INTRODUCTION

The motivation for this collection was a particular interest in discourses of resistance in Canada and their connections across and beyond various borders. If, on the one hand, physical and conceptual limits still persist in Canada, on the other, as Barbara Godard notes, "the topoi of the Canadian imaginary are now moving borders."[1] Much of this phenomenon of destabilization has been triggered by a plurality of voices asserting difference. Not only have the voices of artists and critics within Canada been crucial to this recognition, but their resonances outside Canada have motivated crosscultural exchanges. The term "difference" is here used to encompass, in Smaro Kamboureli's words, difference "of race, of ethnic origin, of gender, of place, of ideological affiliations, or of thematic concerns and aesthetics,"[2] implying diverse modes of expression, and multiplicities of imagination. By "poetics of resistance" we mean both the theoretical work on and the applied poetics of resistance. In addition to literature, some essays in this special issue are focused on the visual arts. We speak of "other discourses" in our title to evoke, not only the critical readings in this volume, but also their dialogic potential to speak to and with other discourses elsewhere.

A wide nomenclature has been created to describe various kinds of poetics of resistance: oppositional poetics, ethnopoetics, poetics of

diaspora, poetics of gender, poetics of the hyphen, among others. Making use of a curious junction, Fred Wah proposes yet another term: "alienethnic poetics." He writes:

> This poetics, while often used for its ethnic imprint and frequently originating from the necessity to complicate difference, is certainly not limited to an ethnic "project"; the same tactics could as well be used for other goals. Feminist poetics, for example, have arguably contributed some of the most useful means to compose ethnic intention.[3]

Wah then comments on the relation between "ethos-ethnos" leading to "ethic" and the importance of this confluence of meanings to the construction of his own poetics—the "alien" component resisting alignment with mainstream discourse.

Ethics or the positioning of the writer can no longer be separate from the body of writing and its strategies of expression. We expect that the sample in this collection may stimulate reflections on these issues. Thus, when looking at different modes of resistance and their ingenious tools—double-voicing, hybrid discourse, polyphony, silence, or formal innovation—we can recognize political implications in aesthetic choices.

The initial idea of having a joint publication gathering Canadian and Brazilian scholars ended up gaining a new feature with the inclusion of Canadian writers. This certainly promotes a fruitful dialogue between a poetics of resistance in its applied sense and critical discourses. Another relevant feature is the inclusion of an analysis of documentaries, as representative of oppositional aesthetics in current media. Also, the diversity of critical approaches and themes and their curious points of connection enrich the debate with the possibilities of contextual readings. We have included a seminal piece by Nicole Brossard, "Poetic Politics," (in translation) that, despite being originally published in 1990, continues to be republished and discussed for its dialogue with current discourses of resistance. As counterpoint, there

are two other pieces, one by Fred Wah and another by Erín Moure, which are brand-new writings—the former, "From c To c: A Prepositional Poetics," written for presentation at a conference at the University of Lisbon; the latter, "A Stalk of Grain and Light," an excerpt from *O Resplandor*, a forthcoming publication. Other contributions include essays by Canadian scholar Susan Rudy, and Brazilian scholars Rubelise da Cunha, Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida, Anelise Reich Corseuil, and Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins, in addition to reviews of recent publications in Canada, by Brazilian scholars Neide Garcia Pinheiro and Tacel Coutinho Leal.

In "Poetic Politics" ("Política Poética"), Nicole Brossard combines personal experience and political discourse to discuss the trajectory of her writing. In doing so, she demonstrates how her "politics of poetic form—[her] poetic politics—have been shaped within a socio-cultural environment as well as through private life." Brossard questions what she calls the "cultural field of language" informed by male thought in a long legacy of writings setting "standards for imagination, frames of reference, patterns of analysis, networks of meaning, rhetorics of body and soul," explaining how she has been confronting this. Making use of subversion and ludic experience, her practice of writing unmasks "lies, hypocrisy, and banality." Besides discussing her own poetics, Brossard reflects on crucial points through which a text can show its politics: perspective or angle can reposition the reading of a text "before it is even read"; themes and postures, disturbing additional ideologies and "disqualifying symbols of authority"; and style, shaking pre-established rules of writing with innovative solutions.

In "A Stalk of Grain and Light," Erín Moure posits as a discourse of resistance her particular form of translation poetics, which challenges notions of both authorship and the self. Here, "I" is "a stalk of grain and light" and several author/translators inhabit the text. Moure's heteronym,[4] Elisa Sampedrín, who first appeared as co-author of Moure's *Little Theatres* (Anansi, 2005), appears as a translator of Nichita Stãnescu even though she (like Moure), knows no Romanian. Moure "translates" Paul Celan through the "transcreations" of poet Oana

Avasilichioaei. This discourse of resistance is enacted in and through the body: "I am interested in the signature and the mouth and the throat. I am interested in how ear and throat receive language." Speaking of her resistance to what she calls the "false dichotomy" between so-called "lyric" and "experimental" poetry, this piece demonstrates how, "[o]nce other languages are part of the foment, the dichotomy does not hold at all; there is but opening, opening."

Speaking from a racially mixed, hybridized position, Fred Wah's "From c To c: A Prepositional Poetics" locates a discourse of resistance—what he calls "a conscious intervention into the realm of the possible"—in the movement of the least noticed words in the English language: the prepositions. Wah has long paid attention to what, in this essay, he calls the "background noise in language that is frequently made transparent by the tyranny of form and ideology." In poet Jeff Derksen's words (whom he cites), it is a matter of "reach[ing] down to the sign as a contested and productive arena." Wah wrestles with a particularly powerful chain of signifiers—"From Sea to Sea to SEA"—by connecting the "sea" to several signifieds—the letter "c" and then the "dominating chord" ("From c To c") in music. In this way, he succeeds in dismantling the abstract nationalism of a Canada claiming that vast expanse of land and replacing it with citizen Wah's particular attention "to the minute, truthful, and particular initiated by those two prepositions in the motto, `from' and `to'." The piece is in fact an improvisation around that "dominating chord," one which honours "the functional, the material, and the dynamic, those opaque little words that, in fact, must perform the scale necessary to hear the full octave."

In "Why Postmodernism Now? Toward a Poetry of Enactment"("Por que Pós-Modernismo Agora? Com vistas à poesia de *enactment*), Susan Rudy revisits Frederic Jameson's concept of postmodernism, to question the supposed opposition between aesthetics and politics. She argues that what was for Jameson "an unimaginable new mode of representing," is visible "not in the English-Canadian fiction discussed by Linda Hutcheon in *The Canadian Postmodern*, but

in "the radical poetries that have been produced in Canada and elsewhere over the past several decades." Thus, discarding the link with postmodern irony or parody, she proposes the view of these poetries for their affiliation with "radical political movements like those mobilized against globalization, racism, homophobia, and misogyny." Rudy then gives an account of the development of radical poetries in Canada since the 1980s. As for "poetry of enactment," she explains several meanings of the term, incorporating them in her assertion that for a poet, "to 'enact' might mean to verify facts through writing; poetry as the enactment of that verification, the performance of an intelligent being." Evidences for this are found in her analysis of three contemporary Canadian poets: Erín Moure, Jeff Derksen and Nicole Brossard.

In "The Trickster Wink: Storytelling and Resistance in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*," Rubelise da Cunha observes how the Trickster adapts to "Western cultural forms of discourse to resist colonialism and survive in the contemporary world." Adaptation, inherent to the history of aboriginal cultures, is here seen as device of resistance in a poetics that juxtaposes/merges Cree storytelling and Western Discourse. Comparing the Trickster in Highway's work to the "anaconda" cyclically changing skins, she argues that the Trickster's need for different guises, after the contact with "the dangerous otherness of Western culture, might [account for] the lesson that it is not by a quest for lost authenticity, but by adaptation that Indigenous knowledge and culture may survive." To sustain this viewpoint, da Cunha offers us a meticulous reading of the novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen* discussing cultural and political contexts and pointing out curious correlations between Western and Cree storytelling traditions. She concludes by saying that "Highway's acknowledgement of art and literature as a space of transformation and survival in his novel demands a concept of genre as a performative structure."

In "'Impossible Citizens' in the Global City: Dionne Brand's Discourses of Resistance," Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida initiates

her essay with reflections on "resistance," drawing on comments by Susan Sontag, Michel Foucault, and Sara Mills. She then inserts Brand's own critical discourse into the debate, identifying her political positioning as the one of "the contemporary intellectual who faces her world boldly and is not afraid of using her language and her profession as a means of resistance." After a brief account of the trajectory of Brand's poetics of resistance, Almeida proceeds with an analysis of the expansion of Brand's activism from a local to a global scale, the latter illustrated in her two latest poetry collections, *Thirsty* and *Inventory*. She notes that, in both books, the city becomes "the personification of an agent of globalization, a predatory and an accomplice that is blind to people's suffering." To better examine this, Almeida discusses some theoretical and critical views of globalization, using them in her analysis. In regard to *Inventory*, like Diana Brydon, she observes how Brand's work "has moved from a characteristic politics of resistance to one that assumes the co-option and the complicity with our present geopolitical scenario."

In "Latin American Geopolitical Struggles in Canadian Documentaries Production," Anelise Reich Corseuil focuses on two documentaries: *The World is Watching: Inside the News* (1988), a British-Canadian production , and *A Place Called Chiapas* (1998), a Canadian production. Considering these documentaries as self-reflexive narratives, she observes how they represent relations of power between Latin and North American countries. Regarding *The World is Watching*, Corseuil identifies a poetics of resistance in its open form, a plurality of voices, reports and images, critical of the very act of narrating. She defines this resistance as "resistance to closure implied in certain ideological perceptions of the other, to representations of stereotypes, or to any form of reduction." This results in a documentary that "reveals the inadequacy between the North-American media's stereotypes and the preconceived ideas of reporters in face of the Nicaraguan historical complexity." She notes that *A Place Called Chiapas* assumes a similar political stance avoiding "a certain authority

to speak of a specific and distinct historical reality," or homogenous representation of "diverse ethnicities and interests" in Mexico. For Corseuil, the problematization of language and form, coexistence of various discourses, and the lack of resolution or denouement in these documentaries help to create audience awareness.

In "Dionne Brand and Alanis Obomsawin: polyphony in the poetics of resistance," Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins brings together the powerfully activist aesthetic practices of two women: Caribbean-Canadian writer and filmmaker Dionne Brand and Aboriginal filmmaker and musician Alanis Obomsawin. In so doing, she demonstrates their uncanny correspondences: both privilege the plurality of voices that, unexpectedly, allows "subjects to speak for themselves." Drawing on Fred Wah's sense of an applied poetics that "initiate[s] movement and change," Martins' essay draws on the full range of each artist's work, from poetry and documentary to film and music. It also pays attention, both to the increasingly broad scale (from the city or nation to the globe) while at the same time insisting, in Wah's words, that "ethics is "something that surrounds our houses, it is where we live."

With this sample of poetics and other discourses of resistance, we expect to offer not only a transcultural forum on the issue, but possibilities for reflection on our social and political consciousness, our way of dealing with differences, and the implications of our choice to embrace the debate. By embracing the debate, we mean to encourage an ongoing dialogue while waiting, as poet Thiago de Mello writes, for a time when "no one will ever have to wear / the cuirass of silence, / the armor of words."[5]

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Notes

1 Barbara Godard, "Notes from the cultural field: Canadian literature from identity to hybridity," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 72 (Winter 2000): 209-247. Web. 2 Oct. 2009 <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=74188488&Fmt=3&clientId=10843&RQT=309&VName=PQD>.

2. Smaro Kamboureli in introduction to *Making a Difference: Canadian Multicultural Literature* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1.

3. Fred Wah, *Faking It: Poetics and Hybridity* (Edmonton: NeWest Press), 52.

4. The literary concept of the "heteronym" was invented by the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. A "heteronym" is an imaginary character (Pessoa had several) created by a writer to write in different styles; each character was supposed to have a unique biography. See Moure's *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person* (Anansi 2001), what she calls her "transelation" of Pessoa's *O Guardador de Rebanhos*, written with his heteronym Alberto Caeiro.

5. Thiago de Mello's poem "Estatutos do Homem" ("Statutes of Man"), Article 5, translation by Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins.

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