

# Introduction

## Canada, Brazil, and Beyond: extending the dialogue

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The history of relations between Canada and Brazil has been erratic, full of stops and starts, “advances and setbacks” (Hewitt and Gomes, this issue) and often marred by misunderstandings, business rivalries, and the very colonial circumstances that make comparison between the two countries so fascinating. As Rosana Barbosa affirms in her book *Brazil and Canada: Economic, Political, and Migratory Ties, 1820s to 1970s*, “neither Brazilian nor Canadian scholarship has given the topic of Canadian-Brazilian relations the attention it deserves” (xiii). This special issue aspires to remedy that neglect and spark further interest in the topic.

The case for building and strengthening the dialogue between Canada and Brazil has been well made (Almeida; Barbosa; Bellei & Besner; Brydon; Hewitt; Monteiro, Nuñez, and Besner). Following up on publications including *Letramentos Transnacionais: Mobilizando o Conhecimento entre Brasil/Canadá*, edited by Roseanne Rocha Tavares and Diana Brydon, and a special issue of *Interfaces Brasil/Canadá* on Transnational Literacies, this special issue arises from work first begun under the auspices of the SSHRC-funded partnership development grant, “Brazil/Canada Knowledge Exchange,” a project that has engaged a network of researchers and teachers in Brazil and Canada in collaborative research designed to facilitate knowledge exchange between our countries and cross-cultural learning in transnational literacies.

Our open call for contributors for this issue of *Canada and Beyond* argued that the Brazilian comparison makes good sense for Canadianists yet our different histories of colonialism, indigenous relations, and cultural debates about capitalism, democracy, multiculturalism, and globalization have seldom been investigated with the sustained attention they deserve. In Canadian literary studies, only a few names such as P.K. Page, Elizabeth Bishop, Jan Conn, and (more recently) Priscila Uppal have attracted much attention in their portrayals of Brazil. A few works focus on the Amazon, located in its majority in Brazil. There are some intriguing, brief references to the region in Timothy Findley’s *Headhunter* and *Dinner Along the Amazon*, while the Amazon is central in texts such as Andrew Pyper’s *The Trade Mission* and Alissa York’s *The Naturalist*. Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy also briefly depicts Brazil, as Jessica Jacobson-Konefall discusses in this issue. Lesley Krueger’s *Foreign Correspondences* and *Drink the Sky*, thoughtful accounts of Canadians in Brazil, deserve more attention, as does Nancy Huston’s *Black Dance*, which moves back and forth between Quebec and Rio. Brazil-born and Montreal-based Canadian philosopher Carlos Fraenkel’s *Teaching Plato in Palestine: Philosophy in a Divided World* includes a chapter set in a public school class in Salvador, “Citizen Philosophers in Brazil,” and another set on the Akwesasne Reserve in Quebec, “Word-

Warriors: Philosophy in Mohawk Land.” Each describes his experiments in practicing what he calls “an open culture of debate” within local contexts in which citizenship is both complex and contested. The cross-cultural comparisons are not elaborated, but emerge implicitly through the structures of his text. In Brazilian literature, the presence of Canada is even scarcer and, where it does appear, results in questionable portrayals such as Mathias Carvalho’s poem about Canadian leader Louis Riel, which Albert Braz discusses in this issue.

In issuing this call, we wondered further what creative works and new angles of analysis may have been missed by neglecting this Brazil-Canada comparison. In academia, efforts to address this topic come notably from the Brazilian Association for Canadian Studies, which publishes the journal *Interfaces Brasil/Canadá*; its most recent issue, for instance, looks at indigenous studies in the Americas and includes articles comparing Canadian and Brazilian literary works. In 2017, the Canada-based Lusophone Studies Association will hold its conference in Aracaju, Brazil. Another encouraging initiative in developing this dialogue between these two countries while also bridging language barriers was the 2010 double special issue “Brasil-Canada: Literatura contemporânea brasileira em tradução/ Contemporary Brazilian Writing in Translation/ Littérature contemporaine brésilienne en traduction” by *Revue Ellipse*, a magazine focused on literary translation that sadly ceased publication in 2012. Although this current special issue of *Canada and Beyond* contributes to Anglophone scholarship on the Brazil/Canada relation, it is worth noting that the relation between Quebec and Brazil has its own dynamic.

Our colonial histories have dictated that Canadian studies has traditionally been oriented toward an Atlantic Studies paradigm working in English or French, just as Brazil too has turned first to Europe. Within Canadian studies, Pacific and Northern studies have functioned as supplements to this dominant transatlantic orientation. Neither multicultural nor postcolonial studies succeeded in fundamentally dislodging the English Canadian self-positioning between the United States and Europe. Canada’s position within the Americas has seldom been examined beyond its relation to the United States. Brazil, too, has only recently begun to look beyond its European and American relations to turn toward its African heritage. Brazil is also now actively involved in developing its ties with other economies and cultures of the global South, including its South American neighbours and the Lusophonie more broadly, a commitment demonstrated by orthographic agreements to unify the Portuguese language.

Albert Braz proposes the label “Outer America” for Canada and Brazil as these two large countries are often forgotten in hemispheric dialogues (119). The history of trade and

diplomatic relations also confirms the peripheral roles of both countries, first in relation to Britain and later, after World War One, to the United States. In revisiting this history, Barbosa explains that “both Brazil and Canada were satellite regions of the same metropolises and had to contend with the domineering presence of a major power” (2006, xv).

Indigenous and Latin American decolonial studies, developing concurrently with the rise of interest in global and hemispheric studies, are creating an environment more receptive to thinking about Canada and Brazil, their changing relations, and the varied contexts in which they might illuminate each other. Canadian studies scholars, an international community, now look not only to the east and west but also south and north from Canada as disciplinary alignments react to changing pressures. This contextual broadening, indicated by the launch of this host journal, *Canada and Beyond*, from its base in Spain, now works across languages as well as across oceans and continents.

The response to our call testifies to the cross-disciplinary interest of this topic. Our issue begins with W.E. (Ted) Hewitt and Inês Gomes’s paper, “‘Matando o Desconhecimento’: The Role of Culture in Brazil’s Relations with Canada and Beyond,” which examines efforts to support educational and scientific interchange between the two countries and then explores the factors that appear to have limited their success. Hewitt and Gomes lament that “There are few bilateral relationships so full of promise, but so lacking in results than that enjoyed by Canada and Brazil.” Given the failure of two-way trade to increase in volume over the last five years, they suggest, citing Ambassador Afonso Cardoso, that the key may rest in our ability to “‘matar o desconhecimento’ (eliminate the barrier of the unknown).” This gap in knowledge is part of the challenge addressed by this special issue.

Too many of the Canadian literary texts cited above, and those analyzed by Braz in his contribution to this issue, show the limitations of an exotifying imagination in response to Brazil. Whereas many Canadian texts still associate Brazil with a last frontier or a place where one can disappear (as in Atwood, Findley, Pyper, and sections of Krueger), Brazilian *telenovelas*, Hewitt and Gomes note, associate “Brazil with wealth and modernity” for their African viewers. Brazilian media, investments, and diplomacy have all contributed to the meteoric rise of Brazilian trade relations with some African countries, yet a shared language has probably done the most to facilitate this rise, just as the absence of a shared language has somewhat stalled Brazilian relations with Canada. This question of language, developed by Hewitt and Gomes in its institutional dimensions, through discussion of the *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*, is also considered in relation to the challenges of translation in papers by Braz and Rubelise da Cunha in this special issue.

In considering lessons to be learned for the Brazil/Canada relationship, Hewitt and Gomes focus on the potential for education and training to help solidify the cultural bonds between the two countries as they have for Brazil and Africa. As they note, Canadian support from the Canada-Brazil awards and Emerging Leaders of the Americas program and from Brazilian CAPES Sandwich fellowships have done much to enable research collaboration and build such affective ties. The Brazilian Science without Borders, sadly now cancelled, has also had an important impact during the few years of its existence. Their analysis of these and other programs lead them to conclude that “the Canada-Brazil relationship holds promise for both countries,” and that while economic arguments “alone will not carry the day,” when partnered with a focus on cultural relations, there is potential for future gains.

Braz, however, in his paper, “Bahai Cuisine and Other Delicacies: Canadian-Brazilian Cultural Encounters and the Invisible Neighbour,” strikes a more cautionary note. He reminds readers that travel and translation can expand cultural horizons but may also “have the reverse effect.” His paper examines Canadian texts about Brazil by P.K. Page and Priscila Uppal, noting the casual treatment of the Portuguese language in these works for what it reveals about Canadian attitudes to Brazil in general, and he stresses the limits of travel narratives in which the traveler is unfamiliar with the local language. The analysis then moves to Matias Carvalho’s portrayal of Louis Riel, an early Brazilian work about Canada that further highlights how language remains a challenge in Canada-Brazil relations.

Cecily Raynor also offers a comparative analysis in “Representations of Home in *Obasan* and *Nihonjin*: The Issei, Nisei, Sansei of Canada and Brazil.” Her paper examines the treatments of the home space in tales of Japanese migrant families in Canada and Brazil. Raynor demonstrates that Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan* and Oscar Nakasato’s *Nihonjin* challenge and complement each other in their examination of space and power in Canada and Brazil respectively. As Raynor concludes, in these two historical fictions, home functions as both a site of identity construction and performance, and a site of disruption, resistance, and alienation. Her comparative analysis draws attention to national discourses around race and ethnicity, noting that “Japanese migrant tales from Brazil and Canada teach us diverse and intersecting lessons about ethnic heritage and cultural plurality.”

The other papers in this issue draw attention to works by Canadian artists that can be clearly situated within a global perspective, paying special attention to Brazilian influences in their construction or reception. Rubelise da Cunha’s paper, “In the Rhythm of Cree

Samba: Transculturality and Decolonization in Tomson Highway's Theatre," examines how Cree Canadian artist Tomson Highway creates a transcultural and transnational work that challenges territorial and genre conventions in a practice of hemispheric performance. Cunha points out that Highway's experiences in Brazil and his knowledge of Brazilian music have been integrated into his theatrical production, while also noticing that his poetics of tricksterism reinforces Indigenous cultural and spiritual traditions. Cunha therefore locates Highway as an example of an artist whose work, by including indigenous knowledge within a hemispheric perspective, demands a critical response that goes beyond the binary of opposing colonizer and colonized.

Jessica Jacobson-Konefall examines the settler colonial politics of Canadian author Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, in which a main character moves between Canada and Brazil in the final volume. In "'It's some cannibal thing:' Canada and Brazil in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy," Jacobson-Konefall argues that Oswald de Andrade's anthropophagic theory sheds light into the treatment of settler and Indigenous relationality in the post-human society of *MaddAddam*. Cannibalism, both literal and figurative, is a central motif considered in Jacobson-Konefall's analysis, which uses as framework the "Cannibalist Manifesto" that has become a cornerstone of Brazilian modernism. Jacobson-Konefall concludes that the trilogy's ending is ambivalent about settler futures in Canada.

In addition to academic articles, this issue includes two refereed reflections on poetic practices. In "Another Piece of Reassuring Plastic: 8 Notes on What the Noigandres Group Taught me" Canadian poet Derek Beaulieu reflects on the influence of Brazilian poetry on his work. Beaulieu situates his construction of Clean Concrete poems within a global context in which Brazil's Noigandres Group played an important role. For instance, Beaulieu explains that he shares with Brazilian brothers Augusto and Haroldo de Campos the belief that "Concrete poems should be as easily understood as airport signs." In this piece, Beaulieu also acknowledges the impact of living in Calgary on his own practice, as he claims, "To be an artist or arts worker in Calgary means to engage with the culture and economics of oil and gas exploitation." Finally, he laments that publishing requirements have made the circulation of poetry more difficult.

Geneviève Robichaud's reflection discusses Erín Moure's translation and reading of Chus Pato in the book *Insecession*. A Canadian poet and translator, Moure published her English translation of Pato's Galician biopoetic text *Secession* alongside her own "echolation-homage," response or reciprocation. This work, as Robichaud suggests, opens space to consider the act of reading across borders that indirectly reflects on the many

dimensions of the transnational project of this special issue. Even though Robichaud's piece does not deal with Brazilian poetry, it links to Beaulieu's essay on the influence of a different poetic tradition on a Canadian poet's work – and it is also worth noting that Galician is a language close to Portuguese.

Robichaud's self-described "nano exposé" asks a series of questions, including one that addresses the situated positioning of reading across spaces, languages, and cultures: "Where are we, then, when we read *Secession/Insecession*?" In pondering this question, the essay provides a suggestive reader's response to a bicephalous text that is itself a model of "response and correspondence ... of simultaneous rupture and reciprocity, but also of slants and inclines, grafts and fold." That description of complex and shifting relations seems equally appropriate to this special issue on the changing relations between Canada and Brazil. This concluding meditation on reading, friendship, and translation thus forms a suitable end point, which is also another place of beginning, for this special issue.

Ultimately, the papers and reflections in this issue demonstrate the transnational and cross-disciplinary potential of examining the Brazil/Canada comparison more closely. In making this issue possible, we thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Canada Research Chairs program for their support for the guest editors' research, the many anonymous reviewers of the articles submitted, OSGEMEOS for their cover art, and especially the editors of *Canada and Beyond* for their generous hosting and editorial support for this project.

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