https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8026.2026.e116246

MOBILITY AND CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN THE AMERICAS: MIGRATION, DIASPORA, AND TRAVEL

Anelise Reich Corseuil[1]*

Magali Sperling Beck[1]**
[1]Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, SC, Brazil

Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida[2]***
[2]Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil

Inter-hemispheric transits and their narratives of travel and displacement have been a reality and, at the same time, an act of imagination, narrativization and representation in the Americas. Within the scope of mobility and cultural encounters, there are correlated movements that help us map the crossing of narratives within the Americas, especially if one examines which narratives become more popular in the crossing of borders from North to South and vice versa; what subjects, historical periods, and political issues become more central to inter-hemispheric audiences up to the point of being narrativized in literature and audiovisual productions; and what genres can be included within the scope of narratives that cross the national and inter-hemispheric borders. Some of these movements include traveling, diasporic, and migratory processes, which characterize a variety of narrative clusters and engender ways of seeing the other in geopolitical terms within the Americas.

In such context, it is important to note that the study of travel narratives or of narratives depicting geographical crossings or displacements has become consolidated as a significant area of investigation in literary and cultural studies. As Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs have already observed in the introduction to one of the first anglophone anthologies dedicated to the study of travel, *The Cambridge*

* Email: corseuil.reich@ufsc.br. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1129-3852.

**Email: magalisperling@gmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2593-0031.

***Email: srga@ufmg.br. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6057-977X.

Esta obra tem licença *Creative Commons*
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0

Companion to Travel Writing (2002), the acts of traveling and writing have always been closely linked given that "[t]he traveller's tale is as old as fiction itself" (2). From narratives such as Homer's *Odyssey* and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* to the adventures of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, among so many other examples from antiquity to contemporary times, it is possible to perceive that the trope of travel has informed both poetical and fictional works, being commonly associated with a world of possibilities, discoveries, trials, and personal growth. In *The Mind of the Traveler* (1991), Eric Leed, for example, argues that in modernity travel is usually associated with freedom or with a potential access to the new. Leed argues that, while "[t]he ancients valued travel as an explication of human fate and necessity; for moderns, it is an expression of freedom and an escape from necessity and purpose" (7).[1]

However, Hulme and Youngs also acknowledge that it was during the last decades of the 20th century that travel started to be critically and theoretically approached as a significant aspect in the production and dissemination of cultural practices. So much so that, in the very opening sentences of Youngs's *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, the scholar states:

> Travel writing, one may argue, is the most socially important of all literary genres. It records our temporal and spatial progress. It throws light on how we define ourselves and on how we identify others. Its construction of our sense of 'me' and 'you'; 'us' and 'them' operates on individual and national levels and in the realms of psychology, society and economics (2013, 1).

Considering all the implications involved not only in the material acts of bodies physically moving across territories and frontiers, but also in the ways in which those movements get depicted and interpreted in the process of remembering, recording, and writing about those experiences, it is not surprising that the study of travel has become so emblematic in contemporaneity.

Mary Baine Campbell (2002) highlights, among different approaches to the study of travel, the importance of Edward Said's *Orientalism* for a renewed interest in texts and documents produced due to colonial and postcolonial expeditions (265). For Campbell, although the journey has always been part of the Western literary imagination, the study of travel writing took a new turn at the end of the 20th century, especially considering the critical and theoretical possibilities involved in looking at narratives previously deemed "subliterary" (such as diaries, letters, scientific documents, and other kinds of writing), as well as in looking at the strategies of representation used by travel writers to depict their cultural encounters (261). In this context, "[t]he study of what we know and how we know it – not to mention who 'we' are – broke loose from its somewhat rarified moorings in philosophy departments and became a vital task for all disciplines as the experiment of empire came to be seen as failing" (Campbell 265-266).

Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, originally published in 1992, has also become an important reference to travel

studies. In this work, Pratt examines what she refers to as "imperial meaning-making" (7), or how imperial ideology was used to systematize knowledge, especially in the context of European colonial travels to the Americas. Her conceptualization of the "contact zone" as "the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (8) highlights the asymmetrical power relations that underlie imperial travel.

Pratt's work is one of the many studies that problematized and challenged hegemonic narratives of travel and discovery following the publication of Said's *Orientalism*. As Din-Kariuki and Van Meersbergen (2024) point out, such studies had a key role in illuminating the representational strategies used by European travelers to "describe and classify non-European 'others', which in many cases were employed to justify dehumanising treatment, including enslavement and political subjugation" (78). Moreover, still according to Din-Kariuki and Van Meersbergen, travel studies exposed "the complex politics of travel and travel writing [...] establishing travel as a major subject of cross-disciplinary interest and importance" (78). In this context, the ambivalences of travel have been continuously associated with its colonial or neocolonial legacies since the writing of travel involves both the affirmation and the destabilization of identitarian and political categories informed by the relationship between observer and observed, traveler and traveled space, self and other.

Such ambivalences also derive from the instabilities that permeate the very genre of travel writing, especially because it seems to linger in the tensions between fact and fiction. As Tim Youngs notes, although scholars such as Peter Hulme approach travel writing as being constituted primarily by texts that depict actual travels, in the sense that "their authors must have traveled to the places they describe" (4), other scholars complicate such definition, since both fictional and factual accounts "employ [...] similar narrative structures and literary techniques" (4). Likewise, John Zilcosky also highlights that, even when critics seem to agree that "travel writing is a narrated account of a voyage (generally told in the first person) based on 'actual travels undertaken'" (2008, 8), there is an underlying question that destabilizes this seemingly straightforward definition: "How do we know which travels are real?" (8). Instead of holding such tensions against the study of travel, it might be in the interstices between fact and fiction, or self and other, that productive dialogues can still surface. For Zilcoksy, it is exactly the genre's ambivalence, which he reads through James Clifford's conceptualization of the "historical taintedness" of the term travel, that "demands a politically aware, self-critical exploration" (9).

It is also important to note that travel studies' emphasis on the imperial legacies of the genre has led scholars such as Din-Kariuki and Van Meersbergen to highlight the Eurocentrism that has permeated the field. In a re-reading of Mary Louise Pratt's own argumentat that the field of travel studies has privileged European or anglophone texts, Din-Kariuki and Van Meersbergen argue that

> [t]he tendency to treat Western, and especially British and North American, travel and travel writing as the central corpus against which other traditions are measured or from which larger generalisations are drawn, continues to shape even those survey works that are critical of this Eurocentricity (79).

For the authors, in order to challenge Eurocentrism, it is important to recognize varied approaches and methodologies to travel studies which are not only looking at different kinds of source material on travel but also reconceptualizing travel itself in more insightful ways, as the fields of migration and diaspora studies as well as mobility studies have been doing (80). Following this approach, the study of inter-American crossings might help us shift the perspective through which we examine both the source texts and the theoretical frameworks in order to look at them more critically.

Narratives of Diaspora

Contemporary transnational movements, including diaspora, migration, nomadism and globalization are not new phenomena. One can also think of a profusion of other terms that define the various zones of contact – in Pratt's terms –, but also conflict, between nations, regions, and cultures (4). The literary production that addresses the contemporary movements of displacement has often been named migrant literature, diaspora literature, exile literature, immigrant genre, among other terms.[2]

Narratives of exile, displacement, mobility, dispersion, and deterritorialization of various peoples are constitutive parts of human history, which can be traced back to biblical accounts (Peters 1999, 17). In fact, the history of these global movements "coincides with the era of European exploitation and conquest and with the formation of world capitalist markets," as Stuart Hall (2003, 35) points out. However, we have been living through what many critics call "the age of migration," a new phase of mass population movements in all directions (Brah 1996, 178). It is no surprise, therefore, that many terms referring to concepts of mobility and transit, such as exile, migration, nomadism, and diaspora, have become recurring tropes of our contemporary times.

The term "diaspora," in particular, has become one of the most recurring critical formulations today, as evidenced by the numerous events and publications dedicated to the subject. The concept has dominated contemporary studies in various fields of knowledge such as sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and cultural and literary studies. Derived from Greek, the word "diaspora" means dispersion and is linked to the verb *diaspeírō*, in the sense of "passing through all sides, to disperse." The term was used by Sophocles, Herodotus, and Thucydides as early as the 5th century BC and its modern use dates from the 3rd century BC. It appears as a neologism in the *Septuagint*, the oldest Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, written by Jewish scholars in Alexandria.

The term originates from an ancestral and historical concept through its initial association with the dispersion of the Jewish people – the Jewish diaspora – and later with the diaspora of African peoples across the Atlantic – called the African diaspora or the black diaspora. Stéphanie Dufoix, in *Diasporas,* observes that some critics consider the Jewish diaspora as the classic case of the diaspora phenomenon because the Jewish people managed to "preserve their integrity as an ethnoreligious community" (2003, 8). Similarly, William Safran sees the Jewish diaspora as the "ideal type" of diaspora (1991, 84). Regarding the African diaspora, Dufoix mentions that its use arose in texts in 1965, but the term had been circulating since the mid-1950s (11). There is often, as several critics highlight, an analogy between the Jewish and African diasporas. In both cases, diasporic communities maintained their cohesion as an ethnic group and suffered strong discrimination in the destination countries. This view, however, has been challenged by many critics who posit it as an essentialization of the concept. In fact, the use of the term diaspora begins with the historical notion of the concept and assumes special value in contemporary times as a category of intercultural and transcultural analysis, as Gilroy observes (1994, 207). For Hall, diaspora can be conceived as a defining concept of contemporaneity.[3]

Avtar Brah points out in *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996) that, if previously the concept of diaspora stood out for its political character to the detriment of the voluntary, the new transnational configuration of power and global politics of contemporary times prevents us from clearly distinguishing between these two poles today (178-179). The so-called "old diasporas" – especially the Jewish and African ones – serve as a starting point for theorising new diasporas more than just a supposed ideal model, as Safran advocates. In this sense, these new diasporas are not always linked to forced displacements and a desire to return home.

The concept of diaspora in contemporary times tends to maintain its political character, inherited from historical tradition, but also refers to the movement of dispersion of peoples, whether voluntary or forced, usually with strong political, social, and cultural impact, giving rise in the host country to a migratory group or a community, sometimes imaginary, as suggested by Benedict Anderson (1983), which maintains some kind of concrete or emotional bond with the homeland.

The term diaspora, which until the 1950s was mostly used in its traditional sense, began, from this period onward, to be employed in other contexts, especially in the 1970s, and reached its peak in the 1990s, when it became established as one of the most relevant critical terms for contemporary thought (Dufoix 17). The first critical texts theorizing the diaspora in contemporary times appear during this period. Especially notable is the journal *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, published by the University of Toronto, whose first volume appeared in 1991, and which brings articles that have become emblematic of contemporary diaspora studies. In 1990, Stuart Hall (here 1994) published his influential article on cultural identity and the Afro-Caribbean diaspora, highlighting especially how the Americas, the *incognito land*, became the origin and the milestone of the African diaspora. Next, Paul Gilroy's influential book, *The Black Atlantic:*

Modernity and Double-Consciousness (1993), decisively marks studies on the diaspora by theorizing the Atlantic as an interstitial space and cultural ensemble of the African diaspora and relating it to the Jewish diaspora.

Dufoix discusses the need to update the concept in its contemporary form as the term adapts well to the modern world (106). Two divergent poles can be highlighted in the conception of the term today: on the one hand, it has become a flexible term to designate various forms of migrations and displacements; on the other, it denotes an emptying of the original meaning of the word, which has been widely criticized. Dufoix chooses a more complex structure of analysis by focusing on the collective experiences of peoples in displacement who maintain a connection with a homeland, real or imagined, although the concept is, in fact, covering up several other contemporary phenomena (xx).

Overall, the term diaspora has been used as an epistemological category in tune with the theoretical line developed by Stuart Hall in the sense that "diasporic identities are those that are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" ("Cultural Identity" 402). In other words, in diasporic movements identities become multiple, provisional, and decentered, transcending national borders and becoming deterritorialized. By endorsing this argument, the author clarifies his definition of the term by mentioning that the diaspora he theorizes does not refer to the dispersion of peoples whose identity depends on a return to a supposedly sacred home, or who rely on a binary conception of difference, but rather to the experience of diaspora, defined by the "recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity" and by the understanding of a notion of identity that coexists in the context of difference and critical hybridism. The alternative of this historical moment "is not to cling to closed, unitary, and homogeneous models of 'cultural belonging,' but to embrace the broader processes – the game of similarity and difference – that are transforming culture worldwide" (Hall 2019 [1999], 223). For Hall, this is the "path of 'diaspora,' which is the trajectory of a modern people and a modern culture" ("Thinking the Diaspora" 223). The author sees this diasporic perspective as a "subversion of traditional cultural models oriented toward the nation" (Sousa 2014, 503), that is, as a possibility for negotiation, translation, and questioning of prevailing models of representation beyond the nation.

James Clifford suggests that, although it is not possible to specify exactly the meaning the term diaspora acquires today since it is an itinerant and "hybridizing" term, given the mobility of the concept itself, most contemporary communities present some form of diasporic dimension that shares some characteristics, whether it is a history of dispersion, myths and memories of the country of origin, the dream of return, or a collective identity. For the author, the concept mainly involves the notion of inhabiting, residing and maintaining a community and a collective even if far from the home left behind. Such a perception or diasporic consciousness originates an inherent ambivalent feeling, sometimes positive and other times negative, marked by a permanent tension between loss and hope, return and postponement (1994, 308-312). By emphasizing these elements of

conflict, Clifford highlights the interrelations of the concept and its intrinsic heterogeneity and cultural diversity, such as, for example, the intersection of the categories of race, class, and gender.

Furthermore, modern diaspora, according to Clifford, is characterized by having a complicating element when compared to ancient diaspora. The difference lies in the fact that contemporary diaspora resists and, at the same time, makes use of hegemonic forces in a movement of questioning, but also complicity, which is the fundamental characteristic of the conflicted and tangled historical moment we live in (327).

Brah speaks of a "diasporic consciousness" or "a diaspora space" as a theoretical concept that, unlike the historical concept of diaspora itself, marks a space of confluence inhabited not only by diasporic subjects but also by "locals" or "natives" who, although not actively participating in global mobilities, are equally affected by them. The author draws attention to the consequences of thinking about diaspora in rigid binary terms, as if we could establish the epistemological foundations of the concept through a division between displaced subjects and those who are apparently rooted (16). In this sense, a diaspora space highlights the multiple entanglements of the genealogies of dispersion and the mobility and fluidity of a varied range of positionalities. A homogenizing and standardized notion of diaspora runs the risk of slipping into the essentialism of subjective and national identities. For Brah, diasporic consciousness becomes a logical consequence of transnational movements, and diaspora space assumes a relevant meaning by addressing issues about national and subjective identities in the context of a plurality of contacts and movements. Diasporic consciousness represents a heterogeneous and, above all, contestational space, in which the multiple positions of subjects are juxtaposed, opposed, acclaimed, or deauthorized. This multiplicity of axes that intersect in contemporary diasporas is central to understanding the current meaning of a diasporic consciousness or a diasporic space.

Brah also highlights the markedly gendered character of contemporary diasporas and identifies a process of feminization of immigration,[4] based on the fact that women have become an increasingly larger segment in all types of migrations and in all regions. In addition, the international division of labor of the proletariat and the exploitation of cheap labor increasingly depends on the labor of these women (179). Gayatri Spivak's article "Diasporas Old and New: Women in the Transnational World" (1996), along with Brah's influential work published the same year, are two of the first texts to theorize contemporary diaspora, specifically from a gender perspective. For Spivak, contemporary diaspora, in particular, highlights markedly gendered subjects who become inserted into the mercantilist logic because of their important role and undeniable usefulness in cultural transits. Spivak emphasizes the importance of gendered experience in what she conceives as this "new diaspora," in which the exploitation of women by transnational agencies, both through the feminization of labor and the adoption of collaborative roles that legitimize the hegemonic forces of

global power, predominates. By demarcating the contemporary space as one of abuse of mercantilist power instances, in her feminist and Marxist critique, Spivak endorses the relevant argument of several critics about the feminization of diaspora in the contemporary world. For her, however, these gendered diasporic subjects, instead of passively accepting the victim position in this process, should adopt an agent position that might allow them to resist the harmful consequences of globalization and the vicissitudes of migratory processes (251).

It is at this intersection of gender and identity constituents that Carole Boyce Davies's pioneering work, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (1994), is situated, as she analyzes the migrations of racialized subjects, especially highlighting the role of Black women writers and their renegotiation of identities in the context of contemporary movements of mobility. In this new diaspora, one observes the strong intersection between ethnic-racial issues and their confluence with gender and class, thus emphasizing the articulations of a doubly marginalized subject and a markedly racialized and ethnicized body. Contemporary diasporas are typically characterized by diverse ethnic communities, which share the marks of visibility through the unequivocal difference in the appearance of this racialized and ethnicized body – which Eleanor Ty calls "the visible sign of otherness" (2004, 6). Ty argues that, although doomed to invisibility and silence, racial minorities are indelibly marked by racial visibility and, consequently, by prejudice and social exclusion.

For Hall, contemporary diaspora reconfigures the old forms of ethnicity that were based on an imperialist and hegemonic conception. It is in this sense that the author defines the experience of the diaspora as being imbued with a concept of hybridism through the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity that also permeates the concept of ethnicity. Hall's view of contemporary diaspora encompasses the possibility of creating spaces of "new ethnicities" ("Cultural Identity" 402), that is, spaces of contingent and mobile discursive articulations supported by the cultivation of differences.

The identity constructions of diaspora subjects, besides inevitably marked by the various constitutive factors of subjectivity, determine their plural, procedural, provisional, and also contradictory character. The renegotiation of identities frequently appears in the texts of writers coming from distinct cultural and social contexts, as well as affiliations to diverse ethnic groups. Identity and space, therefore, become analytical categories that are united in experiences of diasporic subjects. The need to renegotiate identity concepts frequently appears in texts addressing the diaspora, insofar as the spatial displacement also becomes an act of self-knowledge, experienced through a gendered, racialized, and ethnicized body, leading to the questioning of notions of fixed and pre-established identities.

As Rey Chow (2003, 180) reminds us, the concept of diaspora must be examined without adhering to narratives that stratify and ignore the implicit diversities in categories such as women, oppressed classes, the Third World, among others. Failing to consider these variants would perpetuate a system of homogenization, marginalization, and exploitation.

Inter-hemispheric narratives in the Americas

We argue that the crossing of narratives and the narratives of crossing in the Americas in the last two centuries have followed changes in the center of mass around certain privileged regions. Not only have some places been more visited, but also more narrativized across national borders in what can be defined as narrative clusters, which will be arranged and somewhat periodized here considering, mainly, audiovisual productions. The first narrative cluster takes place from the 1940s to the 1950s, during the Good Neighbor Policy – a US attempt to advance cultural and diplomatic understanding within Latin America due to political and economic reasons during the Second World War. The creation of the Office of Inter-American Affairs - OCIAA (1940-45), coordinated by Nelson Rockefeller, enabled the production of various movies about Latin America, including an exchange of writers and film directors between the US and Latin American countries. Here we can include the production of *It's All True* (Orson Wells 1942), *The Gang is all here* (Berkeley 1943), Érico Veríssimo's *Black Cat on a field of snow* (1941), a travel report to the US, and Walt Disney's *The Three Caballeros* (1944), *Saludos Amigos* (1942), and *South of the Frontier*, also made in 1942. In the documentary, Disney and his crew travel to various countries in South America in order to correct previous film production mistakes about Latin America, such as in *Down Argentine Way* (1940), in which Argentines were inaccurately represented (Kaufman 2009, cited in Goldman 2014, 29). The OCIAA subsidized Disney's documentary in order to disseminate information on Latin American history, customs, music, and geography, thus avoiding the previous mistakes by Hollywood productions as well as fostering a policy of cultural proximity between the US and Latin American nations (Goldman 29).[5]

A second cluster of inter-hemispheric narratives that have achieved prominence in the media and for the general public takes place mostly from the 1970s to the 1980s, as these narratives portray the military takeover in various countries of Latin America. The military period (from the 1960s to 1980) and the CIA involvement with the armed forces were portrayed in political Hollywood films from the 1970s and 1980s. Here we can include *State of Siege* (Costa-Gavras 1972), *Salvador* (Oliver Stone 1986), *Missing* (Costa-Gavras 1982), *The World is Watching* (Peter Raymont and Jim Munro 1988), and *Under Fire* (Roger Spottiswoode 1983). From the 1990s onwards, a number of diasporic political movies were produced. Exiled film directors such as Patricio Guzmán, Miguel Littín and Isabel Allende, among others, can be included here. The public and critical success of the films about the military coup can be illustrated by Costa-Gavras's *Missing* (1982), as it shows Ed's (Jack Lemon) search for his lost son during the Chilean military dictatorship in the 1970s. Charles Hofman, an American journalist, was actually killed by the military and the film was based on the biography T*he Execution of Charles Horman: An American Sacrifice* (1978), by Thomas Hauser. The film won the Palme d'Or and the award for Best Actor for Jack Lemmon's performance at Cannes in 1982, as well as the Academy Award

for Best Screenplay in 1983. As the father discovers that his son's death was supported by the CIA in Chile, he loses faith in the American system. Despite the film's adherence to an American protagonism and the consequent effacement of the massive killing of the Chileans by the military, audiences' engagement with the film shows how audiovisual productions can be vehicles for historical and political consciousness.

Political films about Latin America crosscut various genres. Two Canadian documentaries, *The World Is Watching: Inside the News* (1988), a British Canadian production directed by Jim Munro and Peter Raymond, and *A Place Called Chiapas,* a Canadian production directed by Nettie Wild (1998), have also depicted geopolitical struggles in Latin America and their political outcome worldwide. *The World Is Watching* focuses on the international media coverage of the period that preceded the implementation of the peace agreement between Sandinistas and the Contras in Nicaragua in November 1987. *A Place Called Chiapas* shows the relationship between Zapatistas and the Federal Mexican Government, the guerrilla force, the impositions of the USA on free trade agreements (and Canadians' indirect implication), as well as the stance of Canadian subjects, such as the filmmaker himself. The films focus on geopolitical issues, independently of genre, fictional or documentary, thus also revealing the ways in which filmmakers from the first world represent historical and political issues from Latin America. The audiovisual productions that travel among frontiers and national borders are, thus, important ways of understanding the geopolitics of representation of transnational issues.[6]

From the 1970s on, more intensively in the 1990s, there is a third cluster of inter-hemispheric narratives that depict migratory movements from South to North. Most of these fictional and documentary films are associated with displacement due to social, economic and political issues. Although fictional travel narratives and narratives of immigration or displacement imply an imagery of change and new perspectives, as a form of personal transformation, displacement is an urgent and permanent situation. In movies such as *El Norte* (Pedro Nava 1983) and *La Jaula de Oro* (Diego Quemada-Diaz 2013), one perceives such issues. Both films portray the journey of Guatemalan immigrants to the US, looking for better life conditions within a time span of 30 years. Their trajectories are revealing of the relations between the self and the other; the national and the transnational within different historical contexts and different aesthetics. *La Jaula de Oro* portrays subjectivity through the camera gaze in a contained narrative, a characteristic of Diego Quemada-Diaz's work, who is recognized for his realistic and social films.[7] *El Norte* shows the tragedy and personal drama of family losses in a dramatic tone. The music, the characters' gaze and feelings and the plot enhance the drama. Despite their different aesthetic, the films provide a dialogue with each other concerning the frontier and migration in the Americas, with a difference of 30 years. Within this context, deterritorialization can be analyzed *vis à vis* the displacement of the immigrant, as well as by the traveling narratives that are readapted and relocated in space and time across cultures and history.

The docudrama *Bread and Roses* (2000), directed by Ken Loach, could also be included here. It follows Maya (Pilar Padilla), a Mexican woman who illegally migrates to the U.S. to meet her family. Maya's sister, Rosa (Elpídia Carrillo), works as a cleaner for an outsourcing company at a commercial building in Los Angeles. After a spectacular escape, involving Maya's kidnapping by a gang of coyotes, an attempt at prostitution and theft, she eventually meets Rosa and moves in with her. Maya starts working as a janitor at the same place as Rosa, where Hollywood agents and lawyers have their offices. These agents and lawyers do not seem to care for the janitors (mostly Chicanos, African American and illegal migrants from diverse countries) and their working conditions.

In an interview to BBC Films, screenwriter Paul Laverty[8] explained that *Bread and Roses*' screenplay was based on the 1994 L.A. strike, which had "justice for janitors" as a motto. Indeed, the fictional plot, involving Maya, Rosa and Sam (a political activist employed by the janitor union who has a love affair with Maya) is placed side by side with TV footage without any identification as to the origin of the material. The documentary elements of the film are made visible through the use of TV images, reference to the events of 1994 and the many interviews made by the director and screenwriter before shooting the film, as well as through handheld camera and realist cinematography. This fiction film is a hybrid of documentary and fiction, whereas many documentaries take the inverse route: they make use of fictional and imaginary elements, thus revealing the intersection of history and fiction in the production of images of Chicanos and Latin American people.

Recent travel narratives in an inter-American context have shown a hybridization of genres, in which autobiography, fiction, drama and documentary are interrelated. Due to their metalinguistic and subjective forms, more recent films about travel, such as *Adio Kerida* (*Goodbye Dear Love*, Ruth Behar 2022), *Elena* (Petra Costa 2002) and *Chile, Obstinate Memory* (Patricio Guzmán 1997), might be seen as emblematic of diasporic movements. Dee Dee Halleck's documentary, *Gringo in Mañanaland* (1995), reveals how Hollywood industry's consistent processes of hegemony, neocolonialism and exclusion in relation to Latin American culture affected the imagination of the director, as she moves from Cuba to the US as an immigrant. Halleck presents a careful compilation of images from a number of films made in the US about Latin America. She includes scenes from silent movies, industrial cinema, home videos, American governmental propaganda, ethnographical documentaries produced for television since the beginning of the twentieth century, and Hollywood fictional films produced from the 1920s through the end of the 1950s. Halleck's documentary, like Ruth Behar´s *Goodbye Dear Love*, invites us to review the American-Cuban relationship from the perspective of the *émigré*, as both filmmakers revisit their histories from a diasporic perspective. They both travel back to Cuba to revisit their histories and to create new narratives more conscious of the historical gaps within their personal and collective histories. Within these revisionary and newer perspectives, there

seems to be no place for the stereotyped and binary nationalist biased narratives in the Americas.

Another recent cluster of inter-hemispheric narratives is closely associated with ecological awareness *vis à vis* the Amazon forest and climate change. Videos and films on the Amazon Rainforest have not only been used for educational purposes in classroom contexts, or on educational platforms, but also on commercial streaming platforms. They narrativize the conflicts involving local indigenous communities and commercial perspectives of the Rainforest within the context of planetary ecological problems. In the case of the documentaries, most of them portray tourists, professionals from diverse areas of knowledge, and overall public traveling to the Amazon Rainforest with the intention of solving ecological issues or at least to unveil them to wider audiences worldwide. Here we can include *Ama-Zone! The Rain Forest Project* (2001)[9], and the biographical documentary on the life of Margaret Mee, *Margaret Mee: The Moonflower*, directed by Malu de Martino (2012) – which depicts the life of the British botanical artist whose art and journeys into the Amazon Rainforest were well known by botanists. *Rio*, directed by Carlos Saldanha (2013), is a fictional film but also with an ecological claim: to save a little blue macaw from extinction and to stop the smuggling of wild animals from the Rainforest. Although the film's *mise-en-scène* shows Rio de Janeiro and local issues such as poverty, with its characters identified as locals, especially those living in the slum, its narrative shows a global concern: that is, the relations between the national and the transnational regarding the smuggling of wild animals from the Rainforest. Furthermore, with Tulio and Linda, whose marks of national identity can first be identified by their clothes – a yellow and green scarf for Tulio, a Brazilian ornithologist, and austere winter clothes that are later to be exchanged for new Brazilian ones for Linda, an American bookstore keeper, as they become part of a globalized community and are shown to be capable of adapting anywhere – the film erases differences, as their story is easily understood everywhere around the Globe as a story about ecology with worldwide resonances.

Besides being registers of ecological issues and their centrality for the equilibrium of our climate, the videos and films also offer complex geopolitical perspectives that can be associated with post-colonialist views of the forest *vis à vis* transnational and globalized perspectives. In such context, we could include *Cradled by the Earth* (2025), directed by David Vêluz and Renata Meirelles. Vêluz and Meirelles's documentary presents a poetic and circular narrative woven by four different stories about the bringing up of indigenous children in four different ethnic indigenous communities: the Guarani Kaiowá, the Guarani Ñandeva, the Baniwa, and the Khisetje. The great lesson taught by the film is that nature cannot be separated from the indigenous people's raising of their children. It is part of their past, present and future. Everything depends on it. In *Cradled by Earth,* most of the narratives are told by indigenous women, with no voices from outside the indigenous communities. Another important element of the narrative is the

mise-en-scène, which has to do with space construction always associated with the natural exuberance of the land in which they live.[10]

As the discussion of these five major narrative clusters has shown, inter-hemispheric narratives have been widely circulated in various media and have significantly influenced cultural representations of the Americas, marking its geopolitical spaces.[11]

Introducing the dossier

This thematic issue of *Ilha do Desterro* considers the importance on inter-hemispheric narratives in the Americas *vis à vis* immigration movements, diaspora and travel narratives. The essays here collected foreground various perspectives and critical views. In ***"A expressão das multiterritorialidades em* Los Gestos Inútiles *de Rey Andújar"***, Isabel Jasinski explores *Los Gestos Inútiles* (2015) by Rey Andújar, a Dominican writer living in Chicago, in its expression of the paradox of mobility and belonging in migratory movements within the Dominican territorial dynamics. The article highlights how the neopolice narrative spaces experienced by the characters express a circuit of mobilities associated with the perspective of multiterritoriality. According to Jasinski, Andújar, as well as many diasporic Latin Americans, have experienced a multi-territorial process that shapes their perception of culture, literature and language. The work of Junot Díaz also has a diasporic dimension associated with his Caribbean background. In "**Imagined Geographies and Diasporic World-Making: Comics, Sci-fi, and Transnational Narrative in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao***," Tohid Teymouri examines how Junot Díaz conceptualizes diasporic identity in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) as its protagonist engages with transnational popular culture –comics, science fiction, fantasy, and anime. Through close textual analysis, the study shows how Oscar's transnational fandom offers alternative modes of cultural citizenship beyond ethnic and national frameworks, exemplifying the bidirectional flow of narrative across the Americas.

The centrality of cultural studies to inter-hemispheric narratives is further explored in the article **"Culinary Worlds and Inter-American Encounters: Mapping Alimentary Pathways in Laura Tillman's *The Migrant Chef*,"** by Dipra Biswas and Joydeep Banerjee. As posited by the authors, foodways present in various narrative genres are central in cross-cultural exchanges characterizing the encounters between Latin American nations and the United States in critical ways by revealing colonial exploitation, asymmetrical power relations and the complexities of migration. Laura Tillman's biographical narrative of Mexican chef Eduardo "Lalo" García Guzmán explores the varied dimensions of food cultivation, preparation, and consumption as revealing of Mexico's position in a neoliberal, globalized world. Biswas and Banerjee's essay employs the critical paradigm of "gastrocriticism" to analyze the ways in which the experiences of Lalo, his family, and his predecessors portray the coloniality of power integrated

into the US agribusiness. Their trajectory disrupts racialized hierarchies in U.S. culinary spaces and reasserts the cultural sovereignty of Mexico by revitalizing its gastronomy on a transnational scale.

From a more autobiographical, essayistic perspective**,** Roland Walter's **"Diasporic crossroads in the Americas: of literature, travel, migration, and identity"** presents an interdisciplinary, intersectional and comparative theoretical approach to problematize the (re)construction of identity throughout the Americas characterized by hundreds of years of mobility of its peoples. Walter grounds his analysis in inter-American literatures (fiction) and his own travel experiences, both mixed in the errantry of writing. The essay sheds light on the shaded fissures of human existence in specific *zones of nonbeing* in the Americas – zones characterized by forced and willed mobility, errantry and travels, with their diverse sides and characteristics between death, (re)birth and the in-between space linking these two extreme points.

In **"Forced Mobility and Racial Mapping in Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*"**, Roberto Ferreira Junior presents the forced mobility in the narrative structure of *The Underground Railroad*. Going against the grain, Ferreira shows regimes of racial domination in Cora's displacement across Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Indiana, and finally "the North". Drawing on mobility studies, Ferreira´s argument is that mobility in the novel is never neutral but rather coerced, precarious, and dangerous. According to Ferreira Junior, the novel deconstructs the prevalent myth of the North as a route to freedom in slave narratives to reframe mobility as a central mechanism through which racial control operates while simultaneously exposing its limits as a site of resistance. The journey as resistance is also explored in the essay **"In the "Waters" of South African poet Koleka Putuma: A Diasporic Voice Confronting History"**. Marcele Aires Franceschini and Hert Wendell de Camargo foreground the forms of protest and engagement in "Water", by the young South African poet and playwright Koleka Putuma, as an exploration of the religious, moral and historical impositions perpetrated on the survivors and descendants of Africans who were forced to undertake the diasporic journey from Africa to America.

The restraints of the journey are also shown in Irina Rabinovich's **"Unmothered Daughters, Unfathered Homes: Repressed Histories in Jewish Immigrant Narratives by Bertha Pearl Moore"**. The article explores how Bertha Pearl Moore's neglected novels *Sarah and Her Daughter* (1920) and *The Love Child* (1923) offer a counter-genealogy of immigrant writing that resists the assimilatory triumphalism. Affective collapse, poverty, cultural dislocation, and gendered labor fracture family life destabilize mother-daughter bonds. Feminist, psychoanalytic, and trauma theory contribute to show how maternal silence and somatic inheritance transmit displacement intergenerationally, turning immigrant narrative into an archive of what cannot be spoken. Moore's work reframes immigration in the US as a traumatic intercultural encounter, further

showing how non-canonical texts can recover intercultural journeys through a refusal of narrative resolution.

Ana Carolina de Carvalho Mesquita's **"'We have always been at war': Ailton Krenak's forced-displacement narratives of grief"** analyzes Ailton Krenak's books as they reveal a set of Amerindian narratives that "point to the loss of one's land as the very destitution of one's identity, bringing forth his people's relational ontology – a fundamental non-divide between the land and its many beings". Mesquita claims that Judith Butler's concept of grievability transforms "Krenak's texts into forced-displacement texts that, instead of a lament, call for a change in human existence on the planet and redefine territory and belonging" (2026, 1).

In **"Male Migrations and the Gatekeepers of America: Masculinity, Visas, and Borders in Namita Gokhale's *Travelling In, Travelling Out*"**, Arun Kumar and P. Tamilarasan examine the structural shift in travel narratives to the Americas post-9/11 based on their analysis of travel essays collected in Namita Gokhale's *Travelling In, Travelling Out* (2015). The essay explores how the Western security state interrogates and destabilizes non-Western masculinities as the "American Encounter" for the elite South Asian male is split into the Trauma of Entry and the potential Triumph of Settlement. Within the critical perception of the journey as trauma, Juana Sañudo Caicedo, in **"Outside, a World Grows (Afuera crece un mundo, Fernández): A Poetics of Transfiguration"**, analyzes *Outside, a World Grows* (*Afuera crece un mundo*) by Adelaida Fernández, as a resignificative map of the crossing of the Amefrican oceans.

In **"*Cristóvão Colombo e a Colonização do Imaginário*"**, Daniel Vecchio´s essay questions heroic and villainous associations of Columbus, as it historicizes such visions by showing its historical contingencies. A similar historical perspective is presented in **"Ports, heterotopias, and transnationalism: Herman Melville in Rio de Janeiro"** by Emilio Irigoyen, as the essay revises the chronology of Herman Melville's March 1841 visit to Rio de Janeiro. The essay questions how nation-centered research practices continue to structure U.S. literary studies, marginalizing Latin American archives and scholarship despite the long-standing claim of a "transnational turn."

As the essays in this dossier suggest, inter-American crossings continue to inform many of the cultural encounters in the Americas.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT: Does not apply.

End notes

1. A similar discussion is presented by Beck, Magali Sperling in *Unexpected Encounters: Brazilian Journeys and Poetical Re-discoveries in the Works of Elizabeth Bishop, P. K. Page, and Jan Conn.* PhD Thesis. University of Alberta, Edmonton, 2008.
2. See also Almeida, Sandra R. G, 2015.

3. For a detailed discussion of diasporas in other geopolitical contexts that mark the history of the term (such as Armenia, Greek, Chinese, among others), see Safran (1991) and Robin Cohen (1997).
4. See also John Marx's "A Feminization of Globalization" (2006).
5. The analysis of the inter-hemispherical narrative clusters has been here revised, it was previously discussed in Sperling Beck, Magali, and Anelise Reich Corseuil. "Amazon Journeys and Poetic Re-Discoveries in Jan Conn's 'Jaguar Rain' and Malu de Martino's *Margaret Mee e a Flor da Lua*." *Interlitteraria* vol. 29, 2024, pp. 60-77.
6. See Corseuil, Anelise R. *A América Latina no Cinema Contemporâneo: Outros Olhares.* Insular, 2012.
7. It is worth remembering that Quemada-Diaz also worked as camera operator in the film *Land and Freedom* (1995), by Ken Loach – recognized by his filmography on social issues, including films on Latin America. *Carla's Song* (1996) narrativizes the trajectory of George (Robert Carlyle), a bus driver in Glasgow who goes to Nicaragua in the company of Carla (Oyanka Cabezas), a Nicaraguan refugee, during an armed conflict between Sandinistas and Contras. In Nicaragua, George becomes conscious of the civil war atrocities – more specifically the armed conflict between Sandinistas and Contras ("Film Narratives" 43).
8. Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2001/05/02/paul_laverty_interview.shtml. Accessed on November 25, 2026.
9. *AMA-ZONE! The Rain Forest Project* is available at: https://www.pbswesternreserve.org/education/amazone-the-rain-forest-project/. Accessed on March 16.
10. *Cradled by the Earth* is available at https://assista.itauculturalplay.com.br/ItemDetail/67a60425737daeba5e02abc0/68efcdf713641545439e4958, accessed on March 16.
11. For a discussion of these major inter and trans-hemispheric geopolitical processes in foreign narratives on South America, especially in film, see Corseuil, Anelise Reich. "Film Narratives Crossing Time and Space in the Americas: A Comparative Perspective of *La Jaula De Oro* (2013) and *El Norte* (1983); *Rio* (2011) and *The Three Caballeros* (1944)." *Ilha do Desterro*, vol. 75, no. 2, 2022, pp. 031-044. See also Beck, Magali Sperling, and Anelise Reich Corseuil. "Amazon Journeys and Poetic Re-discoveries in Jan Conn´s 'Jaguar Rain' and Malu de Martino's *Margaret Mee e a Flor da Lua.*" *Interlitteraria*, vol. 29, 2024, pp. 60-77.

Works Cited

Almeida, Sandra Regina Goulart. *Cartografias Contemporâneas: Espaço, Corpo, Escrita.* Editora UFMG, 2015.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Verso, 1983.

Beck, Magali Sperling. *Unexpected Encounters: Brazilian Journeys and Poetical Re-discoveries in the Works of Elizabeth Bishop, P. K. Page, and Jan Conn*. 2008. University of Alberta. PhD Thesis.

Beck, Magali Sperling, and Anelise Reich Corseuil. "Amazon Journeys and Poetic Re-discoveries in Jan Conn's 'Jaguar Rain' and Malu de Martino's *Margaret Mee e a Flor da Lua.*" *Interlitteraria,* vol. 29, pp. 60-77, 2024.

Behar, Ruth, director. *Adios Kérido (Goodbye Dear Love)*. Women Make Movies, 2002.

Berkeley, Busby, director. *The Gang's All Here*. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1943.

Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities.* Routledge, 1996.

Campbell, Mary Baine. "Travel Writing and its Theory." *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, organized by Peter Hulme e Tim Youngs. Cambridge UP, 2002, pp. 261-278.

Chow, Rey. *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Indiana UP, 1993.

Clifford, James. "Diaspora." *Cultural Anthropology,* vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 302-338, 1994.

Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas*: An Introduction. U of Washington P, 1997.

Corseuil, Anelise Reich. *A América Latina no Cinema Contemporâneo: Outros Olhares*. Insular, 2012.

Corseuil, Anelise Reich. "Film narratives crossing time and space in the Americas: a comparative perspective of *La Jaula de Oro* (2013) and *El Norte* (1983); *Rio* (2011) and *The Three* Caballeros." *Ilha do do Desterro,* vol. 75, no. 2, pp. 31-44, 2022. https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8026.2022.e89781.

Davies, Carol Boyce. *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject.* Routledge, 1994.

Costa, Petra, director. *Elena*. Busca Vida Filmes, 2012.

Costa-Gavras, director. *Missing*. Universal Pictures, 1982.

Costa-Gavras, director. *State of Siege*. Valoria Films, 1972.

Din-Kariuki, Natalya, and Guido van Meersbergen. "Travel Studies and the Decolonial Turn." *Studies in Travel Writing*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2024, pp. 77-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645145.2024.2442435.

Disney, Walt, producer. *Saludos Amigos*. RKO Radio Pictures, 1942.

Disney, Walt, producer. *South of the Border with Disney*. Walt Disney Productions, 1942.

Disney, Walt, producer. *The Three Caballeros*. RKO Radio Pictures, 1944.

Dufoix, Stéphane. *Diasporas,* translated by William Rodarmor. U of California P, 2003.

Gilroy, Paul. "Diaspora." *Paragraph,* vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 207-212, 1994.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic*: *Modernity and Double Consciousness.* Harvard UP, 1993.

Goldman, Karen. "*Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros*: The Representation of Latin America in Disney's 'Good Neighbor' Films." *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality, and Disability*, edited by Johnson Cheu. McFarland & Company, 2014.

Guzmán, Patricio, director. *Chile, Obstinate Memory*. First Run / Icarus Films, 1997.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory,* edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. Columbia UP, 1994, pp. 392-403.

Hall, Stuart. *Da Diáspora: Identidades e Mediações Culturais,* organizado por Liv Sovik. Editora UFMG, 2003.

Hall, Stuart. "Thinking the Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad" [1999]. *Essential Essays Vol. 2: Identity and Diaspora,* edited by David Morley. Duke UP, 2019, pp. 206-226.

Halleck, Dee Dee, director. *The Gringo in Mañanaland*. Video Data Bank, 1995.

Hauser, Thomas. *The Execution of Charles Horman: An American Sacrifice*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.

Hulme, Peter, and Tim Youngs. *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. Cambridge UP, 2002.

Leed, Eric. *The Mind of the Traveler*: *from Gilgamesh to Globar Tourism*. Basic Books, 1991.

Loach, Ken, director. *Bread and Roses*. Lions Gate Films, 2000.

Martino, Malu de, director. *Margaret Mee and the Moonflower* [*Margaret Mee e a Flor da Lua*]. Imovision, 2012.

Marx, John. "The Feminization of Globalization." *Cultural Critique*, vol. 63, 2006, pp. 1-32. *Project MUSE*, https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/cul.2006.0020.

Mitchell, Steve, director. *Ama-Zone! The Rain Forest Project*. PBS Western Reserve, 2001.

Nava, Gregory, director. *El Norte*. Cinecom International Films, 1983.

Peters, John Durham. "Exile, Nomadism, and Diaspora: The Stakes of Mobility in the Western Canon." *Home, Exile, Homeland*: *Film, Media and the Politics of Place,* edited by Harnid Naficy. Routledge, 1999, pp. 17-41.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Routledge, 1992.

Quemada-Díez, Diego, director. *La Jaula de Oro* [*The Golden Dream*]. Animal de Luz Films, 2013.

Raymont, Peter, and Jim Munro, directors. *The World Is Watching*. Investigative Productions, 1988.

Safran, William. "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora,* vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 83-99, 1991.

Saldanha, Carlos. *Rio*. Blue Sky Studios. 2011.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Diaspora Old and New: Women in Transnational World." *Textual Practice,* vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 245-269, 1996.

Sousa, Vítor de. "What is the meaning of 'diaspora' in the times of globalization? The controversial relationship between Empire, Lusophony, and 'portugalidade'". *4th International Congress in Cultural Studies: Colonialism, Post-Colonialism and Lusophone,* Universidade do Minho, 2014.

Spottiswoode, Roger, director. *Under Fire*. Orion Pictures, 1983.

Stone, Oliver, director. *Salvador*. Hemdale Film Corporation, 1986.

Ty, Eleanor. *The Politics of the Visible in Asian North American Narratives*. U of Toronto P, 2004.

Veríssimo, Érico. *Gato Preto em Campo de Neve*. Ed. Globo, 1953. [1941]

Vêluz, David, and Renata Meirelles, directors. *Cradled by the Earth*. Ludus Produções, 2025.

Youngs, Tim. *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. Cambridge UP, 2013.

Zilcosky, John, editor. *Writing Travel: The Poetics and Politics of the Modern Journey*. U of Toronto P, 2008.

Welles, Orson, and Norman Foster, directors. *It's All True*. RKO Radio Pictures, 1942.

Wild, Nettie, director. *A Place Called Chiapas*. Canada Wild Productions, 1998.

Submission date: 24/11/2026
Acceptance date: 25/11/2026
Editors: Anelise Reich Corseuil, Magali Sperling Beck, Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida