

**The World's (Trans)Figuration by the Act-Word of/in "Mineirinho" /  
A (trans)figuração do mundo pelo ato-palavra de/em "Mineirinho"**

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**ABSTRACT**

This work aims at bringing Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophical perspective closer to Clarice Lispector's literary style. A Bakhtinian approach can be noticed in the "answerable act" notion portrayed in the chronicle-tale "Mineirinho" which, in addition to dislodging us and inviting us to ponder over our being and living in life's movement, calls upon us to think in the world and the world itself experienced and shared with the other, in an active and participative way.

**KEYWORDS:** Answerable act; Mineirinho; Surplus field of vision; Aesthetic empathy

**RESUMO**

*Este trabalho objetiva aproximar a perspectiva filosófica de Mikhail Bakhtin à literatura de Clarice Lispector. Percebe-se a abordagem bakhtiniana da noção de "ato responsável" encenada na crônica-conto "Mineirinho" que, além de nos deslocar e nos convidar a refletir sobre o nosso ser e estar no movimento da vida, nos convoca a pensar ativa e participativamente no/o mundo experienciado e partilhado com o outro.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Ato responsável; Mineirinho; Excedente de visão; Empatia estética*

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Thinking is an act. Feeling is a fact. Put the two together – I am the one writing what I am writing. God is the world. Truth is always an interior and inexplicable contact. My truest life is unrecognizable, extremely interior and there is not a single word that defines it.

Clarice Lispector

## Introduction

“Is the fact an act?” (Lispector, 2017, p.31),<sup>1</sup> writes down Clarice Lispector in the margin of her manuscripts of *The Hour of the Star*.<sup>2</sup> We will seek to answer this question in an attempt to emulate the author’s gesture that unites, in writing, the thinking and acting processes; such a gesture brings together the perspective of the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, with whom we will establish a frank dialogue throughout the article, as its title is already anticipating the connection. The paths opened by the Bakhtinian approach to the notion of “answerable act,” a concept that will be explained later, allow us to meet the act-word of the text “Mineirinho,” by Lispector, whose texture displaces us and invites us to reflect on our being and being in the world, characteristic of the author’s writing. Thus, when presenting our answer, perhaps unfinished, we leave our signature to defend the urgency of participatory thinking, capable of resisting the darkness that plagues contemporaneity.

According to Bakhtin, the human being, a central agent in the movement of life, is summoned to think in the world and the world itself experienced and shared with the other, in an active and participative way. The word of this other, sent in our direction, meets our word. This continuous movement of an “open-ended dialogue” constitutes and (trans)forms us, expanding our consciousness and our being.

The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse,

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<sup>1</sup> In Portuguese: “O fato é um ato?”.

<sup>2</sup> Manuscripts from *The Hour of the Star*. Available in: <https://site.claricelispector.ims.com.br/acervo/notas-de-a-hora-da-estrela/>. Accessed on: 08 Jul. 2021.

and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium (Bakhtin, 1984, p.293).<sup>3</sup>

In the meeting of words, we put ourselves in a listening place and, at the same time, we are called to respond with our word with an “answerable act” – a movement of thought to which we sign. It is worth mentioning that the singular act being performed is a fact, because there is no alibi in existence, and we are not allowed not to act; we act aesthetically to produce interventions and modifications in our ethical way of living. For this to happen, as Bakhtin reminds us in “Art and Answerability,” written in 1919, it is necessary to produce a unity between the ethical world (life) and the aesthetic world (art), and this unity is only possible in the response. The proposal is the meeting between theory and life for us, “we who seek shelter in the abstract”<sup>4</sup> (Lispector, 2015, p.303).<sup>5</sup> Understanding life, events, words and discourses is only possible when things are placed in both dialogic relationships – we understand a text with another text - “Any understanding is a correlation of a given text with other texts” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.161).<sup>6</sup> – and alteritarian ones – the self is only possible in unity with the other.

Art has a special prominence in Bakhtin’s work because, since it is one of the three domains of human culture,<sup>7</sup> the aesthetic doing manages to appropriate scientific practice and the practical reality of life, unifying them in another axiological field and giving the elements they bring together a finishing, a form, a whole that can be apprehended. As Carlos Alberto Faraco reminds us, Bakhtin, in his text “The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art,”<sup>8</sup> understands that

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<sup>3</sup> BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Introduction by Wayne C. Booth. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> LISPECTOR, C. Mineirinho. In: LISPECTOR, C. *The Complete Stories*. Translated by Katrina Dodson. New York: New Directions Books, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> All quotes from “Mineirinho” were taken from *The Complete Stories*, by the publisher New Directions Books.

<sup>6</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. Methodology for the Human Sciences. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

<sup>7</sup> The three fields of human culture defined by Bakhtin are: cognition (science), the ethical (life) and the aesthetic (art).

<sup>8</sup> BAKHTIN, M. Supplement: The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art. I BAKHTIN, M. M. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. *Art and Answerability*. Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin. Translated by Kenneth Brostrom (notes by Michael Holquist, including material from the editor of the Russian edition, S. G. Bocharov). Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990, pp.257-325. This is one of the few texts finished by Bakhtin and sent by him for publication. It is a very important text in the whole of the philosopher’s work, as it contains relevant contributions to the discussions on art and literature.

aesthetic activity isolates (cuts out) elements of reality, that is, from the world of life and cognition, and transposes them to an external plane in relation to this world, giving them a finish (an intuitive and concrete unity) that is embodied in a supported compositional format in the case of literature, on the linguistic material conquered by the author-creator (...) (Faraco, 2009, p.104).<sup>9</sup>

By transposing the elements of reality to another plane, the author-creator (aesthetic-formal function that creates the aesthetic object and also a constituent part of it) frees them from the ethical and scientific event of being, enabling them in another unity of meaning and values. For this, the author-creator plays the role of a contemplator and looks at life from the outside, which allows him to transfigure it. In this sense, we understand that literature<sup>10</sup> puts us in this exotopic position of contemplators, moves us outside of ourselves, to another place that allows us to assume a different perspective. This is necessary, because when we look at reality directly or from within, the field of vision is restricted and limited to our point of view. The literary text enables the movement of leaving the place of individuality and moving towards the author-creator's project, to look from the place he is looking. When we turn to ourselves with the tensioned word of the other, now coated with our own words, we put ourselves in the place of readers who cocreate and we can set out to find other words. By bringing the other's word, which is materialized and staged in language, literature grants us to build our own consciousness and better understand life, since this other word always comes to us under tension, and it is this tension that transforms us. As Antonio Candido teaches us, the experience with form organizes our inner chaos and, therefore, humanizes us: "Every literary work presupposes [this] overcoming of chaos, determined by a special arrangement of words and making a proposal of meaning." (Candido, 2004,

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<sup>9</sup> In Portuguese: "a atividade estética isola (recorta) elementos da realidade, ou seja, do mundo da vida e da cognição, e os transpõe para um plano externo a este mundo, dando a eles um acabamento (uma unidade intuitiva e concreta) que se corporifica numa forma composicional apoiada, no caso da literatura, no material linguístico conquistado pelo autor-criador (...)."

<sup>10</sup> Bakhtin sees the effective possibility of realizing the moral philosophy that he proposes especially in verbal art (literature). This, by bringing the author and hero/character relationship enacted, allows us to look, from an extralocal, exotopic point of view, to the hero not as an object, but as a center of other value according to which the author's world is organized. Literary writing is, therefore, capable of delineating and describing an architectonics of alterity. We consider here that this perspective can also be applied to our experience of reading the literary text, in which we place ourselves outside, in the position of contemplators, and assume, in a participatory and not indifferent way, the author-creator and the hero as different evaluative centers. from which we organize our world.

p.178)<sup>11</sup> We emphasize, therefore, the formative and transforming nature of the literary text.

When we talk about transposition and transfiguration, we also dialogue with the postulations of Wolfgang Iser (1993),<sup>12</sup> by undoing the opposition between fiction and reality. By refuting the dichotomy, the author proposes a ternary relational model, according to which literature must be conceived from three categories: the real, the fictitious and the imaginary.<sup>13</sup> The fictitious mediates between reality and the imaginary, through acts of pretending, transgressors par excellence, either in relation to the limits of the extratextual world or the limits of the imaginary. Reality is transgressed because it will not be the same after being repeated in/by the text, with no direct correspondence with the factual, due to the displacements that take place in it. On the other hand, the imaginary, experienced by the subjects in a diffuse and formless way, is transgressed, as it takes shape when it is introduced into the fictional text. The act of pretending,<sup>14</sup> therefore, attributes a configuration to the imaginary and, in this process of transgression, the recaptured reality is transformed into a sign (symbolized form), and the imaginary acquires an attribute of the real (determined form).

The creation of the literary text takes place, in this way, through the intersection between the real, the fictitious and the imaginary and transfigures the world through the acts of pretending. Even when the world seems reflected, this gesture is already a pretense, as it occupies the textual space with purposes other than those belonging to repeated reality. Such deceit is an aesthetic act of valuing that gives our action in the

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<sup>11</sup> In Portuguese: “Toda obra literária pressupõe [esta] superação do caos, determinada por um arranjo especial das palavras e fazendo uma proposta de sentido.”

<sup>12</sup> ISER, W. *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology*. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Iser conceives the real as the “extratextual world,” the fictional as the fictionally invented world and the imaginary as an instance that allows the invention of the possible as a harbinger of another reality.

<sup>14</sup> The acts of pretending are, according to Iser (2002), the selection, combination and denudation of fictionality. Selection takes place when elements of preexisting contextual systems are chosen and, disconnected from a certain preexisting contextual system, which can be sociocultural or even literary, are articulated to gain new meanings, that is, in order to be transgressed in and by the text. It is not a copy of the extratextual reality, as the selection affects the fields of reference and forces a transgression, making the real unreal. Once selected, the elements will be combined, rearranged, transgressed in the textual space, in order to create “intratextual relationships.” Selection and combination concern the transgression of boundaries between text and context. Both concur for the last act of pretending, which Iser calls the “undressing of fictionality,” or “as if.” This “as if” reaffirms the fictional status of the text, recognized through conventions shared between author and reader, which establish a kind of contract “whose regulation the text proves not as discourse, but as ‘staged discourse’” (Iser, 2002, p.970).

world (ethical act) and, therefore, to reality a (not completed) finishing. The elements of life are reorganized by the author-creator in order to compose a stable, concrete and, at the same time, provisional architectonic whole. In Bakhtin, the notion of architectonics refers to the creation of a unity, of an integrated and relatively stable whole that is structured from dialogic and alteritarian relationships. It is a unity of thought constitutive of the act itself. The author, who assumes a voice in the text and also a place of contemplator, places himself in an external position in relation to the character and his world, ordering them in another evaluative plane and giving them a finish.

After making some theoretical considerations in order to adjust our lenses to the aesthetic object that we bring to scene, we point out that we do not intend to do an illustrative work as if the literary text reflected facts of the extratextual reality. For us, readers, the unity created by the author in writing works as an surplus field of vision that allows us to contemplate it as a whole and to have access to the values given to the elements of the plan of life, often inaccessible and “transgredient.”<sup>15</sup> This is possible, because we sometimes play the role of author, sometimes the role of hero. Therefore, more than Clarice’s text, we bring our response to its reading from the summons it makes to us and, consequently, from/in the encounter of our words with Clarice’s words, those of Bakhtin’s and those belonging to so many other voices. With a biased, feigned look, mediated by Clarice Lispector’s text, we seek to understand our reality and also demand that other voices come to meet ours.

## **1 “Because I Am the Other. Because I Want to be the Other.”**

Clarice Lispector’s story entitled “Mineirinho” was written after the death of José Miranda Rosa, one of the most wanted criminals by the Rio de Janeiro police in the 1960s, and the story title is a reference to Jose’s nickname. A case of police widely reported by newspapers and magazines at the time, Mineirinho’s story was published as

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<sup>15</sup> “‘Transgredient’, in fact, also means taking a step, a step away from any alignment, combination, synchrony, similarity, identification. This term comes from the Latin *transgredo*; and in English it is equivalent ‘to step across’, ‘step over’, ‘to pass through’, ‘to pass beyond’.” For reference, see Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, note 11, p.233. (BAKHTIN, M. M. *Art and Answerability*: early philosophical essays. Translated and notes by Vadim Liapunov; supplement translated by Kenneth Brostrom. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990.)

a chronicle in 1962 in the magazine *Senhor*<sup>16</sup> with the title “Um grama de radium – Mineirinho.” It later appeared in the second part of the first edition of *A legião estrangeira* [The Foreign Legion] (1964). This edition consisted of two parts: one of short stories – entitled “*Contos*” [Short Stories] – and another of chronicles – entitled “*Fundo de gaveta*” [In Back of the Drawer]. Later, this work was dismembered: the short stories remained in *A legião estrangeira* and the chronicles were published in the book *Para não Esquecer* [Not to be Forgotten] (1978). Recently, the text has been collected as a short story in the volume *Todos os contos* [All Short Stories] (2016), by the publisher Rocco. Although it was originally published as a chronicle, it is possible to assume that “Mineirinho” can also be read as a short story (Rosenbaum, 2010),<sup>17</sup> and this imprecision in the classification of the genre leads us to Clarice’s authorial style, which always refutes conclusions and absolute closures. We are in a gaping and unstable field, a space for exercising uncertainty and contact with multiple, often paradoxical voices. The chronicle-tale breaks the barriers of time as it establishes a tension between the death of a violent criminal and the unveiling of a criminal and violent society: “(...) we are all dangerous, and that the moment that the deliverer of justice kills, he is no longer protecting us or trying to eliminate a criminal, he is committing his own personal crime- one long held inside him” (p.303).<sup>18</sup>

When writing about Mineirinho, Clarice hosts him in her writing, in an exercise of alterity, without, however, defending his crimes. The value context of Mineirinho (and, by extension, that of the cook, that of an official we<sup>19</sup> and an unofficial<sup>20</sup> we) is affirmed and included in the context of the author-creator. This, by gaining a unity in the narrator’s voice, is placed in a dialogic relationship with all the elements of the work, becoming a constituent element, and, because it also has a “surplus field of

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<sup>16</sup> The magazine *Senhor* had its first circulation period between 1959 and 1964 and had the collaboration of renowned writers and intellectuals, such as Clarice Lispector.

<sup>17</sup> ROSENBAUM, Yudith. Ethics in literature: reading Clarice Lispector’s “Mineirinho.” *Estudos Avançados*, 24(69), 2010. pp.169-182. Disponível em: <https://www.scielo.br/j/ea/a/bXLdRWqtzdZHqv9HzgRpGHC/?format=pdf&lang=en>. Accessed on: 7 June 2022.

<sup>18</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>19</sup> It is a generic, abstract we, made of cultural, public relations between identities that nullify singularity.

<sup>20</sup> Here we have the singular we, of experience, of difference, not indifference and that recognizes its “no alibi in existing.”

vision”<sup>21</sup> and a memory of the future, it has a domain of the finished whole of this work, becoming an organizing element. In this way, the events of Mineirinho’s death, arranged in his singular past, are transposed through remembrance to the narrator’s singular present plan and, in this present, indicate a permanent future. The rupture of a temporality guarantees the text a certain permanence of meaning while allowing its expansion and the inclusion of other voices. This architectonic whole is given to the aesthetic subject (artist and contemplator), so that the text becomes a place of reflection, in the time of enunciation, in the here-now, displaying and demanding a questioning, an attempt to respond to the restlessness caused by the execution of a criminal. This aesthetic vision helps us to better understand the architectonic construction of the real world and its event-ness,<sup>22</sup> since the world comes to our consciousness as a unit.

The reception of the text also leads us to the “aesthetic regime,” according to Jacques Rancière, “the regime that strictly identifies art in the singular and frees it from any specific rule, from any hierarchy of the arts, subject matter, and genres” (Rancière, 2013, p.34),<sup>23</sup> “a non-hierarchical space, open to anyone and in which there is no rigid separation between artistic forms,”<sup>24</sup> as the author stated in an interview granted to the newspaper *O Globo*, in 2012. We are dealing with the idea of the shared common, in which the sensitive world is related to the capacity of art to encompass the heterogeneous. That is how small events, lives and stories of “anyone” come into play; irreconcilable dialogues coexist in confrontation, conflict and tension. In the same direction, we can say that Clarice’s writing is political because it does not distinguish between those who can and those who cannot occupy the common space of writing, which is constituted in “[...] a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience” (Rancière, 2013, pp.14-15).<sup>25</sup> More than that: her

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<sup>21</sup> The expression “surplus field of vision” is used by Bakhtin to refer to the finished vision, from the outside, that the other manages to have of the “I” (Bakhtin, 1984). For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>22</sup> Term adopted in the Brazilian translation of *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* with the aim of talking about the event character of existing.

<sup>23</sup> RANCIÈRE, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Translated by Gabriel Rockhill. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> In Portuguese: “espaço não hierarquizado, aberto a qualquer um e no qual não há separação rígida entre formas artísticas.”

<sup>25</sup> For reference, see footnote 23.



literary work, by acting out de-hierarchical human relations, reveals a subject whose enunciation claims the “distribution of the sensitive.”

In fact, for us to understand the text and the voices it welcomes and acts out and, certainly, for us to dialogue with our reality, we need to meet (and go against) Clarice’s words, so that such words (and those words they carry) to move and, in the collision with ours, penetrate us. This movement of comparison and confrontation is disorganized, tense, ambiguous; it takes us out of our comfort zone, makes us think about the justice that watches over our sleep while we sleep and falsely saves ourselves, makes us look for “something in us that would disrupt everything—a thing that understands,” “because the one who understands disrupts” (p.302),<sup>26</sup> and we want (and must want) to understand so that we are changed and can intervene in the world. The aesthetic activity fights, therefore, against our insensibility as it presents elements that seem strange to our reality, elements capable of displacing us, of bringing to our consciousness the habitual that seemed unnoticed, of awakening our senses again, and then waking us up.

We try to start from the fact that the short story “Mineirinho” presents the outline of an architectonics of alterity and the compositional structure of a response,<sup>27</sup> staging in and through language the question of the transfiguration of the world that occurs in the meeting of words, in the answerable act, therefore, in the word-act. The narrator, as if responding to a summons, soon introduces herself as our representative: “Yes, I suppose it is in myself, as one of the representatives of us, that I should seek the reasons why the death of a thug is hurting” (p.300).<sup>28</sup> When we come across a voice that, in addition to coming to meet ours, acts on our behalf, as our representative, we are immediately called to face it with our own word in response to our being-event, in the here-now. Either we speak or we are silent. No one can take this place for us, as Marília Amorim (2018) points out:

The duty to think and the impossibility of not thinking are given by the position I occupy in a given context of real and concrete life. From this place, which only I occupy, what I see and what I think are my

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<sup>26</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>27</sup> We emphasize that the text was commissioned to Clarice Lispector by the editorial board of *Senhor* magazine, in which the writer had been a columnist since 1958, and published the month after the fact.

<sup>28</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

answerability. No one else can think what I think. No one else can account for my position and carry it out, so there is no alibi for me not to think and assume what I think. From my concrete and unique place, thought and the being it expresses acquire a value, an intonation and cease to be a mere abstraction (Amorim, 2018, pp.23-24).<sup>29</sup>

The narrator's voice directs our gaze to the event of death: the thirteen shots that annihilated Mineirinho - "And why it does me more good to count the thirteen gunshots that killed Mineirinho rather than his crimes" (p.300).<sup>30</sup> Other perspectives, however, emerge from this focus, namely: that of the criminal, that of the cook, that of the police officers, that of society and that of the narrator herself who, not understanding her discomfort in the face of the event, seeks answers. In a tone of continued conversation, the text begins *in media res* with an enunciator who seems, in fact, to respond to someone else. And how can we not perceive the summons of the text that entangles us in the narrator's provocation as "one of the representatives of us" (p.300)?<sup>31</sup> The singular "we," but also the generic "we," opposing voices and permeated by tensions, put on the scene by the authorial voice and invited to occupy the places of transgression by such voice in the search for understanding "the distress of not understanding what one feels, of having to betray contradictory feelings because one cannot reconcile them" (p.300).<sup>32</sup>

The discomfort stamped on the cook's face is also ours, and it calls us to participate. Faced with the strangeness caused by the question about Mineirinho's death, a game of refusal and acceptance is established, a movement that is, at the same time, of reception and rejection, of compatibility and repugnance. The clash between the feeling of relief at the death of a "bandit" and the desire to see him alive – the "feeling divided by one's own confusion about being unable to forget that Mineirinho was dangerous and had already killed too many; and still we wanted him to live" (p.300)<sup>33</sup> – is then

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<sup>29</sup> In Portuguese: "O dever de pensar e a impossibilidade de não pensar são dados pela posição que ocupo em um dado contexto da vida real e concreta. Desse lugar, que somente eu ocupo, o que vejo e o que penso são da minha responsabilidade. Ninguém mais pode pensar aquilo que penso. Ninguém mais pode prestar contas da minha posição e realizá-la, por isso não existe nenhum alibi para que eu não pense e não assumo o que penso. Do meu lugar concreto e único, o pensamento e o ser que ele exprime adquirem um valor, uma entonação e deixam de ser uma mera abstração."

<sup>30</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>31</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>32</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>33</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

confronted by the law (of God and man) that “thou shalt not kill” (p.300).<sup>34</sup> This established game allows us to transgress the limits of the real and the imaginary to see, in an exotopic position, the question of the trivialization of life that can go unnoticed, but that acquires depth in the literary text and reaches our consciousness as a finished whole. The aesthetic construction confronts, for example, the social discourse that “a good bandit is a dead bandit” – the false idea of security – often supported by the same law “that protects the irreplaceable body and life” (p.300).<sup>35</sup> The confrontation proposed by the aesthetic constructions works as an intervention product that, once contemplated by us, leads us to meet the other and sensitizes us.

If, at first, the narrator shares the cook's confidence in Mineirinho's salvation, the identification is soon rejected due to the social class that distances them. Associating the mistress to “an avenging justice” (p.300),<sup>36</sup> the cook reacts with anger and coldness. The text then exposes the voice of religious common sense, which seeks forgiveness for sins and a way out of the failures of human justice: “Who doesn't know Mineirinho was a criminal? But I'm sure he was saved and is already in heaven” (p.300).<sup>37</sup> Again, the movement of approximation between the characters seems to occur, in the acquiescence of the voice that narrates: “more than lots of people who haven't killed anyone” (p.300).<sup>38</sup> A movement that displaces us, bothers us and disturbs us, which also happens with the cook character, angry with the boss who “was praying into his soul” (p.300).<sup>39</sup> We are also being invaded, because what should be silenced is explored by the writing, confirmed by the textual surface. Could Mineirinho have killed – an act against the law – and still save himself and enter heaven more than many people who did not kill? “It's no use saying what I feel” (p.300),<sup>40</sup> said here by the cook that opens up in a direction and perspective: what can be felt can be read as a voice which contrasts to common sense and which believes in the salvation of Mineirinho's soul; in another direction, the voice takes on the contours of a social representative that endorses the religious discourse for forgiveness. It is still possible to perceive it as the outline of a voice

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<sup>34</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>35</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>36</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>37</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>38</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>39</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>40</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

considered minor, as well as the criminal's voice, which would not serve to be spoken, but is welcomed in the written form.

What is felt but is not said, through the narrator's voice, continuing the reflective path, opens a questioning to the law. The "first law" can, at first, refer us to the legal field. For a society guided and stabilized by order, Mineirinho is the barbaric<sup>41</sup> and parasitic foreigner, as Jacques Derrida<sup>42</sup> asserts, a *persona non grata*, clandestine, from whom society wants to protect itself. In the name of this protection, the State is given the right to punish. This right seems questioned by the narrator (and also by us, readers, since in the text we gave her a power of attorney, "as one of the representatives of us"<sup>43</sup>) when attesting that "this is the law,"<sup>44</sup> she immediately inserts an adversative clause - "but there is something..." (p.300)<sup>45</sup> that creates a tension and makes her migrate from safety to horror gradually. Like the narrator and mediated by the ordering of the shots in the construction of the narrative, we remain on alert and are seized with restlessness and shame. We, too, sleep under the law, our greatest guarantee, "Until thirteen gunshots wake us up" (p.301),<sup>46</sup> moving away from the cold letter of the statute.

This is the law. But there is something that, if it makes me hear the first and the second gunshots with the relief of safety, at the third puts me on the alert, at the fourth unsettles me, the fifth and the sixth cover me in shame, the seventh and eighth I hear with my heart pounding in horror, at the ninth and tenth my mouth is quivering, at the eleventh I say God's name in fright, at the twelfth I call my brother. The thirteenth shot murders me – because I am the other. Because I want to be the other (Lispector, 2015, pp.300-301).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> From the Greek 'βάρβαρος', the word was onomatopoeic, used to refer to the "non-Greek," who did not speak the official language, only babbled. The barbarian called every foreigner, alien to the culture and social and political organization of the Hellenics. Over time, the meaning of the word was broadened and came to designate, in a stereotyped way, all the uncivilized and uneducated. Savage or primitive names the otherness seen as a threat and against which physical and/or symbolic violence is exercised.

<sup>42</sup> When discussing the relationship between host and guest, Derrida shows that the latter can become a threat to the former, becoming hostile, unwanted and illegitimate. The denial of hospitality ends up robbing the outsider of his condition as a human being, capable of being separated from common life. (Derrida, 2000)

<sup>43</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>44</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>45</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>46</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>47</sup> In Portuguese: "Esta é a lei. Mas há alguma coisa que, se me faz ouvir o primeiro e o segundo tiro com um alívio de segurança, no terceiro me deixa alerta, no quarto desassossegada, o quinto e o sexto me cobrem de vergonha, o sétimo e o oitavo eu ouço com o coração batendo de horror, no nono e no décimo minha boca está trêmula, no décimo primeiro digo em espanto o nome de Deus, no décimo segundo

In the end, as a reference to the thirteenth shot, only the astonishment and the tremor, a crucial moment in which the narrator moves and identifies with the other: “I am the other” (p.301).<sup>48</sup> And she wants him to be: “I want to be the other” (p.301).<sup>49</sup> There is a conscious movement of wanting to be, of assuming and signing the answerable act; there is a self that says “I” and confesses that it no longer wants to be governed by the same law. Writing draws attention to alterity, which defines the human being and becomes indispensable for his constitution. The impossibility of thinking man outside of relationships is staged, confirming that the “I” constitutes the “other” and is constituted by him, that is, dialogism is the principle of human existence, as Bakhtin asserts. To this we also relate the figure of the double, which establishes and shows the splitting of the subject, an image that, dialectically, is also opposed to the “I” and causes strangeness. The uncanny (cf. Freud, 1919)<sup>50</sup> refers to what is frightening, but it can develop into ambivalence until it coincides with its opposite, becoming familiar. In the game proposed by the text, there is the reception of this uncanny, which is recognized, even if it causes repugnance. There is no absolute denial, but writing does not hide the difficulty of coexistence. More than the realization of an intimate relationship with the other, even if it is the stranger, Clarice’s text leads us to the desire to commit ourselves. The self is, therefore, a construction of the other. For us to live, there must be dialogic encounters, since our word is always a counterword.

The order that protects also opens up insecurity. It’s a contradictory justice that supports and, at the same time, abandons. In this sense, we turn to Roberto Esposito (2008)<sup>51</sup> when he relates community and immunity, pointing out the negative protection of life. In Modernity and, in a potential way, in current times, we would have isolated subjects in the reciprocal condition of not being or not having anything in common, under the command of a figure that punishes those who violate the social pact (State

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chamo meu irmão. O décimo terceiro tiro me assassina — porque eu sou o outro. Porque eu quero ser o outro.”

<sup>48</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>49</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>50</sup> FREUD, S. The Uncanny. In: FREUD, S. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17 (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Others Works, 1919. pp.217-56.

<sup>51</sup> ESPOSITO, R. *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. Trans. and introd. Timothy C. Campbell. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

with police power), but which is outside of it. The law can, therefore, be broken in order to be, on the contrary, enforced.

The law is also open to the divine command: “thou shalt not kill” (p.300).<sup>52</sup> The imperative, in addition to pointing to the permanent future enunciated in the present, signals the duty to do: not to kill who is similar to me, the other in me. To transgress this law is to pay attention to the dark side of the body beyond. The destruction of the other is also my destruction, “because I am the other. Because I want to be the other.” (p.301),<sup>53</sup> we reiterate. More than perception and desire, we see the narrator’s taking a position staged: “In Mineirinho my way of living. How could I not love him, if he lived up till the thirteenth gunshot the very thing that I had been sleeping?” (p.301).<sup>54</sup> More than the feeling of compassion spent, which seeks to affect us, this “love” declared by the narrator dictates the intonation of the text and can be read, in the Bakhtinian perspective, as the “objective aesthetic love”<sup>55</sup> (being different, but not indifferent to the other), as an emotional-volitional contemplation from an evaluative position that is mixed with aesthetic empathy. This provides us with a vision of what is extralocalized and, at the same time, a vision of ourselves objectified, which allows us to understand our duty in relation to the object of contemplation and, consequently, the action we need to take in relation to it. It is not about putting ourselves in the other’s shoes (creating an abstraction), but understanding them in relation to our uniqueness and understanding our answerable participation in existing. Moved by aesthetic empathy, the narrator says: “that thing, which in Mineirinho became a knife, is the same thing in me that makes me offer another man water, not because I have water, but because, I too, know what thirst is; and I too, who have not lost my way, have experienced perdition.” (p.302).<sup>56</sup> We have two different evaluative contexts (Mineirinho’s and the author-creator’s) that interpenetrate and, at the same time, remain perceptible in the author’s construction of the narrator. These two contexts are, therefore, encompassed by the aesthetic context, in which the values of the author-creator and the contemplator are confronted.

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<sup>52</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>53</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>54</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>55</sup> According to Bakhtin (1993, p.61), it is the “principle of aesthetic seeing.” For reference, see BAKHTIN, M. M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993.

<sup>56</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

It is also possible to refer this first law to the original times, in which the constitution of societies, in its civilizing process, oppressed the individual's basic impulses, but left fissures that return and cause discomfort. This meaning, an oblique intertext with the work of Sigmund Freud (1962),<sup>57</sup> stresses, once again, the protection and helplessness of justice. The necessarily inhibitory character of civilization, which requires man to renounce his primary, erotic and aggressive instincts, causes anguish and places the subject in a constant internal struggle with himself, a place for the resolution of his conflicts. "If civilization imposes such great sacrifices not only on man's sexuality, but also on his aggressivity, we are in a better position to understand why it is so hard for him to feel happy in it" (Freud, 1962, p.62).<sup>58</sup> Culture thus produces unease in humanity, an effect capable of making us prone to destruction and antisociality. And this is something that unites us since the pains have the same origin: the external world, with its uncontrollable force; the body, condemned to decay; and human relationships, the most painful source.

Still desirous of pleasure but prevented from fully realizing it for the sake of social coexistence, we run away from pain and demand compensation arising from the renunciations made. If a part of society is restricted for various reasons from accessing these compensations, something is unbalanced, and violence erupts. The revolt and love, guarded by the narrator of the short story, representative of us, erupt in the face of Mineirinho's "frightened violence" (p.301),<sup>59</sup> because "everything that was violence in him is furtive in us, and we avoid each other's gaze so as not to run the risk of understanding each other" (p.301).<sup>60</sup> From the place of those who have access to the benefits of civilization, the "essential phonies" (p.301),<sup>61</sup> the narrator criticizes the law that promises security, but which turns in exaggeration against the life of an equal. The identification here is evident: helplessness is not just for Mineirinho, it is for all of us. The shots are repeated on the textual surface and aim to hit us, to disturb the sleepy sleepers who falsely save themselves. Why do silly ones need to be "essential?" So that

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<sup>57</sup> FREUD, S. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Translated by James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962.

<sup>58</sup> For reference, see footnote 57.

<sup>59</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>60</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>61</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

the social order is maintained, and the supposed truths are not questioned, “because understanding disorganizes.”

## 2 “We, the Essential Phonies”

Reached and affected by a mixture of revolt, love, compassion and guilt, in addition to being mocked by the nickname “essential phonies,” it is important to emphasize how the philosophical dimension of Bakhtin’s thought helps us to understand this uncomfortable place that demands an answer from each of us. It is precisely because it is a philosophy of life, committed to the answerable ethical act, concretely involved in the self-other relationship, that it can illuminate the complexity enacted in Clarice's chronicle-tale.

Why is it so important for us to bring Clarice and Bakhtin closer? Why are we so interested in bringing literature and philosophical thought together? Perhaps because both help us to understand life, because both the reading of artistic and theoretical creation is the reading of conflict, of confrontation. Reflections from these two fields flow into our lived reality and are not just abstractly theorized. Both surrender to the inexhaustible nature of human existence, the meanings of creation, the dynamics of culture, the “being” of language. We realize that, according to the Bakhtinian perspective we saw enacted in Clarice's text, life can only be understood in the response of the existing-event, in the movement and not as a given fact and separated from the act. Life that strays from answerability is left to chance. It is what Bakhtin and Clarice witnessed in Modernity and what we have seen reach the extreme in the contemporary world: a life almost completely removed from the answerable act and that increasingly conforms us to the condition of “essential phonies,” an inevitable condition for coexistence, social, but which can be fought every day. The essential phonies are all of us who need to have our consciousness expanded, that is, the essence<sup>62</sup> updated by existence.

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<sup>62</sup> According to the German philosopher Nicolai Hartmann, “In every being there is a moment of existence (*Dasein*). By this we must understand the pure and simple fact that, in general, it is there. And in every being there is also a moment of essence (*Sosein*). To this being belongs everything that constitutes the specific determination or the particularity of the being, everything that the latter has in common with another or by virtue of what is distinguished from the other; in short, everything that it



In this sense, Bakhtin assures that the ethical dimension of theoretical thinking cannot be deduced only from its content, since an ethical dimension involves the act of thinking about theory without submitting or limiting it to the laws, but thinking about it from a unique place. In other words, theory becomes ethical when it becomes an act, when it is thought by someone who is singular and unique. With this, Bakhtin (1993)<sup>63</sup> defends a complementarity between theory – universal truth (*istina*) – and practice – singular truth (*pravda*) – and believes that only from this relationship knowledge can be fully achieved. Thus, the content of thought has a stable meaning that is given by what is universal, but this thought only acquires meaning when a subject assumes it and attributes it a value. The *pravda* truth, therefore, corresponds to the intonation of the act, to the real experience, and is always updating the *istina* truth (veracity, abstract value), which makes the act always to be unique, non-reproducible and non-permanent.

With the invention of instruments of technical reproduction since Modernity, it has become common the illusion that it was possible to attribute universal components to the *pravda* truth to make it reproducible, collaborating in an attempt to deprive the act of its answerability, once the being-event as unique is denied. Consequently, in the postmodern world, the separation (contrary to the complementarity advocated by Bakhtin) is increasingly perceived between the *istina* truth and *pravda*; between the subject and the world, or the act and the fact. We have lived in what Walter Benjamin ([1936], 2008)<sup>64</sup> called “the age of technical reproducibility,” marked by the fragmentation of the subject and the scientificization of abstract knowledge. This has increasingly led us, according to João Wanderley Geraldi, to a “sclerosis of sensitivity.”<sup>65</sup> We no longer feel, but instead “sleep and falsely save ourselves” (p.301).<sup>66</sup> We do not exercise our revolt and our love; we build houses with very well locked doors and whose walls are supported by the “certainty that I shall always

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It’s.” Hartmann still “considers essence as a possibility and existence as its actuality.” (Zur Grundlegung der Ontologie *apud* ABBAGNANO, 2012, p.422).

<sup>63</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993.

<sup>64</sup> BENJAMIN, W. *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, Howard Eiland et al. Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2008.

<sup>65</sup> Live, on the channel “Literatura de quinta,” on YouTube, called “Literature as a way of understanding life,” on 07/18/2020.

<sup>66</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

vindicate myself” (p.302);<sup>67</sup> we hide our violence; we manufacture a god in the image of what we need to bless our “composed wrongdoing” (p.302)<sup>68</sup> and to sleep peacefully; we pretend “that we are all right and that there is nothing to be done” (p.302).<sup>69</sup> As phonies, we avoid the look of the other, his counterword, “so we don’t run the risk of understanding each other” (p.301),<sup>70</sup> and we build a “stupefied justice” (p.302)<sup>71</sup> that veils our sleep and neither lets us know nor understands the other and, consequently, life.

For Benjamin, with Modernity, the world starts using a technique as a form of reproduction and repetition, which anesthetizes our senses. This leads, paradoxically, to the loss of experience, memory and, therefore, to forgetfulness. This forgetfulness causes us to lose the ability to let ourselves be affected, to sensitize ourselves and to engage. The work of art would then be a form of resistance, as it has a unique character (although a unitary character is increasingly attributed to it). It demands from us a posture of contemplation, capable of producing reflection, and allows us to build memory (our only contact with the work after the experience), despite the oblivion that marks modern society and despite the fact that art itself can also fall into alienation, into repetition and not produce impact. Such reflection certainly extends to Post-modern society,<sup>72</sup> increasingly marked by post-truth<sup>73</sup> due to the use of elaborate techniques of reproduction as an instrument of control and domination. Therefore, speed and untruth become values that contribute to an increasing insensitivity.

Our times, potentiated by speed, is marked by impermanence and distrust. Behaviors, ways of life, expectations change so quickly that they are not assimilated. It

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<sup>67</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>68</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>69</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>70</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>71</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>72</sup> We consider post-modernity to be the sociocultural and aesthetic condition that began in the mid-twentieth century. For Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998), a French thinker who popularized the term, it is a time when all grand narratives (worldviews) come into crisis and there is a loss of beliefs in totalizing visions of history, which used to prescribe rules of political and ethical conduct for all humanity. The climate of distrust in relation to any discourse that tries to form universal consensus is general. Allied to this, technological changes cause substantial changes in the way of producing and distributing knowledge, that is, science. The world becomes cybernetic and informational. We live, therefore, in contemporaneity, in this post-modern time.

<sup>73</sup> We bring the term “post-truth” as commonly used to the context in which the appearance of truth of a fact, characterized by a strong appeal to emotion and based on beliefs, ends up gaining much expression as if it were a proven fact.

should also be taken into account that societies have different temporalities, which causes a mismatch between changes and reflections, adjustments or refutations. We realize that quickness also affects institutions formed and established for years; it is not easy for them to immediately understand all the impermanence. Disbelief is widespread and common values shared, even among different ones, are uprooted. Basic humanist principles such as friendship, cordiality, loyalty, hospitality are also taken to the background, making our fragility more accentuated. To share the sensitive world is to understand that it is made up of multiple centers of values, contrasting, but moving towards a common destiny, which in itself should root us. What we perceive are individuals trapped in themselves, canceling out those who do not share their false truths, building a barrier to the other who contests.

Faced with the challenges of the contemporary world, Bakhtin perhaps called attention to the need of rescuing the “centrality of the agent” and to the non-separation between subject and world. Art, as the closest domain of life, is capable of transfiguring it, as it places us in a position of emotional-volitional and evaluative contemplation that makes each act unique, particular, calling us to respond to what we experience. We think that Bakhtin would emphasize the construction of an aesthetic subject, capable of assuming a posture of aesthetic empathy, of building an ethical thought, of tensioning his words with the words of the other and, in doing so, would move forward and engage in the construction of his own truths.

In this direction, the aesthetic domain presents itself as the proper place to fight against oblivion and against the sclerosis of sensitivity, because intervention products are created in it that stir our sensitivity again when contemplated by us. From the moment we place ourselves in front of the artistic and theoretical creation of the other, we have contact with what the other is and we can rethink what we are. We can always review what we take as universal truth, updating it, in the act, in the encounter of our truth with the truth of others. From answerable action, the possible unity becomes a real singularity and forms with the world, already valued and object of valuation, a stable and concrete architectonic whole, a unity that is arranged around a center of values that can be thought of, seen and therefore modified. Even with the fragmentation of the subject and knowledge, our thinking always tends to create this whole that is possible to

become a real singularity, and art gives a compositional form to this unity, which becomes a way of intervening in the world.

We would say that Bakhtin's philosophy is configured as an instrument of criticism and resistance and that literary art in general and Clarice's in particular, by working slowly and tensionally with/the word, goes against the immediacy and pragmatism of the contemporary world, eager for speed and applicability. In dialogue, philosophy and literature invite us to produce meanings in the event of the act-thought that articulates subject and culture and allow us to (re)elaborate the life of affections.

We are invited to leave the state of dissimulation, the mechanical and automatic state, and move towards the understanding "like madmen" (p.302),<sup>74</sup> in order to disorganize everything and get to know Mineirinho, because "only like madmen, and not phonies, do we know him" (p.302).<sup>75</sup> The narrator's voice ends up depriving Mineirinho of the blame - "not in its consequences," but "that of a son whose father neglected him" (p.301),<sup>76</sup> and wants "a slightly madder justice" (p.302)<sup>77</sup> that would take into account his silence during life and his brutalization due to this place of erasure, on the margins of citizenship - "Mineirinho lived rage on my behalf, while I was calm" (p.302).<sup>78</sup> It is important to pay attention to this inversion game proposed by the text: full knowledge will only be reached through madness. Only this transgression enables us to understand that "that all of us, living mud, are dark" (p.303),<sup>79</sup> "we are all dangerous" (p.303),<sup>80</sup> we are entangled by fear. The borders between the self and the other, the just and the unjust, the violent and the violated, the law and the crime are shuffled once and for all, leaving the reader helpless. Even a fabricated "god" demystifies the "God" expected by the phony ones. Words and ambiguous images leave us on the edge of the abyss and, for that very reason, faced with the "duty of thinking" and the "impossibility of not thinking." And struck by the narrator's words, we are also mute in front of the man "without his cap or shoes" (p.301)<sup>81</sup> and stay silent before

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<sup>74</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>75</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>76</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>77</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>78</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>79</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>80</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>81</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

Saint George of gold and diamonds<sup>82</sup> (p.302).<sup>83</sup> and before “the man felled by machine guns” (p.302).<sup>84</sup> Thus, “like madmen” we enter “a life that so often has no doorway” (p.302),<sup>85</sup> we understand “things dangerous to comprehend” (p.302)<sup>86</sup> and we feel “deep love” (p.302),<sup>87</sup> which it allows us to be aware that “is why not even one man’s wrongdoing can be surrendered to another man’s wrongdoing: so that this other man cannot commit, freely and with approbation, the crime of gunning someone down” (p.303).<sup>88</sup>

In an attempt to wake us up from the state of somnolence, the narrator confesses to us: “No, it’s not that I want the sublime, I do not want things which have turn into words to make me sleep peacefully, a combination of forgiveness, of vague charity, we who seek shelter in the abstract. What I want is much rougher and more difficult: I want the land” (p.303).<sup>89</sup> “We who seek shelter in the abstract” (p.303),<sup>90</sup> in the official word, in the justice that watches over our sleep, we who sleep, to falsely save ourselves, are called to assume the land, the unofficial word, the answerability. It is this land that we urgently want (and must) approach.

### 3 A Prior and Slightly Madder Justice

If the perspective we propose is that of the relationship between writing and life, which encompasses the constitution of subjectivity always before another, we resort, as a passing point, to the text *Of Hospitality* (Derrida, 2000),<sup>91</sup> in which Jacques Derrida accepts Anne Dufourmantelle’s invitation to talk about the relationships established between guest and host, from which it is possible to create new associations and read them in other fields of knowledge, such as Literature. We approach the voices of the guest and the hostess, juxtaposed in an interesting dialogic game, to Bakhtin’s

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<sup>82</sup> Saint George is normally associated with the armed forces.

<sup>83</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>84</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>85</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>86</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>87</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>88</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>89</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>90</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>91</sup> DERRIDA, J. *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*. Translated by Rachel Bowlby. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.

postulations and to the reading of Clarice's text, following the trails of Derrida's statement that Anne Dufourmantelle takes as an epigraph in her part of the book: "An act of hospitality can only be poetic."<sup>92</sup>

In general, hospitality communicates with ethics and, as such, presupposes the recognition of the other in an interactive and interpersonal relationship, an encounter with the one who is stranger to us and who presents oneself to us as a friend or an enemy. Hospitality, therefore, is not just a passive action of receiving the other, it is built on the ambivalence between the desire to be welcomed, on the one hand, and the desire to welcome, on the other. It is a relationship permeated by paradoxes and tensions between those who welcome and those who are welcomed and, in this sense, hospitality shows itself as a deconstruction, a disorganization in the search to reinforce or to undo the social bond with the unknown, with the foreigner. When discussing this concept, Derrida makes a distinction between hospitality that is conditioned by politics and law and hospitality that takes place in the ethical and aesthetic fields as unconditional reception.

In the first case, the reception of the other tolerates the condition of foreignness and is built on the basis of certain conditions. If not, acceptance scratches out the difference, in an attempt to erase it. Limits and rules are imposed on the guest, formulated in the language and according to the conditions of the host, be it the State, the nation or the owner of the house. Conditioned hospitality has a power relationship; what comes from outside submits to the laws of the host. Perhaps, in fact, the great challenge of hospitality is to welcome the other without reducing them to the same, without domesticating them, respecting their strangeness.

On the other hand, unconditional (or absolute) hospitality is not reduced to official laws, it is the reception of the other in an unrestricted way, without demands, without questioning their origin, without invitations, always keeping them as unknown and unique. In this sense, hospitality could only be a poetic act and, consequently, an answerable act, since it considers the uniqueness of the other, imposing an ethical relationship and establishing an alterity; the other is welcomed in their difference. However, for this hospitality to be implemented as an ethical gesture and not just an

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<sup>92</sup> For reference, see footnote 91.

abstraction, it must assume the force of another law, of a “prior justice” (p.302),<sup>93</sup> “a slightly madder justice” (p.302),<sup>94</sup> a “brute incoherent cry serves as signal” (p.303),<sup>95</sup> capable of deconstructing the justice that regulates conditioned hospitality and that allows that “the deliverer of justice” “freely and with approbation, commit the crime of gunning someone down” (p.303).<sup>96</sup>

The ambiguities and ambivalences of the guest and host relationship still harbor preconceived and latent hostilities (“as a dangerous gram of radium, (...) a grain of life that if trampled is transformed into something threatening” [p.301]),<sup>97</sup> since hospitality can have an intrusive, hostile bias, in which the host can become hostage to his guest. A constant tension (and a pact) between the laws of unconditional hospitality and those of conditioned hospitality is therefore necessary. The unknown causes us fear, a feeling that generates a declared inhospitality, since accepting to receive it without restrictions can configure an exposure to risk. Let us remember the immigration crisis that is ravaging the entire planet. To this group also belong the expropriated, foreigners in their own land, the excluded, on the fringes of the goods and services available to only a portion of society, the wanderers, the crazy or vagrants, “the Mineirinhos,” constantly seen as a threat to established order. Not to mention the indigenous people, seen as a people apart.

Mineirinho, expropriated from his place of belonging and seen as barbaric and dangerous, is extirpated from the community. Thus, he is similar to the unwanted guest, like the threat against which xenophobic hospitality is created, which aims to protect one’s own home (*chez-moi*) (Derrida, 2000),<sup>98</sup> is similar to the unwanted guest. A house-property, house-city, house-civilization, house-body, house-word that cannot and must not be shaken. However, it is destabilized, as the writing exposes Mineirinho’s violence and opens wide the hostile structure in which he was generated. Xenophobic hospitality guided by police power excludes those considered social outcasts, but creates other forms of violence.

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<sup>93</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

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<sup>95</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>96</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>97</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>98</sup> For reference, see footnote 91.

The stranger from whom everyone wanted to protect themselves, when entering the city, invades a forbidden space, since its presence is considered prohibited in the social gear. In order to falsely protect and save ourselves, we build our houses, lock the doors, demand of ourselves that we are phonies, we sleep and we do not let the other enter. “This is the law” (p.300)<sup>99</sup> that keeps the house running according to the political and legal order. On the other hand, literature is the place where we can see “the substance of life” (p.301)<sup>100</sup> which reminds us that “beneath the house is the land, the ground upon which a new house might be erected” (p.301).<sup>101</sup> Only in this poetic act can we finally say that we do not want this house, that we want “a justice that would have given a chance to something pure and full of helplessness in Mineirinho” (p.301).<sup>102</sup> The narrator also transgresses insofar as she welcomes the mute voice of the “thug.” The poetic gesture also belongs to Lispector in the role of author-creator, who transfigures life and moves us towards the perspective of the character and other voices

An unconditional hospitality, with a radical welcome in which alterity is not attacked, is, by concept, unattainable. If it existed, guest and host would nullify themselves. This situation comes up against the question of subjective constitution. There is, however, no identity without alterity. If hospitality without cracks goes beyond the very concept of hospitality in its ethical-political-legal dimension, in fact, it only takes place as a poetic gesture. In a time marked by the exacerbation of individualism and disinvestment in collective life, literature opens up as a space of resistance and welcomes alterities, without reducing them to the same. Ethical gesture of acceptance that manifests itself through the author-creator, immanent to the artistic whole, which engenders the work permeated by socio-historical and cultural elements.

Under the unconditional shelter of this guest through writing, we see the “paradigm of immunization” (Esposito, 2008),<sup>103</sup> an interpretative key of modern society. At the crossroads of the two interpretive poles of biopolitics,<sup>104</sup> the category of

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<sup>99</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>100</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>101</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>102</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>103</sup> For reference, see footnote 51.

<sup>104</sup> “Biopolitics” is a term coined by the French philosopher Michael Foucault in the 1970s to explain the passage from a sovereign power, which caused death or decided to “let live” its subjects, to biopower, in which the State begins to deal with the population as a scientific, political and biological problem. It is about the entrance of the phenomena proper to human life in the order of knowledge and in the



immunity is inscribed, linked to the spheres of the ethical and legal domain: exemption or protection from a disease; safeguard against a common law. In immunization, life and politics are inextricably linked: “Not simply the relation that joins life to power, immunity is the power to preserve life” (Esposito, 2008, p.46).<sup>105</sup> However, this power of conservation can contain in itself the possibility of threat. The immune paradigm contrasts with the concept of community, of reciprocal gifting. If, on the one hand, life in common can annihilate the construction of subjectivities, immunity can create identity barriers, isolated individuals with rights and guarantees. Taken to exacerbation, the immune character can annihilate the life it thought it protected, like “the radium”<sup>106</sup> [which] will radiate regardless, if not through trust, hope and love, then miserably through the sick courage of destruction” (p.302).<sup>107</sup>

The law that immunizes part of society is the same that eliminates others: life transformed into death, “trampled love” (p.301),<sup>108</sup> “this thing, which in Mineirinho became a knife” (p.301).<sup>109</sup> It is justice repudiated by the narrator, “humiliated that I need it” (p.301),<sup>110</sup> justice that embodies negativity. Immunization is related to hospitality, but is contrary to absolute hospitality, in the case of “Mineirinho.” Unlimited hospitality is called “prior justice,” “a slightly madder justice” (p.302),<sup>111</sup> required, desired as a space for welcoming the other in its difference, the stranger who, familiar, also constitutes us. The narrative, we reiterate, summons us “like madmen” to

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calculations of power. Biopolitics promotes the management of life in its biological aspect and aims to conserve it. For Roberto Esposito, modern society has seen the politics of life turn into thanatopolitics.

<sup>105</sup> For reference, see footnote 51.

<sup>106</sup> Radium (from the Latin radius, meaning “ray”; from the scientific Latin radium, “to radiate”) is a highly radioactive luminescent chemical element discovered in the early 20th century by Marie Skłodowska Curie (1867-1934) and her husband Pierre Curie (1859-1906). At the time, it was elevated to a symbol of sophistication, scientific progress, in addition to promising cures for various diseases. Later, it was discovered that the new fashionable element actually caused damage to bones due to its extremely radioactive potential. It is curious to think how the chemical element is brought to the textual surface of Clarice’s short story with its radiating and, at the same time, dangerous presence. Boldly, we can bring the bullet-ridden body of Mineirinho closer to the bodies of *The Radium Girls*. This name was given to North American workers who ingested lethal amounts of radium at the United States Radium factory in New Jersey. These women were instructed to point with their lips or with their tongue the brushes they used to paint clock faces. The painting was performed with luminous paint containing radium, which, when ingested, penetrated the bones and emitted constant radiation, piercing them as if “targeting” them.

<sup>107</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>108</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>109</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>110</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>111</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

disorganize “the house,” to enter “life that so often has no doorway” (p.302),<sup>112</sup> to understand what is “dangerous to comprehend” (p.302),<sup>113</sup> to meet the counterword and, from this movement, create, think, transfigure the world. This call is given as a matter of urgency, so that we wake up to the fight against the insensitivity of our times and against fascism in all its manifestations.

#### **4 So as Not to End**

When proposing his moral philosophy, Bakhtin looks at literature as a possibility of using the word not only in another axiological plane but also covered with the voice of the other. Clarice looks at Mineirinho and offers him a place, without demanding reciprocity. We look at the word-act performed in the chronicle-tale in a movement of disorganization to try to understand how literature, as an aesthetic process (human action), makes us understand ourselves, the contemporary world, the silent word of Mineirinho and other unknowns that, in silence, reach us. The relationship is never direct, the word-act provides us with a dislocated, biased look, mediated by language games, world conceptions, symbolic forms, the evaluative position we occupy, the laws we subject ourselves to, the acts we sign. Following this path, we can say that, as we saw in Bakhtin and Clarice, the poetic act, carried out in the literary text, welcomes us, strange readers, without restrictions, at the same time that it welcomes Mineirinho - in which “human speech has already failed” (p.303),<sup>114</sup> to make us think about the place of the human, the terrain and assume a continuous act of answerability.

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<sup>112</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

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### **Declaration of Authorship and Responsibility for Published Content**

We declare that both authors had access to the research corpus, actively participated in the discussion of the results and conducted the review and approval process of the paper's final version.

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## Reviews

### Review I

Reading the evaluated text was very pleasant. The title captures in a concise and appropriate way the core of the research. With full command of the language and structure of an academic work, the development of writing flows smoothly, preserving cohesion and coherence, displaying excellent knowledge of the principles of Bakhtinian theory about the “answerable act,” which provides a solid anchor for the discussion of the chronicle/short story “Mineirinho” by Clarice Lispector and the achievement of the objective of the work.

I emphasize the maturity of the authors, manifested in the deep reflections of the theme, in the consistency of the arguments and in the expansion of these, seeking theoretical support in other researchers such as Wolfgang Iser, Jacques Rancière, Sigmund Freud, Nicolai Hartmann, Michel Foucault, Roberto Esposito, Jacques Derrida, among others, to discuss the unfolding of the central question in order to better illuminate it. The theoretical bias chosen for the examination of Clarice Lispector’s text is relevant and reveals an original, competent approach that can contribute to the writer’s critical fortune.

I suggest that the authors standardize the classification of the text (tale[?] chronic[?]), or use the expression chronicle-tale, provided on p.2 of the work, according to the aforementioned justifications. Another suggestion concerns the transfer of the footnote that explains the concept “transgressive” to the first entry of the term in the article, where it is most needed.

I would like to take this opportunity to register the forgetfulness of releasing the work Freud, 2011, in the final references, as well as the release of the year of the work consulted in: [QUEIROZ, Inti Anny. O conceito de arquitetura na teoria bakhtiniana – uma abordagem historiográfica, filosófica e dialógica. Estudos Linguísticos. São Paulo, ano?]. ACCEPTED WITH SUGGESTIONS

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### Review II

Provided that the observations below are respected, I approve the publication of the article The world’s (trans)figuration by the act-word of/in “Mineirinho”.

The study presents an original analysis of one of Clarice Lispector’s most important chronicles. The author of the text presents their analysis in an authoritative way, dominating the *corpus* he chose and the theoretical foundation used. However, the text does not fully fit what the abstract of the article indicates: the author, in the ABSTRACT, says that the theoretical foundation of his text will be supported by Bakhtin’s theory – answerable act –, but in the body of the text, composed by introduction, three subtitles, and WITHOUT final remarks, flanks the analyzes privileging other theorists – Derrida, for example. I see no problem in the proposed dialogue. However, I believe that the summary should be rewritten in this sense. I also recommend the creation of the topic – FINAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Writing problems: I believe it is necessary to present the full names of the theorists used. Example: “As Faraco [Ranciére; Esposito, Benjamin, Amorim]” – the first time an author’s voice is mentioned in the text, it is recommended that the author’s name be written in full. The presentation of theorists, interpreters, in abbreviated form is recurrent. In this sense, the reader is not “helped” by the author of the article.

The term “tensioned” appears frequently in the text [as does the word “narrator”]. Use synonyms. Examples of word repetitions: “Already the imaginary... since the act of pretending... So, in this process... so, by the intersection.” There is a paragraph that should be revised/rewritten (the construction is confused): “And this is something more that unites us since the pains have the same origin”...

The author presents as corpus the chronicle *Mineirinho*. Recorded and understood by Clarice Lispector as a chronicle. However, in 2016, Benjamin Moser, when organizing the compendium *Todos os contos* [All Short Stories], by Clarice Lispector, recorded the chronicle in the volume as if it were a short story. This careless organization causes confusion in the reader. I believe that a footnote explaining this editorial oversight is opportune. I suggest that the author of the article, instead of using the book *Todos os contos*, use the first edition of the book *A legião estrangeira* [The Foreign Legion], but if this is not possible, it is better to use an edition of the book *Para não Esquecer* [Not to be Forgotten] – where the chronicle is recorded. I recommend reading the article “*De cuentos reunidos todos os contos*” [From the Gathered Short Stories All Short Stories], by Nádia Battella Gotlib, for further clarification: <https://revistacult.uol.com.br/home/de-cuentos-reunidos-todos-os-contos>. REVISIONS REQUIRED

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### Review III

The article under analysis has a title and abstract aligned with the proposed goal. The objectives launched are fully achieved throughout the development of the text, which brings a relevant theme to literary and linguistic studies in our context, namely, the relationship between writing and society/contemporary context. Theoretically well founded, the article proposes a dialogue between Bakhtin's reflections as well as other theorists, such as Iser, Derrida, Esposito and Ranciére, without, however, losing sight of the analysis of Clarice Lispector’s text. It is worth highlighting the dialogue established between the theoretical aspects, the literary text (writing) and life, revealing a critical view of the author. The text represents a good contribution to studies in the area and is very well written. Therefore, I am in favor of publication. ACCEPTED

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