‘Estou asperamente viva’: on identity and the posthuman in Clarice Lispector’s *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* and *Água Viva*

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For Brazilian author Clarice Lispector, writing was an act of self-interrogation and of becoming for her characters as well as for herself. As the narrator states in her novel *Água Viva*, ‘isto que tento escrever é maneira de me debater’ (48)—a sentiment aptly describing both Lispector’s urgent, enigmatic prose style and the objective underpinning her work. In the words of scholar Earl E. Fitz, Lispector is concerned about how people ‘are all the same […] and lost in an indifferent universe’ (‘Freedom and Self-Realization’ 60) and writes in a bid to untangle existential questions. She was ‘directly influenced by Existentialist writers’ (Pontiero 256). She also interrogates her narration’s subjectivity in the very process of writing towards answers.

In her pursuit of alternative conceptualisations of humanity, Lispector challenges social and artistic norms and develops ambitious interpretations of life and identity. Seminal Lispector scholar Marta Peixoto summarises her work as being fundamentally a search for ‘alternate *[sic]* sources of power and organisation’ (xiv). Lispector’s writing also explores unconventional ideas around being and metamorphosis on a personal level, engaging with identity as an amorphous, evolving reality: as summarised by a character, ‘A trajetória somos nós mesmos’ (*Paixão* 176). Owing to this focus on alternative ways of being and of identity as successive acts of becoming, Lispector’s writing lends itself to interpretation through posthumanism’s lens. Indeed, like Lispector, posthuman theory questions traditional understandings of human identity and undermines boundaries separating various entities. Granted, posthumanism as a term and a concept only emerged in the 1990s, meaning it would be inaccurate to define Lispector—who wrote several decades earlier—as a posthumanist per se. Nevertheless, it merits further exploring how Lispector’s writing originates in very grounded, almost bodily concerns regarding sensations and

environment, and explores human-human relationships through themes such as marriage, sex, and work, only to veer into more experimental spaces that engage with and anticipate posthumanism. A posthumanist reading of Lispector's work therefore has potential to offer insights into how her arguments with herself develop her philosophy, as well as how her work envisages alternative conceptions of being for humans.

There exists a growing body of criticism responding to Lispector's writing. Engagement with her work has increased particularly over the past decade, during which much of Lispector's oeuvre was re-translated into English following Benjamin Moser's 2009 Lispector biography, which generated new interest in the author internationally (Lowe 62). Moser himself has spent years advocating for Lispector to receive greater critical attention, especially in the English-speaking world. Notable criticism of Lispector includes Marta Peixoto's *Passionate Fictions: Gender, Narrative, and Violence in Clarice Lispector* (1994), the first critical book on Lispector in English, which offers a feminist analysis of Lispector's characters and themes; and Marília Librandi's *Writing by Ear: Clarice Lispector and the Aural Novel* (2018), which examines sound and listening in relation to Lispector's work. The delay in Lispector's writing reaching international audiences, however, means English-language scholarship surrounding her books remains limited.

Significant bodies of research into Lispector's work exist in Portuguese and Spanish; recent articles by Martín de Mauro (2018) and Mariela Méndez (2019) even explore Lispector's writing specifically in relation to posthumanism. Méndez, for example, argues that Lispector's "crónicas atípicas" 'consiguen intervenir cultural y políticamente al redefinir los términos en que hemos concebido a lo humano' ("Um 'isto'" 295). Such research suggests that reading Lispector's writing through a posthumanist lens is a logical step in further developing conversations around her work. Innovative scholarship like Librandi's 'echopoetics' research could also complement such readings. Moreover, investigations like these indicate appetite across Lusophone, Hispanic, and Anglophone scholarship for further exploring Lispector's writing through a contemporary posthumanist lens—meaning such analysis is therefore a rich area for study. This is certainly the case in the context of this paper, in which I will contrast two works by Lispector that have yet to be studied comparatively through a posthumanist lens.

In this essay, I will explore two of Lispector’s novels in relation to posthuman theory, in particular Rosi Braidotti’s *The Posthuman* (2013). This comprehensive text develops a theory of posthumanism in reaction to the limitations of humanism, which include racial and gendered biases informing interpretations of human identity. In *The Posthuman*, Braidotti argues humans must pursue ‘alternative schemes of thought, knowledge, and self-representation’ to think more critically about who we are and what we are becoming (12). Braidotti not only critiques intellectual and historical itineraries that have engendered the posthuman, but also asks where the posthuman condition places humanity today; what new forms of subjectivity it supports; and whether the posthuman engenders its own form of inhumanity. In this sense, her writing’s objective complements that of Lispector, making readings of Lispector’s novels using Braidotti’s posthuman theory constructive.

The Lispector novels on which I will focus are *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* and *Água Viva*. *Paixão* details the existential horror and epiphanies of its narrator, known only as G.H., following the day she slams a wardrobe door on a cockroach—an act prompting a spiritual crisis. G.H.’s ensuing dissolution of identity serves as an allegory for the breakdown of the artificial divide humans have erected between us and the world we inhabit. *Água Viva*, meanwhile, published a decade after *Paixão*, explores similar ideas in a less narrativized form, being a meditation on life and time rather than a linear story. The book is noteworthy for showcasing some of Lispector’s most explicit struggles with questions of narrative subjectivity and identity. Contrasted, these books offer insights into Lispector’s understanding of human identity from complementary perspectives: that of a character—introspective yet fictionalized—and that of a self-reflexive narrator who inevitably reads as semi-autobiographical through their interrogation of authorship.

Analyzing these books through a posthumanist lens enables exploration of questions surrounding identity and human nature. This essay will analyze key concepts in both Lispector’s and Braidotti’s writing such as the individual questioning what it means to be human; the conflict between the individual and society, specifically in relation to concepts of time and the animal; and the broader challenge of navigating narrative subjectivity when writing. As Lispector herself writes, ‘como poderia eu dizer sem que a palavra mentisse por mim?’ (*Água Viva* 179). It is a complex question she never entirely resolves. In analyzing Lispector’s relationship with words in conjunction with posthuman

philosophies, however, it is possible to better understand the vision of human nature Lispector seeks to communicate—imperfect language notwithstanding.

THE INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGING THE HUMAN

In both *Paixão* and *Água Viva*, the narrators seek to express agency and challenge notions of what it means to be human by pursuing creative endeavors and questioning boundaries. In *Água Viva*, the narrator is a painter. In *Paixão*, she is a sculptor. The commonality of these professions is significant: both involve creating meaning or imagery out of raw materials, suggesting the narrators are skilled in depicting or molding reality and creating art and artifice. Such is the starting point for Lispector's characters: they have built their lives—professionally and existentially—around controlling and molding the world surrounding them. Paintings and sculptures are also notable for being inflexible: once a painting dries or a sculpture is fired, they become fixed expressions of ideas or feelings. Lispector's characters thus serve as a reflection of Lispector's own preoccupations: the irony of Lispector herself engaging with writing as much to create and control meaning as to articulate it was an irony unlikely to have escaped her. Consequently, the narrators of these two texts not only act as vehicles for Lispector to explore the relationship between occupation, art, and identity, but also as commentary on writing as a marker of Lispector's own self-image.

In this manner, these narrators embody humanist values that center the human in the world and emphasize agency (Walter, *Humanism*), for their professions suggest that they believe—at least initially—that they can shape the world around them. Yet, they also embody what Braidotti describes as the dehumanizing commodification of humans via industrialization and capitalism, which subsumes humans and their relationships into a 'money-power' nexus that 'denies [humans] their full humanity' (114). For example, G.H. admits she was so preoccupied with creating order that '[ela] havia humanizado demais a vida' (*Paixão* 14)—a reflection conveying Lispector's philosophy that to superimpose the human over life is to give false meaning to both. Indeed, G.H. writes that in arranging things, 'crio e entendo ao mesmo tempo' (33). This comment alludes not only to how she designs her sculptures and her home, but also to how she crafts an understanding of the world through exerting power over things – objects; relationships; her own identity. Such exertion of power

enables her to give meaning to something that could otherwise appear senseless and frightening in its indifference. She attempts to tame meaninglessness through human trappings. Consequently, the transformative journey Lispector writes for her leads into that of *Água Viva*’s narrator, who writes that to understand and accept things, rather than seek to arrange them, ‘Devo é entregar-me’ (69).

In both novels, there is a futility to these characters’ efforts to understand their worlds through attempting to exert power over them and to mold them. Both the character of G.H. and the narrator of *Água Viva* express their artistic potentialities in capitalistic ways. Indeed, they understand themselves and their environments through their professions, and the acts of painting and sculpting for what is ultimately social and monetary gain. Even in professions the characters might interpret as artistic, their artistry is superseded by capitalistic demands, which transform the characters’ vocations into professions—placing them within the inherently dehumanizing money-power nexus previously described by Braidotti. This capitalistic subversion and reduction of human artistry and agency evinces a broader anxiety within these texts regarding humans’ capacity to accurately interpret their own experiences.

Lispector is preoccupied with how humans exert control to create—or attempt to create—order in the world. *Paixão* opens with G.H.’s confession ‘tenho medo dessa desorganização profunda’ (11). She links disorganization with a personal sense of ‘dissolução’ and ‘desintegração’, making evident the extent to which she depends on her life’s arranged nature and artificial constructs to feel as though her identity exists (14). This fear foregrounds *Paixão*’s almost Kafka-esque exploration of spiritual metamorphosis, following G.H. as she questions order—a rebellion captured acutely when she contemplates screaming upon recognizing her affinity with a cockroach. ‘Se eu gritasse ninguém poderia fazer mais nada por mim’ (62), she realizes; to scream would be to acknowledge commonality with the roach and thereby ‘ter saído dos regulamentos’ (63) and alienate people around her. The rules to which she refers are those of artifice: the social contract of upholding human organizational structures as absolute truths. G.H. juxtaposes the ‘grito de alarme de estar viva’ (63) with these constructs, implying that to live in adherence with them is effectively to live a form of death.

Lispector’s message here is that humans have constructed rules and societies specifically to help obscure our vulnerability and commonality with

animals. To contemplate how humans and roaches are fundamentally alike—both living matter, trapped in dying bodies—would be to confront humans with our own powerlessness in an indifferent world. It is for this reason G.H. declares 'o material do mundo me assusta, com os seus planetas e baratas' (67). In contrasting these extremes, she recognizes how insignificant humans are in the context of space and time and how humans' material composition is neither special nor sacred—a prospect that initially alarms her.

In *Água Viva*, the narrator expresses less fear than G.H. and challenges order from the outset. This self-assurance potentially reflects the extent to which Lispector's conviction in her own philosophy had matured by this time of writing, *Água Viva* drawing significantly from Lispector's life despite not being precisely autobiographical (Grigore 73). The narrator declares 'Quero a experiência de uma falta de construção' (*Água Viva* 27): she also observes 'não é preciso ter ordem para viver' (38). These statements reflect both Braidotti's skepticism of social organization and 'l'incrédulité à l'égard des métarécits' that Jean François Lyotard claims defines the posthuman in his book *La condition postmoderne* (7). Lyotard understands metanarratives as being totalizing stories about history and culture that humans perpetuate to legitimize knowledge and cultural practices. Understanding this posthuman theoretical concept—that humans' stories and structures are subjective and reductive—is valuable in interpreting Lispector's relationship to posthuman thought.

While Lispector resisted being labelled a feminist writer on grounds of the term's universality, gender remains a relevant lens through which to analyze tensions between her characters and their self-presentation. Even when her narrators are male, such as in *Um sopro de vida*, or of unspecified gender in *Água Viva*, her focus tends towards female characters, many of whom are 'construed as victims' (Peixoto 82) and sometimes even 'entrapped by their eager compliance with confining social roles' (Peixoto 33). This theme merits exploring not least because of Braidotti's argument that dissolving gender barriers is essential in pursuing posthuman identity. Considering gender in Lispector's novels is integral to analyzing identity: gender amplifies barriers between the character, their self-image, the narrator, and the reader as both character and narrator perform gender and selfhood.

Such is the case with G.H., who admits that in forming her so-called inner life, 'eu adotara sem sentir a minha reputação […]; sou aquilo que de mim os outros vêem' (*Paixão* 26). She is self-conscious and self-negating, traits

highlighted even by the contrast between her eating the cockroach and her eating breakfast prior—her ‘robe branco’ and ‘rosto limpo’ suggesting purity, ‘comia delicadamente’ and ‘delicadamente enxugava a boca com o guardanapo’ (*Paixão* 32). This reference to her mouth is notable considering the mouth motif is associated elsewhere in *Paixão* with fearful, gaping voids, such as stone mouths filling with ivy and windows yawning hellishly (35, 106). G.H. wiping her mouth represents her broader efforts to present herself and her world in a pleasing, feminine way: curating surfaces to conceal horrors.

G.H. ‘[se] organizara para ser compreendida por [ela]’ as much as she organizes herself to be understood by other people (*Paixão* 28). She can consequently be understood as ‘um ser […] dividido’ (Diogo 67). This aligns her with Braidotti’s understanding of the posthuman subject, which she describes as ‘the expression of successive waves of becoming’ (Braidotti 136). G.H. corroborates this concept when she discusses her past self ‘abandonando o ser pela persona, pela máscara humana’ (1964: 92-93). This statement illustrates how individuals shed and acquire different ways of being, thus making ‘being’ itself more an act of ‘becoming’.

Indeed, posthuman identity is not fixed—meaning G.H. is both the G.H. narrating retrospectively and the G.H. whose story she describes. Her consciousness of her performance, evidenced by her illicit pleasure in the occasional ‘gesto proibido’ that ‘não combinava com a mulher educada que sou’ (*Paixão* 36), echoes Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity. It also speaks to the notion that manners and society, and to a greater extent human civilization, are behaviors and constructs grounded in human culture, which is used to help differentiate humans from animals. G.H.’s life is a performance, rendering her originary identity—if such a thing exists—an enigma as obscure to G.H. as to those around her.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler explores this paradox of originary and performed identity: she explains that if gender attributes and acts are performative, ‘there is no pre-existing identity by which an act or attribute might be measured’ (180). Gender reality as well as the concept of human civilization are thus created through sustained social performances. This theory is relevant in gender-based readings of Lispector’s characters as well as analysis of posthuman identity in her novels, because it posits that her characters’ gender expressions also form part of their broader performance as people seeking to evince identity in a meaningless world. G.H. realizes ‘a explicação de um

enigma é a repetição do enigma' (*Paixão* 134), for example, and *Água Viva*'s narrator ruminates on the 'criadora inconsciência do mundo' (*Água Viva* 86). These passages suggest that in the same way Butler argues there is no preexisting identity against which to measure gender or behaviour—and Braidotti argues identity revolves around becoming rather than being—Lispector's philosophy is similarly postmodern.

Indeed, Lispector's writing challenges humanist views that understand humans as central to the world and in possession of inherent characteristics. She thus positions individuals as being in existential conflict with society. The narrators of *Paixão* and *Água Viva* rebel by challenging their understandings of themselves and of humanity—but where does this leave them?

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

We have established that Lispector's characters question centering humans and organizing the world into what G.H. denounces as a 'vida sentimentizada' (*Paixão* 69). Determining what this denunciation means for their posthuman identities is complex, considering they continue to exist within restrictive social parameters. That said, close readings of *Paixão* and *Água Viva* through a posthumanist lens offer insight into Lispector's views on living consciously and why embracing new forms of being is essential to this process. Both novels outline alternative attitudes towards living and being, specifically in relation to concepts of time and of the animal.

Lispector frequently explores ideas through binary oppositions: life/death, for instance, and presence/absence. As Fitz notes, this could entail a structuralist reading of her work ('The Passion of Logo(centrism)' 42): the nature of identity or presence in Lispector's writing is often understood in relation to the broader systems in which it exists. Nevertheless, as Fitz also remarks, Lispector's work ultimately aligns more closely with deconstructive thought owing to 'these many motif-like "binary oppositions" [being] seldom, if ever, resolved' ('The Passion of Logo(centrism)' 42). Therein lies a paradox of Lispector's work: she simultaneously writes of characters freeing themselves of the trappings of human life and constructed identity, but also acknowledges that everything is inherently connected. Freedom is therefore to some extent impossible because, as expressed by *Água Viva*'s narrator, 'não estou toda solta por estar em união com tudo' (34).

This interconnectivity can be interpreted more optimistically through a posthumanist lens. Braidotti posits that embracing ontological relationality and greater interconnection between the self and others is inherent to realizing the posthuman condition; that it can engender an ‘enlarged sense of community’ (190). Posthuman theory presents such interconnectivity as a welcome departure from the self-interest of individual subjects present in classical humanism. When read in the context of such theory, Lispector’s characters’ predicaments appear more hopeful.

Nevertheless, a challenge to this reading emerges when the individual subject is connected to other subjects whose lives define the individual’s identity in limiting ways—as is so often the case for Lispector’s characters. Braidotti justifies her positive understanding of interconnectivity between subjects by noting that posthuman theory bases interconnectivity on ‘positive grounds of joint projects and activities’ (190). However, such interconnectivity is not always perceived as optimistically by Lispector. Granted, she writes that the question of ‘entre quais eu sou’—rather than ‘que sou’—is what forms and informs identity (*Paixão* 28). Yet she also criticizes this interdependence, arguing humans struggle to unearth their own identities or the identity of the real because we are merely symbols responding to other symbols—‘tudo ponto de apenas referência ao real’—and ‘a realidade não tem sinônimos’ (*Água Viva* 82). In this manner, Lispector’s preoccupations echo ideas outlined by Lacan in his discussion of the “Other discourse”, where he argues that ‘meaning does not come from substance or essence, but from structural associations and signifying effects’ (Ragland-Sullivan 6). She also has G.H. characterize human society as ‘toda uma civilização que me ajudaria a negar o que eu via’ (76).

Lispector views human society and influence as barriers to the depersonalization she prizes, and as potential opposition to individuals who reject constructing their own identities within human social parameters (1964: 162, 176). Consequently, while Lispector’s ontological views parallel Braidotti’s in that she understands society as influencing individual identity, she is unwilling to accept this reality’s violence or place faith in human interconnectivity. Rather, she chooses to explore alternative means of understanding identity, such as through questioning society’s relationship with time and with animals.

The motif of human society disappearing into the ‘abismo do tempo interminável’ through cosmic indifference recurs throughout Lispector’s

writing (1964: 121). G.H., for example, recognizes her fleeting existence's insignificance, describing herself as living 'na supercamada das areias do mundo'—her penthouse apartment echoes this idea, elevating her as it does above the chaos and complexities of existence on a ground level, in the equalizing environment of city streets (1964: 68). In this sense, her penthouse is a sterile sanctuary that encapsulates G.H.'s own cosseted existence within Brazil's middle-class. Imagining her civilization—and the comforts it affords her—collapsing, horrifies her. Read through Braidotti's lens, this horror is owed to the reality of life being cosmic energy and empty chaos, 'impersonal and inhuman' (2013: 131). Braidotti argues humans 'often crack in the process of facing life' (ibid.) —as does G.H.—and that it is no wonder so many turn their backs on this radical vitality. Lispector's writing highlights the importance of time in this equation: acknowledging life's indifferent power is intimidating partly because of human civilizations' fragility in the face of indifferent, endless time. Indeed, the only means Lispector's narrators offer for coping with such existential horror is to conceive of oneself as being connected to all of time in the same moment, as explains *Água Viva*'s narrator: 'reúno em mim o tempo passado, o presente e o futuro' (1973: 22). This posthuman notion of temporal interconnectivity is a means of believing one's existence expands beyond one's own death. It can provide comfort and a sense of liberation from one's own terminal, carefully organized human form.

Lispector also imagines an alternative way of being by emphasizing connections between humans and animals. Animal imagery recurs with striking frequency in *Paixão* and *Água Viva*, with the latter's narrator writing of how not having been born an animal 'é uma minha secreta nostalgia' (1973: 53). This nostalgia is owed to respect and even envy for how unconsciously and authentically animals live. Rita Herman propounds a related argument in her analysis of Lispector's short story collection *Laços de Família*: 'it is much easier to be an animal, according to Lispector', argues Herman—and 'in some of the stories […] the protagonists envy animals' (1967: 71). Indeed, animals' experiences are felt rather than colored by the anxieties and contradictions embodied by human nature. Animals do not attempt to demarcate or manipulate time: they merely allow it to happen to them. This innate surrender is sought by Lispector's characters and embraced both in *Paixão*'s final paragraph—'A vida se me é' (1964: 179)—and on *Água Viva*'s last page, with the narrator declaring 'Simplesmente eu sou eu […]. É vasto, vai durar' (1973: 97).

Moreover—returning to issues of divided identity, symbols, and performativity —‘Animal nunca substitui uma coisa por outra’ (1973: 50). In Lispector’s philosophy, ‘[a] vida divina’ is ‘uma vida primária inteiramente sem graciosidade’ (1964: 103), and reality is the ‘atualidade neutra’ of both nature and animals, such as G.H.’s cockroach (1964: 88). It is therefore clear that Lispector’s understanding of realizing what contemporary scholars can describe as posthuman identity involves not only challenging human society, but also embracing the timeless and unconscious existence embodied by animals. This incorporation of human-animal connection into posthuman identity can be read alongside Braidotti’s posthuman theory.

Indeed, while Braidotti warns against human-animal exploitation, she advocates for *zoe*-egalitarianism and post-anthropocentric inclusion of animals in posthuman interconnectivities (Braidotti 71-79). In Braidotti’s work, anthropocentrism is challenged by a proposed posthumanist alternative wherein distinctions between animals and humans are de-emphasized in favor of a more seamless connection between nature and culture, wherein the subject is more relational and nomadic. Lispector’s writing echoes Braidotti’s argument in favor of the primacy of *zoe*—the non-human, vital element of life—over *bios*, or anthropocentric life as conceived of by humans. In *Paixão*, for example, the very crux of the text rests on G.H.’s expanding relationality with a cockroach. Humans and animals are not separate in Lispector’s work, nor do they even necessarily exist on a continuum; rather, her texts typically suggest that they occupy similar spaces and even importance within the world.

A notable motif uniting these ideas about identity, society, and the animal is that of G.H.’s initials on her leather suitcases. Lispector’s choice to refer to her character by initials only is significant: initials are symbols for a name rather than a name itself, echoing how G.H. is more a symbol of herself than actually herself. These symbols are how G.H. is known to both herself and others; she states that all one need see is her initials on her leather suitcases, ‘e eis-me’ (*Paixão* 24). Moreover, G.H. comments that in knowing others, she also requires but ‘a primeira cobertura das iniciais dos nomes’ (*Paixão* 24). This statement speaks to Lispector’s argument that humans understand one another through seeing their performed selves—their symbol selves—reflected via others back at them.

G.H.’s initials appearing on leather suitcases, however, is especially symbolic. These ‘malas com suas iniciais gravadas’ are reminiscent of branded

animals (*Paixão* 115). The letters' superimposition onto the leather reflects how humans place themselves above animals, leather being animal skin. However, the effective naming of the suitcases also reinforces the idea that G.H. herself, like all humans, is more animal than she chooses to acknowledge prior to communing with the cockroach. Consequently, it is unsurprising when Lispector describes these suitcases as being stacked 'em tal perfeita ordem simétrica' and bearing, 'sobre a marca quase morta de um "G.H.", o acúmulo já sedimentado e tranqüilo de poeira' (*Paixão* 42). This imagery is reminiscent of a tombstone marked with G.H.'s name and evokes the inevitable fall of human civilization and death of human—though not posthuman—identity. One can argue, therefore, that Lispector's work can be approached from the post-anthropocentric position that no animal is more than any other (Braidotti 71). Her work speaks to this position, with its emphasis on humans learning from animals' neutral, unselfconscious lives in order to overcome the limitations of their own existence.

NARRATIVE IDENTITY AND THE ACT OF WRITING

Analysis of Lispector's writing in relation to identity and the posthuman would be incomplete without discussion of narrative subjectivity and Lispector's relationship with words. While G.H. comes to mistrust words and symbols, concluding 'O nome é um acréscimo, e impede o contato com a coisa' (*Paixão* 140), it is particularly in *Água Viva* that Lispector interrogates the act of writing. *Água Viva*'s narrative voice vacillates between assertion and doubt in analyzing its own nature, exemplifying the tendency of Lispector's works to 'continuously undercut or "deconstruct" themselves even as they move towards new levels of knowledge and self-awareness' (Fitz, 'The Passion of Logo(centrism)' 38). Indeed, the deconstructive element of Lispector's writing offers insights into her perspective on the nexus between language and existence, which informs the nature of posthuman identity in her works.

Analyzing any subject's identity in Lispector's writing is challenging due to her blurring boundaries between character, narrator, and author. When her texts invoke the reader as 'você', for example, it is hard to determine whether Lispector, character, or narrator makes this address—as with G.H.'s ongoing entreaties to hold her hand (*Paixão* 60, 97, 145, 160). Her writing style appears to operate in line with posthuman theory about the interconnectivity of

subjects: she moves freely in and out of her texts. It is not least for this reason that her writing is so often deemed a ‘deliberate merging of nonfiction discourse and creative writing’ (Fitz, ‘The Passion of Logo(centrism)’ 36). Lispector’s presence exists alongside her characters like the shadow selves discussed by G.H., or the unknowable God invoked in both books.

In this manner, Lispector’s presence adds a layer of complexity when analyzing posthuman identity in her works. As an author, she is inextricably part of her characters’ own psyches, effectively inhabiting a form of interconnectedness integral to the posthuman subject. In merging her own identity with the voices in her texts, however, she also participates in what Braidotti terms ‘posthuman death theory’: Lispector disintegrates her own ego by dissolving the barriers between her and her creations and subsequently ‘writing as if already gone [and] thinking beyond the bounded self’ (Braidotti 137). Lispector’s identity is therefore paradoxically both evident in her texts and made imperceptible when understood through the lens of posthuman theories of interconnection and ego dissolution.

Reaching conclusions about identity in Lispector’s writing is rendered even more complicated owing to Lispector continually undermining narrative authority. While there exists no evidence of Lispector having studied deconstructionism, her preoccupation with language being ‘never a stable, closed, and perfectly knowable construct’ is positively Derridean (Fitz, ‘The Passion of Logo(centrism)’ 38). Indeed, statements like ‘O que te falo nunca é o que eu te falo e sim outra coisa’ and ‘verdades não tem palavras’ indicate Lispector’s hesitation in trusting language (*Água Viva* 14, 55). She repeatedly describes words as a ‘densa selva’ enveloping and obfuscating meaning (*Água Viva* 25, 69). The elusiveness of language itself is thus paradoxically a focus of her writing. Consequently, Lispector ultimately celebrates silences and wordless communication far more than written language or speech, as evidenced by her respect for animals’ ignorance of names and human language.

Skepticism of language imbues Lispector’s own writing with a certain irony. She writes how ‘sufoco porque sou palavra e também o seu eco’ (*Água Viva* 16): she is aware that self-reflexivity creates distance between the self who is acting—or writing —and the self that is observing this action. This distance is, to quote Marília Librandi, ‘precisely the space of an echo’ (139). Lispector uses the word ‘eco’ again to describe the nature of writing, specifically in a passage where she melds her own identity with her typewriter’s, stating ‘Sou

uma máquina de escrever fazendo ecoar as teclas' (*Água Viva* 87). This analogy reflects how she perceives her relationship between her, her instruments, and her creations as interdependent.

Nevertheless, while Lispector appears perennially dissatisfied with words, one can at least argue her relationship with them as objects is distinctly posthuman—even if she herself might not have described this relationship in such terms. This posthuman interconnectivity also ironically brings her unconsciously closer to the true meaning of what words seek to represent than she can attain through conscious thought. This notion aligns with Braidotti's argument that art 'transposes us beyond the confines of bound identities' (107), rendering art inherently posthuman by structure. Lispector, her art, and her typewriter are equally posthuman.

CONCLUSION

In *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* and *Água Viva*, Clarice Lispector explores the nature of human identity in parallel with posthumanist ideas regarding alternative ways of existing. Her work lends itself to a posthumanist reading because her focus not only echoes the anti-individualist core of Braidotti's theories, but also questions identity while interrogating the very essence of writing and communication. Lispector's constant destabilizing of her own words invites further research into her work in the context of posthumanism, specifically regarding the relationship between words, truth, and identity formation.

Lispector's ideas about alternative ways of conceiving of human identity, particularly in relation to time and the animal, also merit further consideration. Indeed, Lispector is noteworthy for her illustration of identity aligning so strongly with the posthuman, that it is, I would argue, almost *pre*-human, or even omni-human. For Lispector, 'a vida mais profunda é antes do humano' (*Paixão* 134)—and though her relationship with language is slippery, she nevertheless expresses conviction that human salvation lies in a more animal understanding of time and of ourselves. Her writing therefore places her simultaneously ahead of her time, and everywhere at once.

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