

## When the Eye Meets the World

### Reading Subjectivity in Two Poems

by Carlos Drummond de Andrade

---

**ABSTRACT:** This essay examines two different models to understand the relationship between subject and object in the lyric—Georg Lukács's (which emphasizes the transformation of the object) and Jonathan Culler's (which emphasizes the self-dramatization of the subjectivity in the object)—and demonstrates how both models are called into question by two poems of Carlos Drummond de Andrade. By means of a stylistic reading of the poems "No meio do caminho" and "Noturno à janela do apartamento," this essay claims that in these poems the object, albeit differently, participates in the construction of the subjectivity of the lyrical "I" and, in so doing, produces meaning.

**KEYWORDS:** lyric, object, subject, meaning, Georg Lukács, Jonathan Culler, Carlos Drummond de Andrade.

---

A poesia (não tires poesia das coisas)  
elide sujeito e objeto.  
—Carlos Drummond de Andrade

"Only in lyric poetry is the subject . . . transformed into the sole carrier of meaning, the only true reality" (1968, 63), affirms Georg Lukács in *The Theory of the Novel*. In chapter 3, "The Epic and the Novel," Lukács discusses how the novel and the lyric overcome the duality of subject and object, viewed by him as essentially "mutually alien worlds" after the epic era. Since then, he claims, "the extensive totality is no longer directly given . . . the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem . . ." (56). In order to acquire eternal meaning, the duality between subject and object, rewritten as soul and nature, has to be transcended. And this transcendence occurs in the *lyrical moment*: "the great moment . . . the

moment at which the meaningful unity of nature and soul or their meaningful divorce, the necessary and affirmed loneliness of the soul becomes eternal" (63).

According to Lukács, what he calls "alien, unknowable nature" (63) carries no meaning; it is later described as "dumb, sensuous and yet senseless" (64). Thus, this harbinger of meaning, the "unity of nature and soul," happens only when the lyric subject projects his "essential interiority" onto nature (63). That constitutes the lyrical moment, when the lyrical subject, with its projected interiority, transforms the outside world into a meaningful, illuminated symbol: "At the lyrical moment the purest interiority of the soul, set apart from duration without choice, lifted above the obscurely-determined multiplicity of things, solidifies into substance; whilst alien, unknowable nature is driven from within to agglomerate into a symbol that is illuminated throughout" (63).

The idea of the duality of subject and object continues to concern those who study the lyric. In *The Pursuit of Signs*, Jonathan Culler presents a different take on the "lyric moment," as he discusses the trope of the apostrophe. He argues: "If, as we tend to assume, post-enlightenment poetry seeks to overcome the alienation of subject from object, then apostrophe takes the crucial step of constituting the object as another subject with whom the poetic subject might hope to strike a harmonious relationship. Apostrophe would figure this reconciliation of subject and object" (143).

If such a reconciliation occurs, it is only by the power of the trope, "the incalculable force of an event" (152) that only happens textually: "something to be accomplished poetically in the act of apostrophizing" (143). Indeed, this power has immediacy—giving the lyric its own immediacy—because the apostrophe happens in writing, in "a now of discourse, of writing" (152). Apostrophe produces a "discursive event" (153) and becomes "the essence of happening" (148).

It is clear that for Culler the "moment of apostrophe" (140), this "event" or "happening" through which self and other relate, allowing subject and object to transcend their alienation, paradoxically still relies on the interiority and agency of the subject. To work as a trope, the apostrophe depends on the subject who apostrophizes an object: only by its relationship with the subject, only when it becomes a "you" through poetic intervention, does the object "transcend a purely material condition" (145). Culler admits so much as he states that this linguistic process "can be read as an act of radical interiorization and solipsism" (146).

In that sense, Lukács's and Culler's views present a striking similarity. In both Lukács's lyrical moment and Culler's apostrophe, subject and object can only be

reconciled at the symbolic level. The materiality of the object does not matter, since the object, or outside world, has no intrinsic meaning, and it is the poetic subjectivity alone that produces meaning in the process of symbolization—the “happening.”

Carlos Drummond de Andrade’s “No meio do caminho” and “Noturno à janela do apartamento” allow for a discussion of the relationship between the lyrical “I” and the world. However differently, both poems call into question Lukács’s and Culler’s models of reconciliation of subject and object. “No meio do caminho” and “Noturno à janela do apartamento” are better read in a detailed and structural manner. My readings are indebted to the device-oriented, rhythmic analytical work by Roman Jakobson, and especially the first poem is analyzed under Viktor Shklovsky’s premises in “Art as Technique”: “Art . . . exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony” (1989, 58).

The human encounter with the world has been thematized by different lyric poets and often represented by the scene of encounter between the eye and the world. In his essay about the Homeric view of man and the world, Bruno Snell reminds us that the act of seeing could be expressed by several verbs, many of which did not remain in the Greek language. It was not necessarily the function of sight—as we now have it—that determined or gave significance to the verb; rather, in several cases, it was the object seen and the sentiment fostered by that act of seeing that carried significance.<sup>1</sup> Impressionist painters revolutionized the history of art—and had an impact on poetry as well—by centering, in the “impression” formed by an object in the eye that sees, a sensation that precedes any kind of thought. In other words, they privileged in their art the retinal perception of the world. Eyes have also participated in the construction of the traditional model of desire in the Western lyric, that of desire as a gesture of aggression: the subject sees the object of desire and seeks to invade and take hold of it.

Like other lyric poets, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, in several instances, represents the duality of subject and world by the encounter between the subject’s eyes and his surrounding environment. Also, in his focus on the contrast between light and shadows, his representation of negativity through darkness, Drummond gives to visual perception—and therefore the eyes—a significant role. In “A máquina do mundo,” for example, as the journeying poet refuses the light offered by the machine that opened itself to him, he “baixa os olhos.” This lowering of the eyes prevents him from seeing further, and it signals his refusal and his withdrawal from the world.<sup>2</sup> Eyes will be at the center of my reading, as

they figure prominently in both “No meio do caminho” and “Noturno à janela do apartamento.”

Published in 1928 in the *Revista de Antropofagia*, “No meio do caminho” was later included in Drummond’s first published volume, *Alguma poesia* (1930). It is his most famous poem, and perhaps the most famous Brazilian poem in the twentieth century: often cited and always taught, the poem received countless commentaries and infinite interpretations, and amassed a strong team of detractors. Several elements caused a stir: the treatment of a banal, unimportant topic, contrasting the traditional and valued “poetic subjects”;<sup>3</sup> the use of colloquial language—in particular the use of *tinha* in lieu of *havia*, until then the poetic norm; the limited vocabulary; and the repetitive structure. Drummond himself collected many of the written reactions to this poem in a book titled *Uma pedra no meio do caminho: Biografia de um poema* (1967). Viewed as a “peça de escândalo,” in what was, in José Guilherme Merquior’s words, “um dos últimos escândalos da idade heróica do movimento” (4), “No meio do caminho” is, according to the same critic, the poem that defines Drummond’s early poetics, when “A poesia surge quando o universo se torna insólito, enigmático, embaraçoso—quando a vida já não é mais evidente” (25).

Antonio Candido, writing about Drummond’s early work, identifies a distrust in the poet’s treatment of the “I” and the world, even as he writes as if registering “o espetáculo material e espiritual do mundo” and eventually defining “o Eu e o mundo como assunto de poesia.”<sup>4</sup> Drummond oscillates between his “subjetividade tirânica” and his desire to know the Other and be in the world, claims Candido, while stating that “O eu é uma espécie de pecado poético inevitável, em que precisa incorrer para criar, mas que o horroriza à medida que o atrai.”<sup>5</sup> The obstacle will appear as a motif in Drummond’s poetry, as he examines human connections, and ties between humans and the world. For Candido, the obstacle irrupts in a context in which both the individual and the social world are “tortos,” twisted and perverted, in a reciprocal relation.<sup>6</sup> My reading, which follows, is situated in this context.

“No meio do caminho” is a circular poem, one that turns upon and returns to itself. If the speaker is “on the road,” this same road leads nowhere but to an inevitable return. The first stanza is an insistent repetition of the first verse, in which obsession and circularity are iconically expressed in the placement of its two parts: (x) “no meio do caminho” and (y) “tinha uma pedra.”<sup>7</sup> Visually, this is how the parts are organized:

x y  
 y x  
 y  
 x y

The second stanza begins with the explicit advent of the speaker, an event that changes the rhythm of both the walk and the reading. In visual terms, his entrance corresponds to the two verses that are added to the other final four verses, with these being inversely proportional to those of the first stanza:

c d  
 a  
 c x  
 y  
 y x  
 x y

The two new verses (“Nunca me esquecerei desse acontecimento/na vida de minhas retinas tão fatigadas”) represent the cut of the initial and final rhythmic scheme (“the montage cut”) and bring to the center of the reading the “I” of the poem, the lyric subject, and no longer the world, the object, here presented as road and stone. The world is static, stagnant, and, as in many other poems, acts as a motif expressing Drummond’s nihilism. Reflecting upon himself from his observation of the stone, the speaker then inserts himself right into the center of the poem, surrounded by the stone, which dominates the eight framing verses.

“No meio do caminho” problematizes the Lukácsian model, for in it there is a different process: it is the stone, that is, the outside world, that projects itself in the retinas of the speaker, and it is far from being “senseless.” The stone penetrates the retinas of the speaker who sees it. It is this inanimate, strong, impermeable, and feminine (*pedra* is a feminine noun) object that moves toward the subjectivity of the speaker.

The encounter of stone and retinas will provoke the appearance of the speaker in the poem, and this experience will be marked forever in his life, imprinted in his memory. It is this same ability to remember, though, that reveals in the speaker the possibility of processing something internally, of not being a mere passive perceiver. It is when the speaker graphically appears that the poem



projects itself into the future: we see a poet in the present time talking about a past (*tinha*) that he will never forget in the future. In a certain way, if the poem presents a circular journey in space, which in principle leads nowhere, we can also see, through the verbal tenses, a course in time.

Irruption of new elements, the surprise verses of the second stanza, however, allows for the establishment of a bridge between themselves and the others, that is, between these and other verses. If this connection in the confrontation of the speaker with the world occurs through the gaze (and this can be seen through the emphasis on the tired retinas), in the material elaboration of the poem it occurs through the recurrence of the vowel *i*.

Nunca me esquecerêl desse acontecimento  
 Na vida de minhas retinas tão fatigadas  
 Nunca me esquecerêl que no meio do caminho  
 tinha uma pedra

Here, an assonance creates this direct relationship between the “I” and the world, since it permeates this crucial moment in which the “I” of the speaker (revealed in the pronoun *me* and the possessive adjective *minhas*, and in the ending of the verbs) and the outside world meet for good through the eye. Retinas are the internal ocular membranes that contain the nervous cells which receive the luminous stimuli and upon which are projected the images produced by the ocular optical system. The stone is what is reflected upon the poet’s retinas; the same way that it is still, massively stagnant in the middle of the road, so it will be registered internally, in the retinas that get tired of seeing it. Once memory is dominated by the projected image of the stone, the “I” itself will in its turn resemble the inertia and monotonous paralysis that this stone (that is seen) represents.

The fact that the “I” of the speaker, in this fundamental encounter with the world, is represented by the “retinas” points to the objectiveness of the subject, for it is presented synecdochically, in/as parts—body parts—and not seen as a whole. But “retinas,” specifically, complicates any argument that establishes a simple opposition between a subjectivist and an objectivist reading of this poem, as José Américo Miranda tries to do.<sup>8</sup> For, of the eyeball, the retina is the innermost part, the one continuous, as we have seen, with the optic nerve, and it contains, among its layers, the one that is sensitive to light. Furthermore, being continuous with a nerve makes the retina a vehicle that also conveys impulses of

sensation (light?) between the brain and spinal cord and the eye. As those verses starting the second stanza connect the speaker and the stone, the retina is also the bridge connecting the outside to the brain and the nerves of the “I.” All this suggests, therefore, a relative “interiority,” a deeper connection between “body part” and “being,” somewhat complicating this “objectiveness of the self.”<sup>9</sup>

This encounter between the lyric “I” and the surrounding world constitutes what Lukács would call the “lyric moment” of the poem, when one integrates with the other through the action of the speaker’s gaze. There is a merging of speaker and stone, subject and object; but if the speaker is the agent of the gaze that he imposes upon the world, the image that he sees will affect him profoundly—it will remain within him and accompany him forever—changing, or helping to define, his own perception of his self. His identity is shaped by the stone that he sees in the middle of the road and that physically surrounds him in the structure of the poem. Therefore, against the Lukácsian model, there is in this poem an object, whose physical existence and particularities are relevant, which has meaning and projects this meaning onto the subjectivity that confronts it.

This pattern seems, anyway, to subscribe to the Western lyrical tradition of starting from the duality represented by the pairs subject/object, speaker/world and then reaching the lyrical moment through the merging or cancellation of this opposition. Indeed, it is this fundamental unification that brings meaning to the poem—it is the great “happening” of the poem (“Nunca me esquecerei desse acontecimento”) as posited by Culler (149), which in turn makes the poem a happening in itself. Merquior identifies a theory of “poetry-happening,” in which subjectivity loses ground to the surrounding reality, as a feature of the poetry in Drummond’s *Alguma poesia*. He writes,

Desse modo se afirma em *Alguma Poesia* uma teoria da poesia-acontecimento. . . .

Ora, a equação poesia-acontecimento desloca o acento da sacrossanta subjetividade para a realidade: tudo se passa como se o “vivido” escapara ao solipsismo, às ilusões do cogito narcisista. Na poética do vivido-acontecimento, o sentido da complexidade do real se torna mais agudo. O lirismo se abre à consideração crítica do mundo, despede-se da falsa inocência da escrita. (26)

However, even as it follows the Western dualistic lyrical tradition, “No meio do caminho” subverts the traditional model of desire, for in this case it is the

object (the stone) that comes to the subject (the speaker). The latter does not necessarily desire the former but is invaded by it: the image and, with it, the reality of the stone penetrate his mind and memory through the apprehension by the retinas. The poet does not call for it, but in his confrontation with the world, he is taken by it. This way, we have not an extension of the self into the object (Culler 150) but rather an object that extends and invades the subject, giving it a new meaning. In this model, the idea of desire as a gesture of aggression is maintained, but directed in a different way. The poet marches round and round—a movement that connotes a process and a distance—but the stone in the middle of the road is all he sees. Such an image keeps returning to his eyes, and it dominates not only his field of vision but also his field of memory. It is significant that the “I” (present in three verses right in the middle of the poem) is surrounded by the stone in almost symmetrical verses and, most important, that it only enters the poem after having already been violated by the stone.

The recurrence of the consonant *n* contributes to an atmosphere of desolation and negation—for it recalls “*Não*,” pointing to the nihilism that Drummond would later retake more clearly in “*Noturno à janela do apartamento*,” when he affirms that “*A soma da vida é nula*.”<sup>10</sup> In a way, it also points to a trend not at all exclusive to Drummond’s poetry but very much characteristic of it: an initial and strong desire for death, which sometimes leads to an almost “natural” identification between one’s object of desire and death.

---

“*Noturno à janela do apartamento*” is from Drummond’s third book, *Sentimento do mundo* (1940), a book that, it is generally agreed, introduces more acutely than before the conflict between the self and the surrounding world. Presenting more elements than “*No meio do caminho*,” “*Noturno à janela*” is one of the occasions in which Drummond takes up the motif of the motionless world. Also in this poem, in the tension between “I” and world, the external elements, or objects, are greatly important in the definition of the subject’s individuality or, rather, in the thoughts the poet develops about his own subjectivity.

In this poem, however, unlike “*No meio do caminho*,” never is the “I” directly articulated in the linguistic text. It is as if, to keep the reader’s focus on the internal perspective of the speaker, the latter refuses to say “I,” which would betray a self-consciousness and would not be psychologically realistic. Furthermore, here it is possible to perceive the subject having a more active role in his interaction with the outer world—an interaction that is established in the title



by the word *window*, traditional bridge between inside and outside. In “Noturno à janela” the world still acts upon the subject, but the subject is more than a passive recipient, for he also projects himself onto the image he sees. One could say that the mutual relationship between subject and object is made clearer, and it is this reciprocity that creates the “happening” of the poem.

In “Noturno à janela do apartamento,” only in the title do the words *janela* and *apartamento* appear, yet they have an internal function: they reveal the place where the lyric subject thinks—the point of departure of the gaze that projects he who looks onto the image of the object looked at. The relevance of the contact made through the eye and, from this, the identification between subject and object are initially made explicit in the second stanza, in which stasis dominates both the poet and the world.

Nenhum pensamento de infância  
 Nem saudade nem vão propósito.  
 Somente a contemplação  
 De um mundo enorme e parado

The poet, standing at the window, integrates himself (or is integrated?) into the darkness of the night and contemplates a huge world, motionless like him but fitting within his gaze, comprehended within the frame of the window. In the beginning of the poem, the “*escuridão absoluta*” (third stanza) already imposes itself: it is announced in the title (with “*noturno*”) and appears in the form of “*cubo de treva*” and “*noite*.” Silence and darkness are here associated with death.

This stanza also founds the structure, built upon oppositions, that is dominant in the poem: the poet, melancholic, at night, at the window, sees in suicide the only possibility of resolving this melancholy and overcoming the conflict between the inner space (inside the apartment) and the outer space (beyond the window, in the world).

Silencioso cubo de treva:  
 Um salto, e seria a morte.

However, he rejects this option right away—a fact made clear by the use of the adversative *mas*—creating instead a situation in which he integrates himself into the night and the night, somehow, is integrated into him, as if it were an outside that is inside and is part of himself. Unlike “*tantos que escolheram* / . . .

a dis- / solução" (as Drummond writes in his poem "A Homenagem," referring to ten writers—including Zweig, Benjamin, and Woolf—who committed suicide), the poet here presents another solution: integration.

Mas é apenas, sob o vento,  
A integração na noite.

The oppositions continue into the other stanzas: there is no disquiet "somente" contemplation in the second stanza. The negatives *nenhum*, *nem*, *nem* are morphologically contrasted with *somente*, which brings an affirmative in the second stanza. However, the images presented in the two sets of two verses constituting the second stanza are less of an opposition than a parallel: there is no thought or movement in the poet, as the world is also still. Such a parallel stillness can also be seen in the palindromic reappearance of NEM in soMENte, as if they complemented and mirrored each other, like the objects to which they refer. This second stanza, though, as a whole, will be in opposition to the following stanza, which, to this generalized stasis, will contrast a powerful life, in movement, circulating.

The third and central stanza presents the preemptory assertion of life's nullity, as well as an admission of life's power. There is a contrast between *vIda* and *nUla*, but, as if an announcement of the final synthesis, we can see life penetrating, or circulating, isomorphically in the stanza, fighting in the *escuriDão* (*vIda*) *absoLUta* (*nULa*), dripping like *líquido* (*vIda*), until it annuls the opposition *vIda/nUla* in the word *circUla*. So, as the poet realizes that "A soma da vida é nula," he immediately repeats the adversative *mas* to admit—as I have pointed out—that life still has power and circulates, construing thus an antinomy with the death presented in the first stanza.

The same life that had just been declared "nula" now is said to have "tal poder." Darkness, which in an earlier moment was associated with death, is gradually impregnated by life. The stagnant world loses some strength facing the might of life, which circulates everywhere: in the world as well as in the poet, for this image brings to mind both the bloodstream inside his veins and the circulating movement of the light in the lighthouse, foreshadowing thus the end of the poem. This is another instance in Drummond's poetry that serves as a refutation of Lukács's concept of a "senseless world" onto which the subjectivity of the poet is projected, conferring meaning to it.

Then comes the fourth stanza with its Mallarmaic enumerational triads:<sup>11</sup> it begins with “Suicídio, riqueza, ciência . . .” and ends with “noite, mar ou distância.” The first three elements are connected to human beings, whereas the last three relate to the surrounding natural world, and the two sets establish an oppositional frame comprehending the two internal verses. This opposition occurs in both sound and visual terms with the symmetrical graphic inversion of ALma/cALa and interrOGa/IOGo.

A ALma severa se interrOGa  
E IOGo se cALa

At this point the subject is actually doing something: he is thinking, he is interrogating, even if at the end he falls silent again. Unlike “No meio do caminho,” in which the subject is overwhelmed by the power of the stone and basically acted upon by it, in “Noturno à janela” it is possible to perceive a subject that, in all his hesitations and ambiguities, manages to be more active in his relationship to the world. He presents his options, “suicídio, riqueza, ciência”; however, following the pattern of opposition found in the poem, he does not answer the question he poses to himself.

Nevertheless, there is the possibility of choice—in the first stanza he exercises this choice and decides not to jump out the window. In the verses “. . . E não sabe/ se é noite, mar ou distância,” the subject of the first clause is the “alma severa,” which stands for the poet. The presence of such a subject indicates that even if the poet *does not know*, there is a cognitive subject, or one with cognitive capabilities, present in the poem. It could be argued that this parallels the fact that although the speaker does not explicitly say “I,” he can still be perceived by the reader and by himself as existing in his full cognitive and perceptual interiority. As for the subject of the second clause, this is totally open and unclear. But some options are presented there as well—“noite, mar ou distância”—even if the poet refrains from choosing an answer from these alternatives.

In his analysis of this poem, Murilo Marcondes de Moura argues that its oppositions are elaborated in a “sistema de relativizações”: basically, what is affirmed is denied—“o poema não apresenta um percurso nítido,” “e não existe nenhum eixo linear que se possa tomar como guia.”<sup>12</sup> Moura claims that both systems of opposition and relativization build a permanent back-and-forth movement that prevents any significant advancement. The things presented

annul themselves mutually (“A soma da vida é nula”?) in a great phonic and visual play:

A atmosfera silenciosa do poema é perpassada pela enorme incidência da fricativa /s/, espécie de representação sonora do vento ou de um monólogo sussurrado, sistematicamente presente em palavras importantes do poema: “silencioso,” “suicídio,” “ciência.” . . . [A]s relativizações ocorrem no detalhe sonoro. Assim, a “morte” retorna naquilo que a está evitando—integração na noite.” Na segunda estrofe, o som reiterado da ausência de perspectiva temporal “nenhum pensamento,” “nem,” “nem”—reaparece na atividade presente do eu lírico—“somente,” “contemplação.” Na terceira, a oposição entre o /i/ de “vida” e o /u/ de “nula” é neutralizada na palavra “circula.” Mesmo a estrofe seguinte, de paralisia diante das alternativas excludentes, está balizada pelo som suicídio, ciência, severa, se, se, sabe, se . . .” (1997, 95)

This mutual neutralization is the sole, if only a precarious, movement contrasted to the immobility of the lighthouse, observed by the equally “fixed” (i.e., immobilized) poet.

The last stanza, composed of a single verse, “Triste farol da Ilha Rasa,” breaks the strophic and phonic scheme and reveals the final end reached by the poet’s gaze. Contemplating a nocturnal and static world from his apartment, the poet, who is also motionless, catches sight of a lighthouse on an island. The poet is motionless but has life circulating in him, his blood flows in continuous movement and he chooses not to die. The lighthouse is also motionless, but the light rotates rhythmically to illuminate the sea and the quay to the ships. However paradoxical, both are motionless but “circulating,” that is, they combine the circulation that represents life with a steady, still placement in the world.

Through the act of gazing at the lighthouse from the apartment window, the poet achieves an integration of the apartment and the island—two dichotomous poles that grow in importance in Drummond’s work, especially after the poet moves from Minas Gerais to Rio de Janeiro.<sup>13</sup> This integration is like a synthesis of all the oppositions and alternatives presented along the poem. It is important to emphasize that the light shed by the lighthouse, more than “enlightening,” solidifies the idea of night’s darkness (it is this darkness that guarantees its existence and gives it a *raison d’être*), into which the poet is integrated as well. Furthermore, it is worth observing that this final monostich inscribes itself on the page, and graphically represents the other side of the bridge that links the



subject's look to the object he looks at. Physically it could be perceived as the ray of light that alone crosses the page at the end of the poem, linking the eyes of the poet on one side to the eye of the lighthouse on the other. In this process, a mutual reflection is forged by the two poles, by means of the projection of characteristics onto each other. In a way, both become subjects and objects, exercising a certain agency upon each other. The lighthouse is sad because the poet is sad; it is the poet's gaze that construes this image. But the lighthouse, with its eye of light, also contaminates the eyes that are fixed upon it, and has, similar and symmetrical to it, at the other side of the window, a poet who also resists, motionless and silent, darkness. With tired retinas, he goes on.

"No meio do caminho" and "Noturno à janela do apartamento" are two poems that, thematizing the conflicted relationship between the lyrical self and the world, call into question both Georg Lukács's model of a senseless world that acquires meaning through a projection of the subject upon the object and Jonathan Culler's model, which also is based on the premise of a gap between subject and object, where the "happening" of the poem relies on the subject conferring meaning to the object. Different in the way they portray the relationship between subject and object, both poems by Drummond, nevertheless, present an external world that participates in the definition of the speaker's subjectivity, in the establishment of his individuality. "No meio do caminho" has an external world that more clearly acts upon the subject and affects him in his interiority. In "Noturno à janela do apartamento," subject and object strike a more balanced relationship. Lighthouse and man, connected by an imaginary line created by the reciprocal gaze, share not only agency but also qualities.

#### NOTES

This piece was first conceptualized in weekly dinner discussions with classmates at the University of California, Berkeley. We wrote a longer collaborative work, based on a common theoretical problem, in which each individual part was engaged in dialogue with the other. My acknowledgments go to Julie Anderson, Sharon, and Zou Lin—the coauthors of "The Dinner Papers."

1. Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 1–22.
2. See Alfredo Bosi, "'A máquina do mundo' entre o símbolo e a alegoria" (1988), 80–95; José Guilherme Merquior, "'A máquina do mundo' de Drummond" (1965); Betina Bischof, "A recusa à máquina" (2005), 103–46.

3. The nonpoeticity of the object of retinal impression (the stone) betrays the resistance to "important," "poetic" objects of desire in this type of modernist poetry.
4. Antonio Candido, "Inquietudes na poesia de Drummond" (1970), 95.
5. *Ibid.*, 97.
6. *Ibid.*, 103: "A deformação [do mundo social] . . . se articula com a deformação do indivíduo, condicionando-a e sendo condicionada por ela." Betina Bischof, studying Drummond's later poems, also speaks of the relevance of the obstacle in the poet's work, as it becomes an element of his poetics: "aquilo que sempre foi central para essa poesia: o obstáculo, o entrave, a negatividade." Bischof (2005), 47–48. Following Merquior's analysis, Bischof also sees a correspondence, or even equivalence, between the "I" of the poem and the surrounding world in her reading of "A máquina do mundo." Bischof (2005), 111.
7. Antonio Candido affirms that "No meio do caminho" is built on a "processo de saturação da palavra-chave." Candido (1970), 104. Haroldo de Campos sees in repetition the basis for the poem's "concreção lingüística" and aesthetic information (à la Max Bense). Campos claims that the "emoção-surpresa" of the poem is built upon repetition. Campos, in Sônia Brayner (1978).
8. See José Américo Miranda, "Fotografia e poesia: Leitura da forma em Carlos Drummond de Andrade," *Inimigo Rumor* 4 (1998): 76–86.
9. Chana Kronfeld writes about the transition from impressionist to expressionist poetry in Hebrew modernism. Commenting on "Be-leylot ha-stav" (On Autumn Nights) by David Fogel, Kronfeld explains that "On first reading, the poem seems to be a paradigmatic example of impressionistic observation," and the images seem to be "retinal imprints." "However," she continues, "the text, in typical expressionist fashion, presents the most subjective, imperceptible internal qualities as if they were objective sense data." See Kronfeld (1996), 192.
10. In a third poem, "Noturno," we find two verses that I consider a strange synthesis of the circular journey of "No meio do caminho"—which is also a journey in time—and the darkness that dominates "Noturno à janela do apartamento"—darkness that, while working as an important element in the atmosphere of stagnation, here creates an immobility in time: "Viajando parado. O escuro me leva / sem nunca chegar. Sem pedir a bença."
11. Some examples from Mallarmé that come to mind are "Rien, cette écume, vierge vers" and "Solitude, récif, étoile," from the poem "Salut," and "Nuit, désespoir, pierre-rie," from "Au seul souci de voyager."
12. Murilo Marcondes de Moura, "Noturno à janela do apartamento," *Inimigo Rumor* 1 (1997): 89–97 [94].
13. *Apartment and eyes* appear significantly in at least another of Drummond's poems: in "Opaco," from *Claro Enigma* (1951), the apartment building, by blocking his view, denies the poet the desired sight of the moon and the stars in the sky.

## WORKS CITED

- Andrade, Carlos Drummond de. *Uma pedra no meio do caminho: Biografia de um poema*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora do Autor, 1967.
- . *Poesia e prosa*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Aguilar, 1983.
- Bischof, Betina. *Razão da Recusa*. São Paulo: Nankim Editorial, 2005.
- Bosi, Alfredo. *O ser e o tempo da poesia*. São Paulo: Cultrix/EDUSP, 1977.
- . *Céu, Inferno*. São Paulo: Ática, 1988.
- Campos, Haroldo de. "Drummond, Mestre de Coisas." In *Carlos Drummond de Andrade: Fortuna Crítica*, edited by Sônia Brayner. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1978. 246–52.
- Candido, Antonio. *Vários escritos*. São Paulo: Livraria Duas Cidades, 1970.
- Culler, Jonathan. *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981.
- Jakobson, Roman. *Questions de poétique*. Paris: Seuil, 1973.
- Kronfeld, Chana. In *the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996.
- Lukács, Georg. *The Theory of the Novel*, translated by Anna Bostock. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968.
- Merquior, José Guilherme. *Razão do poema*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1965.
- . *Verso universo em Drummond*. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria J. Olympio Editora, 1976.
- Miranda, José Américo. "Fotografia e poesia: Leitura da forma em Carlos Drummond Andrade." *Inimigo Rumor* 4 (1998): 76–86.
- Moura, Murilo Marcondes de. "Noturno à janela do apartamento." *Inimigo Rumor* 1 (1997): 89–97.
- Shklovsky, Viktor. "Art as Technique." In *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, edited by Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer, 55–66. New York: Longman, 1989.

MONIQUE RODRIGUES BALBUENA is an associate professor of literature in the Clark Honors College at the University of Oregon. She was a Starr Fellow at Harvard University and a Frankel Fellow at the University of Michigan. Her book *Homeless Tongues: Poetry & Languages of the Sephardic Diaspora* is forthcoming from Stanford University Press. Her new book project is provisionally titled *Sephardic Literary Responses to the Holocaust*. Balbuena is the Modern Literature editor of the *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* and the editor of the new Jewish World Literature series at the Academic Studies Press. She may be reached at balbuena@uoregon.edu.