women need to be united to achieve more respect and fair social conditions.

C. Allende: Hija de la fortuna [Daughter of Fortune], Retrato en sepia [Portrait in Sepia], and La casa de los espíritus [The House of the Spirits]

1. Hija de la fortuna: a Latino Woman's Journey in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

Hija de la fortuna was published in 1999 and was soon followed by Retrato en sepia in 2001. Allende mixes the histories of English-Chilean families with the history of California in the former, portraying a very interesting vision of the ethnically rich history of that state, also filled with racial intolerance. The nineteenth-century gold rush which brought numerous foreigners, who oftentimes became American citizens, is detailed in Hija de la fortuna, as well as other historical events such as the Pacific War of Chile against Bolivia and Peru. Retrato en sepia differs in style from Hija de la fortuna, since it is a first-person story narrated by Aurora del Valle.

Hija de la fortuna tells the story of Eliza Sommers and her loyal Chinese friend, the wise Tao Chi'en. The story begins in the year 1843 and finishes in 1853. Retrato en sepia is the continuation of the story, narrating events that occurred between 1862 and 1910. It also links the del Valle family to the story of La casa de los espíritus by providing the reader with more details about the couple Severo and Nivea del Valle, parents of Rosa and Clara. Thus

Allende fills several gaps about the family history that had existed since 1981, with the publication of La casa de los espíritus. The narrative in Hija de la fortuna is chronological and there is an omniscient third-person narrator. Maria Cláudia André notices that the narrative in Hija de la fortuna “maintains a chronological account imitating through diaries and letters ‘the formulaic structure of travel literature’” (74). Eliza is a heroine, like so many other female characters in Allende’s novels, such as Eva, the Trueba women, and Aurora del Valle (Eliza’s granddaughter and the main character in Retrato in sepia).⁸³

However, not all women are heroines who lead successful lives in Allende’s novels. The reader also learns of minorities who are exploited, such as the Singsong Girls, Asian adolescents who are brought into the United States to serve as sex slaves. Further, some female characters are not as successful in life as Eva was, because they lack elements that would lead them to complete happiness, such as the capacity to bear children for Aurora, or the existence of a true love for Miss Rose (Hija de la fortuna). Eva seems to be completely satisfied about her achievements in life, both on a personal level and on her professional life. Aurora and Miss Rose complain about not achieving everything they dream of, and that seems to prevent them from considering themselves happy.

Eliza Sommers is the protagonist of Hija de la fortuna and her story is certainly the main line of the novel, with the story of Tao Chi’en growing strong as well, as he meets and helps Eliza escape from Chile to the United States. Even though Eliza’s journey dominates the novel, there are other women characters that stand out. One of them is Paulina del Valle and another is Miss Rose. Both characters have strong tempers and sensuality that they hide

⁸³ Allende’s latest novels form a solid narrative of epic proportions that bring to life a new kind of feminine archetype whose identity is no longer measured by her capacity to love, marry or bear children, but her determination to colonize her own space and her own body as places of resistance where the spiritual, the intellectual and the creative self may finally be nurtured. (André 87)

after knowing passion. It is also worth mentioning the impact caused by courtesans in both Hija de la fortuna and Retrato en sepia. Lola Montez is an Irish-born prostitute who comes to California to make an impact in the city after having attracted attention in Europe for her love affairs (Hija de la fortuna), and Amanda Lowell is a Scottish prostitute who attracts men from the highest levels of Californian society and wishes to surpass the myth of the previous famous prostitute (Retrato en sepia). Both women mirror the character Tránsito Soto of La casa de los espíritus, the prostitute who becomes Esteban Trueba's only way of saving his granddaughter Alba from being imprisoned and tortured by the militaries. With the portrayal of these characters, female prostitutes who achieve power, Allende is acknowledging the influence of women of all sorts, including prostitutes, in society.

Eliza Sommers is raised by two very different women who contribute to shaping her identity: Miss Rose and Mama Fresia. The latter is introduced as a woman who “*hacía las veces de cocinera e ama de llaves*” (17) (“served them as a cook and housekeeper,”) (9) was illiterate, and at first did not believe the fragile abandoned infant would survive, claiming it was best not to touch the baby, who was in her opinion cursed. But soon afterwards she seems to have changed her mind, suggesting that a female goat should be purchased to provide milk for the child, this way saving Eliza's life. She becomes very important in Eliza's development, a surrogate mother like so many humble women who give up everything for their masters' well being. Eliza grows up listening to Mama Fresia's indigenous legends and myths, becoming also aware due to that bond of signs of nature and dreams, of the existence of spirits. She also learns to cook, which later in her life in California becomes her profession. Mama Fresia is with Eliza during all her childhood and teenage years up until Eliza runs away in a ship to search for her lover. She has to leave the

Sommers at that time and returns to her Indian village, after having failed to perform an abortion in Eliza (the fetus later dies during the journey to California). This abortion would have killed the young woman if it were not for Tao and a prostitute's help. Mama Fresia leaves the Sommers after living with and working for them for a lifetime; however Miss Rose finds out she knows practically nothing about that woman, and with this Allende reveals the reality of so many exploited woman who work almost as slaves for rich Latin-American families.

As Eliza grows up in Chile she learns how to play the piano with Miss Rose, a talent that provides her with enough income to survive by herself for some time in California, while she looks for her lover, Joaquín Andieta. Such mixed cultural heritage—from being raised by an English woman and a native Chilean—makes of Eliza a character tolerant of racial differences, and is probably one of the reasons why it was not hard for her to accept Tao as her lover.⁸⁴ Eliza is certainly among the group of people who accepts the mixing of races, herself a child of an Englishman and a Chilean woman, raised by an Englishwoman and an Indian, a Chilean living in California in the company of a Chinese doctor, a *zhong yi*, who has deep knowledge of the traditional Chinese medicine.

Eliza's biggest passion leaves her pregnant and with a bad reputation. It was unacceptable for a young woman in the nineteenth century to be pregnant without a husband, as it still is at present in many places. Mama Fresia helps Eliza get into the ship with Tao, and then disappear to her people, showing that all that mattered for her was that child she had raised. On the other hand, Mama Fresia was unknown to Miss Rose, in spite of the fact that she had lived with the Sommers for several years: "Nunca le habían preguntado de dónde

⁸⁴ As Gloria Anzaldúa states, "the new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity" (101).

provenía o si tenía familia. Mama Fresia, como los demás sirvientes, pertenecía al limbo impreciso de los fantasmas útiles” (241) (“They had never asked where she came from or whether she had a family. Mama Fresia, like the other servants, belonged to that vague limbo of useful wraiths”) (250). When Miss Rose learns about Eliza’s disappearance, she understands her and worries about her. Finding Eliza becomes a priority in her life. This is a sign of solidarity not so common among upper classes in Latin America, but Miss Rose had also been in love when she was young and is able to empathize with Eliza’s situation. Eliza also acknowledges later that Miss Rose had been a good mother, when she tells Tao her plans of writing to the lady after four years of silence: “Es como mi madre. Si yo la quiero tanto, seguro ella me quiere igual” (376) (“She is like my mother. If I love her this much, I am sure she loves me back”) (392). The novel ends with no real encounter between the two women after that, but in Retrato en sepia Eliza visits Miss Rose in England and also receives her father, Miss Rose’s brother, several times in her house (Miss Rose was then writing romantic novels, and not pornography, which had been her means of becoming a rich woman and thus powerful).

Eliza Sommers is, above all, a character of great determination, both from within (as can be proven by her temperament since childhood) and from without (from her interaction with others and with a foreign land—California—and a foreign culture—the Chinese). She is able to prove that life is harsher for women than for men when she dresses up as a man, telling Tao that as a man she becomes invisible, whereas as a woman she would be endangered in California amidst all the people who wanted to find gold. As Judith Butler points out, gender is performative and Eliza performs the role of a man without difficulty.

Eliza learns about social prejudice both in Chile and in California, and understands that her love for Tao has to be disguised.

In terms of gender identity formation, the example of Eliza is indeed illustrative of the point made by Beauvoir and Butler that “gender is a way of ‘doing’ the body.”⁸⁵ Eliza, while living with Miss Rose, has lessons about how a woman is expected to behave, present herself, and even move; she learns how a woman must perform in society. Further, Butler states that “gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original” (qtd. in Salih 127) and this statement summarizes the idea that real, perfect men or women simply do not exist, but people are constantly trying to achieve the utopic perfection (as Miss Rose tried to do for Eliza, but the latter was aware that she would never be that perfect original). Similarly, Butler claims that “heterosexuality is always in the process of imitating and approximating its own phantasmatic idealization of itself—and failing” (qtd. in Salih 128). The same line of thought can be applied to Allende’s couples—even the “happy,” connected ones are always struggling to understand each other. What they really have that is an advantage is a high level of respect for each other (for example, Nivea and Severo and Eliza and Tao—for them friendship came first, followed by sexual connection).

2. Retrato en sepia: a Latin Woman in the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Aurora del Valle, who slowly learns secrets about her family and tells them to the reader, her listener, narrates Retrato en sepia. She is a woman who goes through a series of misfortunes before finding true love and becoming strong enough to stand for what she desires. She has the support of some men who help her overcome difficulties, which is a common fact in Allende’s novels (female characters can usually count on male cousins,

⁸⁵ Salih 21-38.

brothers, and companions to bolster their careers and help them achieve a certain level of independence).⁸⁶ This optimism is a characteristic of post-boom writers, along with the heroism that is also present in several of Allende's novels.

Sensuality is a strong characteristic of the most recent novels written by Allende. There is an implication that all women, and especially Latino women, are slowly acknowledging that desire and pleasure are essential for the success of a relationship and for their own happiness. However, the women characters that experience love and pleasure have to learn about these issues primarily from books. Such is the case of Nívea del Valle, who marries her cousin Severo even though he was severely injured during the war of Chile against Peru and Bolivia. One of the greatest obstacles Nivea has to overcome has to do the position of women according to her Catholic upbringing. Nívea believes that sexual pleasure is a sin:

Sabía, por supuesto, que estaba cometiendo un pecado horrendo – el placer siempre es pecado – pero se abstuvo de discutir el tema con su confesor porque le pareció que el gusto que se daba y que se daría en el futuro bien valía el riesgo del infierno. (140)

She knew, of course, that she was committing a horrendous sin—pleasure always is sin—but she refrained from discussing the subject with her confessor, since it seemed to her that the pleasure she received and would give in the future was well worth the risk of hell. (120)

Nívea's transgression is, then, very serious, but she chooses to risk going to hell because of pleasure. As Evelyn Stevens notices, sexual behavior practice "frequently deviates from prescription" (96). Even though the "ideal" dictates both premarital chastity and postnuptial frigidity for all women, often times women perform both practices and, according to Stevens, "real" women may find it necessary to "refer to sexual intercourse in speaking with their priest, their physician, or other trusted confidant."

⁸⁶ Male characters also have females who "bolster" and "help them achieve;" however, it does not seem to be as crucial for their career and personal development as much as it seems to be for females.'

Before Nívea, in Hija de la fortuna [Daughter of Fortune] Eliza Sommers encountered the same difficulties in relation to learning about the forbidden secrets of pleasurable sex, but with the help of Tao she learned how to achieve that (in fact Hija de la fortuna does not have a description of Eliza and Tao's being together as a couple, but it is one of the first events narrated in Retrato en sepia). This is an important feature of several societies, including the Latin American: most women do not know anything about sexuality even after they get married. No one teaches them about the subject, ignorance is enormous and it causes much unhappiness. A few women are as lucky as Eliza and Nívea, who find a caring, mature partner, and grow in this aspect as well as intellectually. In Allende's novels some female characters do not find real love but dream of it, and in this case the results are catastrophic. Such is the case of Miss Rose and Karl Bretzner (who was married), Eliza Sommers and Joaquín Andieta (who was distant), Lynn Sommers and Matías del Valle (who was a bohemian): these relationships were intense for the women but meant little to the men. Lynn was extremely beautiful but lacked other qualities; thus she dies shortly after giving birth to Aurora (this is an echo of the same fate as that of the beautiful Rosa in La casa de los espíritus, a character described as a fairy with green hair but who lacked any personality qualities). Real love according to Allende is long-lasting and more intelligent, since the true loving couples are the ones such as Eliza and Tao, who transcend racial barriers and work together to help other people (the Sing Song girls and whoever needed a cure for various diseases), as well as Severo and Nívea, who respect and encourage each other to grow intellectually.

One significant aspect of identity in Allende's novels, and especially in Eva Luna, Hija de la fortuna, and Retrato en sepia, is the fact that the female characters who have strong

personalities are the ones who are able to develop and assert themselves more. Eva, Paulina and Aurora are three examples of such women. They fight against society and the common assumption that women must be docile. Eva rebels against her insensitive boss, for instance, when she is a child servant being exploited in a rich family's house. She manages to pull a portion of the lady's hair and after that incident is much more respected by her. Paulina marries the man she chooses even though her family opposes it, and Aurora runs away from all the Catholic boarding schools she is sent to, because there she could not be free from having to obey rules that diminish women's intelligence (girls are not supposed to ask questions or show any sort of vanity). After several attempts to have a private tutor for Aurora, Paulina hires Matilde Pineda, who proclaimed herself to be "agnóstica, socialista y partidária del sufragio femenino" (168) ("an agnostic, a socialist, and a supporter of women's suffrage") (145). This teacher mirrors Eva's teacher and reinforces the point made by Adrienne Rich that several times a woman such as a teacher functions as a second mother to a girl, setting an example of a free woman. Furthermore, Matilde Pineda is very much like Nivea. They are both passionate about life, social justice, and women's rights.

All of Isabel Allende's novels studied here deal with some sort of society that imposes a great deal of pressure on the characters. Moral values are extremely important on the surface, but when a close look is taken it seems that inside some things are not quite right. There are a lot of secrets kept by the families about their origins, which are usually mixed. One example is Paulina del Valle's continuous attempt to keep Eliza ignorant of the fact that her ancestors are of Chinese origin. The role of the women in all the novels is still primarily one of submission to men. Women grow up hearing that they must be passive and obedient to men. Even women who have liberal ideas end up trying to impose on younger women

notions that perpetuate the machismo they grew up learning. Such is the case of Miss Rose, who during her youth learns about love and pleasure, but as she raises her niece Eliza never takes into consideration the latter's desires until Eliza runs away from home. In addition, after spending her youth in Chile, Miss Rose decides to return to her native England, where she gives up writing pornography to write romantic novels. Achieving independence is extremely hard for these women, no matter what nationality they are, be they English (like Miss Rose) or Latin American.⁸⁷

Allende uses veridical historical-political events to situate her trilogy in time. Thus the reader learns about Severo del Valle fighting in the war of the Pacific, which occurred between 1879 and 1883 (*Retrato en sepia*), about Joaquin Andieta and Paulina del Valle joining in the California Gold Rush, about Aurora's cousin being murdered in the Chilean Civil War which broke out in 1891, and the Trueba grandchild Alba being imprisoned soon after the 1973 military coup in Chile.⁸⁸ Such a technique helps in the construction of the stories of so many amazing characters, and engages the reader in exciting historical narratives populated with fictional characters.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Another example of contradictory behavior by women is the one provided by Paulina del Valle's life, as Maria Ines Lagos points out in her article, "Female Voices from the Borderlands: Isabel Allende's *Paula* and *Retrato en sepia*."

Paulina's example in *Retrato en sepia* shows how difficult it is to continue being defiant. She, who had been a rebel all her life, acknowledges that there are certain boundaries that cannot be transgressed if one needs to safeguard a position of power and influence. Ironically, this woman who had not been religious falls into the hands of the clergy when she is about to die, and she bequeaths unknown sums of money to the Catholic Church. (125)

⁸⁸ Marcelo Coddou calls the mixture of fiction and history a "borderline rediagramming of historical knowledge," claiming that Allende does not limit herself to history but "va más allá, buscando en la intimidad de sus personajes el desentrañamiento de una época que le parece se proyecta con vigencia en momentos actuales" (117) ("goes further, searching in the intimacy of her characters the opening up of a time that projects itself with relevance in present moments.")

⁸⁹ Eliana Rivero praises the creation of such a vast genealogy with the use of the devices mentioned, claiming: From a narrative viewpoint, the construction of a genealogy that encompasses one hundred and thirty years of chronology—and that draws upon a background of historical facts as well as on the fictionalization

Most characters of Allende's novels who stand out among others are engaged politically, and in most cases they share left-wing and liberal views (conservatives are not linked with progress but with the perpetuation of traditional values). Such is the case of Nívea del Valle, of Miguel and Alba Trueba, of Pedro Tercero García and his followers, of several emancipated teachers (all female), of even some nuns who think that they have more freedom in the convent being spouses of Christ than among a "machista" society. One exception is Frederick Williams, the purportedly *English* butler who becomes Paulina's husband and is a declared conservative (he is, in fact, a convicted thief who learned an English accent and the occupation of butler and used those as disguises). With this character Allende makes use of the picaresque tradition of mocking society.

Aurora del Valle receives a present from Severo (her uncle who had her registered as his daughter until her biological father's return to Chile) that would in a way change her life and help her go through her teenage years and develop her identity. That present is a camera she learns to love and with which she takes photographs that contribute to her development, since she begins to see the world (especially people) with different eyes. Just as Eva finds in storytelling a means of entertaining and educating other people and herself, Aurora discovers that photography can take her through a maze of discoveries. The memories she had been trying to put together or rescue, in some cases, are preserved through her new hobby. She takes thousands of photos which assist her in telling her own story. One extremely important

of credible episodes connected to imaginary happenings – is a feat of configuration. Isabel Allende has accomplished this feat in the eighteen years elapsed since the publication of *The House of the Spirits* (1982). With *Daughter of Fortune* (1999) and *Portrait in Sepia* (2000), the saga of six English, Chilean, and Chinese families—the Sommers, the Del Valles, the Domínguez, the Rodríguez de Santa Cruz, the Truebas, the Chi'ens—cuts through time and reconfigures the panorama of nineteenth and twentieth century history along the Pacific coasts of the Americas. Both in visual and narrative ways, those stories are told to keep memories alive, and in doing so, they reveal an original succession of strong women who truly hold up their own half of the sky. (106)

clue she obtains about Diego's affair with Susana is through a photograph of the couple. Roland Barthes calls the "air" of the photograph exactly what Iván Radovic sees in the picture and shows Aurora, leading her to find out the truth. The air is, to Barthes, "the expression of truth" (109). Such is the goal of the observer of a photograph of a person, as described by the French critic.⁹⁰ Because Aurora has now the evidence about Diego and Susana's love but cannot prove it except with the photograph, she follows her husband and finally finds the truth as she encounters Susana and Diego making passionate love. The photograph is the key for her to become suspicious.

Aurora with her persistence⁹¹ manages to have the best photography instructor in Chile, Don Juan Ribero, who teaches her among other things to take natural pictures (and not ones that take people away from their natural state). As Barthes claims, if one stops for a pose he is no longer what he was before and that ruins the picture.⁹² Even though this natural kind of picture is not appreciated by all the people who observe her pictures that is the manner in which Aurora is going to grow personally, by analyzing natural pictures.

Because Aurora's parents are absent from her life (her beautiful but extremely naive mother died soon after her birth and her father was only present a few months before his death and those roles are fulfilled at first by her maternal grandparents, but all has to be

⁹⁰ Barthes claims that:

Since photography (this is the *noeme*) *authenticates* the existence of a certain being, I want to discover that being in the photograph completely, i.e., in its essence, "as into itself..." beyond simple resemblance, whether legal or hereditary. Here the Photograph's platitude becomes more painful, for it can correspond to my fond desire only by something inexpressible: evident (this is the law of the photograph) yet improbable (I cannot prove it). This something is what I call the air (the expression, the look) (108).

⁹¹ Aurora is by nature inquisitive and brave, and these are qualities necessary for a woman to succeed. Her photography instructor sees that and that is the reason why he accepts her as a pupil.

⁹² Barthes comments about posing for photographs: "Now, once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of "posing," I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image. This transformation is an active one: I feel that the photograph creates my body or mortifies it, according to its caprice" (108).

changed when she is five years of age, it is extremely hard for her to pursue her own history. Her paternal grandmother, Paulina, does not allow her to preserve the memory of the other grandparents whom Aurora loved so deeply; thus there is a lack in her life that she will only be able to trace years later.⁹³ Eliza Sommers does meet her granddaughter again, after Eliza travels to China and elsewhere, and is a great example of a successful woman to Aurora. Having those strong women (Paulina, Eliza, Nívea, Señorita Matilde Pineda) as role models aids her in developing gender identity. And finally understanding the nightmares she has for a long period of her life is the last step she needs to take in order to retrieve her past filled with painful memories, her road to identity.

Two male characters are responsible from the beginning for Aurora's liberation from a failed marriage: the ex-prisoner, ex-butler Frederick Williams (who rescues her from the farm and her fake marriage) and the doctor Iván Radovic. Without them Aurora would certainly be forever unhappy and trapped in that sad relationship with Diego, who loves his daughter-in-law passionately. Iván is a perfect match for Aurora because he is attentive and helps her both professionally and emotionally. He, unlike Diego, takes a genuine interest in Aurora's hobby of photography. Also, he accepts and encourages her to explore sexuality. She is the one who kisses him first, letting her desire be expressed. She claims that "Con Iván Radovic he aprendido a sacar la voz y las garras" (315) ("with Iván Radovic I have learned to set loose my voice and my claws") (279). Further, their affair contributes to Aurora's discovery about the origins of her nightmares, leading her to the truth about her grandfather's

⁹³ Karen Cox notices that while Aurora "remembers pieces of her past, her identity is shaped primarily by a sense of orphanage that can be erased only by recalling her memories. Recovering the past, then, becomes the primary route to knowing the self" (154).

death (316-317). Thus having complete support from the man she loves aids her to start healing old wounds.

What Aurora's relationship with Iván Radovic made possible for her was more than simply having a friend and lover: it made it possible for her to express herself freely, as she confesses that she began to reveal her inner feelings. Hence the positive effects of having a companion who provides his partner with understanding go beyond the simplicity of bringing happiness or having a family. The consequences may be a life-changing attitude. As a nineteenth-century Latino woman, Aurora is indeed very lucky, as her uncle "Lucky" wanted her to be when she was born. Aurora and Iván's relationship echoes the relationship of Tao and Eliza, and of Eva Luna and Rolf Carlé, mainly because there is no gender oppression in any of these relationships. Allende saw that her primary idea of leaving Eva and Naranjo together would not fit well with Eva's personality, since Naranjo is no more than a "machista" man, with no perspectives for change in that domain.⁹⁴

All these characters' evolutions are exposed by Allende in a completely different manner from the way Lispector reveals hers. Joana, for instance, even though she has the company (but never the understanding) of at least four male characters—her father, her teacher, her husband, and her lover—is not able to find satisfaction through any of them completely. They may have been bridges over which she needed to pass before realizing (by herself) that she is stronger and more true to herself without them. It might be possible, though, that during or after the journey she would meet someone (of any gender) who is like the male companions of Allende's female characters, that is, supportive and understanding.

⁹⁴ Allende declared that during her presentation in Durham, NC, on 10/30/2004.

3. La casa de los espíritus [The House of the Spirits]: Four Generations of Twentieth-Century Chilean Women

The characters in La casa de los espíritus are for the most part based on real-life people, though naturally they are literary constructs as Allende creates them. Some of them can be easily linked to celebrities such as the Chilean former president, Salvador Allende, the dictator Pinochet, and the poet Pablo Neruda. Allende has said that the spine of the book is a man, Esteban Trueba, and this is true since all women interact with him one way or another,⁹⁵ but the women on which I shall focus have remarkable characteristics,⁹⁶ such as Nívea, who fights for the women's right to vote and dies be-headed; Clara, who has supernatural powers, interprets dreams and predicts the future with accuracy, speaks with the spirits of the dead, and remains in the house as spirit after death; Blanca, an innocent but powerful woman who learns about prejudices of class and race the hard way; and Alba, representative of the new generation of Latin American women. Alba ends up pregnant with a girl of whom she does not know whether she is a daughter of her lover or of a rape, but she is optimistic since she believes the girl will live in better times.⁹⁷ Alba finds some happiness

⁹⁵ Allende explains that “Si bien, la columna vertebral de mi libro es un hombre, Esteban Trueba, quienes cuentan la historia son las extraordinarias mujeres de diversos medios sociales y edades que lo rodean, y con las que té de dar una visión amplia de lo femenino en la América Latina” (qtd. in Arango L. 60) (“even though the backbone of my book is a man, Esteban Trueba, the ones who tell the story are the extraordinary women from various social means and ages who surround him, and with those I tried to give an ample view of the feminine in Latin America.”)

⁹⁶ Allende expresses her view about her female characters and their similarities with several women she knows from Latin America:

Son seres bien plantados en sus pies, altivas, generosas, fuertes, jamás derrotadas, plenas de ternura y coraje. Cada una a su manera encuentra la forma de vencer la mediocridad y sobreponerse al manto gris que a menudo envuelve la existencia cotidiana. No creo que esto sea un romanticismo de mi parte. Corresponde a la realidad de tantas mujeres que he conocido en mi oficio de periodista y en mi vocación por la amistad. (qtd. in Arango L. 59-60)

They are down-to-earth beings, arrogant, generous, strong, never defeated, and full of tenderness and courage. Each one in her way finds the way to defeat mediocrity and to control the gray mantle that often surrounds daily existence. I do not believe that this is romantic of my part. It corresponds to the reality of so many women whom I have known in my career as a journalist and in my vocation for friendship.

⁹⁷ It is impossible to discuss La casa de los espíritus without taking into account the narrative style of magical realism. The integration of various aspects of reality, be them possible or not, is a vital part of the whole

in love, as did her mother. Their companions are men who provide them with encouragement and are respectful (even though power relations still exist in their relationships).

The couples Severo and Nivea, Clara and Trueba, Blanca and Pedro García Tercero, and Blanca and Miguel form the main pairs of the novel. Of the four, only one couple—Clara and Esteban Trueba—have a negative relationship, but not always. Because Esteban Trueba is powerful and acts as a tyrant in several occasions in his life, Clara and other characters suffer. At the end of his life, when he realizes among other things that the power of the dictatorship is bigger than his own power, Esteban Trueba becomes more compassionate and even has a strong narrative voice as he begins to narrate parts of the novel. The women characters mentioned above have their lives molded according to the relationships they have with the male ones. The other three male characters—Severo, Pedro García Tercero, and Miguel—are caring and have outstanding qualities. However, the evil men—Esteban Trueba and his illegitimate grandson, Esteban García—seem to dominate the novel and cause much more furor. Esteban Trueba represents the patriarchal and dominant society—he is never punished or questioned (except by his brave wife) and has several illegitimate children through rapes—whereas Esteban Garcia represents the evil ruler and avenger, as he becomes

narrative of magical realism and must be read as such. To Allende herself magical realism is a necessity, as she claims in an interview with Bautista Gutiérrez: “Cuando vivimos en contacto permanente con todas las formas de violencia y de miseria, hay que buscar explicaciones y encontrar esperanzas en lo sobrenatural. La realidad es tan brutal, que necesitamos el refugio de un mundo mágico o espiritual⁹⁷” (qtd. in Bautista Gutiérrez 129) (“[w]hen we live in permanent contact with all forms of violence and misery, we must search for explanations and find hope in the supernatural. Reality is so brutal that we need the refuge of a magical or spiritual world.”)

Bautista Gutierrez points out the following traits of magical realism in the characters of *La casa de los espíritus*: they are described realistically but with supernatural qualities, be they physical or mental, magical or creative; they possess the surrealist element of the oneiric and employ dreams to daily situations (such as to decipher messages); some present caricatured and ironic aspects; they count on surprise and the acceptance of the unexpected as something quotidian; they establish a syncretism between religion and magic; they are described in an objective way with no judgments or discriminations; they manifest a social and political consciousness of the Latin American environment. (118)

a Colonel and rapes Blanca several times. That cycle of violence is only broken later on by Alba, who is tired of violence, wants peace, and hopes for a better future for her child.

Severo and Nivea's relationship continues strong in La casa de los espíritus. Nivea is a mother (she has fifteen children), but never ceases being present at her husband's side as wife and lover. Severo gives her support in everything, from fighting for females' rights to helping the poor. Her name means snow, or white/pure, and she names her daughter Clara, meaning "clarity," beginning a cycle that continues down to her granddaughter Blanca (white) and her great-granddaughter Alba (dawn). As Richard McCallister notices, the matriarchy that exists among these four generations is reinforced by their names. (25)

Clara is such a remarkable character that it is difficult to describe her. She dialogues with the spirits and brings messages from the dead to help the living. Because she is not so good at talking with the living,⁹⁸ though, she begins writing journals and keeps doing so all her life. Her writings become a crucial element for her grandchild, Alba, in her attempt to rediscover and reconstruct lost memories. Clara is ready to marry Estéban Trueba, who learns to love her only slowly, when she cannot talk to him anymore. Her commitment to silence is immense and marks her final years on earth, since there is a sense that her spirit is still alive in the house after she dies. Esteban is not in her way anymore; she can come and go as she pleases. After death she does not help the poor country people as she does in life, but her presence is strong and a living message for Alba and for whoever reads her writings, her main form of communication since she chooses to be silent. Thus, interestingly enough, the fact that Clara does not talk for so many years in her life is not an obstacle for understanding and loving her. Clara-mother/grandmother/great-grandmother-is close to the woman Sara

⁹⁸ Clara has reasons for not talking much. First, as a child she witnesses the violation of her sister's corpse. Second, silence is her strategy against Esteban's abuse.

Castro-Klarén mentions at the center of many Latin American stories pre-World War II: “an endless tender, innocent, but nevertheless all-knowing mother” (11). Clara is also humble-but still able to defend herself through silence. Debra Castillo points out that often times when there is silence in Latin American works the readers ultimately speak: “our attentive ears can hear their [the silent characters’] silences. (81) That may as well be the case with Clara. The reader is able to understand her as well as Trueba does, through her actions and personal history.

Clara is one of the few flat characters in the novel. From childhood on, she reveals the same (positive) features: she is giving, helpful, loving. She blames herself for her beautiful sister’s death (even though her presages are not hers, as she is just an instrument of the visions she has) and decides consciously not to speak until nine years later, when she reveals her wish to marry Esteban Trueba, formerly engaged to her deceased, astonishingly beautiful sister. Her husband is not able to understand her and leaves her doing whatever she wants around the house and helping people at the farm as she pleases, as long as she does not do anything against him. They are not a couple who complete and support each other totally, but Esteban learns some of his wife’s characteristics and is able to express them at the end of his life to his granddaughter Alba, toward whom he is caring. Clara fills the gap with her writings and charity. She is able to shut herself off from the evils around her, and even though silence is not an effective means of expressing revolt, she manages to punish Esteban and change his ways a little through that weapon (she decides not to speak with him anymore after he is violent against her and Blanca).⁹⁹ Besides turning to herself, to the spirits that

⁹⁹ To Marjorie Agosín, Clara’s silence is not a symbol of feminine domesticity but of rebellion:

La mudez es la vía de rebelión de Clara ante la estructura familiar imperante. Pero aquí cabe enfatizar que el silencio de Clara no es igual al silencio de la domesticidad femenina. Clara recupera ese silencio por medio de otra escritura netamente femenina que son sus diarios personales, que no participan en los detalles

surround her and to writing, Clara also sews. Such feminine activity is a form of creativity as well.

Clara as a child is brave enough to question even a priest during his sermon (for which she is called demonic),¹⁰⁰ and she once more reveals her inner strength when she leaves the Tres Marías Farm to return to the city and help whoever needs shelter, people of all beliefs and backgrounds. She is acutely aware that what she does appeases her mind but is not enough, since she knows there is a need for social justice. At the end of Esteban Trueba's life Clara comes as a spirit to remain by his side, and in a romantic mood she helps him die happy, showing once more how forgiving she is (at that point Esteban Trueba's rage had completely vanished and Clara was happy as well with him). Hence, Esteban Trueba was never forgotten by Clara and he learned a lot from her, she who was always a perfect woman. Naturally, since she is from the Chilean upper class, she does not have to work for a living or even work around the house. La Nana and other servants (and, for some time, her sister-in-law Férula) are always there, cleaning, cooking, taking care of the children, while Clara spends her time almost alienated from the world, playing the closed piano, and being entertained by spirits. This changes only after La Nana and Férula leave her life (La Nana dies during an earthquake, of shock, and Férula is expelled by Trueba, who notices his sister's lesbian desires), when Clara is left with no other option but to assume the role of head of the household after Esteban is seriously injured in the earthquake and the main servant and

o los acontecimientos vinculados al advenimiento de la historia sino que son la intra-historia de su propia ensoñación y su forma de tolerar la exterioridad de su vida. (152)

Silence is Clara's mode of rebellion against the dominant family structure. But here, it must be emphasized that Clara's silence is not the same as feminine submissiveness. Clara recovers that silence through another type of purely feminine writing made up of her personal diaries that do not cover those details or incidents related to the advent of the story but rather are the intra-story of her own illusions and her way of enduring the exteriority of her life.

¹⁰⁰ Allende, *La casa de los espíritus* 17.

Férula are no longer available. Clara then does everything, and does not seem alienated any longer.¹⁰¹

Esteban Trueba, who sometimes narrates the story, talks about Clara at that point in her life, after the earthquake, when Clara works hard and distances herself from him:

... apenas se vio libre de las cacerolas y la escoba, regresó a sus cuadernos de anotar la vida y a sus cartas de Tarot en los momentos de ocio. Pasaba la mayor parte del día ocupada en el taller de costura, la enfermería y la escuela. Yo la dejaba tranquila, porque esos quehaceres justificaban su vida. Era una mujer caritativa y generosa, ansiosa por hacer felices a los que la rodeaban, a todos menos a mí. (191)

... as soon as she was free of brooms and saucepans she returned to her notebooks and her tarot cards. She spent most of her day busy with the sewing workshop, the infirmary, and the schoolhouse. She was a charitable and generous woman, eager to make those around her happy—everyone except me. (153)

Esteban reveals his loneliness and the fact that he longs for his wife's love (but can never get it because he wants to achieve it through power and abuses her at times and other women); however, he understands that she needs her space for helping the community of Las Tres Marías,¹⁰² and that is the way she wants her daughter to spend her life as well. In some passages he becomes much less powerful than Clara, who becomes a distant, unreachable object of desire, even though she seems to be the weakest, asthmatic, and silent.

Blanca has a Catholic education, even though her family (parents and grandparents) seem to give that to her only because of society demands. The narrator describes her as a character that acts differently in school and out:

Era una criatura romántica y sentimental, con tendencia a la soledad, de pocas amigas, capaz de emocionarse hasta las lágrimas cuando florecían las rosas en el jardín, cuando aspiraba el tenue olor a trazo y jabón de las monjas que se inclinaban sobre sus tareas, cuando se quedaba rezagada para sentir el silencio triste de las aulas vacías. Pasaba por tímida y melancólica. Sólo en el campo, con la piel dorada por el sol y la

¹⁰¹ Clara assumes La Nana's role, for she is forced into performing a role that she never had to before (when she goes pick up Blanca at the convent taking a train alone for the first time in her life, her daughter notices the change and Clara claims that it is the world that has changed, not her).

¹⁰² Still he interferes with the lessons she gives the peasants.

barriga llena de fruta tibia, corriendo con Pedro Tercero por los potreros, era risueña y alegre. Su madre decía que ésa era la verdadera Blanca y la otra, la de la ciudad, era una Blanca en hibernación. (156)

She was a romantic, sentimental child, with a preference for solitude, few friends, and a propensity to be moved to tears when the roses in the garden bloomed, when she smelled the rags and soap the nuns used as they bent over their tasks, and when she stayed behind to experience the melancholy stillness of the empty classrooms. She was considered timid and morose. Only in the country, her skin tanned by the sun and her belly full of ripe fruit, running through the fields with Pedro Tercero, was she smiling and happy. Her mother said that that was the real Blanca, and that the other one, the one back in the city, was a Blanca in hibernation. (122-123)

She learns from her mother about social justice and is aware from childhood that she needs to fulfill certain roles expected of her. The patriarchal system still prevails at her time. She thus accepts to marry the man her father indicates, even though she is in love with a peasant, Pedro Tercero. After the coup, though, she changes and hides people persecuted by the dictatorship and decides to leave the country with her beloved, the man who completes her, Pedro, with whom she will likely spend the rest of her life in Canada. Blanca is close to her mother, who understands and respects her (and this mother-daughter bond is constant in the novel). Blanca, like Clara, has an artistic skill that will not only contribute to her coping with a lot of her problems but also will provide for her and Alba—making pottery. She learns that she likes this craft with the aged and wise Pedro García, her lover's grandfather, but alone finds out that she loves producing animal pieces (at first found useless by her father). Blanca wants to make sure that Alba learns to earn her own money and becomes independent of men.

Blanca differs from her mother in the sense that she decides to become a single mother instead of tolerating her fake husband's double life (Jean de Satigny performs gender—he pretends to be heterosexual and accepts to marry Blanca for money, however he has homosexual relationships with the Incas, indians that worked as servants during the day

but at night performed sexual activities with him). Even though Clara suffers a lot with Esteban, she remains married to him all her life (using silence as protest), but it is Blanca who leaves her weak husband to raise her daughter by her own means. As Nora Glickman notices, “Blanca es la primera de los Trueba en optar por ser madre soltera, rechazando la función tradicional de esposa abnegada, y desechando el mito de la unión familiar, como garantía para la armonía conyugal” (57) (“Blanca is the first Trueba to opt for being a single mother, refusing the traditional function of submissive wife, and rejecting the myth of the family union as guarantee of conjugal harmony.”) She opts for living with her father in a state of near misery (she worked as a servant in the house and taught pottery to mentally ill youth and to wealthy people) and waiting for the right time to be with the only man she has ever loved. She can still be considered a heroine since she worked hard doing pottery and social work (as a teacher and a nurse in Las Tres Marias and later in the Trueba house in the city) and was strong-willed; nothing made her change her mind about staying with the man she chose, even though he was from a different social class and everything seemed to be against them. Her father considered Pedro Tercero García a “badly-born” man since he was poor, even though he was the grandchild of the wise Pedro Segundo, a man who saved Trueba’s life and his property from being destroyed by ants. Esteban Trueba spends a lot of money on the old man’s funeral, but cannot accept his grandson as a son-a-law because of his humble origins and innovative ideas about social justice (the young man was a revolutionary, much like Huberto Naranjo in his ideology). Blanca did not want to leave her father’s house for a long time, and gives no explanation for that. Her daughter thought it was for lack of love (for not loving Pedro enough), but this is hard to believe for everything else she does in life she does for her love for him.

When Blanca's baby girl was born her grandmother searched for a name that, like hers and her daughter's, was in a chain of luminous words. They found "Alba," who was born being watched by a little boy, Miguel. This little boy would grow to be Alba's lover and true friend. Allende has explained that naming the three women after the color white means that they are pure.¹⁰³ "the purity of facing the world with new eyes, free from contamination, without prejudice, open and tolerant" (qtd. in Cox 35). Even though Alba does not grow up with her father around and her arranged father, Jean de Satigny, is just a constant dream, she is surrounded by family and friends and is close to both her two uncles and her grandfather. Her relatives have a positive impact on her, being mostly people who did not worry about what other people say, and even her grandfather Esteban Trueba is so enchanted by the child that the time they spend together is full of tenderness (there is no resemblance to the old, unruly Trueba). Further, Alba has been compared to Allende herself in several ways: the strange father she thought she had (Allende imagined Jean de Satigny based on her own absent father), the presence of a grandfather both feared and loved, enchanting uncles, interesting books found in trunks in the attic—all these things and people that made Alba's childhood magic have been mentioned by Allende as being part of her own life. Alba is of the four (Nívea, Clara, Blanca, and Alba) the most liberal and committed to living a better life, in great part due to the fact that she belongs to a more liberal generation. She has also a strong voice as narrator of large parts of the novel and of its beginning and ending (the book is also narrated by her grandfather, a fact which provides a different, right-wing male perspective on events, and by another third-person omniscient narrator).

After she grows up, Alba, like Clara and Aurora, is committed to writing down her family history as well as Chilean history in order to transmit facts, and mainly to help her

¹⁰³ Pure is the sense of being free from anything that might be harmful such as preconceptions about others.

heal from the many atrocities she suffered. The parts she narrates in the novels are the parts of her writings with which the reader gets in contact. Writing is a strong need for her, and because of this habit she learns a more complete view of the facts with the contributions of Clara's diaries (which were organized by events and not chronologically). During Alba's young-adult years she was involved in politics, but not as much as other youth of her generation. Even though she goes to prison and is humiliated, this occurs because of personal issues – Coronel García, the illegitimate grandchild of Esteban Trueba, feels hatred and despises her and wants to revenge his grandmother's rape by Trueba as well as the comfortable life he can never have but grows up seeing Blanca enjoying. Alba does not feel the need to accept traditions without questioning. For instance, she claims that she can be Uncle Jaime's wife and at the same time Miguel's lover, going against morals dictated by the patriarchal society and taking a step forward in relation to her mother, who accepted an arranged marriage. She learns a lot about politics with her boyfriend, Miguel, while she is in college, even though she is often accused of not being really committed to politics or to social causes. That proves not to be true when she helps threatened revolutionaries and ends up in prison, tortured on a daily basis both for her involvement in the rebellion and for being the grandchild of Esteban Trueba, a man who never acknowledged the existence of his illegitimate son and grandson Esteban García.¹⁰⁴ However, Alba is very forgiving and lives for the love she feels for Miguel, for her child, and for social justice. She is thus extremely

¹⁰⁴ For Trueba, Pancha's child was repulsive; he never does anything to help her situation change even though he knew Pancha was only fifteen years of age and a virgin when he raped her. At the time he saw her and her (his) child as: "un enorme envase que contenía una sustancia informe y gelatinosa, que no podía reconocer como un hijo suyo" (73) ("an enormous container that held a formless, gelatinous mass that he was unable to view as his own child") (54). This is a depressing reality of many Latin American women, who are seen as objects and exploited sexually, later being abandoned to their sad fates. Often times they are blamed by society, as if it were their fault that men like Trueba only see them as Trueba sees Pancha, "un medida higiénica que aliviaba la tensión del día y le brindaba una noche sin sueños" ("hygienic method for relieving the tensions of the day and obtaining a good night's sleep").

optimistic and independent, since even though she loves Miguel she claims that the child is above all hers (even though the child is most likely the product of rape by Esteban García). Further, she is able to love her grandfather, Esteban Trueba, despite the fact that he represents the traditional façade of the family, with its false morals and patriarchal values it imposes on society.¹⁰⁵ He also loves her deeply, and is able to support her in every occasion, even though she is an illegitimate child. He is for her what he should have been for his wife and his daughter: a caring man.

While still a young child Alba finds (with the aid of her grandmother Clara) that she has an aptitude for painting and that skill links her to her grandmother's habit of sewing and to her mother's pottery. They both also portray animals through their different artistic abilities. This is important since it is the way each woman expresses herself: all their joys and sorrows are articulated through their art. There is also writing as a way of transmitting memory and healing from sorrows, a habit which both Clara and Alba have and which is also a manner of defying patriarchy.

The character who never finds the caring man in her life is Férula. The sad fate of this character is marked by the fact that she dedicates her life to others and receives nothing but scorn in return. The only person who offers her tenderness is Clara, and for that relationship Férula is punished by her jealous brother Esteban. After her death Esteban still hates her, due to the fact that she finishes her days in misery when she could have lived in comfort with his money. However (and Clara understands that), she lacked love that she never received from her brother, not only money. Further, Férula soon realizes that because she was born a woman in a "machista" society she is not able to do the things she would like (such as leave

¹⁰⁵ See Norma Helsper's essay, "Binding the Wounds of the Body Politic: Nation as Family in *La casa de los espíritus*," for an elaborate view on the complicated relations within the Del Valle-Trueba family and its association with Chile.

the house and her diseased mother and travel, work and do whatever an adventurous man is able to do). Férula dies alone and unhappy, and her identity is shaped by the cruelty of her brother and of a “machista” society. She has, in fact, lesbian desires toward Clara, which she always confesses to a priest, according to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Further, in an act of masochism, when she is caring for her mother, she cannot suppress feelings of pleasure in the sight of her mother’s leg, consumed by illness. In all her life she never experiences tenderness from anyone except her sister-in-law. She chooses to pray and condemn herself, despite all the pain that brings upon her. She allows herself to be no more than a powerless, weak creature, victim of her brother and of a society that shows for her only hatred. She is aware that through marriage alone could she find some happiness, but gives up that idea when her mother dies, thinking it too late for any sort of romance due to her aging. Allende does not create a happy ending for this character, maybe because her goal is to denounce so many injustices committed against lonely and abandoned women, left to their own fate in misery either from their financial situation or from the heart, as in Férula’s case, or from both. She lives in poverty by choice, even though her brother sends her an allowance.

Another female character that deserves attention in La casa de los espíritus is La Nana (the one who is never properly named, she is always simply the nanny), who is from humble origins and dedicates her life to raising the del Valle and Trueba children. She is a representative of lower class women who have no one to count on. After her death, Clara finds the nanny’s only treasure: things she collected that belonged to or reminded her of those children she cared for, such as hair bunches and fingernails. La Nana is peculiar also because she wants to defend the interests of her children’s masters, not the ones of her own humble people. Thus she does not approve of Blanca’s relationship with the poor Pedro

Tercero García.¹⁰⁶ In addition, she sees Férula as an enemy (they both fight for Clara's attention) and is usually bitter toward her. This character represents the lower class that contributes to the perpetuation of their people's condition, but has no other choice since they need to survive. La Nana counts on the love her employers return to her, but that is not always what happens (Trueba, for instance, never acknowledges all her efforts).

Amanda is a character who is also a victim of a "machista" society. Her story is common, and yet not much has been done to prevent things like what happens to her from occurring. She is an orphan who has a little brother, Miguel; she becomes a drug addict and gets pregnant. Knowing she cannot afford having another child to support, she seeks to have an illegal abortion, since such a procedure is illegal in her country. Even though she finds help from the man who loves her (Jaime, a medical student at the time and Clara's son), the man she loves and father of the unborn child (Nicolás, Jaime's semi-lunatic twin brother) does not take responsibility for his behaviour.¹⁰⁷ With the portrayal of this character, Allende is revealing the reality of so many neglected poor women in Latin America and elsewhere, who have nothing and nobody to care for them. Amanda decides not to marry the irresponsible Miguel, but knows that her job as a reporter is not enough to provide for herself and two children. Jaime performs the operation, and Nicolás feels some guilt, but cannot grow up enough to take responsibility for Amanda and the children. Soon after she recovers, Amanda leaves the Trueba house (where Clara takes care of her) for good. Amanda is luckier

¹⁰⁶ La Nana scolds Pedro Tercero: "-Aprende, mocoso, a meterte con los de tu clase y no con señoritas – se burló entre dientes" (168) ("It's time you learned to stay with your own class instead of nosing around señoritas") (133). With this statement La Nana is refusing to admit that among low class people there are also misses – she does not consider them (and herself) honorable members of society.

¹⁰⁷ He is also machista acting that way.

than many women, because she is loved by Jaime and has somebody to care for her during her recovery from the illegal abortion.

Allende portrays these characters as realistically as possible. In her writing the need to express reality is constant; even though she also portrays images of successful women who often have the support of men to succeed, Férula, Amanda, and La Nana are examples of female victims in Latin-American society. As Márgara Russotto has stated, having a room of one's own like La Nana and Férula have is just the beginning. At least such classes of women are beginning to have their voices heard through literature and other manifestations.

In Allende's novels, it is difficult enough for middle and upper-class women to become independent and successful in life; for lower-class ones it is almost impossible. The latter barely survive, even though in most cases they work hard and are dedicated to wealthier families, such as La Nana and other servants in the Sommers', del Valle's, and Trueba's households. It is better for middle and upper-class women to have the support of men and other women. Alba, for instance, finds a supporting hand in Ana Díaz, a former classmate at college; Díaz criticizes Alba for being a bourgeois trying to participate in the people's struggle¹⁰⁸ (when Alba falls in love with Miguel she follows him in a manifestation, but has to leave due to violent cramps she feels), but later on when both Alba and Ana Díaz meet again in prison they give each support and encouragement¹⁰⁹ (after Alba is abused, raped, and tortured by García). Eliza Sommers soon realizes that life as a man is easier: she was left alone when performing the role of a male and earned more money. Eva Luna is a heroine, who is able to succeed but is always counting on the help of several people. In

¹⁰⁸ Allende, La casa de los espíritus 341.

¹⁰⁹ Allende, La casa de los espíritus 430-432.

Allende's world, society contributes to the failure or success of women of all classes with its pre-judgments and values.

Thus, Isabel Allende presents identity formation in several ways: it develops according to cultural and economical conditions as well as a product of the personalities of the characters. Some characters tend to want to make a difference in society in a quiet way such as Clara and Blanca. Others are more strong willed and want to take action in an active way, as natural leaders, such as Eva Luna and Nivea. In the case of Allende's novels, the struggle for a better society starts in the home and then may take a larger scope if they find the support of other people, be they of the same gender or not. Identity formation is a slow process that can be strongly influenced by politics and the environment, and these issues are found in Allende's *oeuvre*.

CHAPTER IV

MICHELLE CLIFF: WOMEN IN SEARCH OF AN IDENTITY THEY WERE TAUGHT TO DESPISE

“They like to pretend we didn’t fight back. We did: with obeah, poison, revolution. It simply was not enough.”¹¹⁰

A. Abeng and No Telephone to Heaven: Clare’s Journey and the Shaping of Identity

Michelle Cliff (b. 1946) was born in Kingston, Jamaica. In her own words: “I originate in the Caribbean, and although I have lived in the United States and in England, I travel as a Jamaican. It is Jamaica that forms my writing for the most part, and which has formed for the most part, myself.”¹¹¹ Such a deep connection between a person and a place is something that marks her *oeuvre*. Cliff expresses in words the complications she finds concerning the effects of Jamaican colonization on her mind as she grew up to understand those issues:

Jamaica is a place halfway between Africa and England, to put it simply, although historically one culture (guess which one) has been esteemed and the other denigrated (both are understatements)—at least among those who control the culture and politics of the island—the Afro-Saxons. As a child among these people, indeed of these people, as one of them, I received the message of anglocentrism, of white supremacy, and I internalized it. As a writer, as a human being, I have had to accept that reality and deal with its effect on me, as well as finding what has been lost to me from the darker side, and what may be hidden, to be dredged from memory and dream. And it *is* there to be dredged. As my writing delved longer and deeper into this part of myself, I began to

¹¹⁰ Michelle Cliff, “If I Could Write This in Fire, I Would Write This in Fire,” The Land of Look Behind 67.

¹¹¹ Cliff, The Land of Look Behind 12.

dream and imagine. I was able to clearly envision Nanny, the leader of a group of guerrilla fighters known as the Windward Maroons, as she is described: an old Black woman naked except for a necklace made from the teeth of whitemen. I began to love her.¹¹²

Michelle Cliff had an upbringing that made her initially believe in different values from the ones she chose to adopt later in her life. She feels a strong need to look for the identity she was “taught to despise;” the identity she had to look back to Africa and to the Caribs to find.

Cliff spent most of her childhood years in New York and teenage years on the island, graduated in European History from Wagner College and went to England to pursue her M.A. in Philosophy and Ph.D. on Italian Renaissance literature. She became Professor of English Language and Literature in the United States, holding positions in the University of California, Santa Cruz, and Stanford University. She currently lives in the United States. Of the three writers in this dissertation she is the only literary critic. Her first novel, Abeng (1984), attracted a great deal of attention due to the power of the narrative, the inclusion of the local *patois*, the depiction of social conflict in the island, and other important issues, already portrayed in her previous prose poems published in Claiming an Identity they Taught me to Despise (1980). In her second novel, No Telephone to Heaven (1987), Cliff continues the path initially traced in her first novel. Free Enterprise (1993) is the most innovative of Cliff’s three novels; it includes African-American as well as American and Jamaican-American history. Harold Bloom, in Caribbean Women Writers, argues that “Cliff’s writing reflects her interest in histories of struggle, revolution, and political action, both personal and public, silenced and voiced. Her work also explores how identity is shaped by racism and sexism” (30). Similarly, Cliff states: “I can’t stand the idea of the novel here, the history there, the biography there. I can’t see why these things can’t be mixed up. We have to bring

¹¹² Cliff, The Land of Look Behind 13.

our imagination to our history, because so much has been lost” (qtd. in Hudson 111). Cliff’s view about blending history and literature has a great deal in common with Allende’s. Identity formation, though, differs in the writers’ work: in Michelle Cliff’s there are more issues involved in the process, notably issues aroused from the relationships between colonizing and colonized people.

Identity is constructed in a variety of ways, and Michelle Cliff’s *oeuvre* exemplifies that. The characters are constantly trying to make sense of who they are from several contexts: historical events, the place they were born, the places they visit or live later in their lives, their age, race, class, and gender. Lindsay Pentolfe Aegerter has noticed that: “Cliff’s work . . . captures identity as a matrix of subjectivity in which politicized positions . . . cohere in the wholeness of individual humanity” (8). Identity formation is not only about gender identity but also about other types of identity,¹¹³ including racial identity formation and awareness. Judith Raikin, who interviewed Cliff in 1991, comments: “It’s wonderful to read a novel that deals with both racial and sexual identity and history at once. Because these things are not really separate, but are constructed in similar ways” (69). Living in the United States and England raised Cliff’s awareness about these issues, which are reflected in her work.¹¹⁴

The identity of most of the characters in Cliff’s novels is subversive, as is the identity of many of the Caribbean people, a fact which is reflected in literature and other forms of art, such as music (an example is reggae) and culture (Rastafari¹¹⁵ is an example). However, as

¹¹³ Such as racial identity, cultural identity, gender identity, and so on.

¹¹⁴ These are the locations particular to Cliff’s spaces; however, similar types of relationship between colonizing and colonized countries create comparable tensions, such as African nations that were recently been granted independence from European countries (e.g. Portugal and Angola/Cape Verde/Mozambique).

Emilia Ippolito points out, it took a long time before Africa was re-discovered in the Caribbean, since accepting being black was not—and is not—easy for many Caribbeans. Michelle Cliff notices that many people, mostly white, cannot easily accept the fact that she considers herself black. She looks white but knows she has African blood, and for her she can only be black (in Jamaica light-skinned Jamaican people are called “red”). Cliff has mentioned that: “I know most of my students at Trinity don’t believe I’m black—the white students. The black students don’t seem to have a problem with who I say I am.”¹¹⁶ She talks in patois with other Jamaicans, even if they are educated Jamaicans, since for her language is also a form of rebellion and of claiming her true identity.¹¹⁷

Cliff points out, in “Clare Savage as a Crossroads Character,” what she felt about Victor, the boy raised by wolves who was later brought into civilization: “I felt with Victor when I first read his story. My wildness had been tamed, that which I had been taught was my wildness, which embraced imagination, emotion, spontaneity, history, memory, revolution, and flights of fancy” (263). It seems that her very nature had been forced to

¹¹⁵ Rasta, as it is more commonly called, has its roots in the teachings of Jamaican Black Nationalist Marcus Garvey, who in the 1930s preached a message of black self empowerment, and initiated the “Back to Africa” movement. Which called for all blacks to return to their ancestral home, and more specifically Ethiopia. He taught self reliance “at home and abroad” and advocated a “back to Africa” consciousness, awakening black pride and denouncing the white man’s Eurocentric worldview, colonial indoctrination that caused blacks to feel shame for their African heritage. “Look to Africa”, said Marcus Garvey in 1920, “when a black king shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is at hand”. Many thought the prophecy was fulfilled when in 1930, Ras Tafari, was crowned emperor Haile Selassie 1 of Ethiopia and proclaimed “King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and the conquering lion of the Tribe of Judah”. Haile Selassie claimed to be a direct descendant of King David, the 225th ruler in an unbroken line of Ethiopian Kings from the time of Solomon and Sheba. He and his followers took great pride in being black and wanted to regain the black heritage that was lost by loosing faith and straying from the holy ways. 1975 to the present has been the period of the most phenomenal growth for the Rastafarian Movement. This growth is largely attributed to Bob Marley, reggae artist, and the worldwide acceptance of reggae as an avenue of Rastafarian self-expression. Marley became a prophet of Rastafarianism in 1975. The movement spread quickly in the Caribbean and was hugely attractive to the local black youths, many of whom saw it as an extension of their adolescent rebellion from school and parental authority. With it came some undesirable elements, but all true Rastas signify peace and pride and righteousness. (“The Afrocentric Experience: Today in Black History!”)

¹¹⁶ Schwartz 608.

¹¹⁷ Schwartz 609.

become invisible. This theme is constant in Cliff's work and the novels Abeng, No Telephone to Heaven, and Free Enterprise express the notion of claiming an identity that one is forced to forget. From the time colonizers and slave dealers arrived in the island, they imposed their power on the other peoples, both natives and Africans. Cliff portrays this struggle in her *oeuvre*, as well as what Aimé Césaire and Leopold Senghor point out in "Présence Africaine:" the attempt to keep the colonized's traditions alive through oral language.

B. Abeng: the Blooming of a Jamaican Girl

*"Clare got a flame-red blossom of hibiscus and put it behind Zoe's left ear and told her friend that she should be a princess and that Clare would be the prince and lead an army of red ants, biting ants, which were now on their way, marching toward them, in an attack on their enemies."*¹¹⁸

Abeng (1984) narrates the growing up of a young girl in Jamaica as well as the history of that island. However, it is not the official history but the "other history," the history of the colonized. Cliff explains in the first page of the book that "*Abeng* is an African word meaning conch shell. The blowing of the conch called the slaves to the canefields in the West Indies. The *abeng* had another use: it was the instrument used by the Maroon armies to pass their messages and to reach one another" (Foreword). Thus *abeng* is both a sign of repression and rebellion, and so is the protagonist Clare herself, a mixture of these two. Elizabeth Paravisi and Barbara Webb think that "since the conch shell also suggests the

¹¹⁸ Michelle Cliff, Abeng 101.

shape of the womb, [Cliff's] title is symbolic of the synthesis of history, rebellion and the feminine perspective that she [Cliff] attempts in the narrative" (qtd. in Bloom 33).

Michelle Cliff talks about herself and the protagonist of her two novels, Abeng and No Telephone to Heaven, in "Clare Savage as a Crossroads Character." She states the following concerning her purpose as a writer:

Part of my purpose as a writer of Afro-Caribbean (Indian, African, and white) experience and heritage and Western experience and education (indoctrination) has been to reject speechlessness by inventing my own peculiar speech, one that attempts to draw together everything I am and have been, both Caliban and Ariel and a liberated and synthesized version of each. (264)¹¹⁹

The fight against "speechlessness"—being forced to keep quiet for centuries due to colonization—is what motivates Cliff to write. She has fulfilled her goals beautifully and powerfully, and her character Clare Savage represents the very polarity there is between Caliban and Ariel, for she is constantly searching for her origins and questioning the imperialism that is forced upon her and her people. Michelle Cliff defines Clare Savage in the same essay:

The protagonist of my two novels is named Clare Savage. She is not exactly an autobiographical character, but she is an amalgam of myself and others, who eventually becomes herself alone. Bertha Rochester is her ancestor. Her name, obviously, is significant and is intended to represent her as a crossroads character, with her feet (and head) in (at least) two worlds. Her first name means, signifies, light-skinned, which she is, and light-skinnedness in the world in which Clare originates, the island of Jamaica in the period of British hegemony, and to which she is transported, the United States in the 1960s, and to which she transports herself, Britain in the 1970s, stands for privilege, civilization, erasure, forgetting. She is not meant to curse, or rave, or be a critic of imperialism. She is meant to speak softly and keep her place. Her surname is self-explanatory. It is meant to evoke the wildness that has been bleached from her skin, understanding that my use of the word *wildness* is ironic, mocking the master's meaning, turning instead to a survival, her survival, and wholeness, her wholeness. A knowledge of history, the past, has been bleached from her mind, just as the rapes of her grandmothers are bleached from her skin. And this bleached skin is the source of her privilege and her

¹¹⁹ Caliban and Ariel were both, according to Roberto Fernández Retamar "slaves in the hands of Prospero, the foreign magician. But Caliban is the rude and unconquerable master of the island, while Ariel, a creature of the air, although also a child of the isles, is the intellectual" (qtd. in Cliff 263).

power too, she thinks, for she is a colonized child. She is a light-skinned female who has been removed from her homeland in a variety of ways and whose life is a movement back, ragged, interrupted, uncertain, to that homeland. She is fragmented, damaged, incomplete. (265)

Through this description we have in a nutshell the main character Clare Savage, a mixture of both the colonizer and the colonized. She undergoes a journey that links the past and present of Jamaica as well as the past and present of colonizers and slaves—the current black West Indian citizens.

Clare's father was the white descendant of an English official, a man so cruel that he did not hesitate to burn his slaves alive instead of freeing them. Her mother was a red, descendant of the maroons, ex-slaves. Her mother's family was a family of small farmers in mid-twentieth century Jamaica. All this is important to understand how complicated Clare's upbringing is, since she was made to believe she was superior for being her father's daughter, but at the same time she discovers her black legacy, inherited from her mother's lineage.

One figure that is crucial for the Jamaicans is that of Nanny. She is described as a sorceress, an obeah¹²⁰-woman “who could catch a bullet between her buttocks and render the bullet harmless” (14). Also, as the narrator explains, she “carried the secrets of her magic into slavery.” She was one of the two sisters who, according to an island myth, were the foremothers of all island children:

In the beginning there had been two sisters – Nanny and Sekesu. Nanny fled slavery. Sekesu remained a slave. Some said this was the difference between the sisters.

It was believed that all island children were descended from one or the other. All island people were first cousins. (18)

¹²⁰ Brathwaite explains that:

Equally significant were the black and/or slave preachers, doctors and obeah-men... [They] were almost entirely independent of white control and contributed enormously to the physical and psychological well-being of the slave population and therefore to the health of the society as a whole. Slave doctors usually confined their work to their own particular plantation. A good obeah-man would have influence throughout the district. These obeah-men (and women) received a great deal of attention from the white legislators of the island. (Brathwaite 162)

Thus on one side stood the image of Nanny, the powerful, role-model grandmother, and on the other side there was the power of the white people, represented by the Queen of England and her allies, since Jamaica had two rulers in 1958: “a white queen and a white governor” (5). The image of the Nanny carries a great significance in Cliff’s work. Nanny is present in all her three novels. She is a symbol of successful resistance against the Continental supremacy.

There are several differences between Clare’s parents. One such difference that soon strikes the reader is the fact that they attended separate churches. Mr. Savage preferred the John Knox Memorial Church at Constant Spring, where there was no church choir and whose congregation was mostly of middle class and “for the most part families- brown and black and red and white mothers and fathers and children” (12), whereas the Tabernacle, which Mrs. Savage liked, “consisted for the most part of Black women—sitting and singing in groups and pairs and alone.” Mr. Savage’s church had a harpsichord from England that never adapted to the Jamaican climate; Presbyterian hymns were played and the main message was that Christians would walk to heaven with the support of God and “by almost any means necessary—‘marching as to war.’” Mrs. Savage’s church sermon was about the necessity of deliverance and in the services there were generally women possessed with the spirit, who would “jump up and fall down moaning, or sway faster and faster back and forth, calling on God to hear her, asking his forgiveness.” Clare observes her mother’s behavior and this has an impact on Clare’s identity formation process. She follows her mother’s example of solidarity among black (poor) women. These issues will continue to develop in Cliff’s second novel, No Telephone to Heaven.

Clare, upon spending a summer vacation with her maternal grandmother in the country, kills a bull by accident. Her idea had been to go looking for a legendary wild boar which used to be hunted by the maroons (ex-slaves from the time Jamaica was a Spanish possession). After the killing Clare was considered evil. She was then sent to be ‘tamed’ by an old spinster, who would teach her European-style good manners. Some light is shed upon this practice by Evelyn O’Callaghan’s Woman Version: Theoretical Approaches to West Indian Fiction by Women, which has one chapter dedicated to the issue of “Engineering female subjectivity,” the construction of a new, domesticized woman based on European values. Callaghan cites a poem written by Olive Senior, ‘Colonial Girls School:’ “under the ‘pale northern eyes,’ the sexuality, vitality, black skins, kinky hair and Creole language of West Indian girls was ‘erased’ until There was nothing left of ourselves/ Nothing about us at all.” (70) Such a process or educational system is also called zombification, as Brodber (1982) explains:

I have this notion that colonialism, as it operated in [the West Indies], was a theft of culture—a theft in a strange way. The English have brought in all these African peoples, who have a particular world view, and they insist on taking this world view away from them, which is in fact their *spirit*. Without it, you cannot live; without it you’re just plain ‘fles’. . . only dry bones, rotten flesh. (qtd. in Callaghan 71)

For Clare, being with Mrs. Phillip (or Miss Beatrice, as she was instructed to address her) was painful. She had only met the lady once and remembered how she had closed her holiday greetings on the occasion stating “And God save the queen,” as the family heard the annual message of Elizabeth II, queen of England, whom they looked up to. Clare tried to persuade her mother not to go stay with the lady, but the former was strict about that, saying that she did not “have to be confined by this sad little island” (150). Clare could learn things from her, even though Kitty admitted that Mrs. Phillips was narrow-minded about colored

people, like Clare's father was. Clare's identity was being erased: she was not allowed to consider herself colored, and was made to spend time with a racist woman who was supposed to teach her things that would help her succeed in life. She was going to learn to be a racist herself.

When Clare was very young, gender difference had already been constructed in her mind. The moments of dialogue and understanding she shared with her father were the kind of moments she imagined a son would share with a father (and not a daughter): "Clare's relationship with her father took the form of what she imagined a son would have had there had been a son" (qtd. in Out of the Kumbula 118). Clare had already learned about difference and the fact that she was treated as a boy mattered to her.¹²¹ Further, Clare was the daughter of a white man and a colored woman, but her father considered her to be white and, it seems, several other island people did the same. Clare herself questioned that, but was told by her father: "You're white because you're a Savage" (73). She kept thinking of that, since her mother was colored, how could she be white? Her relatives tried to make her whiter: "Her knees tended to grey, and she had been given a piece of pumice—rough volcanic rock—by an aunt to work the grey out of her skin. ... she was considering how she could be white with a colored mother, brown legs, and ashy knees."

There are indications that Clare is curious about gender and she often performs non-feminine roles. The incident with the bull reflects one of these times. Booker and Juraga note that when Clare decided to go hunting for Massa Cudjoe she was assuming "a traditionally

¹²¹ Nancy Chodorow points out the importance of how children are brought up to define who they will become: "It is crucial for us as feminists to recognize that the ideologies of difference which define us as women and as men, as well as inequality itself, are produced, socially, psychologically, and culturally, by people living in and creating their social, psychological, and cultural worlds" (Chodorow, Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory 112).

masculine role” (120). This is possibly one reason why Clare was forced to spend some time learning feminine manners with Mrs. Beatrice Phillips: to teach the girl, as Booker and Juraga put it, “to behave as if she is white, middle-class, and conventionally feminine, removing all vestiges of her black, working-class, and lesbian inclinations.” The family of Clare’s mother Kitty was colored, but only Clare’s sister Jenny looked like them (the ex-slaves named Freeman).

Clare’s relationship with Zoe can also be indicative of her longing for love, maybe her mother’s love or another woman’s love (she feared men and was consumed with the idea of being raped). Even though there is no actual sexual experimentation with Zoe, Clare’s feelings for her are strong. When they bathe naked together in the river, the reader learns Clare’s feelings and the fact that in her mind they were natural: “Now Clare herself had a dearest friend who was dark, but it would not have occurred to her to place those swift and strong feelings—largely unspoken feelings—she had for Zoe in the category of ‘funny’ or ‘off’ or ‘queer’” (126). On the other hand she hated the cane-cutter who caught her and Zoe naked together after the river bath, reached for the gun and shot it, and the reason she fired it could be interpreted as being because the man had invaded her private world with Zoe. Clare is fighting for her space, and she does not intend to allow anyone to disturb her. As a man the cane-cutter is a threat to her and she wants to use power against him by shooting the firearm.¹²²

One more incident between Zoe and Clare that strikes the reader as possible evidence of a homosexual interest occurs when Clare is trying to make peace with Zoe after a confrontation which led to a physical fight in the country. Clare loses, having to admit she was “one true cuffy and stingy as one dog” (101). After the fight Clare proposes that they

¹²² A phallic symbol.

pretend Zoe is a princess and Clare a prince. She performs the role of a man. Clare's feelings and sexual curiosities are also an important part of her identity formation.

Besides her own curiosity and education, there were other facts that contributed to Clare's identity formation. One example is Anne Frank's story, which was made famous in Jamaica when Clare was a pre-teen, and had an impact on her. Clare decided to write her own journal. She empathized with Anne Frank and saw the Jewish girl as a model for resistance against hatred. She compared the fate of the islanders with the fate of Jews in the sense that both were marginalized simply due to ethnic categories. That realization was important for Clare to understand how big the consequences of prejudice can be, and to take action against it. Just as Anne Frank found in her writings strength to survive, Clare would later become politically involved in the fight against oppression.

Clare kills the bull of her grandmother's, a symbol of a patriarchal system. Even though she did not intend to kill the bull, the event is very close to Lispector's short story "O Búfalo" ["The Buffalo"].¹²³ Symbolically the similarities are enormous since both animals represent male supremacy. However, in "O Búfalo" the protagonist was looking for an animal that would fit her need of hating. In Lispector's own words:

Um dia desses tive um ódio muito forte, coisa que eu nunca me permiti: era mais uma necessidade de ódio. Então escrevi um conto chamado "O Búfalo", tão, tão forte, que, por experiência, fui ler para Mafalda, Arnaldo Pires, e eles sentiram até um mal-estar. O rapaz disse que o conto todo parece feito de entranhas... É a história de uma mulher que vai ao jardim zoológico para aprender com os bichos como odiar. Essa mulher, que só aprendeu a perdoar e a se resignar e a amar, precisa pelo menos uma vez tocar o ódio de que é feito o seu perdão. Entende-se que ninguém tem culpa: ela está tentando odiar um homem cujo "único crime impune" é não amá-la. Na verdade, por mais irracional que fosse, ela o odiava, só que não conseguia sentir em cheio o próprio ódio. Depois é que vem o búfalo. (qtd. In Gotlib 301)

One of these days I felt a very strong hatred, something I never allowed myself: it was more a need for hatred. Then I wrote a short-story entitled "The Buffalo", so strong that, from experience, I went to read it for Mafalda, Arnaldo Pires, and they felt sick... It

¹²³ Lispector, Laços de Família [Family Ties].

is the story of a woman who goes to the zoo to learn from the animals how to hate. This woman, who only learned to forgive and to resign herself and to love, needs at least once to touch the hatred of which her forgiveness is made. It is understood that nobody is guilty: she is trying to hate a man whose “only unpunishable crime” is not loving her. In fact, even though it is irrational, she hates him, but she could not feel her hatred fully. The buffalo only comes later.

The woman of “The Búfalo” is finally able to express anger and kill, as well as Clare. The former was angry at the man who did not love her. Clare was angry at so many things her girlfriend had told her about the social system in Jamaica, things she was not able to change and that represented the “evil” side, the side of the white man. Also, she was angry at the cane-cutter who saw her naked and wet from the bath she had taken with Zoe, her beloved girlfriend. The man would not have done anything about that funny scene, but he was the one who immediately triggered the shooting of the bull.¹²⁴

Mrs. Phillips is a peculiar character. She is white, racist, considered “feminine” and representative of “good” European manners. She does not treat her servants well, and mistreats especially Minnie Bogues, a black woman. Minnie, in return, calls her ‘bitch,’ in open reference to the fact that the old lady had several dogs whom she treated extremely well, even bringing them to her room at night: “Minnie often went into a rant ... about the ‘ole bitch’ and what she imagined went on in the bedroom after the lights were put out and their mistress brought in two or three or four of her favorite dogs to sleep with her” (152). Mrs. Phillip holds a position of superiority in society because she is white and rich; however, as a woman she is not free. No one envies her, since she is now an elderly and lonely woman, who only feels tenderness for animals and raises suspicions due to such behavior.

¹²⁴ Marta Peixoto presents an alternative reading of “O Búfalo.” To her the woman is not able to hate the man who did not love her and she is “caged in by her inability to recover emotions she had long repressed” (300) (as a woman she had never been allowed to hate, and hating was something she longed for). Peixoto proposes the theory that perhaps the woman was “not ready to allow herself to hate” and such is the reason why she faints in the final scene.

In spite of being forced to spend time with the racist white lady, Clare finds someone who fascinates her and whose story was amazing: Mrs. Phillips's sister, Mrs. Winefred. The latter is considered insane, but it seems to Clare that she is the sanest of all people. Miss Winifred is one of many female Caribbean characters who feel deprived of identity. After traumatic events in her youth she chooses not to bathe any longer. She thus becomes isolated from society. Mrs. Phillips does not want Clare to speak to her (Clare does so when Mrs. Phillips is not present). Miss Winifred had had a baby from a black man, "a nice little Black man who worked for us," in her words. She did not accept the respectable marriage her father arranged for her, never let the man get close to her, and chose to live as a recluse and unwashed. Still, Miss Winefred is described by Clare as a gentle person with warm eyes, a person who would not make birds turn from her. She was filthy and considered mad by society; according to Mrs. Phillips, due to her selfishness her husband could not endure her. But Miss Winefred was the sister who had stood up for her identity; she did not accept the world rules that were contrary to her heart and had to pay for that. She was made to feel infected: "All the water in the world cannot wash away what I did. My sad life. Which made another sad life. All the salt in the world cannot draw out the infection I carry in me. I live in repentance for my sins. I am not what I was meant to be" (164). Miss Winefred was led to believe that interracial relations are wrong. She was unhappy and considered mad, but the question is, would she be happy had she remained married to the man her father picked for her? Her sister Mrs. Phillips did not seem happy either, and she had done what was expected from her as a racist woman dependent on a man (her father and husband, as was expected of a lady). According to O'Callaghan, it is "possible to view the madwoman's strategy of 'opting out' of *all* role models/images/stereotypes as a refusal, if not a deconstruction, of the

arbitrary boundaries of a divided patriarchal colonial society” (47). Miss Winifred’s way of punishing herself led the society of the time to consider her mad, and it was at the same time her way of expressing her view: that she should be able to choose the man she wished to love and to have a baby with.¹²⁵

Abeng finishes with the teenage girl Clare talking about race issues with Mrs. Stevens/Miss Winefred, the woman who considered herself dirty and thus never washed, and going to bed to dream of Zoe, waking up the next night to find out she was menstruating (just as her friend Zoe had said). That marks her passage from childhood to maturity; she had become aware of many of her own feelings in relation to gender and desire, and had been able to make important conclusions about issues of race. She questions her education and the values of her father, who was always so eager to erase any trace of darkness in Clare. As Clarke notices: “Claire is symbolically poised at the onset of adulthood, looking out at a complex and strange world. We are meant to read this moment as a metaphor for an ambivalence towards the steadily approaching reality of independence” (15).

¹²⁵ The episode of Miss Winefred resembles Bessie Head’s autobiographical work A Question of Power and the fate of the South African novelist, as she describes her birth and the situation surrounding it: “I was born on the sixth of July, 1937, in the Pietermaritzburg Mental Hospital, in South Africa. The reason for my peculiar birthplace was that my mother was white, and she had acquired me from a black man. She was judged insane [as was Miss Winefred in Abeng] and committed to the mental hospital while pregnant. Her name was Bessie Emery and I consider the only honour South African officials ever did me – naming me after this unknown, lovely, and unpredictable woman” (qtd. in Mackenzie’s Bessie Head: an Introduction 3). Both Head and her mother become victims of a society that punishes them; Head indeed had an onset of mental illness (and was subsequently able to recover.) Head’s protagonist in the novel, Elizabeth, similarly to Miss Winifred, is deeply involved with nature, a fact that seems to bring to both of them relief from the mental problems they struggle with. Elizabeth enjoys communal gardening, whereas Miss Winefred feeds birds with crumbs (and the birds respond well to her). On a more abstruse level, as Mackenzie suggests, Head’s novel “is an exploration of the experiences of her life and an investigation into what they signify in the greater context of an Africa in transition” (34). Bessie Head and Michelle Cliff did in fact correspond for some time; Cliff has expressed a desire of publishing her letters one day and has also dedicated Abeng to her (Raikin 60).

C. No Telephone to Heaven: Clare's Teenage and Adult Years

*Isolate yourself. If they find out about you it's all over. Forget about your great-grandfather with the darkest skin... Go to college. Go to England to study. Learn about the Italian Renaissance and forget that they kept slaves. Ignore the tears of the Indians. If anyone asks you, talk about sugar plantations and the Maroons—not the landscape of downtown Kingston or the children at the roadside.*¹²⁶

No Telephone to Heaven (1987) can be read independently from Abeng. However, reading about Clare's resolutions in terms of gender and politics brings to the reader a more complete understanding of the process of identity formation for a Jamaican woman from a privileged background who chooses to embrace social causes and to question pre-imposed notions of gender, class, and race. As Thomas Cartelli describes her:

Unlike the majority of those of her silent or silenced postcolonial sisters who have been identified as socially or politically updated versions of *The Tempest's* Miranda, Clare Savage is presented as the self-determining agent of her own education who refuses to use the advantages of pale skin and privileged class-standing either to "pass" or to deny the Caliban within. Abandoned by her defiantly Jamaican mother, raised in exile in New York by her Americanized father (who is perhaps too coyly named Boy Savage and functions, both here and in Cliff's earlier novel, *Abeng*, as a deeply flawed Prospero figure), tutored in Renaissance studies at a university in London, this New World Miranda rejects father and London alike in order to return to Jamaica, where she attempts to redeem her grandmother's homestead and, with it, a sense of "basic, assumed life."¹²⁷

In No Telephone to Heaven Cliff portrays Jamaica not as "A WORLD OF CULTURE WITHOUT BOUNDARIES" (6), but as a place that has been explored since colonial times. She leaves it clear that there is still much to be improved there before it becomes the paradise it is said to be to attract tourists. As Fiona R. Barnes notices: "Cliff is relentless in her demystification of the prevailing Western romantic images of the Caribbean

¹²⁶ Cliff, "Passing," The Land of Look Behind 22-23.

¹²⁷ Cartelli 91-92.

culture and her insistence on the presence of multiple competing scripts subsumed within every dominant narrative.”¹²⁸

Clare has experiences living in the “neocolonizer”¹²⁹ United States with her father until she finishes school and then in the mother country England, where she attends college, and later decides to come back to Jamaica in search of her identity—of race, class, and gender. She is in her mid-thirties when she decides to recapture the history of her country, which had been almost erased by the colonizer and the colonized who were forced to suppress it. She is strongly influenced by her mother Kitty, who undergoes an impressive process of identity-shaping herself, narrated in Part III of No Telephone to Heaven, properly entitled “The Dissolution of Mrs. White.”

Kitty Savage accompanies her husband from Kingston, Jamaica, to New York as he wishes; however she soon realizes that they are not welcome in the United States as they travel across the country by car in 1960, when Clare is fourteen years of age. Avoiding main roads and never checking in at motels accompanied by Kitty or Jenny, the darker daughter, Boy Savage finds that the only way for the Savages to be tolerated in the United States is by hiding the family’s black ancestry, only telling the half-truth that they are descendants of

¹²⁸ Fiona R. Barnes, “Resisting Cannibalism: Oppositional Narratives in Michelle Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven*” 24

¹²⁹ Michael Parenti explains the term “neocolonialism:”

Sometimes imperial domination is explained as arising from an innate desire for domination and expansion, a “territorial imperative.” In fact, territorial imperialism is no longer the prevailing mode. Compared to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the European powers carved up the world among themselves, today there is almost no colonial dominion left. Colonel Blimp is dead and buried, replaced by men in business suits. Rather than being directly colonized by the imperial power, the weaker countries have been granted the trappings of sovereignty--while Western finance capital retains control of the lion’s share of their profitable resources. This relationship has gone under various names: “informal empire,” “colonialism without colonies,” “neocolonialism,” and “neoimperialism.” (...) Historically U.S. capitalist interests have been less interested in acquiring more colonies than in acquiring more wealth, preferring to make off with the treasure of other nations without bothering to own and administer the nations themselves. Under neoimperialism, the flag stays home, while the dollar goes everywhere--frequently assisted by the sword (Parenti 15).

plantation owners, passing as white at all times. As they travel through the south of the United States, they read signs of hatred against non-whites, such as “A MAN WAS LYNCHED YESTERDAY” (54) and “YOU ARE IN KLAN COUNTRY” (58). The time Kitty spends in New York working in a laundry for Mr. White as the fabricated Mrs. White is almost unbearable for Kitty. She misses the Jamaican food, climate, music, everything. Yet she is not even allowed to go to places that remind her of Jamaica, for Boy wants her to integrate into the new culture and environment, forgetting their past. She looks for consolation with Hispanics but does not find it, and writes messages to the white customers of the laundry, which not only distract and amuse her, but also reveal her feelings:

WE CAN CLEAN YOUR CLOTHES BUT NOT YOUR HEART.
AMERICA IS CRUEL. CONSIDER KINDNESS FOR A CHANGE.
WHITE PEOPLE CAN BE BLACK-HEARTED.
THE LIFE YOU LIVE WILL BE VISITED ON YOUR CHILDREN.
MARCUS GARVEY¹³⁰ WAS RIGHT. (81)

Some customers do indeed read Kitty’s messages, and Mr. White fires the two black women who work in the laundry, thinking they had written them. Kitty confesses she had been the author of the sentences, takes her leave, and decides to go back to Jamaica with Jenny. She feels guilty for having caused the black women’s dismissal, but does not know how to find them or what to say to them in case she does. Clare is left alone with her father, wondering why she is left behind.¹³¹ She feels motherless and does not see her mother any longer. Kitty dies five years later without returning to New York; Boy never returns to Jamaica either, even though they exchange letters stating how much they longed to see each other.

¹³⁰ Marcus Garvey was a Jamaican-born black man, “leader of the largest organized mass movement in black history and progenitor of the modern ‘black is beautiful’ ideal” (The Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers Project, UCLA, “Marcus Garvey: an Overview”).

¹³¹ Ann R. Morris and Margaret M. Dunn in “The Bloodstream of Our Unheritance: Female Identity and the Caribbean Mothers’-Land” note that for Clare “Kitty’s abrupt rejection is traumatic” (219) and that Clare “is left unmothered, while still a child.”

While in New York, Kitty not only suffers prejudice but also misses her own mother, who dies in Jamaica while the Savages are still in the island. She herself is motherless and her family's move just adds to her burden. Boy suffers prejudice as well. The high school principal of the school he wanted to enroll Clare frankly tells him that "children from underdeveloped countries develop at a different rate than American children" (98) when he takes Clare to be enrolled at the high school. He was also called "white chocolate" by the principal, who claimed that there was "no place for in-betweens" in their [the American] system. Boy's attempt to pass fails and he is forced to hear the truth about his family's race. He suffers, but goes on trying to integrate himself and Clare into their new life, even marrying an Italian-American woman later. Clare observes and internalizes everything, but before taking action she must first go to London, the "mother nation," land of the worshipped Queen, to find out all the truth that has been hidden from her and the colonized people for so long.¹³²

Clare slowly realizes the complexities of racial identity, and one of the strong events that marks her while she is still in the United States is the historical bombing of a black church in the South, the Sixteenth Baptist Church, an attack that kills four young girls (all younger than Clare at the time) and injures another twenty-one. Clare reads about the attack (a hate crime), and keeps pictures of the girls in their coffins with her for some time. Her father finds that out and demands that Clare stop thinking about those issues, asking her, "do you want to labor forever as an outsider?" (102). He takes the pictures away from her, but the

¹³² The experience of diaspora is often painful, even more so when there are racial and other types of prejudice involved. As Grant Farred claims: "Marginalization is at the core of the diasporic experience. The dispersion of a previously settled social grouping involves the loss of place (signifying primarily home and community) and the often violent interruption, if not termination, of a people's history and the resituation at the outskirts of a foreign environ" (Farred, *What's My Name?* 113). Although Boy tries very hard to adapt to the new environment and customs, he experiences marginalization. Kitty withdraws with her youngest, dark daughter, and Clare decides to move to England only to experience even more marginalization. Even though she is light-skinned, she takes all offenses against dark races personally.

impression has already been printed on Clare's mind. She will never forget that incident, and connects it with her mother.¹³³ Clare's racial identity is definitely formed at that time, when she feels the importance given to race in the United States. From then on she was always attentive to signs of racial intolerance, both in the United States and in England, where she later witnesses riots against immigrants of color and is shocked. She has already started to see her mother's lineage as black.¹³⁴ She listens to white British people shout mottos of hatred: "KAFFIRS! NIGGERS! WOGS! PAKIS! GET OUT!" (137) The response is written on a poster on the following day: "WE ARE HERE BECAUSE YOU WERE THERE," an indication that the movement of diaspora is linked to colonialism itself. However, Clare feels that there can barely be a dialogue about those issues.¹³⁵

Feeling lonely in England, where she decides to go in pursuit of further studies after her experience in the United States, Clare tries to parallel herself to the character Jane Eyre in Charlotte Brontë's novel, for she is also like that protagonist: heroic, "[b]etrayed. Left to wander. Solitary. Motherless" (116). However she soon finds out she feels much more like

¹³³ Belinda Edmondson points out that "Cliff understands that an understanding of black consciousness is crucial to resolving the complexities of being a white colonized subject, and more importantly is empowering not only to black people in the Caribbean, but to white people as well; her novels attempt to reclaim her African identity, which was "bred out" of her during her childhood years in Jamaica."

¹³⁴ Constance S. Richards, for instance, claims that "Black nationalism functions in *No Telephone* as a positive, though also problematic, answer to Clare Savage's childhood and adolescent sense of isolation" (23).

¹³⁵ Racial riots have been part of England's history. As Farred points out in *What's my Name?*:

The Caribbean presence in the metropolis, as Hall points out in "Racism and Reaction," is an established one, almost as old as the English presence in the West Indies. Of equal vintage is the narrative of conflict between West Indies blacks and white Britons that arose out of the Caribbean, Asian, and African settlement. British post-World War I is especially riddled with incidents of racial strife. (188) Farred also notices that "the riots disrupted the notion of Britain as a homogenous, white nation by drawing attention to the ways in which colonialism and European economic expansion were reconfiguring the British ideological landscape" (189). At present, in my view, Britain and the United States are still in the process of dealing with racial variety and with the movement of several racial groups to predominantly white spaces.

Jane Eyre's Bertha.¹³⁶ "Yes, Bertha was closer to the mark. Captive. Ragout. Mixture.

Confused. Jamaican. Caliban. Carib. Cannibal. Cimarron. All Bertha. All Clare." Realizing that she has much more in common with the madwoman in the attic, Antoinette—Bertha, and not so much with Jane Eyre, is another important step for Clare in claiming her identity as a West Indian woman.

The hero/heroine of the novel is a transgender, Harry/Harriet. Cliff wanted it to be this way, claiming: "I did that purposely because Jamaica is such a repellently homophobic society, so I wanted to have a gay hero/heroine."¹³⁷ Harry/Harriet is biologically born a man, loves women, but wants to be a woman. He/She suffers because of that, being raped as a boy, but she is still a hero as she becomes certain of his gender identity and is happy being what she is.¹³⁸ Cliff claims "he is the most complete character in the book,"¹³⁹ and he endures what a woman in the Jamaican culture endures, "especially a woman like his mother, who has been a maid," Cliff says.

¹³⁶ Bertha is the protagonist and one of the narrators in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea, a prequel Rhys wrote to Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre. Bertha (Antoinette Cosway) is Rochester's first wife, who in Jane Eyre is locked in the attic, mad. Rhys designs a past for Bertha, from her childhood in the West Indies to her last days as a prisoner in Thornfield Hall. Bertha is, in fact, what Rochester calls Antoinette Cosway, even though she does not like to be called Bertha. In Rhys's novel Antoinette loves him but amidst Caribbean rituals, beautiful landscape, and people, his actions and gossip made by other people make her feel depressed and wild. Neither Antoinette nor Clare find in England a home. For them England is more a prison, a place that seems to disorient them. There are many similarities between Cliff and Rhys, in the sense that both writers are light-skinned, descendant of slave owners who lost their fortunes due to the abolition of slavery, and the fact that both have written about issues of race, class, and gender relations as well as about diaspora (both women left the Caribbean in their youth and went to Europe—Cliff and Rhys and the United States--Cliff) and the portrayal of Caribbean nationals as inferior or alienated.

¹³⁷ Schwartz 601. Cliff also talks about how she felt when her mother discovered in her thirteen-year-old diary a declaration of love for another girl, humiliated her reading it in front of all her family, and because of that the other girl was taken out of the school they attended together. Later Cliff's mother disowned her daughter for being gay (604). Cliff thinks she tried to hide her feelings about the way her gender choice has been criticized by her family members, but it is certain that there is a lot about gender in her work.

¹³⁸ I will use the feminine pronoun to refer to Harry/Harriet because she decides to adopt that gender.

¹³⁹ Adisa 276.

Both Harry/Harriet and his mother experience being raped in their lives (there is in this fact a strong connection between women in the West Indies and in South America, as portrayed by Allende in the fates of peasant women). Harry was raped at the age of ten by a British officer who called the boy “sweet lickle monkey” (129) and kept it secret for his own protection. The boy Harry had the help of a maid who was the replacement to his mother, who was his father’s maid before. That maid, Hyacinth, was to Harriet what the humble women in Allende’s Eva Luna represented to Eva: loving, supporting helpers who did what they could to protect her. Harry grows strong to become the transgender being from whom Clare learns a lot in terms of being courageous, of standing for what she decides. Clare needs that sort of example and support, especially since Jamaica is a highly homophobic society, as Cliff puts it.¹⁴⁰

Harry not only becomes Harriet but also becomes a follower of Marcus Garvey and guides Clare to become a revolutionary, in order to fight for their people. Harriet is a nurse, she works at the Kingston hospital as well as with poor people in the downtown area; thus she is able to help local people through her position. However, she thinks more needs to be done. She learns traditional West-Indian medicine from older women. She keeps in touch with Clare through letters while she is in England and France with Bobby, and meets her when she comes back. Harriet supports the socialist island governor Michael Manley.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Cliff declares to Schwartz: “I have no idea why homophobia is so virulent there, but I think it must go back to slavery, the sexual use of black men by the slavemasters, perhaps” (610). Cliff also confesses in the same interview that she did not visit Jamaica for a long time partly because she is gay and does not feel like she has a place there (612). She expresses the same sentiments in an interview to Adisa: “I have often wondered what the source is (for homophobia). Why is it such an homophobic place? Does it go back to slavery? Is it something that has its roots in slavery? Were the slaves used in that way?” (276)

¹⁴¹ Michael Manley (1924-1997) was the son of the founder of the People’s National Party (PNP), Norman Manley, elected Prime Minister of Jamaica in 1955. Michael Manley won the general elections for PNP. He soundly beat the unpopular incumbent Prime Minister Hugh Shearer (his cousin) in the election of 1972 after running on a platform of “better must come,” giving “power to the people” and leading “a government of truth.”

Upon Clare's definitive return, Harriet and Clare visit the place where Clare's ancestors from her mother's side lived and loved, and where she used to go on vacation. That place is also where she first loved another woman, Zoe, as told in Abeng. Harriet helps Clare in her journey back to her origins, and introduces her to the leader of the guerrilla. Harriet, the cross-dresser, is very influential in Clare's awakening in the political arena.

Besides reading C.L.R. James and being a Garvey supporter, Harry/Harriet wants her people to suffer less and to locate their own past apart from the past imposed upon Jamaica: "we are of the past here. So much of the past that we punish people by Flogging them with cat-o'-nine-tails. We expect people to live on cornmeal and dried fish, which was the diet of the slaves. We name hotels Plantation Inn and Sans Souci. . . . A peculiar past. For we have taken the master's past as our own. That is the danger" (127). Her criticism of their customs reflects her own self, which has to be changed even though it implied much suffering.

What immediately triggers Clare's withdrawal from the institute she attends in England is an image of Pocahontas she sees in Gravesend, a town "where the graves end" (134). Wandering alone by the graves, she sees one grave in particular that strikes her: it is the grave of Pocahontas, which reminds her of who she is—a Jamaican. First she goes to France, where she feels deeply for Bobby, the troubled and infected man who cannot come to

He was Prime Minister from 1972 to 1980 and from 1989 to 1992. Manley instituted a series of socio-economic reforms that yielded mixed success. Though he was a biracial Jamaican from an elite family, Manley's successful trade union background helped him to maintain a close relationship with the country's poor, black majority, and he was a dynamic, popular leader. Unlike his father, who had a reputation for being formal and businesslike, the younger Manley moved easily among people of all strata and made Parliament accessible to the people by abolishing the requirement for men to wear jackets and ties to its sittings. Manley developed close friendships with several foreign leaders, including Fidel Castro, and with Cuba just ninety miles north of Jamaica, he strengthened diplomatic relations between the two island nations, much to the dismay of United States policy-makers. ("Michael Manley.")

terms with war and race issues.¹⁴² Then she goes back to Jamaica. The movement back to the island is certainly not easy for many islanders. As Stuart Hall points out in his 1970 essay, “Black Britons:” “The socio-cultural and psychological pressures on individuals or groups which are involved in moving from one culture to another so closely interpenetrate, that it is impossible to make any clearcut distinction between them” (325). However, as Hall states: “I do not believe that the vast majority of black immigrants to Britain are going to return to their countries of origin unless they are sent, although all of us will want to keep alive the possibility of ‘going home’ as an escape clause, just in case the society does decide in the end to push us over the side” (325). Black immigrants to Britain, the United States, and other developed countries face discrimination and struggle to make a home in the new country, safer and with better social conditions for themselves and their families. As Grant Farred points out, Stuart Hall did not return permanently to his country of origin, due to the lack of a psychic “home,” a safe and unviolated space in the Caribbean, and then turned his attention to securing such a locale within the metropolis itself.¹⁴³ This is the same position taken by Cliff, who lives in the United States and only goes back to the Caribbean to visit, and to her reasons for that the phobia of homosexuality of Jamaican society adds its weight. Cliff’s character, Clare, though, belongs to the group of islanders who, after spending part of their lives in Britain or the United States, decide to return to their home countries in search of their

¹⁴² Thomas Cartelli points out the following about Clare’s relationships and her wanderings between America (U.S. and Jamaica) and Europe:

In the process of her transit between New York, Europe, and Jamaica, she has casual sex with Paul H., a spoiled prince of the Jamaican economic aristocracy; enters into a consciously restorative relationship with a physically and psychically maimed Caliban, a black American veteran of Vietnam who has had his childhood dreams of “catching shrimp with [his] mother . . . gathering okra, and dodging the snakes” (158) permanently invaded by nightmares of dismemberment; and allies herself in “sisterhood” with an androgynous Ariel who doubles as a Jamaican nationalist. (92)

¹⁴³ Farred, “You can go home again, you just can’t stay: Stuart Hall and the Caribbean diaspora.”

identities as well as to fight for social causes.¹⁴⁴ Clare and Harriet become what Edward Said defines as the intellectual: an “individual endowed with the faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy to, as well as for, a public” (11). Albeit their means end up not being the best, they try to do something to honor and protect the memory of their heroine Nanny and to improve the social condition of the islanders.

After two years of working with Jamaican children, teaching them what she thought was the right history of the island she was slowly able to recover, Clare is ready to engage in the political arena, with the support of her mother’s memory (Kitty hoped Clare would someday make something of herself and help her people) as well as of Harriet, who keeps saying that “Jamaica needs her children” (140). This view is honorable, but Hall’s and Cliff’s struggle, as well as that of millions of islanders who migrate to Europe and the United States is equally valid, since they dedicate a great deal of time and effort to constructing a home in the metropolis, and sometimes are involved in politics.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, often times the fact that people leave their home countries contributes to their development of identity, since they

¹⁴⁴ The choice of where to call home is certainly not easy for most natives of Postcolonial countries. However, no matter what their choice is (either remaining in their country of origin or moving to the “mother land”—the ex-colonizers’ land or the neo-colonizer’s land—the United States), a level of commitment to the well-being of a community is characteristic of several intellectuals. Boy’s choice of moving to the United States in itself should not be criticized, but his new way of life, which for him means forgetting the island where he was born and simply assimilating and marrying a white woman, leaves too much room for criticism. From a different point-of-view, though, the fact that he is able to assimilate quickly may be positive (a fact that affects the development of identity but is viewed positively by some people).

¹⁴⁵ Stuart Hall, for instance, was one of the formers of the New Left in London, a new kind of political space away from Jamaica. Personal issues were also part of his reasons not to return, as Farred notes: “It is an intensely personal story, a tale in which Hall recalls how his middle-class family’s interpellation into the racist hierarchies of colonialism destroyed his sibling and psychically disabled him” (*What’s my Name?* 183). Farred believes that: “the devastating experience suffered by Hall’s sister is, more than anything, an indictment of the colonial project and the internal racism it nurtured in the colonized” (185). Thus there are important questions in search of clarification: are the islanders racist, as Hall leads us to believe, and homophobic, as Cliff puts it, because (at least in part—a great part) of the colonizer? How deep are the consequences of the imposition of a culture on others?

can see and analyze things from the distance, and grow from such realizations.¹⁴⁶ Clare lives for a while in her grandmother's house, surrounded by memories (she even finds a scrapbook that belonged to her mother), in the company of the disguised guerrilla group. The group is able to distribute baskets of food to the poor neighbours. They share Hall's ideal that "the 'society of equals' is better than the soft-selling consumer-capitalist society"¹⁴⁷ and care about other people.

The novel ends with the deaths of Clare and other guerrilla.¹⁴⁸ Clare's death can be viewed as positive since she dies for her native land and is, ultimately, united with it. Because the guerrilla she joins sees the white filmmakers who are trying to take possession of the myth of their beloved Nanny as enemies of their culture, they attack the filmset and are repressed by the government.¹⁴⁹ The guerrilla is betrayed, and its actions are criticized.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Emilia Ippolito has noticed how "home is often portrayed as a place of alienation and displacement in autobiographical writing" and believes that "the family is sometimes situated as a site of oppression for women" (32). She calls attention to bell hooks's concept of home as relocation: "through the experience of location, fragmentation, and relocation one can construct a 'new world order' in which one can find his/her own place. (qtd. in Ippolito 38) In the case of Clare, she was brought by her father to the United States, decided later on to go to Europe, and ended up back where she felt home really was, to the abandoned land of her grandmother, the only place where her mother Kitty felt was home.

¹⁴⁷ Hall, "Editorial," New Left Review 3.

¹⁴⁸ This would have happened during the time when Michael Manley was Prime-Minister of Jamaica. Even though the guerrilla movement Clare and Harriet took part in and gang riots are different in several aspects, the late 1970s gang riots are considered among the bloodiest events in Jamaican history. According to Darrell E. Levi, violence flared in January 1976 in anticipation of elections. A state of emergency was declared by Governor-General Florizel Glasspole in June and some prominent members of the JLP were accused of trying to overthrow the government and were detained in a specially-created prison at the Up-Park Camp military headquarters. Elections were held on 15 December that year. The PNP was returned to office. The State of Emergency continued into the next year. Extraordinary powers granted the police by the Suppression of Crime Act of 1974 continued to the end of the 1980s. Violence continued to blight political life in the 1970s. Rival gangs armed by the two parties fought for control of urban constituencies. In the election year of 1980 around 800 Jamaicans were killed. While the murder rate in Jamaica has long been high, meaning that all these deaths cannot be linked exclusively to political violence, Jamaicans were particularly shocked by the violence at that time. ("Michael Manley.")

¹⁴⁹ There is a questioning of whether the United States government was involved in the repression of the guerrilla.

The life and development of Clare, albeit her death which can be considered a failure of her goals,¹⁵¹ leave a good message. She becomes a whole person, who understands that all cultures are rich, and that power comes with organization of a community, even though violence may be a means of acquiring that power.¹⁵² Her life is not overall a failure.

Clare is able to develop her identity fully as a black women. She identifies with her mother as black even though she looks white, and worships the memory of Nanny, an ex-slave who is a Jamaican heroine for standing up against the hegemony of the colonizers.¹⁵³ The same does not apply to Clare's gender identity. It seems that she died without coming to terms with her sexuality, albeit she is friends with Harriet (who decides for a different sexual identity), and has a history of loving women (portrayed in Abeng through her love of Zoe). However, going back to Butler's notion that gender is performative, Clare is a good example of this: her gender identity fluctuates as she feels attracted to Zoe, to Bobby, and to Harriet. Her cultural identity is as well completely developed, as she chooses to return to her home

¹⁵⁰ Constance Richards points out, for instance, that "[t]he 'soldiers,' however well-intentioned, never seem to achieve Fanon's 'fighting phase,'" which sees national culture as a product of real material struggle. Instead, the "soldiers" limit their concern with national culture to the misappropriation of the Maroon/Grandy Nanny myth by Western popular culture" (27).

¹⁵¹ Fiona Barnes makes the following reading of the final part of No Telephone to Heaven:

The surprise betrayal of the resistance fighters (the script played out for them in earlier Jamaican history when Nanny and her band are betrayed by a loyalist slave) and their destruction by the Jamaican army, who operate in collusion with foreign film crew, portrays the triumph both of neo-colonial forces and it seems, of European literary conventions in the narrative. (30)

¹⁵² See, as an example of this view, Grimshaw 276, in which C.L.R. James, in a letter he wrote in 1957, states that "The revolutionry movement on the whole, and the Marxist movement in particular, will be making a fundamental mistake if it does not recognize these movements for what they are—a form of revolutionary struggle characteristic of our age—and if we allow ourselves to be misled by this label of non-violence which has been pasted upon it" (276).

¹⁵³ This is the same position defended by C.L.R. James. According to Grant Farred: "James sees engagement with the cultural life of that community as the means that not only secures the links, but the intellectual's place in that community and new postcolonial nation itself" (What's My Name? 139). James formed his community outside of his home country (Trinidad). However, his point of view and that of Clare are similar in the sense that both joined communities to fight for causes that are related to postcolonial nations and have to do with their beliefs and political involvement.

country and to fight for social justice there. She is an intellectual according to Said's definition, albeit her cause is betrayed and she is not the representative of a whole community.

Clare's relationship with women is remarkable. These relationships are strong and shape her identity. Her mother, grandmother, and other Jamaican women, including Zoe and Harriet, have a much stronger impact on her life than men. Her father and Bobby are the two men who participate most in her life, but they are not the ones who really contribute to her development.¹⁵⁴ There are indications in the novel that she prefers the company of women, and not of all women (or of those who perform the role of women, in Harriet's case), but only of those who share her social-political commitments or her race and class.

D. Free Enterprise: Identity and the Fight for Human Rights in the U.S.

*"... remember me, ... and if
you remember not, O then I
will remind you of what you
forget..."*¹⁵⁵

The most recent novel published by Michelle Cliff, Free Enterprise (1993), is an attempt to correct historical omissions concerning the participation of women in the abolitionist cause, as well as in the fight for true freedom of all peoples. Cliff has claimed in an interview: "I started out as an historian; I did my graduate work in history. I've always

¹⁵⁴ C.L.R. James, in his 1981 essay "Three Black Women Writers: Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Ntozake Shange," notices the same trend in the novels he analyses: "The friendship between women; the impossibility of women getting on with men, as long as men see them chiefly as sexual instruments; the church; the lowest levels of Black life in America: these Black women are arriving at conclusions that are filling the minds of the most advanced and hard thinking people today" (415). Similar to the realization in the literary works analysed by James, that by participating in a community and acting for the good of the community these Black women will be better off, Clare joins a community—in her case, a guerrilla group—to achieve more power to fight for what she believes.

¹⁵⁵ Michelle Cliff, Free Enterprise 209.

been struck by the misrepresentation of history and have tried to correct received versions of history, especially the history of resistance. It seems to me that if one does not know that one's people have resisted, then it makes resistance difficult.”¹⁵⁶ Thus Cliff’s goal of pointing out historical mistakes and most importantly, historical omissions, is pursued in her *oeuvre*. Certainly the results are incredible revelations concerning identity formation of those people ignored by mainstream historians. Nonetheless Cliff does not claim to know the whole truth about history, but only to raise questions concerning the authenticity of the official version. At the same time, she continues to do in Free Enterprise what she has always done in her fiction: she challenges the Eurocentric history that glorifies the deeds of the conquerors and stresses that the oppressed peoples are marginalized long after the conquerors leave.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, the notion that passing (as white) is considered a way of improving lifestyle is still present in Free Enterprise; thus some consequences of this phenomenon are present in the novel and contribute to identity formation.

Free Enterprise presents new fictional strategies in relation to Abeng and No Telephone to Heaven. There are several narrators, and Cliff included letters, storytelling by multiple narrators, and memories as literary devices. The novel is highly fragmented and is considered to be a postcolonial work.¹⁵⁸ “Free Enterprise” is the name of a restaurant run by

¹⁵⁶ Adisa 280.

¹⁵⁷ Adrienne Rich emphasizes the need for women to revise the past, as Cliff does:

Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. (35)

¹⁵⁸ The usual definition of Postcolonialism is accepted in this work as stated, for instance in Handbook of Literary Terms: Literature, Language, Theory:

Postcolonialism is the political and cultural analysis of societies freed from colonial rule. . . . In analysing literature and artworks produced in postcolonial settings, they expound controversial debates over race, miscegenation, complicity, and ethnocentrism. In this way, postcolonialism focuses on the text,

free blacks, where the two main characters meet to discuss political ideas. The name also refers to capitalism and to the attempt to arm the slaves in open rebellion, as Mary Pollock points out in “Positioned for Resistance: Identity and Action in Michelle Cliff’s *Free Enterprise*” (208).

Annie Christmas (born Regina) is a Jamaican woman living in the nineteenth century who longs to do something meaningful with her life. She is the daughter of “[u]ne femme de gens inconnu” (6), a term used in reference to Jamaicans who wanted to bleach their family lines, claiming the identity of being white (or as close as possible to being white), passing as white. But Regina opts for claiming a different identity, leaving her comfortable position as a middle-class “white” Jamaican to join the movement on the mainland. Later on she decides to live near a leper colony the United States, in Carville, Louisiana, a place where people are forced into silence, just as colored people were forced to live in Jamaica and in several other countries during colonization.¹⁵⁹ Even though she spends most of her life in exile, she cherishes memories and objects that remind her of Jamaica, her home. She keeps memories and souvenirs from the island, and thinks about it every day: “Never settled, never at home on the continent to the north, even after a lifetime in exile there, Annie Christmas thought of her island each day of her life” (19).

In the leper colony patients are given numbers as soon as they arrive, in an attempt to erase their identities and spare their families shame. Cliff points out that most of the people infected are dark-skinned, or belong to oppressed groups such as Jews and Maroons (182).

but has a larger ambition: to impart the experience through the eyes of the colonized individual, not the eyes of the colonizer. To postcolonial critics, this is a final act of liberation from the colonizer. (117)

¹⁵⁹ Cliff has claimed that the people in the leper colony are really “incarcerated political activists” (qtd. in Agosto 28).

However, those same people had stories to tell, claiming their identities as well as inspiring political awareness. Also, as Myriam Chancy points out, “the inhabitants of the leper colony tell each other stories on a day-to-day basis in order to shed their numbers and reinstate their true names, lives, and histories” (175). They find in Annie Christmas an attentive listener as well as a storyteller herself.¹⁶⁰ For instance, one of the characters, great-grandson of a man who was present when Captain Cook arrived from England to colonize Hawaii, narrates the story of the colonization of Hawaii from the point of view of the colonized. This story sees the “discoverer”¹⁶¹ of Hawaii, Captain Cook, as a man who brought syphilis into the island, wanted to change everything in the island to suit European ways, and was in turn robbed, killed and roasted by the natives, who kept his bones as souvenirs (and maybe ate him). The Hawaiian great-grandson claims: “We had been syphilized, my friends, cured of our savage state” (49). The fact that the great-grandfather’s voice is present (he is present in spirit) and telling the story gives it more authenticity, but the great-grandson knows that the truth “lies somewhere in between” (51). He acknowledges that his great-grandfather has purified the experience, omitting the fact that “the women and some of the men went along with the

¹⁶⁰ The treatment given by Annie Christmas to the patients of the leper colony is similar to that given to patients with the same disease given by Ernesto “Che” Guevara and his friend Alberto Granado during their journey around South America (these events occurred when Guevara was not yet a graduated doctor and Granado was already a leprologist), as Guevara narrates to his father in a letter: “The farewell which the patients in the Lima hospital gave us was enough to encourage us to carry on; they gave us a primus stove and collected a hundred *soles*, which in their economic circumstances is a fortune, and several of them said goodbye with tears in their eyes. Their appreciation stemmed from the fact that we didn’t wear overalls or gloves, that we shook hands with them as we would with the next man, sat with them, chatting about this and that, and played football with them. This may seem pointless bravado, but the psychological benefit to these poor people – usually treated like animals – of being treated as normal human beings is incalculable and the risk incredibly remote.” (my underlining) (132) Che also explains their commitment to leper patients had to do directly with the affection the patients showed towards them: “Si hay algo que nos haga dedicarnos en serio, alguna vez, a la lepra, ha de ser ese cariño que nos demuestran los enfermos en todos lados” (*Notas* 15) (“If there is anything that makes us seriously commit, ever, to leprosy, it must be the affection the sick show us everywhere (we go)”).

¹⁶¹ In fact, it is believed that the first people who arrived in Hawaii between 300 and 750 A.D. were Polynesians from Tahiti.

English sailors willingly, for payment of biscuits or rum or belladonna.” With this Cliff shows the other side of the story: that the colonized did things for small rewards that would later cost them dearly. Annie Christmas listens to this story and tells her own, about Alexander Bedward, a member of the Jamaica Native Baptist Church who claimed that “the black wall shall crush the white wall” (54) and was locked away as a madman. Even though Bedward was a nationalist, Annie claims that he is remembered as a madman, and she is sad about that, since the islanders do not understand the efforts he made to stand up against oppression. However, through such oral history a lot can be questioned about truth, thus changing people’s minds and guiding them toward an awareness that is vital for each person’s identity. Cliff has stated that Free Enterprise is more diverse than the other novels and that it is filled with “political enthusiasms.”¹⁶²

Annie Christmas is undoubtedly searching for the truth about her island and about the human condition. Her stay near the leper colony seems odd, but to her it brings understanding since there are people there searching for the same things she is. In 1920 she feels free in the home she has chosen to live in, secluded but free. She has bottles with different scents adorning trees that remind her of Africa, Jamaica, of her true origins. Reclaiming her past and that of her people is extremely important to her. A crucial point in beginning her process of healing from the series of rapes she suffered is when she is able to finish writing a letter to her friend Mary Ellen Pleasant, from whom she always received letters for whom she was not able to finish any other. The date of the letter was 1898. Before that she was not able to express what happened in words, not even to Rachel De Souza, a woman of Spanish-Jewish roots who had lived in Surinam before getting sick and going to the leper home in Louisiana. Rachel becomes a good friend of Annie, being able to leave the

¹⁶² Schwartz 598.

colony often to visit her. When Annie told the story of the failed raid (Harper's Ferry) and of how she was captured and humiliated she stopped the narrative when she stated that "my sex became known" (197). Only in the letter to Mary Ellen Pleasant is Annie Christmas able to describe how she was found chained amidst men in a Confederate chain gang (she was passing as a black man,¹⁶³ a cooper, to fight in the war) due to blood running down her leg. She was given her own chain, or leash, as she calls it, was then cuffed around the neck and led from man to man—the chained slaves were forced by the keepers to rape her, for the keepers' entertainment. (206-208) She was severely punished for being a light-skinned woman among slaves, and for passing as a man. After being released by Yankees, she ends up in the house near the leper colony in the South, where she finally finds some peace with the sick (political activists from various countries), but never forgets her past: "I can feel the cuff to this day" (208). She finishes the letter by revealing that she thought, as she was under the domain of the keepers, of Industry (her childhood nurse she loved, a representative of the oppressed women of Jamaica, but of those women who stand up for their values and their freedom). For Annie, telling her story is also important because it is told from the survivor's point of view to engender resistance. (73)

Another character who stands out in the novel is Mary Ellen Pleasant, an American black woman (1814-1904, born in a concealed Maroon settlement, according to Cliff) for whom Cliff creates a family line: her father, Captain Parsons, is a hero in the novel, a ship Captain who hides slaves, fights for freedom and social justice, and ends up in "the Cage," a place where the women had the reputation of murdering men; her mother, Quasheba, leaves to the fourteen-year-old Mary Ellen a hand-wrought revolver, "which, in all her days, never

¹⁶³ Annie explains that she was transformed into a dark-skinned man due to "a transformation obtained with a magic elixir, one endorsed by preeminent minstrels" (193), and she also said she still had the elixir in a bottle hanging on a tree.

left her side” (131). She was given a secret name that only her people knew, which according to Cliff she took to the grave without ever disclosing. Both parents die violent deaths in their struggles in defense of black emancipation. Mary Ellen learns from birth that she is of African heritage and should embrace the fight for social justice. Mary Ellen attends the Free African School, where her identity as a black woman is shaped.¹⁶⁴ Mary Ellen’s teacher, Miss Carey, believes strongly in the power of storytelling as an attempt not to let memory fade. Thus she encourages the children to recite a narrative about their past: “‘Books are fragile things,’ she explained. ‘What they contain can easily be lost. We must become talking books; talk it on, like the Africans, children. Talk it on’” (211). Likewise, Isabel Allende’s character, Eva Luna, was taught the same power of storytelling, and used that to survive.

Mary Ellen Pleasant befriends Annie Christmas after meeting her at Boston’s Tremont Temple in 1858 at a Frances E. W. Harper lecture. She is the one who picks the name “Annie Christmas,” based on the life story of an African woman of that name who lived around revolutionary times and was a beautiful warrior, keeping a “thirty-foot necklace, on which each bead signified eyes, noses and ears she had gouged out or bitten off in fights.”¹⁶⁵ According to Pleasant, her body was taken by her twelve sons “down the river and out to the Caribbean” (27). Pleasant is wealthy and is in the hotel business, serving white people and at the same time hiding blacks who escape from slavery. She suffers from

¹⁶⁴ In Mammy Pleasant’s biography, Hudson claims that the black woman did not have a formal education, that she was a domestic servant as a child, and later was sent by her father to live and work with a couple – the Husseys -- who did not use her father’s money to give her an education, but soon put her to work as a shop clerk. (21) That turned out to be good for Pleasant; it was where she learned a lot about the business world (even though she always regretted not having a formal education). To Hudson the young Mary Ellen had the support of the church – the African Baptist Church, before going to live with the Husseys, where she “could have taken spiritual and social refuge at the African Baptist Church, conversing with islanders, learning the politics of the community, and connecting with African Americans in a safe space away from the center of Nantucket Town. Black Baptist churches were critical institutions for black women’s identity formation and political training” (20).

¹⁶⁵ Cliff, Free Enterprise 26

prejudice and is acutely aware of that, and Cliff claims with horror: “Lord Jesus, they take one look at a successful black woman, and they think she’s either a whore or a voodoo queen. Either she got money by sucking white cocks, or by putting spells on them” (101).¹⁶⁶ She became known in California in the early 1860s for filing lawsuits against streetcar companies that refused to stop for colored people, including herself. In the 1880s she was accused of voodoo practices and baby selling (she denied this, claiming she had helped place babies in families, but not for money),¹⁶⁷ during a trial of a friend and protégé (an Irish descendant woman, not a black one, indicating that Pleasant not only helped people of her own race).¹⁶⁸ Her image was seriously affected, and from the 1890s until her death she lost most of her property and witnessed the downfall of her enterprise. According to Hudson, “Pleasant granted more interviews, made more court appearances, and printed the first and only installment of her autobiography in this decade [1890s]. She also issued some of her most fiery rhetoric in the last ten years of her life” (79). She worked for a wealthy white family, the Bells, for many years, and it seems that she used them to achieve high social levels, as Mrs. Teresa Bell writes in her diary: “Mary E. Pleasant has been my evil genius since the first day I saw her. She has simply had me for a pocket book to help her have a standing which otherwise she never could have reached. A demon from first to last” (qtd. in

¹⁶⁶ Hudson observes that in her boardinghouse business prostitution may have occurred, as was expected at the time, but that the title she gained of “black madam” diminished her activities as a successful entrepreneur and abolitionist (60).

¹⁶⁷ Hudson 73.

¹⁶⁸ Even though Ireland has a long history of oppression, because that woman was Irish and white her position hold privilege in the North American society. Cliff has talked about the fact that she joins women of different races in her work: “Christmas and Pleasant are the two main characters who come together in this revolutionary moment, but there are other characters from other parts of the world who also represent resistance, other revolutionary moments. I want to show that national boundaries evaporate, that people can reach each other across distances and resist. One of the things I am trying to do in this book is adjust the lens, to re-vision history.” (Adisa 280)

Hudson 90). Certainly Pleasant was an intelligent and manipulative woman; however Cliff does not focus on her means for succeeding using white people. She emphasizes the human side of Pleasant, including the fact that for her color is not the main issue, but fighting oppression is. It can be oppression against any people, not only black people, but people of any color.¹⁶⁹

In Mary Ellen Pleasant's epigraph it reads "She was a friend of John Brown," and Cliff was struck by that sentence, which subsumes all the value of Pleasant's existence to simply being a friend of John Brown, even though she dedicated her life to the abolitionist cause, participating in the plotting and financing of the Harper's Ferry raid.¹⁷⁰ She is comparable with Nanny, the representative of the maroons who became an idol for the colonized people of Jamaica for having stood up for the preservation of the people and their culture.¹⁷¹ Angeletta KM Gouridine points out: "The similar fates of the Jamaican and African American women signal Cliff's embrace of the diaspora connections, yet the contrast in their local prominence underscores the politics of place" (45). Whereas Pleasant does not become

¹⁶⁹ For instance, in real life Pleasant stood by a white woman, Sarah Althea Hill, in a divorce trial case (see Hudson 63-78), and in Cliff's fiction she befriends Annie Christmas, who is not an African-American woman, but Caribbean.

¹⁷⁰ According to Hudson, Mary Ellen Pleasant requested that the sentence be printed on her gravestone, and that request was honored in 1965, when the San Francisco Negro Historical and Cultural Society placed a marker bearing the phrase on her grave in Napa, California. (43)

¹⁷¹ Louis James discusses the figure of Nanny:

'Nanny' (or 'N.') as a resistance leader against the British in the early 1700s has provided a focus for militancy in West Indian women's writing, bringing into prominence a figure whose name remains in the ruined 'Nanny Town' concealed deep in the Jamaican mountains, but previously shadowy in Jamaican folk history. While male leaders like Cudjoe were renowned principally as warriors, Nanny has been celebrated as being also priestess and cultural organiser of the Maroon community. Goodison's poem 'Nanny' celebrates her transmission of healing arts from Africa:

I was schooled in the green-giving ways
of the roots and the vines
made accomplice to the healing acts
of Chainey root, fever grass and vervain. (206-207)

as famous¹⁷² as she should have, Nanny is still remembered today as a symbol of power against Caribbean colonization, and Agosto points out that “[n]ot only were two consecutive Maroon towns named after her, but her cultural significance was recognized in 1975, when the government proclaimed her a National Hero, an honor granted to participants in the struggle for the freedom of Jamaica” (47). Another parallel that can be traced between Nanny and Pleasant is that both assume a motherly role towards their communities, nevertheless none in fact played the role of a mother.¹⁷³ Pleasant is called “Mammy,” though she refuses to be called so once she establishes authority. Cliff refers to Nanny as “mother,” but as noted by Noraida Agosto, “the domestic connotations of the word are subverted by its juxtaposition to signifiers that identify Nanny as hunter, healer, and magician” (48). Nanny was born in Africa and never accepted being either a slave or a passive woman (role usually linked to mothers); she came from a society where women had power and used that power to cure the maroons from diseases and wounds and to kill their enemies. She was also deeply connected with nature, and according to the legend Annie Christmas heard as a child through her nurse, Industry, “if a white man crosses Nanny’s grave, he dies instantly” (29). Annie Christmas’s identity is marked by Nanny and Industry, who told her the legend of the former, and her meeting with Mary Ellen Pleasant sparked a series of changes to her character.

Annie Christmas describes her friend Mary Ellen Pleasant to Rachel DeSouza, and the strange connection between an earthquake in San Francisco and Pleasant, after the latter’s death:

¹⁷² In recent years there have been attempts to discover more about Mary Ellen Pleasant, and Cliff’s novel has contributed to that.

¹⁷³ According to Hudson, Mammy Pleasant had a daughter with her second husband, John Pleasant, but did not raise her. (28)

Dedicated fighter in the Cause, Mother of Freedom, Warrior and Entrepreneur, who some believed came back from the dead in nineteen and six to avenge her good name, and the loss of property she suffered at the hand of the fathers of San Francisco, who finally brought her down, charging she was a witch, casting spells with her one blue eye and her one black eye, poisoning the city water supply, wreaking havoc at the stock exchange, souring the milk of nursing mothers. (203)

This is a very romantic description, with elements of magical realism that are connected with Mary Ellen Pleasant's whole existence, even that after death. Cliff gives her an outstanding place in history.

One more character stands out in Free Enterprise: Clover, the historical figure named Marian Hooper, Marian Adams after marriage (1843-1885), a white American woman, hostess and photographer, married to Henry Adams (1838-1918, great-grandson of the second United States president John Adams and grandson of the sixth president, John Quincy Adams), a Harvard Professor of Medieval History as well as a novelist. Henry Adams is the author of The Education of Henry Adams, where he writes the story of his life without mentioning his marriage of thirteen years to Clover (he never mentions his marriage even though it was not unsuccessful). The omission is intriguing, and thus Cliff in Free Enterprise includes the character Clover, bringing her into the spotlight.¹⁷⁴ It is also true, as Cliff portrays it, that after Clover's suicide Henry Adams traveled extensively, becoming a globetrotter. Cliff highlights Clover's life through her own (Clover's) letters to her sister, brother, to the sculptor August Saint-Gaudens (who works to create a memorial for the black 54th Massachusetts Regiment and after Clover's death design her sculpture, which is at present in the Rock Creek Cemetery, Washington, D.C.), and to her cousin, Alice Hooper, with whom she has a lesbian relationship. Cliff's Clover only finds herself at ease in the company of other women. Henry's influence on her seems to be suffocating, and she feels

¹⁷⁴ Eugenia Kaledin was struck by the omission and published The Education of Mrs. Henry Adams (1994), a very successful attempt of providing Clover Adams with a history.

unworthy of him. She dedicates herself to photography (like Aurora in Allende's Retrato en sepia [Portrait in Sepia]), and is a brilliant photographer; however as a woman she is not recognized for that. In Free Enterprise one of the people who is photographed by her is Mary Ellen Pleasant. The fact that her activity (photography) is not valued by society because of her gender contributes to her falling into depression, as well as the idea that she would become like her mother (who died of tuberculosis when Clover was five) and her father's mental patients, imprisoned in a sanatorium. She cannot have children (at least she feels it is her fault),¹⁷⁵ reads a book about "the issue" and feels confused, but refuses to try any sort of treatment, claiming she is "past forty. No hope" (167).

One event that marks Clover profoundly is the loss of one of her pictures. She is extremely frustrated that the photograph she had taken of her brother, Ned, who was "in charge of the regiment of Negro troops" (161), with the men departing to the War, was lost and never served the purpose she wished it to serve, of being a model for Saint-Gaudens's sculptures. Her work was diminished and the photograph she and her brother cherished was lost. Mary Pollock claims that: "like other scattered pieces of African American history, the monument sculpted by Saint-Gaudens ironically came to represent not black history, but white history—it was known as the Shaw memorial in honor of the white colonel" (213). Clover's fate is very similar to that of Allende's Férula (La casa de los espíritus): they both love women and cannot be recognized in society as they deserve due to their gender, and even though they belong to families that can provide them with comfort they feel lonely and hopeless. Henry Adams and Esteban Trueba become disappointed with them; Henry never

¹⁷⁵ Otto Friedrich's Clover: The Tragic Love Story of Clover and Henry Adams and Their Brilliant Life in America's Gilded Age, points out that there are several theories about Henry Adams being "a repressed homosexual," a bisexual, or that he might have been impotent. (147)

mentions Clover's name again in his life but never remarries, and Esteban cannot understand why Férula chose to die in misery while he sent her money regularly.

Someone who saw Clover's work and respected it immensely was Mary Ellen Pleasant. Clover took a photo of her in 1858 of which Pleasant remarks: "She allowed me to see the fierceness some complain about, others celebrate, which I never took very seriously" (179). Pleasant also mentions in her letter of condolences to Henry Adams that she thought Clover was a romantic (178). She also mentions in the letter that she had met Clover during a speech by Frederick Douglass, one of the primary black/enslaved leaders of the abolitionist movement. Thus Cliff brings Clover nearer to politics, making of her a woman with a sense of social justice.

Clover was certainly someone who cared for others. One of the people who greatly impressed her was a woman "of mixed blood by the looks of her" (86) from the alley who told Alice and Clover that her name was Scheherezade. The woman asked Clover if she were a "shadow-catcher" (referring to photography) and refused to be photographed: "you want something as intimate as my likeness to take away with you" (87), she explained, and that impressed Clover, as well as the woman's life story: she was a slave of brown skin and green eyes, daughter of a white man who taught her to read, so that she could read to him. The father later abandoned her, his reader-slave-cook daughter. The woman also told Clover she knew how to avoid pregnancy, and that made an impact on her as well. Clover came back to look for the alley-dweller on the following day, but she was gone.¹⁷⁶

Alice and Clover's relationship was strong, and the time they were together is described as "the time they felt most alive" (84); for the first time Clover felt "real." Both

¹⁷⁶ The woman had stated she would only leave to save her life; she knew she was in danger and may have been murdered that day.

women admire the work of Mary Ellen Pleasant. However, Clover disapproves of her cousin Alice's criticism of Dr. Mary Walker, a woman doctor who dressed as a man and tended the troops at the front, amputating the limbs of wounded men. That character represents an inversion of traditional roles (she is powerful and even takes something that is crucial to men away from them). Alice calls her "the strangest creature" (172), and that upsets Clover, who states in a letter to her cousin that her hands are not trained for women's work either. Mary Ellen Pleasant thinks Alice is trying (to be human), but cannot see the marks slavery left on the whole African race.

In Free Enterprise Cliff explores the contradictions of success in business and the fight for social justice. She created for the historical Mary Ellen Pleasant an intriguing life, with a remarkable trajectory into assertiveness for a nineteenth-century-woman. Cliff also brings to the character Clover a whole new dimension, since in real life the character appears simply as the wife of Henry Adams. In Free Enterprise she is much more than that: she knows that she is married to a good man but she is a full human being, who notices other people around her and cares for them, no matter what their background (she leaves an impression on Mary Ellen Pleasant for that exact reason). Finally, Annie Christmas, whose life intertwines with that of Mary Ellen in the novel, is a strong Caribbean woman who is able to claim an identity that has been almost forgotten: she learns to claim her mixed heritage, and to praise the power of the Caribbean people, and especially, Caribbean women through the image of Nanny.

Michelle Cliff has created characters who come from disadvantaged groups in society and struggle to have their voices heard. As they discover their selves they also attempt to

make a difference in society. Clare learns about her background and fights at Harry/Harriet's side in order to bring value to a past that can dangerously disappear (the past of Nanny, of the slaves-rebels who stood up against oppression). Mary Ellen Pleasant has a brilliant mind but is unable to be accepted as an intelligent and successful woman. Clover is never mentioned by her clever husband; nonetheless, she is a bright and sensitive woman who cares for others regardless of their social status. Finally, Annie Christmas is able to come to terms with a past of injustices and tell her story and that of her people.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Identity formation is an open-ended process that involves several issues such as the inner world of the characters as well as cultural and philosophical values that are imposed on them. The race and class to which such characters belong contribute to the process as do their environments and their socio-political conditions. In the work of Clarice Lispector identity formation differs from the same phenomenon in the work of Isabel Allende and Michelle Cliff.

Discovering one's identity is a process that varies from character to character and is different in the work of each writer in this study. Lispector's work reveals that a woman's inner world can be enormous and that there can be a moment of illumination that will shine out above all the problems she is forced to face in life. Her narrative stresses the inward strength of characters who struggle to succeed (even though it is never clear whether they are successful or not, they keep searching). In her books it is not clear whether the characters will accomplish something meaningful. However, some of them, such as Joana and G.H., go through a series of events that impact their personalities and make them seem changed. Joana decides to go on a journey that will most probably take her in a different direction from the one she has been following with her husband and lover. She at first puts her life in these men's hands. The journey is the first step toward independence. She is going for the first time to do something by herself and for herself. She will let loose the wild horse that is inside her.

G.H. realizes that her existence mirrors that of a cockroach. She has to eat part of the cockroach in order to identify with the animal more intensely and to find out who she really is. She turns into a better person in the sense that she understands her nature and decides to face it. The case of Macabéa is matchless among all the other characters in this study: her identity is limited since she is from an extremely humble background. Having not been able to have access to much in life, she is not able to claim an identity until the moment of her death. At that moment she feels like a star and claims for the first time in her life that she is somebody. Even though there are other characters in this study, such as Eva Luna, who also come from humble backgrounds, Macabéa still suffers more. She is completely alone in the world. Eva Luna finds other people that support her and help her succeed in life. The opposite happens to Macabéa: the only two people that ever noticed her, her spinster aunt and her cruel boyfriend, do not love her. They mistreat her and do not do much in her behalf. Lispector creates for the character an inspiring death, which realistically is the only means through which she can be a star.

Água viva is a development of Lispector's previous work in terms of literary technique. Its main character and narrator is a nameless voice. It is possibly a female voice (since it desires to eat her placenta in a process that echoes G.H.'s eating of the cockroach in order to search for her identity) who lets her mind flow to let the reader know of her deep feelings and desires. It is a voice of a well-formed character that is sure about those feelings and desires; it is a voice that finds meaning in what seems to be meaningless.

Michelle Cliff and Isabel Allende portray an alternative view of history, a fact which contributes to focusing on the process of identity formation of several of their characters. This is certainly one of the reasons why their works are considered postmodern. As Linda

Hutcheon points out: “There seems to be a new desire to think historically, and to think historically these days is to think critically and contextually” (88). Cliff creates a strong protagonist of her first two novels: Clare, who slowly realizes that most things her father wants her to believe are in fact not true. She decides to claim an identity that she is taught to despise because she simply cannot stand to live a lie. She is strong enough and lucky enough to have the means of undergoing a journey of self-discovery as she rewrites the history of Jamaica. However, like Maca, she is not able to fully develop her identity because her life is taken before that is accomplished. Cliff wants to portray the lives of women who in fact lived in the nineteenth century in the United States but were not granted full credit for what they had done in life. The stories of Mary Ellen Pleasant and Mrs. Marian Adams are fully developed through a woman’s viewpoint. The results are indicative that a different portrayal of history is possible and must be pursued.

The role the environment plays is certainly crucial in all the works. For most of the characters in this study the process of identity formation begins in the home. Joana observes the chickens in the neighbor’s back yard to make sense of the cycle of life and death. She watches the clock move to see if something is going to happen to her in relation to the passing of time. She wonders whether certain words are masculine or feminine in an attempt to make sense of a categorized gender-oriented world. Maca grows up accepting submissively the values her aunt imposes on her. The fear that she may become a prostitute makes her aunt abuse her. She learns about the power of the wealthy and she learns to conform since she cannot find a way of changing the system. The city of Rio de Janeiro is the place she chooses to live but it is hostile to her. Her identity is something she cannot easily claim since she is defenseless in the city that requires a strength she does not possess. Eva

Luna and the characters in La casa de los espíritus as well as the other Allende novels analyzed here are for the most part stronger than Maca; however, there are some who cannot achieve much in their lives. Due to their circumstances they live on the edge of society, like Férula and some humble women who work as maids or perform other working-class activities. These kinds of characters also populate Michelle Cliff's *oeuvre*. They live in Jamaica or New York and belong to the poor working strata of the social sphere. Everything they do in life is limited by such circumstances. Eva Luna is one of the few who is able to succeed in life, with the support of others and her own talents as a storyteller.

Gender identity formation occurs in most cases according to social values imposed on individuals. Characters who tend to shift gender because they feel desire toward a non-traditional gender representative face innumerable difficulties. Férula is one of them. She is never attracted to men and tries to convince herself that the reasons for that lack of interest lie in the fact that she is forced to dedicate many years of her life to caring for her brother and mother. However the only person for whom she ever reveals any sort of attraction is Clara. Due to impositions of society and particularly of religion she confesses those desires to a priest and punishes herself by living in horrible conditions. After death, in a scene closely related to magical realism, she comes back as spirit and approaches the object of her only passion in life: Clara. Melécio/Mimi is a character that shifts gender roles and feels that surgery is not necessary as she achieves a point where she is confident enough as a transgender, inasmuch as surgery is beyond her wishes. Her situation is similar to Cliff's heroine Harry/Harriet. That character is also confident and strong enough to challenge society. One of Lispector's characters (who as a child questioned the reason why Portuguese nouns are gendered) subtly reveals desire for same-sex characters. Joana feels attracted to

Lídia and longs to be nurtured by her. Thus there are in the works of the three writers in this study either gender shifting or desire for same-gender relationships. As Judith Butler points out, genders are constantly being performed and are a shifting category.

Class plays an important role in forming the identity of the characters. The issue is constant in the works of the three writers in this study. Lispector portrays several maids and other characters from the working class who, though playing secondary roles, function as a means through which the main characters learn more about social relations and reflect on how they are seen by others. For instance, G.H.'s maid Janair is never actually physically present in the novel but she is the one who at first guides the protagonist to go to the maid's room. Further, it is because G.H. sees Janair's drawing on the wall that she starts questioning who she is. Joana is a member of the upper class and does not have to work for a living. She is only able to go through her journey because she can afford it. She also has the privilege of having a maid to accompany her after the death of her father. Relationships between upper middle class people and servants are still very common in Brazil. Even though the working class is mostly in the background of Lispector's novels, its importance is undeniable.

In Allende's texts, relationships among classes are frequently dealt with. The author has chosen to place a greater emphasis on working class characters than Lispector, and many of them are protagonists of Allende's novels. Eva Luna and Eliza Sommers are two of them, examples of successful stories from girls of extremely humble backgrounds. Their success is related to the fact that they are hard workers and talented as well as to the fact that both find the perfect mates. Members of the middle and upper-middle classes such as Clara, Blanca, and Alba still face difficulties in life, due to their underprivileged position as women. Some

of the characters such as Férula and Blanca decide it is better not to enjoy the family's financial situation because they feel there is a lack of respect and care for themselves.

Michelle Cliff's work is filled with representatives of the working class who struggle to live with dignity and never lose faith in the building of a world of fair social conditions. The guerrilla warfare in No Telephone to Heaven exemplifies that. The character Christopher, however, represents aggressive rebellion toward an environment that is hostile to him. He murders the local Jamaican bourgeois family he works for and particularly injures the maid because they represent the ones who have oppressed him in life. The social hierarchy of that society excludes members of the poor working class to which he belongs. His defense is cruel, but the system that placed him in the position he belongs to is crueler.

The importance of race in the formation of identity is not as transparent as that of class in the works analyzed here. In Clarice Lispector's *oeuvre* race is dealt with sporadically. That certainly has to do with the fact that most of the protagonists are white and that culturally in Brazil issues of race only recently have begun to be discussed. Furthermore, Lispector does not mention Macabéa's race. She does mention that G.H.'s maid is black and despises her employer; however, the reader does not have access to the maid's voice since she does not narrate the story. In Lispector's texts race is touched upon and there is a sense of turmoil concerning race relations in Brazil and elsewhere, such as in the short story "The Smallest Woman in the World" (Family Ties).

The issue of race plays a crucial role in forming the identity of Michelle Cliff's characters. To Clare, claiming her identity as a black woman is a matter of extreme importance. She views claiming this identity as being respected in the world for who she really is. She feels deeply sorry for the black children killed in the church attack in the 1960s,

and she compares herself to Anne Frank as she decides to keep a personal journal. In Allende race plays a fundamental role: women of color usually belong to the poor working class. They are treated with scorn by the upper classes but find more and more support among their peers.

Identity formation cannot be treated without taking into consideration the issues discussed in this dissertation: race, class, and gender identities are connected and contribute to the formation of human beings. Also, as Chodorow argues: “Individual psychological meaning combines with cultural meaning to create the experience of meaning in those cultural categories that are important or resonant for us.”¹⁷⁷ The writers we have studied here have explored all the facets of identity in all their richness and variety, lighting the path ahead for other women writers to pursue.

¹⁷⁷ Chodorow, The Power of Feelings 69.

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