



**MEDIATING SILENCE:  
TRANSLATION IN CLARICE LISPECTOR'S  
*THE HOUR OF THE STAR***

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In Clarice Lispector's *The Hour of the Star*, a male narrator, Rodrigo, mediates a feminine and impoverished subject, Macabéa, for a middle class audience. Likewise, two male translators, Giovanni Pontiero and Benjamin Moser, mediate the original Brazilian work for their English-speaking audience.

In the novel, Clarice creates Rodrigo to describe its heroine, Macabéa. Since she is illiterate, she has no words to identify herself to herself or anyone else. Instead, the educated Rodrigo narrates her story to his sophisticated readers; yet he cannot ever capture her truth or essence because she exists beyond the realm of words. Consequently, he must invent and create a good deal of his concept of Macabéa before ultimately realizing that he has failed. Clarice Lispector created Rodrigo as a narrator to emphasize language's inability to access the truth of Macabéa, the feminine subject.

In the English-speaking world, Brazilian literature — like Macabéa — inhabits a marginal space. Both English translations of *The Hour of the Star*, Giovanni Pontiero's 1992 attempt and Benjamin Moser's 2011 version, mediate between Clarice Lispector's Portuguese as an underrepresented subject and the educated, patriarchal English of the United States and Europe. In addition, Clarice's penchant for challenging typical Luso-Brazilian grammatical and literary conventions complicates the translation process. The translators struggle to channel her style in English and, by so doing, they each mark the text with their own creativity.

While mediators, whether translators or narrators, affect their illustrations of their subjects, they still provide otherwise unattainable access to them. Their inventions and creations highlight but cannot describe the untranslatable strangeness of their feminine subjects.

