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# EXCHANGING GLANCES: THE STREETCAR, MODERNITY, AND THE METROPOLIS IN BRAZILIAN LITERATURE

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“E os bondes passam como um fôgo de artifício” (Mário de Andrade)

The streetcar has been defined as “a large coach or car on rails that provides public transportation along certain streets” (*Webster’s* 1325). However, its role as a simple means of transportation is only one of the many that the streetcar has played in literature and in real social interactions. Its importance in the multifaceted urban geography of metropolitan cities and its participation in the experience of the everyday life of the so-called modern individual have given to it a much broader semantic dimension than its dictionary definition offers.

This essay discusses how the streetcar has become a symbol of modernity in Brazil and, consequently, a source for everyday language in contemporary Brazilian Portuguese. It analyzes how the representations of the streetcar in the works of Oswald de Andrade, Mário de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, Clarice Lispector, Lygia Fagundes Telles, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Rachel de Queiroz and Antônio de Alcântara Machado give us access to some of the historical, cultural and economic issues that were part of the complex advent of modernity in Brazil. From the outside, or within the streetcar, characters allow us to look more critically at the emerging metropolitan city and its problems, at the contemporary society it has produced, and, more specifically, at the modern person that inhabits it, who is at once its creator and its product.<sup>1</sup>

In January of 1859 the first streetcar company started its operations in Brazil (Navenh, “Cronologia”; for more on the history of streetcars in Brazil, see Allen Morrison and Emídio Gardé’s websites). The Cia. Carris de Ferro linked the Praça Tiradentes to Tijuca in Rio de Janeiro. Around twelve thousand passengers rode on this new means of public transportation in the first months. The first streetcar appeared on the streets of Recife in June of 1867 and in Salvador and Belém in 1870. The city of São Paulo acquired its first streetcar only in 1872 and the Cia Carris de Ferro was already transporting around three thousand passengers per day by 1881. The first electric streetcars in South America appeared in 1892. They connected the Largo da Carioca and the Largo do Machado in the city of Rio de Janeiro. They arrived in Salvador in

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March of 1897. Manaus, the capital of the state of Amazonas, welcomed the electric streetcars in August of 1899, about nine months before São Paulo, whose first electric streetcar transportation service was inaugurated by the Light and Power Company on May 7, 1900, connecting downtown to Barra Funda. On the thirteenth of the same month the service to Bom Retiro started and on the 27th both Vila Buarque and Higienópolis received their electric streetcars. On June 17 one could ride them on the Avenida Paulista. The *linha Avenida* opened on June 24 and on December 31 electric streetcars appeared in Brás. At the end of 1900 there were twenty-five electric streetcars for twenty-four kilometers of tramway in São Paulo. On the first day of 1901 two more services were inaugurated: Rua Augusta and Penha. At that time there were two hundred and forty thousand inhabitants in São Paulo and over seventeen million in Brazil. While recounting a childhood memory in his “Advertência” to *Namoros com a Medicina*, Mário de Andrade mentions the streetcar ride as one of the activities he perceived as characteristic of adult life: “Era menino, e apenas nos poucos momentos em que largava da meninice, achava bonito, desejava, confesso, desejava ser homem grande, tomar bonde, fumar, andar com dinheiro no bolso” (7). Andrade’s words reveal that streetcars were already an integral and important part of the everyday life of the inhabitants of São Paulo when he was a child. Moreover, by putting the act of riding on a streetcar together with those of smoking and carrying money, which have been in different ways associated with power, Andrade’s *homem grande* implies more than merely being an adult; it is also to be independent and successful (cigarette companies in Brazil were famous for commercials featuring very beautiful people wearing fancy clothes and driving luxurious cars).

In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Marshal McLuhan has shown how the wheel, since its invention, has functioned as “expediter of tasks, and architect of ever-new human relations” (181). He explains, for instance, that “with the coming of the horse-drawn bus and streetcar, American towns developed housing that was no longer within sight of shop or factory” (180). In Latin American countries like Brazil, the appearance of the electric streetcar, which was one very important sign of its modernity, brought changes of all sorts. This is not surprising since, as McLuhan also explains, “every technology creates new stresses and needs in the human beings who have engendered it” (183). Moreover, in the case of São Paulo, for instance, the arrival of the *bonde* was a part—and certainly a consequence of—a series of other important events that would alter not only the urban geography, but also the social, economic and political context of the city. The origin of the word *bonde* in Portuguese comes from the fact that the electric streetcar system in Brazil was constructed by the Canadian company Light and Power, which financed the project by issuing “bonds” (Light, “Instituto”; see Gardé’s website for other versions of the origin of the term). The arrival of the Light and their *bondes* marked Brazil’s immersion into modernity. Not only did the company bring streetcars to Brazil, but they also promoted progress in São Paulo and in several other areas, since it bought a variety of other Brazilian companies at the same time. The energy distributed by the Light impelled the economic and industrial growth of São Paulo and marked a turning point in the history of the city.

Oswald de Andrade comments on the impact of the appearance of the *bonde elétrico* on São Paulo society:

Anunciou-se que São Paulo ia ter bondes elétricos. Os tímidos veículos puxados a burros, que cortavam a morna da cidade provinciana, iam desaparecer para sempre. Não mais veríamos [...] o bonde descer sozinho equilibrado pelo breque do condutor. E o par de burros seguindo depois. Uma febre de curiosidade tomou

as famílias, as casas, os grupos. Como seriam os novos bondes que andavam magicamente, sem impulso exterior? (O. Andrade, *Um homem sem profissão* 46)

According to Andrade, the appearance of the streetcar excited the entire city. The replacement of the “timid” old vehicles that were pulled by donkeys, as Andrade explains, by the late electric trolley cars meant the replacement of a provincial life with a more extravagant modern existence, that is, a farewell to the past and the welcoming of a new era. Streetcars signaled the arrival of technology, science, and progress. The *bondes* were a result of the advent of electricity, a bewildering and awe-inspiring novelty that also evoked feelings of fear and apprehension: “Um mistério esse negócio de eletricidade. Ninguém sabia como era. Caso é que funcionava. Para isso as ruas da pequena São Paulo de 1900 enchiam-se de fios e de postes” (O. Andrade, *Um homem sem profissão* 46-47). Part of the reason why the curiosity surrounding the *bondes* sometimes turned into suspicion and fear was related to the numerous changes in the appearance of the city brought about by the arrival of these odd-looking machines. For many Brazilians the electric streetcars represented an invasion of their physical space, as well as their mode and pace of living. Exchanging the donkeys’ strength for electric power implied the imposition of a new and faster rhythm, which would modify not only some of their simplest daily habits but also the nature of professional, social, and personal interactions. In his early *crônica* about the *Bonde de Santa Teresa*, Machado de Assis recognized that the “bonds” were changing the pace of daily life in Rio de Janeiro. “Quando um *bond* sobe, outro desce; não há tempo em caminho para uma pitada de rapé; quando muito, podem dois sujeitos fazer uma barretada” (363). Machado criticizes the scarcity of time for casual personal interactions effected by the introduction of the streetcars. In the same *crônica* Machado creates a satirical dialogue between two donkeys: “Alguns burros, afeitos à subida e descida do outeiro, estavam ontem lastimando este novo passo do progresso” (364). The steam-running streetcars Machado is referring to transform the donkeys into figures of an old-fashioned past: “a diligência é um meio-termo entre a tartaruga e o boi” (364). For that reason, “esse interessante quadrúpede olhava para o *bonde* com um olhar cheio de saudade e humilhação” (364). Here Machado implies, not only that the animals have lost their usefulness, but also that the population as a whole (of which the donkeys are representative) is not altogether pleased with these changes.

Machado knew that being “modern” is a temporary condition, since there is always going to be something more modern to replace whatever is up-to-date at a given time. In light of this, he suggests that in the same way the donkeys were replaced by the steam, “o vapor há de ser pelo balão, e o balão pela eletricidade, a eletricidade por uma força nova” (364). The substitution of the steam streetcars by the electric ones in São Paulo, for instance, signaled the shift that the city would undergo towards becoming a metropolis. Georg Simmel has suggested that the metropolis creates specific psychological conditions: “with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life-it creates in the sensory foundations of mental life [ . . . ] a deep contrast with the slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the sensory-mental phase of small town and rural existence” (325). The new rhythm brought by the electric streetcars would add to São Paulo the urban and metropolitan characteristics discussed by Simmel, such as the “imponderability of personal relationships” (327) and the “blasé outlook” (329); in other words, the “atrophy of individual culture through the hypertrophy of objective culture” (338). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that some modern Brazilian authors like Oswald de Andrade often times used the streetcar in their literary works as a metaphor for modernity and its consequences. It is also easy to understand why the *bonde* became the source of a variety of popular linguistic expressions in Brazilian Portuguese.

Oswald de Andrade tells us how the appearance of the first electric streetcar in Brazil was accompanied by feelings of anxiety and dread: “A cidade tomou um aspecto de revolução. Todos se locomoviam, procuravam ver. E os mais afoitos queriam ir até a temeridade de entrar no bonde, andar de bonde elétrico” (O. Andrade, *Um homem sem profissão* 48). According to Andrade, everyone was slightly hesitant, but many people wanted to be part of the novelty, that is, to become modern. Besides the many wires and trails, the speed of the streetcar was another source of fear for the population: “É capaz de saltar dos trilhos! E matar todo o mundo” (O. Andrade, *Um homem sem profissão* 48). This mixture of speed and power, together with a natural human fear of the unknown, also led to the characterization of the *bonde* as an untamed animal: “Lá vinha o bicho! [...]. Lá vem o bonde! Toma cuidado!” (O. Andrade, *Um homem sem profissão* 48-49). Consequently, the streetcar acquired an image of danger, the danger that many would associate with the new times to come: “Eu tinha notícia [...] de que era muito perigoso esse negócio de eletricidade. Quem pusesse os pés nos trilhos [do bonde] ficava ali grudado e seria esmagado fatalmente pelo bonde. Precisava pular” (O. Andrade, *Um homem sem profissão* 46; insertion is mine). Metaphorically speaking, being run over and crushed by the streetcar means to be incapable of keeping up with modernity.

Nowadays *bondes* are rare in most Brazilian cities. Many teenagers and even adults have never seen one. Due to what might now be considered their quaint design and the nostalgic memories they evoke, they are occasionally used in touristic areas. This occurred in Santos in January of 2002, when the *Bonde Camarão* was restored by the Companhia de Engenharia de Tráfego for use on the touristic tramway (Navenh, “Cronologia”). In many cases, streetcars have become a symbol of the same idea of the past it once repudiated. This is evident in the lyrics of Caetano Veloso’s song “Trilhos Urbanos” (1979): “O melhor o tempo esconde / Longe muito longe / Mas bem dentro aqui / Quando o bonde dava a volta ali [...] Bonde da Trilhos Urbanos / Vão passando os anos / E eu não te perdi / Meu trabalho é te traduzir” (1-4; 13-16). In the author’s words, the absence of the streetcar symbolizes the nostalgia the poet feels; that is to say, a longing for the kind of social and professional interactions, lifestyle, and values of a bygone era. In essence, to miss the streetcar is to miss an entire cultural period. And to translate the *bonde* is to translate the past, its memories, culture, and values, which is, in a certain way, to make it “present.” Thus, implicit in Veloso’s lyrics is the idea that the streetcar is history and, as such, must be preserved.

In “Não Pago o Bonde,” Leonel Azevedo and J. Cascata’s well-known 1938 Carnaval song, the streetcar’s “inaccessibility” is portrayed as the result of economic limitations. The *bonde* is expensive and theoretically out of the reach of the narrator, who nonetheless gets on the streetcar and refuses to pay for the ride: “Não pago o bonde / Porque não posso pagar / O meu é muito pouco / E não chega pra gastar / Moro na rua das casas / Daquele lado de lá / Tem uma porta e uma janela / Mande a Light me cobrar” (Light, “Cultura”). The passenger’s defiant stance towards the Light Company is tantamount to an act of civil disobedience, in that he challenges the right of this rich corporation to monopolize this means of transportation. Moreover, he seems to insist on the injustice of the streetcars’ inaccessibility to the poor. In “Viagem de Bonde,” a *crônica* by Rachel de Queiroz, one of the passengers also refuses to pay the streetcar fare. The character is portrayed as a figure of power since he is described as a strong black man whose moustache resembles Stalin’s and who looks like one of the leaders of the *Ministério do Trabalho* (54). This man avoids the conductors in order not to pay for the ride. The narrator suggests that his act cannot be attributed to financial hardship: “Sei que não pagou a passagem a nenhum dos

dois e devia fazer aquilo por esporte; não tinha cara de quem precisa se sujar por cinquenta centavos" (54). The man's dishonesty is explained as an amusing way to retaliate against the Light: "pois quem é que não gosta de ver se tirar um pouco de sangue à Light?" (54). The popular dissatisfaction with the Light is shown in a more explicit manner later in the text when, after a quarrel breaks out, a man argues that the conductor and the other Light employees should have aligned themselves with the people, rather than the company that exploits and enslaves them: "motomeiro, conductor e fiscal, em vez de se aliarem com o povo, não passavam de uns lacaios da Light" (54). This comment upsets the conductor, who challenges the man to a physical fight out on the street. The man refuses, pointing out that he "não se metia com estrangeiros" (54), which demonstrates the people's view of the company as an invader, an imperial exploiter that is only seeking profit.

The streetcar is also connected to a social and economic reality in Antônio de Alcântara Machado's "Brás, Bexiga e Barra Funda." Unlike Azevedo and J. Cascata's song, the *bonde* in Alcântara Machado's story is associated with the lower classes: "Ali na Rua Oriente a ralé quando muito andava de bonde. De automóvel ou carro só mesmo em dia de enterro. De enterro ou de casamento" (55). The character Gaetaninho cannot fulfill his dream of riding in an automobile due to his socioeconomic limitations. In fact, the only opportunity he has for an automobile ride is after his death: "Às dezesseis horas do dia seguinte saiu um enterro da Rua do Oriente e Gaetaninho não ia na boléia de nenhum dos carros do acompanhamento. Ia no da frente dentro de um caixão fechado com flores pobres por cima" (58). One may be inclined to read Gaetaninho's death as symbolizing the character's triumph over his social determinism, especially because it seems that Alcântara Machado manipulates the language in such a way so as to give the boy more agency after his death: "-Sabe o Gaetaninho?/-Que é que tem?/-Amassou o bonde!" (58). "Smashing the streetcar" could be read as his destruction of his socio-economic restraints. However, if death were to be read as liberating in this story, why wasn't the boy run over by an automobile when there was a chance? "O Ford quase o derrubou e ele não viu o Ford" (54). Instead it is the streetcar that runs over him in the end: "Antes de alcançar a bola um bonde o pegou. Pegou e matou" (58). Since the streetcar is used as a symbol for all that which demarcates the boundaries of his existence; that is, the poverty and oppression that finally kill him, the message is more pessimistic. Even during the funeral the author reminds the reader of the character's lower class status by making mention of the *flores pobres* on top of his coffin (58).

It is also possible to read the story as a commentary on modernity, represented here by the automobile. The first automobile appeared in São Paulo in 1893, imported by Henrique Santos Dumont and the first Brazilian automobile, the Romi Iseta, was produced only in 1955 (Navenh, "Cronologia"). Naturally, the arrival of the automobile diminished the importance of the streetcar. Therefore, one may link the economic to the modern both in Alcântara Machado's story and in Azevedo and J. Cascata's song. Both texts show that the advantages of modernity in Brazil, whether represented by the streetcar or the automobile, for many years were accessible only to the elite.

According to the Light Company website, the Light and their services are cited in one hundred and twenty Brazilian songs. The electric streetcar itself appears in over seventy-eight songs (Light, "Cultura"). Despite having practically disappeared and, consequently, been turned into an emblem of the past, the *bondes'* historical, social and cultural importance was so profound in Brazil that the phrase *o bonde* is still used metaphorically in multiple popular expressions. For example, the well-known expression *perder o bonde* is used when someone misses a good profes-



sional opportunity or fails to do something important. According to Mario Prata, the expression came about as the result of a historical event: In Rio de Janeiro in 1921, José Severino Sanseverino, “motorneiro do bonde 35 (Lapa-Castelo), perdeu um bonde. Saiu para trabalhar com o veículo e nunca mais ninguém soube dos dois” (135). Prata explains that there was an article about the incident on page 8 of the newspaper *O globo* on April 30th, 1921. After that, people started joking with their friends before they would engage in a professional deal by saying something like: “*Não vá perder o bonde!*” The expression is also used as a joke when someone arrives late to a meeting. “*Você perdeu o bonde?*” they ask. Another common expression is *tomar o bonde errado*. This is used when the outcome of a business deal or an experience is surprisingly negative, or simply when one makes a wrong decision. A favorite of many Brazilians is *tomar (or pegar) o bonde andando*. Older Brazilians usually explain that in cities like Rio de Janeiro the streetcars were not as big as those in São Paulo and were open on the side. It was common for a passenger who had just missed the streetcar to run alongside it and hop onto it while already in motion so that he would not have to wait for the next one. Nowadays the expression is used when someone joins a discussion already in progress without knowing the topic of conversation. It is also used when someone arrives late to a movie, play or meeting and, consequently, misses part of the program. In some states of Brazil the word *bonde* is used as slang for a bad business deal or to describe an ugly woman. In the city of Rio de Janeiro *bonde* is also slang for “drug dealer” and the *bonde do mal* “é o arrastão – um grande número de delinquentes que, correndo a par, leva à sua frente tudo o que signifique valor” (Gardé, “Bonde - Qual será a origem do termo?”). This contemporary use of the word in Brazil, associated with negative aspects of things or people, is certainly because the *bondes* were generally considered unattractive machines, which frequently broke down. In a poem entitled “O Combate” (*Pau Brasil* 121), Oswald de Andrade calls them “*Grandes cágados elétricos*” (14), referring to both their ugly appearance and their inefficiency. Furthermore, the author might also be making a commentary on the slow or incomplete modernization in Brazil, or to its late arrival in all of Latin America as a whole.

In Oswald de Andrade’s poem “Bengaló,” the *bondes* are cited as part of the modern city the narrator sees from his window. His panoramic view includes a piano playing the newly imported fox trot, a telephone, the movie theatre, and the Fords (*Pau Brasil* 123). In Andrade’s “Pobre Alimária,” the confrontation between the modern and the “archaic” is also a theme (*Pau Brasil* 115). In this poem, a horse and the wagon it pulls get stuck on the streetcar rail. The conductor gets impatient because he is in the midst of taking lawyers to their offices. They release the vehicle, but the horse gets whipped as a punishment, which partly explains the pity for the animal cited in the title of the poem. The streetcar, of course, represents modernization, as opposed to the old-fashioned horse-car. The horse deserves sympathy because it has become an outdated and useless form of transportation with the introduction of the electric streetcar. One of the messages here is that progress is inevitable and the old cannot stop or get in the way of the new. In his reading of this poem, Roberto Schwarz points out that another sign of modernity are the lawyers, though it is only a relative modernity—a tramful of legal men suggests a rather simple society, whose professional gamut remains idyllically, comically small. We shouldn’t forget that progress really needs engineers, and that in this sense—as is true even today—the phalanx of solicitors is going the wrong way, pointing in the direction of ‘the posh side, the erudite side, the one that quotes the right authorities’ [ . . . ]. The progress is undeniable, but its limited nature, which allows it to be placed in the same context as the backwardness in relation to which it can be defined as progress, is no less undeniable. (112)

Carlos Drummond de Andrade, another modern Brazilian poet, also uses the streetcar in his discussion of the emerging modernity. In “A Flor e a Náusea,” a flower blooms in the middle of the street (Drummond, *Antologia* 24-26). The flower is the anticity, antimodernity symbol. Its unexpected “birth” in an improbable place like the modern city catches the attention of the poet. The flower defies the asphalt, the police, the tediousness, and the hatred of the city full of crimes. The poet writes, “Passem de longe, bondes, ônibus, rio de aço do tráfego. / uma flor ainda desbota” (35-36). The streetcar, like the bus, represents the antinature, the artificial “iron” city, and as such, it must keep itself away from the “natural” flower. The opposition between natural and artificial environments in the poem also corresponds to an opposition between an archaic past and a modern present.

According to Renato Cordeiro Gomes, “a cidade como ambiente construído, como necessidade histórica, é resultado da imaginação e do trabalho coletivo do homem que desafia a natureza” (23). Citing Beatriz Jaguaribe, Gomes points out that

o ato fundador da primeira cidade, criada no exílio, é produto de uma maldição. Vem simbolicamente confirmar a perda do Paraíso e articula culpa e cidade. Indica, como um mito de começo, a *separação*, o antagonismo entre dois elementos primordiais: neste contexto do Gênesis, a ordenação de Deus e o rompimento com esta ordem perfeita. Com referência à cidade, a separação é o fato de uma disjunção funcional, o resultado de duas forças antinômicas: cidade e natureza a que se acopla a dicotomia ‘sedentário/ nômade. (80)

Therefore, it is not surprising that this struggle between the metropolis and nature is such a recurrent motif in Brazilian modernist writing. This topos occurs again, for instance, in Drummond’s “Aurora.” The poem starts with the image of a drunken poet on a streetcar at dawn. Everyone was still sleeping: “As pensões alegres dormiam tristíssimas” (3). We then learn that the world was going to end and nobody knew about it—except a child, who kept quiet. The tone of the beginning of the poem is tragic and hopeless: “Tudo era irreparável. / Ninguém sabia que o mundo ia acabar” (5-6). This catastrophe is associated with “drunkenness,” which is what generates the inability to “see” and, consequently, annuls everyone’s capacity to “know.” The poet cannot literally see the “end of the world” from the streetcar because he is drunk. The people cannot see it from their houses because they are sleeping and thus equally “drunk”: “As casas também iam bêbedas” (4).

Despite being drunk, the poet suddenly hears an “apelo na aurora: Vamos todos dançar / entre o bonde e a árvore?” (16-18). This “call from the dawn,” a kind of divine intervention, proposes a solution: the appropriate position for the city dweller is “between” the “streetcar” and the “tree.” It is here that the poem reveals its message: the commitment to modernity leads to and requires loss of innocence; which blurs our “vision” of the world and prevents us from fully understanding the dangers of uncontrolled and heedless progress. The “end of the world” represents the ultimate level of danger for mankind, which, naturally, only an innocent child can “see.” All others are too deeply involved in it and are, therefore, also to blame. As we can see, the poem places, dialectically, on one hand modernity, sin, guilt, danger, and punishment; and on the other, nature, innocence, repentance, and salvation. Since progress cannot be erased and is inevitable, the poetic voice calls for the reconciliation of the opposites, neither the rampant progress alone, here represented by the “streetcar,” nor the “tree,” a symbol of the uncivilized rural setting. The way out is a “movement” (a dance) between them. One cannot miss the religious subtext in the poem. After all, José, Helena, Sebastião and Artur “embarcam para a eternidade” (10-14), and the synthesis presented as the revelation brought by the aurora’s call “saves” the drunk and blind



poet, which, in fact, symbolizes an opportunity for contrition for all modern individuals and is the path to “salvation”: “Entre o bonde e a árvore / dançai, meus irmãos!” (19-20). The tone of the poem has changed. Everyone is now united in “brotherhood” and the message is one of hope. They are invited to dance communally, as if celebrating. “Death” will still come, writes Drummond, but if the modern person finds this position of reconciliation with nature (and God), “salvation” is possible: “como um sacramento” (29).

Because of the beginning, one might attribute the poetic voice to that of an outside observer, a kind of *flâneur* who is watching the streetcar and the city. One could certainly suggest that it is the ubiquitous eye of God observing the community. But it is also possible to designate the drunken poet as the source of enunciation. From that perspective, the streetcar becomes a kind of a window from which the poet “sees” and creates the city. Walter Benjamin has called our attention to the “interpenetration of street and residence” in the experience of the *flâneur* (423). Fittingly, in this poem the gaze is directed not only at the drunken poet himself on the streetcar, but also to interior and exterior spaces in the community, since he also witnesses what is going on inside the *pensões* and *casas* (3-4): “José, que colocava pronomes/ Helena, que amava os homens” (10-11). Moreover, a *flâneur* on a streetcar is an observer guided by modernity, since the original idea of the *flâneur* is associated with walking, a more “natural” activity. It is also particularly interesting that the *flâneur* is “drunk.” According to Benjamin, “an intoxication comes over the man who walks long and aimlessly through the streets” (417). For Benjamin, this intoxication is anamnestic (417) and characterized by doubt and indecision (425), which in the poem is represented by the “dance” between the streetcar and the tree. But from this point of view the drunkenness should not be associated with blindness, as in my previous reading. Rather, it is precisely what empowers the *flâneur* to “see.”

In “Brinquedo” Oswald de Andrade plays with São Paulo and with its modernity (O. Andrade, *Primeiro caderno* 23-24). The modernist author uses the tone of a “cantiga de roda,” a kind of folkloric child’s song in which the children form a ring and dance, usually repeating a refrain. Here the refrain is “Roda roda São Paulo / Manda tiro tiro lá” (1-3). The city becomes a sort of character, rotating and moving in circles like the children do in the Brazilian game. Like the verse itself, the “bondes da Light” (11), among other signs and symbols of modernity like the telephones, automobiles, and skyscrapers, are spinning around in the *roda*. This fast-paced and repetitious movement, also a metaphor for urban life, allows the poetic voice to suggest a kind of tour of the city through critical eyes. The poem tells the story of modernization from its slow beginning to its rapid acceleration. It starts by mentioning what the city was like before modernization: “Da minha janela eu avistava / Uma cidade pequena / Pouca gente passava / Nas ruas. Era uma pena” (3-6). From his window the poet views a small city, in which there is very little movement. This is probably the “old” São Paulo in its pre-modernization era, when the *roda*, as Andrade would put it, had not yet begun. The last line of the stanza indicates that the poet is not very happy with what he sees: “era uma pena” (6), which hints to us that modernization will be viewed in a positive way later in the poem.

However, when the poem announces the arrival of modernization we are soon impelled to reevaluate our initial judgment. Andrade writes, “Os bondes da Light bateram / Telefones na ciranda / Os automóveis correram / Em redor da varanda” (11-14). The author observes the streetcar from the outside. He glances at it as he glances at the city as a whole. Through his eyes, modernization does not appear unproblematic, as perhaps one would expect from the poetic voice that had just complained about the old São Paulo. It is depicted as a kind of chaotic, frenetic, and fast-paced dance, where all the symbols of modernity occupy the same physical space, the city,

or rather, the *roda*. Chaos is shown first because the streetcars crash, which is a symbol for the lack of order and sequence, since streetcars were supposed to follow a time schedule and a route. If they crash, the content of both the city's time and space are disrupted.

Andrade also introduces a "menino grandão" in the poem (24), a metaphor for the first skyscraper in the city: "Depois entrou no brinquedo/ Um menino grandão/ Foi o primeiro arranha-céu/ Que rodou no meu céu" (23-26). We are tempted to read the *menino grandão* as the metropolis of today; as opposed to the "little boy" the city was in the past. Here the "big kid" and the skyscraper are both metaphors for each other and symbols of modernity and its expansion. Buildings get taller and taller, the "boy" grows, and the city keeps *rodando* in its self-generating rhythm. However, the image of a "big kid" also helps to suggest the idea of an incomplete modernity, for he has grown in size but not yet matured. Considering the Brazilian modernist project, of which Oswald de Andrade was one of the leading figures, one could also read this commentary on the incomplete modernization as a criticism regarding the underdeveloped state of the country's intellectual community at the time. Later the poet looks at the city from his backyard, as his interior window now seems too small to encapsulate the vastness of the sprawling city below: "Do quintal eu avistei / Casas torres e pontes / Rodaram como gigantes / Até que enfim parei" (27-30). The small city from the beginning of the poem is gone. From his backyard he sees only houses that are towers and enormous bridges that seem to encircle him.

The scene is so overwhelming that he can no longer look at it, yet he tells us what happens next: "Hoje a roda cresceu / Até que bateu no céu / É gente grande que roda / Mando tiro tiro lá" (24). The "big kid" is gone and the city is now inhabited by *gente grande*, which is both a definition of the inhabitant of the modern city and of the capitalist ruling power and its leaders. The poem does not say the *roda* exploded, but similar to Drummond's motif of the "end of the world" in "Aurora," Andrade's poem certainly implies that modernity reached a dangerous limit. Not only does the *roda* approach the sky, but "hits" it, meaning that it reaches the limit and at the same time aggressively forces itself upon it. The poet cannot look any longer, afraid of what he might see next or perhaps just because he knows the modern city itself is sublime and as such it escapes representation, suggesting that it is useless to represent what cannot be represented. Again we must remember Drummond's "Aurora," where the poet is not only drunk, but also sort of "blind" and, therefore, unable to "write" the city. Consequently, one may infer that even the functions of artists in the modern city, and the modern world, are subject to the interference of modernity, an implication also present in Drummond's "Aurora."

Like Oswald de Andrade, Drummond also relates the presence of the streetcar to the natural progression of city life. In his famous "José," the streetcar does not crash like in Andrade's poem (Drummond, *Antologia* 20-22). Rather, it does not appear at all. In one stanza, Drummond characterizes chaos in Brazil by listing things that did not happen that day: "o dia não veio, / o bonde não veio, / o riso não veio / não veio a utopia" (20-23; emphasis added). Some might read "José" as an autobiographical poem and see it as the expression of the author's own frustrations or failures. However, the character José may also be interpreted as the average Brazilian, or rather, every Brazilian, who is lost without a means of transportation, that is, he is without direction, destiny, or identity. Either way, one of the themes of the poem is the relationship between self and the world. Since the streetcar did not show up, José walks, but the poet asks him: "você marcha, José! / José, para onde?" (62-63). José keeps moving on, but he lacks the guidance and the speed that the streetcar would provide him. The poem is not entirely negative, since José is not stuck in time and space. He does want to get somewhere but all the circumstances seem to be against him: "Com a chave na mão/ quer abrir a porta/ não existe porta/ quer

morrer no mar/ mas o mar secou/ quer ir para Minas/ Minas não há mais" (38-44). Moreover, the choice of the verb "marchar" implies a certain discipline and organization in his manner of walking. On the other hand, the character José is "marching" alone and not as part of a group, which indicates a lack of unity that, if we read "José" as a collective project, is problematic.

Another indication of the poem's collective dimension is the common association of the verb "marchar" in Portuguese with the military. According to the poem, one cannot get anywhere by "marching." If the poem had been written during the two decades of military dictatorship in Brazil, and not in 1942, this word choice would be an apt metaphor for both the way in which the army operates and for the tone of its dictatorial rule in Brazil. Nevertheless, the verb is still appropriate if one remembers that the country was going through a fascist dictatorship under Getúlio Vargas's rule, which promoted censorship and ideological control. Even before the military deposed Vargas in 1945, Brazilian citizens were already supposed to "march" as soldiers, that is, move in the direction dictated by the authorities and passively obey their orders. Therefore, the poetic voice subtly criticizes and blames the ruling machine for the nation's lack of direction, since it implies that the path it provided would take Brazil nowhere.

An additional reason we cannot dismiss totally the notion of military criticism is, after all, because it was in 1942 that Brazil, due to North American pressure, declared war on Germany, Italy and Japan. In 1944 the FEB (Força Expedicionária Brasileira) was sent to participate in World War II. If Drummond disagreed with the way Vargas ruled the country, this last line of José could just as well have been his response to the dictator's decision to send Brazilian troops to the war (naturally, I am in no way arguing that Drummond supported Nazism). In any case, the poem makes a strong social and political criticism and asks that Brazilian society reflect with equal intensity on their reality. It is important to think about the present, the *agora*, Drummond says. After all, "marchar" is the only option left for José—and the Brazilian people—who are not allowed to get on the streetcar of effective progress. Therefore, the streetcar functions here not only as a kind of metaphor for the continuity of everyday life, but also as a symbol of the ideal "direction" the nation should take in the social and political spheres.

Rachel de Queiroz also uses her *crônica* "Viagem de Bonde" to make a political criticism. Unlike Drummond's "José," the target here is not the army, but the Federal Government. The *Bonde Engenho de Dentro* arrives as crowded as usual, says the narrator (53). Nevertheless, other people keep getting on. There always seems to be room on the streetcar for those arriving. But when some people start trying to get off, a quarrel breaks out and chaos ensues: "o bonde tinha parado no meio da luz verde aberta para os carros em direção contrária; parecia o dia do juízo final, o bonde parado, os automóveis buzinando, o guarda apitando e sacudindo os braços" (55). One of the passengers comments that the government is to blame for this confusion: "isso tudo acontecia porque o Governo promete mas não cumpre o dispositivo constitucional [...] da mudança da capital da República" (53). He argues that many of the problems faced by the city of Rio de Janeiro, which was at that time still the capital of Brazil, are due to the bureaucratic machinery of the Federal Government. If the capital were moved, municipal problems such as transportation, housing, and food supplies could be overcome: "que maravilha o Rio com um milhão de vagas nos transportes, um milhão de vagas nas residências, um milhão de bocas a menos [...]. As favelas se acabam automaticamente, o arroz baixa a quatro cruzeiros!" (55). Like the *Bonde Engenho de Dentro*, the city is crowded and the Government is to blame. The streetcar is a metaphor for Rio, both overpopulated and chaotic: "e só um coração de ferro tem coragem de deixar este Rio, assim mesmo apertado, superlotado, sem comida, sem transporte, sem luz e sem água" (55), but it is also a symbol for the people of the lower classes, as opposed to the automo-

bile which, as in Alcântara Machado's "Brás, Bexiga e Barra Funda," represents the elitist luxury and power of the Government officials: "Imagine que delícia o Rio ficar livre de toda a laia dos burocratas, dos automóveis dos políticos e dos políticos propriamente ditos" (55).

In the poem "Soneto da perda da esperança," Drummond writes, "Perdi o bonde e a esperança. / Volto pálido para casa" (1-2). This time the poet seems to be using the streetcar in both a literal and a figurative way. The narrator means that he has lost his way and now he feels hopeless. This time the streetcar symbolizes an individual dilemma. As in "José," as well as in a number of his other poems, here Drummond explores the complex connection between the individual and the world. For this reason, he uses time as one of the principle motifs of this poem: "Vou subir a ladeira lenta" (5); "Entretanto há muito tempo nós gritamos: sim! Ao eterno" (13-14). Another central idea is the importance of the choices one makes: "Todos [os caminhos] conduzem ao princípio do drama e da flora" (7-8).

The self is also confronted with a challenging world in Drummond's "Poema de Sete Faces" (Drummond, *Antologia* 13-14). Once again the streetcar is the instrument that brings the two together: "O bonde passa cheio de pernas: pernas brancas pretas amarelas. Para que tanta perna, meu Deus, pergunta meu coração" (8-11). Not only is the streetcar crowded with people but it appears to have legs of its own and to "run" madly against time, as does the modern individual. To look at the streetcar is to look at a mirror, but the poetic voice finds his reflection disquieting: "Para que tanta perna, meu Deus" (10). Drummond is at once addressing the fast-paced rhythm of everyday life in a metropolis and the difficulty the individual faces in coping with it.

Oswald de Andrade also uses the streetcar to make a personal statement in "Poema à Patrícia," dedicated to his new wife "Pagu" (Patrícia Galvão): "Sairás pelo meu braço grávida, de bonde / Teremos seis filhos / E três filhas / E nosso bonde social / Terá a compensação dos cinemas / E dos aniversários dos bebês / Seremos felizes como os tico-ticos / E os motorneiros / E teremos o cinismo / De ser banais / Como os demais / Mortais / Locais" (qtd. in Boaventura 157). Here Oswald seems to be planning the kind of life he would have after his marriage to Pagu. According to Maria Eugenia Boaventura, Pagu encouraged Oswald to embrace a more proletarian lifestyle, to be as happy as "os motorneiros" (8), as the poem says (Boaventura 157). Getting on the streetcar in this poem connotes a change in social class, which is also suggested by some of the actions the poetic voice enumerates, such as having many children. Oswald plans to be "banal" like common people such as the *motorneiros*. But it is only through a more banal lifestyle that one may achieve the compensation of happiness, found solely in small but meaningful experiences like going to the movies and walking hand-in-hand. The poem, therefore, expresses more than the author's personal desire since, by the same token, it characterizes the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie as meaningless and criticizes its abandonment of important values such as friendship and family.

Oswald de Andrade's general project has a collective scope. The poem "Brinquedo" shows how modernity affected people's lives in public and in private, as well as in interior and exterior spaces in São Paulo, perhaps even suggesting that the difference between these spaces was irrelevant since they appear intersected in the text (O. Andrade, *Primeiro caderno* 23-24). We see telephones, "private" tools at the time, playing a *ciranda*, which is a game generally played outside. And the automobiles, private machines—but usually associated with exterior space—run around the porch, which is at once a private and exterior space. One should note that by making the automobile "run," Andrade is making man and machine analogous, which is a comment on how modernity imposes its rhythm on human beings to such an extent that one becomes the other. Moreover, modernity also dehumanizes us, as Andrade seems to suggest.

Mário de Andrade, another leader of the Modernist movement in Brazil, like Oswald de Andrade and the other *modernistas*, was also concerned with the modern city, its inhabitants, and the status of art in the modern world. His book of poems *Paulicéia desvairada* is a good example of his preoccupation with modernity. Considered one of the first Brazilian modernist works, the book is about Mário de Andrade's native São Paulo, its images, architecture, history, people, and their experience of modernity in general. The importance of the depiction of the modern urban experience in *Paulicéia desvairada* is unquestionable. Critics such as Charles A. Perrone have rightly pointed out that it "comprises a launching pad of an urban imperative in the modern poetry of Brazil" (18). Perrone has reminded us that "this multifaceted collection of verse initiated a city/artist-in-the-city thread in Brazilian poetry that passes through [ . . . ] other principal *modernistas* [ . . . ] and finds pointed expression both in the mid-century neovanguard of *poesia concreta* and in numerous discursive texts in the domain of later twentieth-century lyric" (18). In the preface to his book, Andrade explains that "in [his] opinion, to write modern art never means to represent modern life through its externals: automobiles, movies, asphalt. If these words frequent [his] book; it is not because [he] think[s] that [he] write[s] 'modern' with them; but since [his] book is modern, these things have their reason for being in it" (M. Andrade, *Hallucinated City* 16). As he clarifies, it is inevitable to mention and discuss the signs of modernity in a text that is "modern." However, what would make his writing modern would not necessarily be the theme of modernity, but a modern way of writing, which was one of the primary concerns within Brazilian *Modernismo*.

In the poem "O Domador", Mário de Andrade, both author and character, sees the *Bonde 3* (M. Andrade, *Hallucinated City* 46-47). "Na frente o *tram* da irrigação," writes Mário de Andrade. The *tram* is both a symbol of progress itself, as well as the vehicle that prepares the soil in which modernization will take root. Mário observes the movement of the streetcar and the cloud of dust it creates in its wake. These are the "sujidades implexas do urbanismo" (4), which is a comment on one of the negative aspects of modernization. The streetcar—and urban expansion in general—"dirty" the city. Although the narrator does celebrate modernity in the poem, he also looks upon the metropolitan city with nostalgic eyes: "Mas...olhai, oh meus olhos saudosos dos ontens" (17). This criticism of modernity is evidenced by the title "O Domador," the meaning of which is only revealed in the very last line of the poem. It is a reference to the task facing the modern individual, in this case the son of an immigrant: to "tame" modernity.

Mário gets onto the streetcar, pays for his ticket, and there he joins a composite of the Brazilian people: "São cinco no banco: um branco, um noite, um oiro, um cinzento de tísica e Mário" (13-15). The streetcar becomes a metaphor for the city or perhaps even for Brazil, since it represents the country's "melting pot." Oswald de Andrade also seems to use the streetcar as a metaphor for the city or the country in his short poem "Bonde" (O. Andrade, *Poesias Reunidas* 106). The streetcar becomes "o transatlântico mesclado" (1) that "Dlendlena e esguicha luz" (2) where there are "postretutas e famias" bouncing along with the rhythm of its movement. To use the metaphor of a ship for the streetcar is understandable since both are means of transportation that rock and quiver while in motion. However, the choice of a transatlantic ship, an enormous vessel that transports people through the ocean deserves more attention. It might very well be a symbol for Brazil, a vast country full of immigrants, or even for the city of São Paulo, which is not only inhabited by migrants from the rest of Brazil but is also home to countless foreigners. The ship is *mesclado*, like the city of São Paulo and the whole of Brazil. In either case, the *bonde* or the *transatlântico* carries "postretutas e famias," which in standard Portuguese would be "prostitutas e famílias," that is, the worst and the best of society. By placing a group representa-



tive of the diverse society inside the streetcar, Andrade also shows how this *flâneur* is able to position himself both within and at a distance from society. From the streetcar, Mário, the narrative voice in Mário de Andrade's "O Domador," is able to see the city, the "espetáculo encantado da Avenida!" (18). He observes the diversity of the city: "laranja da China! Abacate, cambucá e tangerina!" (21-22), and the future, more modern Brazil: "passa galhardo um filho de imigrante, / loiramente domando um automóvel" (25-26).

This poem offers an example of what both Oswald and Mário de Andrade would consider important to their modernist project: the use of nonstandard Portuguese, written as it was spoken in some levels of society, which Mário de Andrade would call the real "Brazilian" language. Another example of this experimentation with language is the invention of the verb *dlendenar*, an onomatopoeic word resembling the sound the streetcar makes when it stops to call the passengers. The verb insinuates the idea of repetition in everyday life. The fact that the streetcar *esguicha luz* also implies that the headlights illuminate the darkness in such a way that we can see what would otherwise be obscured. On a symbolic level, this illumination implies a better understanding of society.

In "Nocturno," Mário de Andrade makes a commentary on the multiplicity of events that characterize life in a modern city like São Paulo (M. Andrade, *Hallucinated City* 54-57). Andrade uses the streetcar as a vehicle linking a series of photographic images of the city at night. It resembles the use of the streetcar in the 1995 Brazilian movie *Terra Estrangeira* (*Foreign Land*) by Walter Salles and Daniela Thomas, which takes place both in Portugal and Brazil. Whenever the scene turns to Portugal the streetcar "crosses" the screen, as if announcing the change in setting, a pairing of images evocative of the past for many Brazilians. In the 1958 Oscar-winning film *Orfeu negro* (*Black Orpheus*) by Marcel Camus, in which the protagonist is a *motorneiro*, the streetcar functions in a similar way.<sup>2</sup> The streetcar appears three times in "Nocturno." Each time the author uses a different verb to describe its movement: First, the *bondes* "gingam," then, they simply "passam" and at last they "riscam," but their movement is always fast "como um fôgo de artifício, sapateando nos trilhos" (5-6). This repetition of images suggests the stressful, schizophrenic nature of life in urban areas. In a way, the use of the streetcar in Mário de Andrade's "Nocturno" is reminiscent of Manuel Bandeira's "Profundamente." In this poem, Bandeira describes the "noite de São João": "No meio da noite despertei / Não ouvi mais vozes nem risos / Apenas balões / Passavam errantes / Silenciosamente / Apenas de vez em quando / o ruído de um bonde / Cortava o silêncio / Como um túnel" (7-15). Of course in Bandeira's poem the city is "sleeping": "Estavam todos dormindo / Estavam todos deitados / Dormindo / Profundamente" (21-24). The setting is predominantly rural, as opposed to Mário de Andrade's sleepless city in "Nocturno," and the streetcar is the only connection to modernity. But the streetcar does not rest for the night like the people in town, which implies that modernity stops for no one and will inevitably reach even the most remote rural communities.

The appearance of the streetcar in Bandeira and Mário de Andrade's poems could also be read as a "line of flight," to use Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept. A line of flight, according to these theorists, "is like a tangent to the circles of significance and the center of the signifier" (Deleuze & Guattari 116). It is a line that penetrates a system which cannot accommodate it. Nevertheless, it is also part of that system: "there is always something that flows or flees,

<sup>2</sup>In the 2000 remake of this movie (*Orfeu*), however, the streetcar is no longer a central feature of the urban environment as other forms of transportation have replaced it in contemporary Brazil.



that escapes the binary organizations, the resonance apparatus, and the overcoding machine: things that are attributed to a 'change in values,' the youth, woman, the mad, etc." (Deleuze & Guattari 216). While the streetcar crosses and weaves its way through the city, its passengers are offered an "escape" from the very public space they are traversing. In other words, the idea of the line of flight suggests that the public space and the duration of the streetcar ride allow the passenger a private experience, a moment of individual freedom, as Georg Simmel would put it, within the collective and therefore, "public" experience of modernity. Although in "Nocturno" the way in which the "line" belongs in the system is more explicit, in *Bandeira's* poem it should also be noted that the presence of the *bonde*, though totally disconnected from the rest of the scene, is not out of place. In fact, in *Bandeira's* poem even the night itself may suggest a line of flight, since the idea of "sleep" seems incongruent with modern city life and thus could be viewed in part as an "escape" from it (the same cannot be said about the "sleeping" city in Drummond's "Aurora." It would invalidate my previous interpretation).

In Lygia Fagundes Telles's short story "Dolly" and in Clarice Lispector's "Amor," the streetcar is a means of "escape" from reality, or rather a line of flight. In Telles's story, the protagonist, Adelaide, gets on the streetcar after finding "Dolly," a woman with whom she was going to share an apartment, dead on the floor of her home. Adelaide leaves the crime scene full of fear and guilt and gets on the *Bonde Angélica* to go back home. Although Ade does not tell her story to the police or anyone else, her moments on the streetcar are enough to fulfill her need to tell the truth, even if only on a spiritual and mental level. The streetcar provides her with a space for reflection, confession, absolution, and change. The name of the streetcar connotes some divine connection and her creation of an imaginary passenger allows the narrator to arrange the scene in a way that resembles a Christian confession: "quando subi neste bonde eu tive a sensação de que um passageiro invisível subiu comigo e se sentou aqui ao meu lado, só nós dois neste banco" (12). An imaginary confessional is set up on the streetcar and her invisible passenger plays the role of a priest. As the streetcar moves on, we follow the gradual and therapeutic release of her guilt through her confession of her "sin": "descubro que é bom falar assim sem pressa enquanto o bonde corre apressado e sacolejando sobre os trilhos" (12). But the streetcar moves faster than her words, which indicates her omission of some details of the story. It is the invisible passenger who allows her to tell everything: "Mas, e esse sangue que pingou aí na luva, pergunta o passageiro soprando fundo do meu ouvido. Cruzo as mãos sobre as luvas e agradeço a Deus por essa pergunta que já estava esperando, tinha que ser feita e eu tinha que responder. Agora sei que vou falar até o fim" (14). Other Christian symbols and themes reveal themselves throughout the story. "Dolly" is actually called "Maria," Ade gets on her knees, as in an act of repentance (15), and both the streetcar conductor and the ticket-taker wear clothes resembling a priest's cassock: "vejo o motorneiro de costas com seu impermeável de chuva. O cobrador também vestiu a capa preta" (30). Moreover, the character believes that her confession will lead her to salvation: "sei que vou me salvar falando" (13), and forgiveness does come after the invisible passenger hops off and, naturally, the confession concludes: "Falei tudo e agora sinto essa aragem que vem não sei de onde, me libertei!" (31).

However, the whole experience is not only religious, but also developmental since it portrays a kind of coming of age for Adelaide; that is, a rite of passage. Arnold van Gennep believes that "the life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another" (2-3). He proposes that "for every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined" (3). According to Gennep, "a complete scheme of rites

of passage theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation)" (11), which are the very experiences lived by the protagonist of "Dolly" during her streetcar ride. Her desire to move out of the pension represents her symbolic "separation" from her community: "queria sair da pensão [...]. Queria tanto ter um quarto só meu, sem entrar na melancólica fila do banheiro" (13-14). By riding on the streetcar she leaves her world to enter Dolly's, which is one of imagination and dreams: "meu nome de verdade é Maria Auxiliadora, inventei o Dolly e meu agente inventou o Dalton [...] e meu sonho é só esse, ser estrela, estrela!" (29). Back on the streetcar, when she is confused, afraid, and feeling guilty over Dolly's death, she goes through a period of limbo, the second phase of a rite of passage, symbolized by the fast movement of the streetcar: "Aqui estou no bonde Angélica que corre contra a noite e contra a tempestade que tomou outro rumo com suas botas de nuvens" (30). During the streetcar ride she can "escape" the tormented state she finds herself in and, as a result, overcome the traumatic experience of finding Dolly's corpse. The character matures and becomes more self-confident after her "limbo" period, and is reincorporated into her group, though with a different role, completing the rite of passage: "estou voltando lá para a pensão [...]. Vou andando e ouvindo o bonde que se afasta quase manso sobre os trilhos e me faz bem ouvir o som deslizante que me acompanha. Estou sem medo na rua deserta, já sei, sou tartaruga mas agora virei lebre indo firme até o bueiro onde deixo cair as luvas, *Bye!*" (31-32).

The line of flight emerges as a kind of "daydreaming" in Clarice Lispector's short story "Amor." As the streetcar approaches the protagonist's stop, Ana, a housewife, and mother, looks not at what is going on out on the streets, but rather within herself. The physical space of the streetcar allows her to "withdraw" from her daily routine and think about her family, her duties at home, and her past. The movements of the streetcar mirror the uncertainties of her thoughts: "O bonde vacilava nos trilhos, entrava em ruas largas" (21). The "wide streets" represent the breadth of ways in which she could have led her life if she had made different choices, and the "vacillation" reveals her reservations with regard to her final option; becoming a housewife. This is why "o bonde se arrastava, em seguida estacava" (21). Nevertheless, Ana struggles to reject the validity of the alternative paths she could have taken, for as she keeps repeating, as if to convince herself once and for all, "assim ela o quisera e escolhera" (20; 21). Furthermore, these options are no longer available to her: "O que sucedera a Ana antes de ter o lar estava para sempre fora de seu alcance" (20).

This self-reflection is intensified by a sudden glance outside the streetcar. She sees a blind man, or rather, she sees herself reflected in him. Ana realizes she shares the blind man's darkness, but, as in the beginning, she is reluctant to accept this fact. For this reason she stares at the man with hostility: "Ana olhava-o. E quem a visse teria a impressão de uma mulher com ódio. Mas continuava a olhá-lo, cada vez mais inclinada" (22). She is simultaneously attracted to and repelled by what the blind man allows her to "see." Her indecision is symbolized by his chewing gum: "o movimento da mastigação fazia-o parecer sorrir e de repente deixar de sorrir, sorrir e deixar de sorrir" (21).

At one point the streetcar lurches, throwing her backwards and thus making her lose her concentration (22). Once again the movement of the streetcar parallels her thoughts: "o bonde estacou" (22). As a representation of restricted space, the streetcar, also stands for her personal limitations; and symbolizes the patriarchal world which confines her. After that, we are led to believe that everything quickly goes back to normal: "Poucos instantes depois já não a olhavam mais. O bonde sacudia nos trilhos e o cego mascando goma ficara atrás para sempre" (22).

However, the protagonist's ability to conform to her limitations is immediately challenged. "Mas o mal estava feito," writes Lispector (22). The "damage" the narrator refers to can only be the intensification of Ana's self-questioning, her increasing need for self-awareness. Things look and feel differently now: "A rede de tricô era áspera entre os dedos, não íntima como quando a tricotara" (22). The string bag, a symbol of imprisonment much like the streetcar, does not fit as comfortably between her fingers: "A rede perdera o sentido e estar num bonde era um fio partido" (22), which represents her inability to repress her unwanted thoughts and feelings. Something changes in her and that which constituted her self-image no longer makes sense. Although she tries to manage the situation and avoid an existential crisis, it is inevitable: "Perceber uma ausência de lei foi tão súbito que Ana se agarrou ao banco da frente, como se pudesse cair do bonde, como se as coisas pudessem ser revertidas com a mesma calma com que não o eram. O que chamava de crise viera afinal" (23). As a result, she rediscovers long forgotten places, spaces, relationships and feelings.

In the introduction to his English translation of *Laços de Família*, Giovanni Pontiero rightly proposes that in "Amor" Lispector suggests that "the mechanical nature of many people's lives may lead them to question the value and purpose of their existence" (16). Pontiero reminds us that Lispector has long been associated with existentialist authors. Brazilian critics such as Benedito Nunes have linked her to Kierkegaard and Heidegger and Pontiero himself connects her to Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre (15-16). Ana's existential crisis leaves her with mixed feelings such as extreme happiness, suffering, pity and fear. She misses her stop, a sign of her mental confusion, and gets off the streetcar feeling weak and confused: "desceu do bonde com pernas débeis, olhou em torno de si, segurando a rede suja de ovo. Por um momento não conseguia orientar-se. Parecia ter saltado no meio da noite" (23). Getting off the streetcar represents her attempt to change her existence, which is determined and constrained by her roles of mother and housewife. But she holds on to the string bag, which indicates that she is still linked to her previous condition. Nevertheless, one should note that the string bag is now stained with egg, indicating that some level of change has occurred after all. Moreover, "plunging into the middle of the night" means entering a world of darkness, that is, the blind man's world. Let us not forget that in this story it is the blind man who plays the role of guide. Ana is then led into an equally symbolic Botanical Garden: "o cego a guiara até ele" (25). Her experiences in the idyllic but "dark" garden—"as sombras vacilavam no chão (24)"; "nas árvores as frutas eram pretas, doces como mel" (25)—reemphasize the limbo state in which she finds herself.

Pontiero points out that the characters in *Laços de Família* are haunted by a dilemma that provokes an emotional crisis. According to him, "anguish comes when man becomes aware of the gulf between himself and his possibilities. He must inevitably choose between them, and whatever he chooses makes him what he is" (15). In "Amor" Ana's memory of her children, or rather her "love" for them, makes her feel guilty and rush home, but this time it is a different home: "que nova casa era essa?" (26). Her choices are laid out before her eyes: "o cego ou o Jardim Botânico?" (26), in other words, her old "blind" life or the new world that had opened up for her? As she struggles between blindness and lucidity, Ana finally chooses to go back to her old life: "acabara-se a vertigem de bondade.[...] Antes de se deitar, como se apagasse uma vela, soprou a pequena flama do dia" (29). It is also possible to read Ana's experience as a rite of passage. However, the protagonist's final choice and the lack of indication of any role change at the end of the story lead us to question the existence of a postliminal stage, and therefore, of the completion of the rite of passage. It is more important to recognize that, although ultimately Ana does not free herself from her confined domestic existence, Lispector's psychological, and

intimist narrative suggests that freedom comes from an awareness of alternatives and not from the nature of the choice itself.

The streetcar has been a constant image in Brazilian artistic culture. By studying its appearance in literature, music and art in general, one has access to a vivid picture of the cultural and economic history of Brazil. First as a symbol of the future and now as an emblem of the past, the streetcar has inspired numerous critical commentaries on the unmerciful, but necessary modernization of Brazil. It has been used to make observations on class and gender, as well as criticisms of the Brazilian social structure. While the streetcar has virtually disappeared from the streets of Brazilian cities, it has become a symbol of the project of modernity in literature, popular expressions, and in the collective imaginary.

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