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Unraveling the Articulate: Thinking, Being and Becoming in Clarice Lispector's *Near to the Wild Heart*

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Her father's typewriter went clack-clack...clack-clack-clack... The clock awoke in dustless tin-dlen. The silence dragged out zzzzzz. What did the wardrobe say?

Clothesclothes-clothes. No, no. Amidst the clock, the typewriter and the silence there was an ear listening, large, pink and dead. The three sounds were connected by the daylight and the squeaking of the tree's little leaves rubbing against one another radiant.

-Near to the Wild Heart, "The Father..."

Brazilian author, Clarice Lispector, is an enigmatic writer, as well as person. Her biographer, Benjamin Moser, explains that, "The attempts to describe this woman often go on...grasping at superlatives, though those who knew her, either in person or from her books, also insist that the most striking aspect of her personality, her aura of mystery, evades description" (2). A number of authors, journalists, and acquaintances have commented on the strangeness and luminosity of her being; upon Lispector's death, the poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade wrote that she "came from one mystery / and departed for another" (Moser 2). Despite Lispector's mystery, she was not "a hazy figure known from shreds of antique papyrus" (3); in fact, she was well known throughout her publishing career, did a number of interviews and there are still those living who knew her in her lifetime. Although enigmatic, she was not an obscure figure. The mystery that others experienced in the presence of Lispector even extended to her own conceptions of self; she once said, "I am so mysterious that I don't even understand myself" (qtd Moser 4).

This theme of not understanding extends throughout her work, as made apparent by the opening quote. Even more emphatic, perhaps, is that within misunderstanding is the expansive desire-the need- to understand (and be understood); as illustrated by the opening quote of this

thesis and Lispector's debut novel, the character is willing to employ any method necessary to unravel language in order to achieve a deeper sense of knowing.

The mystery of Lispector does not come through in a void of knowing, but rather as she puts it, a lack of understanding. She was evasive in answering questions posed to her too directly, for fear of further perpetuating the mythology of Clarice. Lispector even wrote a short story titled "Profile of the Chosen Being" that Moser reads as a mirror to her reluctance to share (4). In it she describes her character: "he did or said such contradictory things to the photograph that the corners turned up with rage as it lay there in the drawer. He hoped to become more real than his image. But what happened? It turned out that all he did was to touch up the image in the photograph" (*Cronicas* 185). No matter what Clarice did, she felt that it would only reinforce an image of her, one that could be seen as static as a photograph. She told one journalist, "They wouldn't understand a Clarice Lispector who paints her toenails red" (Moser 4).

The distance between image and reality is a topic that Lispector returns to and can be seen in the way that she places language just on the edge of the articulable realm, or as philosopher Michael Marder puts it: "Clarice Lispector's writing hovers on the razor-thin and fragile edge between description and the ineffable, between existence and nonexistence, between the world and its disappearance, between losing and finding oneself" (1). Language, and even thought itself (insofar as thoughts are articulated through language) becomes the locus for meaning and discovery (of existence, the self) and as much as it is the vessel for meaning, it is also that which devoids meaning within its attempt to articulate the object itself.

The passage at the beginning of this essay, which opens her debut novel *Near to the Wild Heart* (1943), provides the first example of Lispector's project towards an examination of meaning, in that a sensation of meaning exists, while evading a concrete meaningfulness. The

main character, or the “her” established in the first sentence, is a young Joana, playing at what feels like a game of linguistics that asks the question: How can one get past language and directly to meaning, while still making sense, so to speak? Moreover, the reader too is left confused, trying to make sense of the paragraph through an ambient and anarchic meaning making, in the same way that Joana is.

By opening with this seemingly nonsensical paragraph, Lispector signals to the reader a moment of crossing a threshold that neither represents reality too closely, nor does it disregard the real; the nonsense of what a wardrobe says makes “sense” insofar as a wardrobe holds clothes, but why must it talk? Already a distance is established between the world of words and the world of things, and the ironic mediation of those two must come, inevitably, in the failure of language.

The Lispector scholar Earl E. Fitz asserts that this failure of language is a type of silence, as though in between the thing and the sign of the thing lies a silence wherein the failure to articulate comes into being. In the same chapter, still as a young girl, Joana attempts to reach that fleeting thing-in-itself: “Between her and objects there was something, but whenever she caught that something in her hand, like a fly, and then peeked at it—though she was careful not to let anything escape—she only found her own hand, rosy pink and disappointed” (6). As a child Joana tries to seize upon “the thing” with her own physical perception as much as she attempts to mold it into a thought object, but every attempt results in either absence, or as in the introduction, meaninglessness. Rhetorically, this quote is analogous to the reader’s sensation in that the reader is attempting to land upon or extract some kind of meaning within the text itself, only to find an absence of articulation. The entire first half of the book avoids the possibility for summary-for how does one summarize the attempt to find the thing-behind-the-thing? How does one articulate

the veils of thought investigated, cast aside, or obscured? Like Joana, every attempt the reader makes to anchor within the easily articulated, in the world of plot, summary, or narrative, our hands open, empty but for the fleeting trace of an unnamed thing. In this thesis I will argue that the rhetorical inarticulability within the act of reading *Near to the Wild Heart* mirrors the same process that Joana goes through in terms of her own coming into being. Through Lispector's word choices and narrative structure, the reader is placed beside Joana, both of whom are unable to mediate the process or experience of existence (or of reading) with their own awareness of it. Or, to put it another way, the reader struggles with language and being at the same pace as Joana does, attempting to mediate language into a singular mode of meaning or structure, that can only succeed if, like Joana, the reader is able to release the valve of meaning and to allow language to exist in a state of unravel.

Lispector is, as Fitz puts it, "impelled by the anarchy of language toward a Nirvana like state of inner awareness beyond knowledge and toward the silence that lies forever beyond the speech act" (422). Joana, even as a child, attempts to understand the mechanics of meaning so as to get at the construction of it in the hopes of understanding something that may underlie those things. She continues to play games in the hopes of landing upon the meaning, or the why and how if it:

She went over to the little table where the books were, played with them by looking at them from a distance. Housewife husband children, green for the man, white for the woman, scarlet could be a son or a daughter. Was "never" a man or a woman? Why wasn't "never" a son or a daughter? What about "yes"? Oh, so many things were entirely impossible. You could spend whole afternoons thinking. For example: who had said for the first time: never?" (7).

Throughout *Near to the Wild Heart*, Joana continues asking questions of the world in such a way, attempting as always to reach inside the moment to draw out a solid object--but again, like the reader, she is left empty handed, lacking the concrete. While the main plot of the book doesn't occur until part two, the first part moves between a past tense "review" of Joana as a young child, experiencing first the death of her mother and secondly her father, to a more contemporary, or at least older, Joana. The older Joana gets married, then separates from her husband when he impregnates his former fiancée --whom he had left for Joana. After that Joana goes on to have her own love affair with a potential criminal. While these seem like (and are) major life events, they are presented in a similarly disjointed shape as the young Joana's ruminations on meaning in that they do not follow a typical narrative arc or occur within a chronological framework. Rather, these events take place prior to the reader, acknowledged only through the inner reflections of the characters, namely Joana. These plot points take on meaning insofar as they provide a backdrop for Joana's reflections and consciousness, but are rarely the entire object of Joana's own thought patterns. Lispector scholar and professor, Marta Piexoto, aptly questions this disjunction in plot structure: "Why the melodramatic plot—deaths, betrayals, love encounters, triangles and separations—when the narrative focuses on intense first-and thirdperson monologues occurring in moments of solitude?" (3) Piexoto relates this disjunction to a difficulty in interpretation, and indeed it is a good question. Why does the action occur, as she says, offstage? Why have intense life events occur at all if the novel is oriented toward interiority? I would add that this disjunction complicates both the act of interpreting as well as reading, further reflecting a relationship between the reader's act of reading and Joana's attempt to find something beyond these moments, something deeper within herself. Like the way that real events in life occur, the plot junctures are rarely perceived within a clear trajectory of forward

movement. The novel's movement between past and present, sometimes happening within their own chapters (though without specification of time change) or within a moment of thought, reflects the constant reinscription of the past self upon the present, and vice versa. It also creates a sense of instability within the sensation of reading; just at the moment when perhaps the reader has become so enmeshed within the world of the novel (so as to forget that they are in the process of reading), the time and place may alter without clear signaling, bringing the reader back to the present act of reading. One could even link this lack of signaling between past and present, or between the actions of the novel and the reflections of the characters, as an aspect of Fitz's silence. Between Joana's reflections of her past self with her present self is a gap, or a silence, where the actions that may have inscribed or triggered these reflections remain unarticulated.

The entire novel, though written from third person, could be categorized as an "interior" novel in that the focalization is primarily upon and through Joana's interior monologue. While there are sections of the book that are presented through other character's consciousness, Marta Piexoto posits that "Joana's development and subjectivity dominate the novel" (3). Piexoto goes on to suggest that Joana's dominant subjectivity is what the writer Benedito Nunes is referring to when he cites *Near to the Wild Heart* as one of Lispector's "monocentric novels." Piexoto also notes that, "The other characters have remarkably little independence from Joana. Although many are given internal, even lengthy, monologues, they either reflect on Joana--agreeing, in admiration or horror, about her specialness--or provide studied contrasts to her personality" (3). This lack of independence from Joana mimics the frustration at the mediation between object and subject; as Joana is unable to experience the "truth" of any single thing, or more the "thingitself" without its mediation through her perception, that frustration becomes exacerbated by her own

limited availability toward articulation. None of the characters are permitted a format of consciousness that is not already mediated through the oscillating subject/object of Joana. To take it one step further, the reader is never presented a view of the world that isn't occupied by Joana's subjectivity, even at the moments of apparent solitude on the part of another character.

Even Otávio, Joana's husband, is so entangled in the subjectivity of Joana that it halts him from being an agent within his own life:

He wanted her not so he could make his life with her, but so she could allow him to live. To live above himself, above his past, above the small vile acts he had cowardly committed and to which he cowardly remained attached. Otávio thought that by Joana's side he could continue sinning. (87)

Before going on, it is important here to establish definitions for a few narratological terms I will be referring to and coming back to later on in this paper. There are three terms to express the narrative positionality and the expression of a character that are important to this paper: direct discourse, indirect discourse, and free indirect discourse. Professor Robert Dale Parker defines them as such:

DD [direct discourse] is straightforward. It represents speech or thought directly, often in quotation marks, as in, *He said: 'I love her.'*...ID[indirect discourse] is less straightforward but not terribly mysterious, as in, *He thought that he loved her.* It shifts the tense of DD one step back, in this case from present tense (love) to past tense (loved), and in other cases from past tense (loved) to past perfect (had loved). And it uses third person...to represent speech or thought through summary...Like ID, FID [free indirect discourse] shifts the tense a step back and uses the third person, but it blurs the boundary between a narrator's language and a character's

language, as in *He was walking down the street thinking. He loved her. He really did. This time he was sure. He crossed the street, lost in his thoughts.* 73 To return to the previous passage with Otávio, it is apparent that his desire to be a subject is as fraught as his inability to become one outside of his association to Joana. This creates a multiplicitous distance: by maintaining the narrative distance of an indirect discourse for Otávio the reader is granted insight only into Joana's way of thinking—despite phrases such as “Otávio thought.” The multiplicity begins, though, at the level that even within the narrative distance the reader is toward Otávio, he as a character cannot exist in the story without his relation to Joana.

Not only is this presented structurally, but contextually as well in that it is what Otávio believes: “She cast him into his own intimacy, coldly forgetting the comfortable little formulas that sustained him and made it easier for him to communicate with people” (83). Without Joana, Otávio is without access to his own intimacy, his own life. This creates throughout the novel an emphasis on the orientation toward Joana, by which I mean that the reader is consistently reminded of Joana, and instills a confusion about who is actually narrating—might Joana be the narrator, and thus unable to articulate another's world where it does not touch hers? Or, even more, where that world is not hers? These questions echo the struggle that Joana has with herself and the world, while reinforcing the difficulty of being a subject.

Even at times when free indirect discourse is available to other characters, they are unable to step outside of Joana. During Otávio's lengthy monologue wherein he is preoccupied within his own act of writing, he can't even differentiate his own thoughts from those of Joana's: He who is writing this page was born one day. Now it is exactly a little past seven in the morning. There are

mists outside, beyond the window, the Open Window, the great symbol. Joana would say: I feel so inside the world that it feels like I'm not thinking,

but using a new means of breathing. Farewell. This is the world, I am me, Joana is asleep in the bedroom, somebody must be waking up now, Joana would say: someone else dying, someone else listening to music, someone walked into a bathroom, that's the world. I'm going to touch everyone, invite them to be moved by me. I live with a naked, cold woman, don't avoid it, don't avoid it, who watches me, it's a lie, it's a lie, but it's true. (112)

To echo Piexoto, the characters exist only as narrative constructs to more fully demonstrate Joana as a subject in herself. Similar to Joana's inability to reach the "truth" of anything without having to move through herself, the reader cannot experience a type of objectivity—despite the third person narration—without the mediation of Joana. Even Joana cannot experience herself without herself, which is to say that Joana's own experiences are always already mediated through her. Because of this, Joana constantly struggles with her identity through a constructed dichotomy of knowing and being. Joana poses this dichotomy in the question: "What matters then: to live or to know you are living?" (60) While the reader struggles to understand the world of other characters outside of Joana, Joana similarly struggles in experiencing the world—meaningfully—outside of herself, or rather outside of her articulation of herself. The other characters enforce her inability to escape herself, in that even in the narratives of others, Joana is unable to exist through them, and thus beyond herself. Like the supporting characters, the reader moves through a conflicted objecthood insofar as in the act of reading, the reader exists, like the characters, as another reflection of Joana. The reader partakes in perpetuating Joana by being witness to her. Piexoto posits that, "Joana's narrative implies a

sort of reciprocity, a continuum of mutual need between character and author” (12), wherein I would create an addendum and include “reader”, or even better, I might substitute “author” for “reader”. The implied reciprocity rests in the silence between subject/object, being/awareness, reader/character (reader/character referring to the discomfort of the reader shifting between these two positions, without ever landing fully in one.)

Like the reader’s oscillation between reader/character, Joana moves between a similar binary within the narrative structure itself. Throughout the novel, Joana’s narration often moves between “I” and “she” without clear distinctions. Using Parker’s definitions, this movement is the slippery one of free indirect discourse, in that it resembles indirect discourse through past tense and the process of summarization, however does not always point to the threshold of perspective shift. Here is an example:

She noticed that she still hadn’t fallen asleep, thought she would surely crackle on an open fire. That long gestation of her childhood would end and from her painful immaturity her own being would burst forth, free at last, at last! No, no, I want no God, I want to be alone. And one day it will come, yes, one day the capacity as red and affirmative as it is clear and soft will come in me, one day whatever I do will be blindly surely unconsciously, standing in myself, in my truth...¹⁹⁴ At the beginning of this passage is indirect discourse in “she noticed” and “thought”, however only a few lines down this perspective shifts suddenly to being inside of her thoughts not from a third person perspective, but rather from a first person, initially seen in “free at last, at last!” The exclamation point is an indicator in that it begins to reveal the emotional emphasis on Joana’s thoughts about herself. Recognizing this movement between “she” and “I” is important because it structurally manifests Joana’s own oscillation toward how she relates to

herself. At times Joana is narrating her life, while others she is fully within it, and reflecting from a closer standpoint.

The changes in how Joana narrates herself or is narrated by herself are similar to ability to reflect on themselves reading, versus simply reading. Or, to say it another way, the separation between “I” and “she” is indicative of the inarticulability between being a subject to oneself and an object.

The inarticulability between being a subject to oneself and an object-- or more simply living or being aware of living—could also be the difference between the character’s private identity versus their public identity. Fitz too describes the separation between these as a type of silence:

Relating directly to structure as well as to characterization, language use in Lispector's fiction falls into two distinct categories: its expression of a character's private identity and its expression of a character's public identity. This structuralist duality produces the binary - and dialectical - tension that characterizes her work and, at the same time, functions as the very mechanism that generates the discourse of silence so typical of her fiction. 422

Between the public identity and the private identity exists a silence, an inability to articulate within the confines of language. In the other characters, only an aspect of their public identity is expressed in that it has some connection to Joana, while the rest is not even attempted at a mediation but rather left completely silent. Joana, however, expresses this silence throughout the book. This silence is the driving force of almost all of Joana’s reflections and thoughts. However, within this silence is not the merging or mediation of two selves, but rather the awareness of one before the other.

Joana is always at odds with the separation of the awareness of herself, and the living state of herself, as echoed in her other dichotomous complications: the thing/the thing-in-itself; the articulation of a thought/having a thought; herself/others. For now, though, I will focus on the difference she experiences of herself and the movement, action, or experience of herself. At times this separation can be read as a defense mechanism, such as she felt as a child learning of the death of her father:

I am suffering, she thought suddenly and surprised herself. I am suffering, a separate awareness told her. And suddenly this other being loomed big and took the place of the one who was suffering. Nothing happened if she kept waiting for what was going to happen...She remained hollow for a few moments, watching herself closely, scrutinizing the return of pain. (44)

Here, Joana does not have the experiential vocabulary to establish that what she is feeling is pain and suffering, she can only become cognizant of it through an awareness of herself. Which is to say that the awareness of herself must, in this instance, supersede the experience of herself in order to remain herself, so to speak. By separating the notion of being and awareness she is able to tell herself that not only is she suffering, but she will, through her awareness, take the place of the suffering self. It is not through an equanimity of feeling that Joana is able to create this distance, instead it is an exertion of the intellect over the feelingful mind. Though at times this separation may seem to be coming from an enlightened place of fluidity, it is not as simple as that. For example, “Even suffering was good because while the lowest suffering was taking place she also existed--like a separate river” (40). While this quote may seem to indicate an appropriate distance from suffering, her position as a “separate river” only emphasizes more her distance

from herself, from her capacity for living. Joana recognizes this state, such as when she creates a narrative about a real estate agent whose voice sparks an existential reflection;

She had no history, Joana slowly realized. Because if things happened to her, they were not her and didn't mix with her true existence.... Things outside of her had no doubt happened to her. She had been disillusioned, had the odd bout of pneumonia. Things happened to her. But they only intensified or weakened the burbling at her center. At the end of the day, why talk about facts or details if none of them dominated her? And if she was just the life that coursed through her body without ceasing? 67

These questions that Joana poses at the end, as though she were narrating from the woman's perspective, mirror her own in such a way that Joana may as well be referring to herself. Just before this, Joana thinks back to the moment that she first began noticing voices, starting with a moment of hearing her own voice in a way that startles her, because it is both hers and not hers at the same time; it "had a history, a fragile history that went unnoticed by the owner of the voice, but not by the owner of this one" (67). Joana notices her own voice, and notices this woman's voice, because within the voice itself is the expression of the past and present (or as in the woman's case, a miraculous absence of it) and acts as the vessel of the inarticulable, the carrier of silence between private and personal. The voice is that which expresses to others the sensations we experience as subjects. The voice then (inasmuch as it is using language), itself, becomes an object or aspect of the public self, that self which can seemingly never consolidate or fully express the feeling, but also enacts itself onto the subject and inscribes on the experience a language that ultimately fails at articulating while also replacing the desire for articulation (or the desired articulation). In a conversation with Otávio, Joana recognizes this correlation:

“Yes, I know,” continued Joana. “The distance that separates emotions from words. I’ve already thought about that. And the most curious thing is that the moment I try to speak not only do I fail to express what I feel but what I feel slowly becomes what I say. Or at least what makes me act is certainly not what I feel but what I say.” 86

Joana notes that words are not the equivalent to their emotional parallel, and that the power of words is such that they become the sensation itself, eventually replacing the initial emotion that came before it. To go back to the voice, it carries with it a movement, in that it not only fails—through language—to express the life inside of it, but it limits that life by inscribing the public back onto it. What is expressed becomes what was desired to be expressed, despite its failure to actually do so. Joana finds this woman’s voice rousing both because she felt that “[the woman] must have experienced something that Joana had yet to go through” while also sounding “so far from life” (65). Between these two things lay Joana’s desire: to experience something, and to not be far from it, from life. And yet, like Joana, this woman’s voice is interesting because it expresses, through its “low, curved tone, without vibrations” (65) some type of silence—the aural notes of it indicate the inarticulable. When Joana creates the story of the woman, she echoes her own question: “In truth she had always been two, the one that had a slight idea that she was and the one that actually was, profoundly” (69). This sentiment sounds similar to “what matters then: to live or to know you are living?” One version understands that she exists but cannot fully grasp that existence within her own understanding, while the other version simply exists, without an attempt at articulation of that existence.

While Joana characterizes this woman as someone who “was in herself, the end itself” (68) or whose existence “was so complete and so connected to the truth that when it came time to give in

and die she probably thought, if indeed she was in the habit of thinking: I never was” (69-70), she also says that she “smiled colorlessly” (67) or looked “without impatience, without interest” (66). Despite Joana’s initial attraction to this woman and her ability to simply live life (and potentially understand it) Joana ultimately decides that the woman “understands life because she isn’t intelligent enough not to” (70). This quote brings Joana back into her cycle of experience and awareness, of trying to articulate the thing without the-thing-itself escaping the grasp of articulation. Read here, for Joana life is not worth living without the intellectual and perpetual desire to understand it, presumably without it one would be living colorlessly and without cheer. This event could also signal Joana’s actual mission—not for self-awareness or discovery of the deepest object in itself, but to not lose the desire for those things: “What I desire doesn’t have a name yet” (61), as in, to continue attempting to unravel the articulable.

In the moments that Joana does feel she has reached inside of herself, or experienced the fullness of her own inarticulability, it further separates her somewhere along the line. “In my interior I find the silence I seek. But in it I become so lost from any memory of a human being and of myself, that I make this impression into the certainty of physical solitude” (61). Even when Joana has fully embraced the inarticulable, and commenced fully into herself, she loses something in the process: she no longer becomes a being within the world, or at least she feels her distance from it. She cannot exist within the world at the same moment that she articulates her existence to herself.

In philosopher Michael Marder’s essay on Clarice Lispector, he expresses this urge to experience life in total coupled with the desire to articulate it simultaneously:

Human beings cannot feel this passion, because they cannot feel or live in the present. Instead, they throw or project their past expectations onto future

experiences, turning these into a pale shadow of themselves, an ideality with which they desperately and futilely wish to catch up. To feel is always to experience beyond one's experiential capacity (hence, to experience that which cannot be experienced), to be hypersensitive, even to (and within) the indifference of anonymous existence. 10

This quote helps to reflect my prior assertion that the un signaled movement of narration between past and present reinforces the distance that Joana is also experiencing of movement between thinking and being. She cannot exist in the present without the past inscribing itself upon her, and at the same time she cannot completely exist without thought inscribing something else upon her experience of that existence.

Initially, Joana believed that in order to address this “passion” of living, she must go deeply into herself, into her own thoughts and ruminations: “I try to isolate myself in order to find life in itself” (61). However, she recognizes, as she did with the woman, that moving in either direction— be it fully into existing without thought, or into the thought of existence—diminishes something of herself, and is unable to capture life, or to capture anything in-itself.

Without experiencing things, I won't find life will I? But even so, in the white, unlimited solitude where I fall, I am still stuck between closed mountains. Stuck, stuck. Where is the imagination? I walk on invisible tracks. Captivity, freedom. These are the words that occur to me. However they are not the true, only, irreplaceable ones, I feel. Freedom isn't enough. What I desire doesn't have a name yet. 61

Joana reasons that if she continues isolating herself, and only thinking upon “life in itself” she won't be able to find life. There is a limit to what the imagination can accomplish if it is not

accompanied by physically taking part in the world around her—without experience as well.

Joana later goes on to question how far her own isolation could ever take her: “But what was the point of any reasoning... If you rose to the point of understanding it[life], without going crazy in the meantime, it wouldn’t be possible to preserve the knowledge of it as knowledge but it would be turned into an attitude, an attitude of life, the only way to fully possess and express it” (70).

This statement above is the first recognition, by Joana, of the need to not consolidate the act of living into an articulated thought process—that it couldn’t even be articulated if one were to actually possess some true understanding of life. Rather, it would necessarily be sublimated into an aspect of the body, of the inarticulable, that it would be reconstituted back into the process of living. Inevitably, this true understanding of life must result in a type of silence, or as she puts it, “perceptions too organic to be formulated as thoughts” (35). Or, to give another example, “Analyze each instant by instant, perceive the nucleus of each thing made of time or space. Own each moment, connect my awareness to them, like tiny filaments almost imperceptible but strong. Is this life? Even so it would give me the slip. Another way to capture it would be to live” (60). While Joana can think of every moment, she can connect herself to each thing that comes into contact with her, life cannot stay within those things—it would, as she says, “give her the slip” if that were the only mode she chose. So-what then? What does one do with the realization that the inarticulable is the essence of life itself, despite your desires or tendencies? Joana asks herself this question, but finds the answer itself within it: “Inspire me, I have almost everything; I have the outline waiting for the essence; is that it?-- What should someone who doesn’t know what to do with herself do? Use herself as body and soul to make the most of body and soul? Or make her strength into an outside force?” (60) The most, or the best, that one can do is to

continue existing within the process of living—that is to be both essence and outline, to live and sometimes to know you are living. In between these two things is the inarticulable.

Author and Lispector scholar Fernando Arenas mimics these ideas in his essay on language and subjectivity within Lispector, stating,

The phenomenological experiences of characters in numerous works by Lispector and Ferreira are the result of a sensorial interaction with the world and its objects, and its repercussions vis-à-vis the innermost depths of one's being. This interaction unleashes an emotional and spiritual response that brings to the fore a heightened awareness of one's identity or one's relationship to the self and the world. This awareness can hardly be transposed into words or contained within a rational scheme. 189

Near to the Wild Heart attempts to capture the process of becoming, one that cannot be stated within regular schema or plot formation, and thus brings not just Joana to a new awareness of identity, but instills in the reader a process of practicing the unravel in an attempt to exist in the silent, inarticulable spaces wherein life happens within the self, and out of the self. One can learn that in the act of reading is the continuous process of becoming, that silent process between two different profundities: living, and knowing you are living.

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