

Example of book
review on "xavier
drank french wine.
and ate a whole
chicken alon...

[Art & Culture](#), [Symbolism](#)



Write a response to Clarice Lispector's short story, "The Body" and Rick J. Santos's article, "Forbidden Fruits in C. L.'s 'The Body'"

Bigamy, homosexuality, murder. Clarice Lispector's short story, "The Body" is both brave and shocking. Brave, because the author chooses to deal with controversial and often taboo subjects and shocking because she does it with boldness and honesty and makes no attempt to present a beautified version. The story is a critique to modern society and, through the use of symbolism, aims to convey a series of messages to the reader.

"The Body", published in 1974 is critical of society, its norms, institutions and view of the world. Even from the first line the reader understands the underlining criticism: "Xavier was a fierce, full-blooded man. Very strong this guy" (Lispector, 283). This man lived openly with two women, Carmen and Beatrice, and being married to both, he was committing a crime. However, although everybody seemed to have known, nobody seemed to object. "Everyone knew Xavier was a bigamist" (Lispector, 283), the author lets us know; however, he is even able to go to church with his two wives! Nobody objects even when he decides that he wants a third woman, a prostitute, to satisfy him. On the contrary, the society that is ready to accept a male bigamist is not even ready to acknowledge the existence of a lesbian relationship. When the two women eventually murder Xavier and confess their crime in front of the police, the policemen prefer to leave them unpunished and send them to exile instead of recognizing their existence as a couple (Lispector, 287). This is made even more evident by the fact that the police's decision not to arrest the women comes right after Carmen asks "let us be in the same cell" (Lispector, 287).

There is another level to the reading of the story. It is presented in Rick J. Santos' article "Listening to Silence: Forbidden Fruits in Clarice Lispector's 'The Body'" and has to do with symbolism and the use of metaphors to convey messages about the subjects of the story, mainly female sexual desire and independence in a man's world. Santos (105), writing in 2007, more than 30 years after the publication of Lispector's story, suggests that food, its preparation, the ways it is consumed and/ or shared are all symbolic. Preparation of food, a female preoccupation according to the norms of our patriarchal societies does not only symbolize the initial conformity of the two women to these norms, but also serves as a bonding element between them (Santos, 105). This bond becomes even more explicit as they share their food:

The two women ate the other chicken" (Lispector, 283).

Xavier needs a whole chicken to satisfy his appetite. Equally he needs two or even three women to satisfy his sexual appetite. Eating and sexuality are thus interconnected. Santos (107) even suggests that the words "eat" and "food" in Portuguese can also have sexual connotations and as such their use in "The Body" is symbolic. As the two women continue to bond, their relationship being established, Xavier's presence becomes more and more annoying. His "bad manners" at the table are once again symbolic of the male intrusion in the lives of the two women (Santos, 109).

Lispector deals bravely with controversial subjects and the way she chooses to present them to her readers is fascinating. The critique against modern patriarchal society is masterly presented through a series of short sentences that describe her characters or narrate the story. At the same time her use

of symbolism, as Santos decodes it, is both clever and inspired. It presupposes however, an informed audience that will be expecting it.

WORKS CITED

Lispector, C. "The Body" in K. David Jackson (ed.) Oxford Anthology of the Brazilian Short Story. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2006.

Santos, R. J. "Listening to Silence: Forbidden Fruits in Clarice Lispector's 'The Body'". Vertentes, Sao Joao del- Rei, 30, p. 104-114. 2007.