

APPROACHES TO COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND INTER-AMERICAN DIALOGUES: A TRIBUTE TO RENATA R. MAUTNER WASSERMAN

Anelise R. Corseuil^{1*}

¹Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, SC, Brasil

Luiz F. Valente^{2**}

²Brown University, Rhode Island, USA

Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida^{3***}

³Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, MG, Brasil

Professor Renata R. Mautner Wasserman's work on Comparative Literature and Inter-American Studies, her intellectual generosity, and her commitment to outstanding scholarship have inspired the guest editors of this thematic issue on Comparative Literature. Besides serving as the International Editor of *Ilha do Desterro* for more than a decade, Professor Wasserman has been not only our partner in many other professional activities, but also a friend and a generous intellectual to her colleagues and students. After receiving the title of Professor Emeritus, she is now retired from Wayne State University (WSU), MI, EUA, where she taught Comparative Literature and Literatures in English in the Department of English and advised a number of graduate students in their Graduate Program in English. She has also co-advised graduate students in Curso de Pós-Graduação

* Anelise R. Corseuil is a Professor of Literatures in English and Film Studies in the Graduate Program in English and at the English Language and Literature Department at UFSC. She holds a PhD in Literatures in English from Wayne State University and she is currently the Editor-in-Chief of journal *Ilha do Desterro*. Her email address is hcorseuil@terra.com.br. ORCID: 0000-0002-1129-3852.

** Luiz Fernando Valente is a native of Rio de Janeiro, and was educated in Brazil and the United States. He is a Full Professor of Brazilian and Comparative Literature, and a former Chair of the Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies at Brown University. His publications include *História e ficção: convergências e contrastes*, *Mundivivências: leituras comparativas de Guimarães Rosa*, and more than eighty book chapters and articles in journals in the United States, Brazil and Europe. Valente is co-editor of *Brasil/Brazil: A Journal of Brazilian Literature* and a former president of the American Portuguese Studies Association. His email address is luiz_valente@brown.edu. ORCID: 0000-0001-5031-0590.

*** Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida is a Professor of Literatures at Faculdade de Letras, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) and a CNPq research scholar. She is currently the Rector of UFMG and acted as its Vice-Rector during 2014-2018. She is the President of Associação de Universidades Grupo Montevidéu (AUGM), Vice-President of the World University Network (WUN) and Vice-President of Associação de Universidades de Língua Portuguesa (AULP). Among her many awards, she is an Honorary Citizen of Belo Horizonte. Her main area of research is Comparative Literature and Literatures in English. Her email address is srga@reitoria.ufmg.br. ORCID: 0000-0001-6057-977X.



em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC).

Her classes, publications and advising work have helped Brazilian scholars working in the area of Inter-American Studies in several ways: Professor Anelise R. Corseuil was her advisee as a graduate student in Literatures in English at WSU; later on, as Professor of Literatures and Film Studies at UFSC, Corseuil had the privilege to coordinate, along with Professor Arthur Marotti, also from WSU, and Professor Renata Wasserman, an international cooperation agreement under CAPES and FIPSE funding, which involved Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, WSU, as well as Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) and New York University (NYU), under the coordination of Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida at UFMG and Robert Stam at NYU. We coordinated a very successful international program with more than 50 students participating in it as exchange students from both countries, for approximately ten years. This international agreement also allowed professors from all the involved universities to conduct research work abroad, collaborating in team research work, teaching classes at the graduate level and co-advising graduate students, as well as publishing on comparative literary studies in the Americas. Corseuil and Wasserman, for example, travelled through theories and fictions and co-authored the essay “Travelling Cannibals,” and Almeida and Wasserman co-authored a thematic issue for *Ilha do Desterro* (Wasserman; Almeida 2009)

Similarly, Professor Luiz F. Valente has also known Professor Wasserman for more than 30 years, having first met her at a meeting of the Northeast Modern Language Association in his hometown of Providence, Rhode Island in 1988. Her work was already known as she was publishing extensively in the area of Comparative Literature. Their careers have regularly crossed paths as they have been on the same panels and shared meals at various professional conferences, from New England to the Pacific Northwest, and points in-between.

Professor Wasserman’s intellectual work as a researcher is outstanding -- the critical, historical and cultural reflection undertaken by Renata R. Mautner Wasserman over more than four decades has been essential for all those involved in Inter-American literary studies. Her books, such as the indispensable *Exotic Nations: Literature and Cultural Identity in the United States and Brazil, 1830-1930* (1994), awarded the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Comparative Literary Studies by the Modern Language Association of America, and the outstanding *Central at the Margin: Five Brazilian Women Writers* (2007), have played a major role in the incorporation of Brazilian letters into the scope of comparative literature in the North American academy.

The strategy of publishing primarily in her second language has fulfilled the important function of helping expand the discussion of Brazilian literature beyond the borders of Brazilian academic circles, by opening spaces in the Anglophone world for the appreciation of authors who, as the title of her second book suggests, Professor Wasserman convincingly demonstrates to be central even while “marginal.” That is the case with two celebrated essays, which introduced

Brazilian writers to the readers of *PMLA*, the prestigious flagship journal of the Modern Language Association of America. The pair of articles “The Red and the White: The Indian Novels of José de Alencar” (1983) and “Mario Vargas Llosa, Euclides da Cunha, and the Strategy of Intertextuality” (1993) are not only required reading for Alencar and Euclides scholars but have also been vital to the diversification of comparative literary studies.

In addition to being an outstanding researcher, Professor Wassermann is known for her generosity towards her colleagues and students. Celebrating her pioneering contributions to the field of Inter-American literary studies is both an undisputable duty and a gratifying pleasure.

The essays here collected in this thematic issue of *Ilha do Desterro* are all associated with comparative literatures and cultures as they are based on the theory as well as the praxis involved in the making of comparative literature and comparative studies within the context of the Americas.

Professor Earl E Fitz’s essay “Renata Wasserman and Inter-Americanism” considers Prof. Wasserman as a practitioner of the field known, variously, as inter-American literary study, hemispheric literature, and the literature of the Americas. It also argues that she is a leader in this field not only because of her discerning critical observations but also because she proves the singular importance of Brazilian letters in this comparatively American perspective. Fitz’s study especially celebrates Wasserman’s work on two Brazilian authors: José de Alencar and Mário de Andrade. Wasserman highlights these two writers’ major contributions to nineteenth and twentieth-century literature in the Americas.

One of the results of Anelise Reich Corseuil’s post-doctoral research work at WSU, in 2018, under Wasserman’s advising, is the essay here published under the title “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).” The essay introduces us to the frequent migratory currents of certain narratives and ideas within the Americas and how they have formed clusters of knowledge and stimulated audiences’ imagination about specific cultures or nations. More specifically, the essay is a discussion of the process of narrative continuity and displacement in recent films about immigration and travel within the Americas, as they can be read in relation to earlier films on the same theme: *La Jaula de Oro* (Diego Queimada-Díez, 2013) vis à vis *El Norte* (Gregory Nava, 1983), and *Rio* (Carlos Saldanha, 2011) vis à vis *The Three Caballeros* (Walt Disney, 1944). As Corseuil explains, *La Jaula de Oro* presents the same border crossing as *El Norte*, from Guatemala to Mexico to the USA, but twenty years apart, whereas in *Rio* the contemporary narrative of a migrating little blue macaw, Blu, who moves from the USA to Brazil, readdresses another culturally and politically invested symbolic icon from the mid-1940s and the good neighbor policy -- a parrot named José Carioca, whose role in *The three caballeros* goes much beyond the frames of the film. The essay aims at an analysis of the narrative and aesthetic frameworks of the films and their ideological resonances and displacements in terms of American hemispheric relations.

From a more historical and global perspective, the essay “Translating empire, translating Cartier and Léry into English: text and context in comparative narratives of expansion and the New World,” by Jonathan L. Hart, approaches texts and contexts between Brazil and Canada in the Atlantic world, not only as an Inter-American comparison, but also as a trans-Atlantic and global typology. It focuses on the representation of empire through translation, particularly of part of Jacques Cartier’s narratives about Canada by John Florio in 1580 and of Jean de Léry’s account of the voyage to Brazil in Samuel Purchas’ collection in 1625.

In “A national unity of interests and affections’: frameworks of the union in the early Brazilian novel,” Thiago Rhys Bezerra Cass discusses how novels from the United Kingdom have been consistently defined as a major repository of narrative paradigms for the incipient Brazilian novel, being the national tale arguably one of them. As Cass suggests, national tales provided a narrative framework for the negotiation of colonial heritage and postcolonial nationalism, which might be seen in José de Alencar’s *O Guarani*.

In “O Gótico em William Faulkner e Lúcio Cardoso: uma leitura comparada”, Maria Sena analyzes the Gothic elements in the short stories “Céu escuro,” (1940) – and their related narratives: “Um capítulo de romance” (1940) and “História de Cristiana” (2) (1944) –, by the Brazilian writer Lúcio Cardoso, *vis à vis* “A rose for Emily” (1930), by the American writer William Faulkner. In this essay, Sena argues that the Gothic is a consistent poetics, with identifiable narrative elements.

In “À sombra da colonialidade: a violência em “The welcome table”, de Alice Walker, e “Duzu-Querença”, de Conceição Evaristo,” by Ernani Silverio Hermes and Rosani Úrsula Ketzer Umbach, Walker’s and Evaristo’s stories were compared and contrasted in regards to their representation of the violence perpetuated throughout History by a colonial matrix of power. Starting from this point, the authors analyze racialized and gender-based violence through the lens of decoloniality, focusing on the development of the storyline and the figurative dynamics of the characters.

From an inter-American perspective, in “Crossroads between American authors: Eshu, Ogun and Oshunmare in Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy* and Conceição Evaristo’s *Ponciá Vicêncio*,” Danielle de Luna e Silva and Renan Cabral Paulino analyze Morrison’s and Evaristo’s novels in order to list elements related to the presence of Orishas in both narratives. They conclude that both novels converge to the existence of similar elements characteristic of Oshunmare, Ogun, and Eshu. This finding is seen as an element that enables a comparative reading of Afro-Brazilian and African-American Literatures from the perspective of the crossroads pedagogy.

Mexican-American writers in the U.S. are the topic of “Produções artísticas de U.S. Latinx: demolindo fronteiras e desmanchando estereótipo.” In this essay, Gisèle Manganelli Fernandes discusses how U.S. Latinx live “between two worlds,” a characteristic that leads their artistic production to obtain support for social inclusion and equality. Fernandes uses different texts to exemplify how Latinx writers address stereotypes applied to their communities on a daily basis:

Entre Lucas y Juan Mejía (1992), by Julia Alvarez, is at the basis of the debate related to the issue of being “hyphenated;” the play *Los Vendidos* (1967), by Luis Valdez, poems by Benjamin Alire Sáenz, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Tino Villanueva, as well as the movie *Sleep Dealer* (2009) are also discussed in Fernandes’s essay.

Still from an inter-American perspective is Livia Penedo Jacob’s “The uirapuru, the eagle and the condor: Indigenous literatures in Abya Yala.” Jacob’s essay provides a comparative analysis of the ways in which Indigenous literature has been produced and received in various countries in the Americas, identifying colonial interventions in these processes. For Jacob, even when conditioned by Western mechanisms (such as market, consumer and public), Indigenous works are pedagogical from a political point of view, thus deserving historically contextualized analyses.

A second essay in this thematic issue of *Ilha do Desterro* on Indigenous culture from an inter-American perspective is Neide Garcia Pinheiro’s “Indigenous Cinema in Brazil and Canada weaving cultures: *Topawa* (2019) and *Waban-aki: People from Where the Sun Rises* (2007).” The essay presents a comparative analysis of the documentary *Topawa* (2020), a collective of Parakana filmmakers from the Amazon region in Brazil, which presents the process of production of traditional hammocks, and *Waban-aki: People from Where the Sun Rises* (2007), by Canadian filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin, -- the latter portrays the lyricism of Obomsawin’s perspective of her people, the Abenaki, in their contemporary struggle to keep traditional basketry alive. According to Pinheiro, considering the differences in the contexts of the two documentaries, both explore a common theme, the role of traditional activities in the complex process of (re)construction of cultural identity in the face of historical adversities. For Pinheiro, the two productions also illustrate how Indigenous cinema goes beyond local borders to encompass a wider movement in the Americas and the world also advocating for Indigenous political affirmation and the recognition of Indigenous cultural renaissance.

From a comparative inter-mediaty perspective, two essays are here included: “Medialities and adaptabilities in Jorge Furtado’s Shakespearean Labours of Love,” by Caio Antônio Nóbrega and Genilda Azerêdo, and “Is this a novel?,” by Carolina Barbosa Lima e Santos. Nóbrega and Azerêdo’s essay provides an analysis of the representation of medialities (in terms of medial possibilities and restrictions) in Jorge Furtado’s novel *Trabalhos de amor perdidos* (2006). For the authors, the literary narrative, the intermedial references to theater, illustrated novel, radio program and website are especially significant, for they portray of the characters’ choices on how to work with these media’s communicative potentialities and the obstacles when adapting Shakespeare’s work. The authors also discuss the relationship between intertextuality and intermediality, so as to illustrate the devouring character of Furtado’s parody. Santos’s essay provides an analysis of *Eles Eram Muitos Cavalos* (2001/2006), by the contemporary Brazilian writer Luiz Ruffato. The essay discusses the possible configuration of the work as a “literary installation,” a term used by the author himself. Ruffato’s text proposes a reflection on Brazilian social ills from a decentered critical perspective, far from

any nationalistic bias. To develop her analysis, Santos recovers the concept of installation, used in Visual Arts, as well as theoretical studies aimed at analyzing the relationship between literature and other arts, developed by authors such as Marjorie Perloff, Márcia Arbex, and Maria Adélia Menegazzo.

This thematic issue closes with an interview given by Renata R. Wasserman to Professors Anelise R. Corseuil and Magali Sperling Beck, entitled “Between Worlds: a conversation with Renata Wasserman,” and with a review section on two recent publications.

In the interview, Professor Wasserman offers a panorama of her personal and professional life in Brazil and in the U.S., which she calls the experience of living “between two worlds.” Her descriptions of her life in São Paulo during World War II and during the military regime and her later experiences in the U.S. as an academic, professor and intellectual compose an invaluable mosaic in which education, feelings and critical inquiry play a vivid part.

The last section presents reviews of two recent publications: *Charles Simic: mestre dos disfarces*, translated and organized by Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins and Maysa Cristina da Silva Dourado, and reviewed here by Marcelo Martinez, as well as Avital Gad-Cyckman’s *Light Reflections Over Blues: Short Prose*, reviewed by Melina P. Savi. Avital Gad-Cyckman lives in Florianópolis, was born in Israel, and also has lived “between two worlds;” Charles Simic has always had close encounters with Brazilian culture and lives in the U.S. Martinez’s and Savi’s reviews highlight significant aspects of both of these works.

Renata Wasserman’s metaphor of “living in two worlds” is very consistent throughout this thematic issue of *Ilha do Desterro*, embodying one’s life and world.

We would like to thank our Executive Editor, Magali Sperling Beck, for helping us throughout the editorial process; Ane Girondi for the design and Paola da Cunha Nichele for her work at *Ilha*.

We wish you will enjoy this issue of *Ilha* as much as we enjoyed organizing it.

References

- Wasserman, Renata R. “Preguiça and Power: Mário de Andrade’s *Macunaíma*,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 21 (Summer 1984): 99-116.
- Wasserman, Renata R. “Re-inventing the New World: Cooper and Alencar,” *Comparative Literature* 36 (Spring 1984): 183-200.
- Wasserman, Renata R. “The Red and the White: The ‘Indian’ Novels of José de Alencar,” *PMLA* 98 (October 1983): 815-827.
- Wasserman, Renata R. “Mario Vargas Llosa, Euclides da Cunha, and the Strategy of Intertextuality,” *PMLA* 108, 3 (May 1993): 460-473).
- Wasserman, Renata R. *Exotic Nations: Literature and Cultural Identity in the United States and Brazil, 1830-1930*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Wasserman, Renata R. *Central at the Margin: Five Brazilian Women Writers*, Lewisburgh: Bucknell U. P. , 2007.

- Wasserman, Renata M., and Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida, eds. *Ilha do Desterro: On Foreign Land: Ideologies and Travel Discourse* 57 (Jul/Dez 2009): 1-176.
- Wasserman, R. M.; Corseuil, Anelise R. "Travelling Cannibals". *Cualli*, v. 01, p. 209-232, 2013
- Wasserman, R. M.; Corseuil, Anelise. "Canibais Viajantes". In: *Cinema, globalização e interculturalidade*. Lopes, Denilson; França, Andrea. (Orgs.). Chapecó: Argos, 2010, p. 193-217.