

# Canadian Studies in Bahia

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**Resumo:** Este texto apresenta a trajetória da autora como uma canadianista que tem trabalhado para o dinamismo dos estudos canadenses na Bahia. Com uma bagagem considerável de estudos e pesquisas em universidades do Quebec, a atual vice-presidente da ABECAN conta como tem organizado eventos e publicações coletivas para reunir pesquisadores tanto no Canadá como no Brasil.

**Palavras-chave:** Literatura quebequense; mídia; estudos canadenses; intercultural

I flew to Quebec for the first time in 1979. I studied French at Laval University for three weeks with a scholarship from the Ministry of Education.

Before going to Quebec, I had begun to work with a Quebec team in a Radiovision project developed by Educational Radio of Bahia. This project aimed to create a literacy revolution in our state with the use of verbal and visual languages, with radiophonic messages, slides and paperbacks. A scriptwriter from the University of Quebec at Montreal (UQÀM), Jacques Archambault, came several times to conduct workshops on the concept of the image in educational material, and about the adequacy between images, sounds and written words. In his teaching concerning different relations between the signs, Archambault gave us a good training in Semiotics. This practical training in radio complemented the academic course that I had already completed in the Federal University of Bahia.

In 1984, I flew to Montreal to do a PhD in Semiotics in UQAM. I had a literary training, but my work in Educational Radio had provoked a special interest for me in media messages, and I decided to write a thesis about the impact of new technologies on social behavior. As I had observed that Brazilian people liked watching soap operas, and began, in the eighties, to buy every product announced in the fictive plots, I felt that the theme of the insertion of advertisements in narrative forms that could reach both poor and rich people was an appropriate one for Semiotic research.

My research was very favorably received and I began to give lectures in different Universities in Montreal, Québec city and Chicoutimi. In addition, I was invited by Radio Centre Ville to do a series of programs about Brazilian culture, and I talked about the power of TV Globo, the fourth largest television network in the world.

When I finished my thesis, I worked for two years in the University of Bahia as a head teacher in the young course of social communication. I joined the Brazilian Association of Communication Studies – INTERCOM – where I met several researchers who had already studied or worked in Canadian universities. I was able then to organize in 2002 the Colloquium Brazil/Canada: *America, Land of Utopias. Challenges of Social Communication*, in Salvador, as a part of the National Conference of Communication

For years, I developed in the workshops of Intercom comparative studies of Brazilian soap operas and the telefiction of Quebec (*téléromans*). The title of my research was *The Aesthetic Revolution in Telefiction: realistic fiction or imagined reality?* By citing examples taken from television drama from Brazil and Quebec, this research demonstrated the existence of certain tendencies of a transnational order that was able eventually to sketch the contours of universal TV fiction. The premise of this research was that television production creates a representative reality that is capable of bridging the tradition of popular fiction and reality by avoiding mimetic production. In this new area of televised fiction, new aesthetic tendencies are deployed. By taking into account the concept of merchandising, the research demonstrated that a veritable union of fiction and advertising (publicity) has established itself within the *telenovela*.

This study therefore attempted to describe certain modalities of the intersection of discourses within the text by following both semantic axes of sensory production. The first axis deals with the exaltation of the technical progress that permits the insertion of the advertising (publicity) discourse in fiction; the second deals with the treatment of social and political facts that shatter scenarios combining fiction with information. We worked with the *téléromans* *Lance et compte* and *Scoop*.

In 1992, Denise Lavallée opened the Canadian Studies Center (NEC) in our University -UNEB. I began to collaborate with the Center, giving lectures in several seminars concerning Canadian studies, doing translations of Canadian

lectures in French, and founding with Mrs. Lavallée, Mr. Edson Miranda (recent director of our Center) and Mrs. Leonor de Abreu the journal *Canadart*. In this Journal, we published a great deal of Canadian and Brazilian research in diverse fields of the human sciences. *Canadart* was the official journal of ABECAN for ten years. This Association was twice under the presidency of Mrs. Lavallée and I became a member of the directorship (Financial Council), and collaborated in the organization of its national conferences.

With a focus on the process of transculturalism, *Canadart* stimulated reflection not only on the intersection of Canadian and Brazilian culture but also on the identity construction of other cultures in the Americas. Our journal has special merit in discussing the great TV and radio production of Québec. Texts by Renée Legris, Hélène Marchand, Catherine Saouter, and myself, have shown how the electronic media are a means of promulgating particular visions of Canadian and Brazilian history. For example, teletheater and *téléromans* represent the integration processes of different people that immigrated to Canada, politic questions concerning sovereignty and Canadian multiculturalism, the development of feminism and the emergence of homosexuality with the dangers of harassment and discrimination. Brazil also has creative frameworks within a sociological and political point of view, where the Media are rooted in a particular cultural system.

In several of the Conferences that we organized in the NEC, I was able to talk about TV production. Grignon's book *Un homme et son pêché* (1933) and *Le Survenant* (1947) became both radio and television series. Both were very important for the creation of a national television network in 1952 which played an important role in the evolution of a collective identity for French Canadians. Grignon's character Séraphin Poudrier, was developed in the series *Les Belles Histoires des Pays-d'en-Haut*, from 1956 to 1970 in 495 episodes. The series had a vast ensemble cast of extended family and other villagers which revealed in greater depth the settlement of Quebec's Laurentides region. The satirical portrait of Séraphin was also modified: the great miser of a small Quebec village who dominated all the people and gave the impression of someone that had power became a public man, a major, who continued to have power, but who could share wealth with others and think about the well-being of the community.

Thinking of the originality of Grignon who could create a character capable of breaking with the convention of regionalist novels representing the utopian rural life, I decided to do two post-doctorates in CRELIQ (*Centre de Recherche sur la Littérature Québécoise*), in Laval University, over two periods: 1994-1998 and 1997-1998. In CRELIQ, we had a research group called INCULT (*industries culturelles*) whose leaders were Roger de La Garde et Denis Saint-Jacques. We discussed specific structures of television series, adaptations from literature to radio, TV and cinema, and all kinds of intersections between distinct media. One day I gave a lecture in a group discussion on cinema and compared the film adapted from *Un homme et son pêché* and the film adapted from the Graciliano Ramos novel *São Bernardo* (1934). I talked about two strong power structures that allowed the emergence of two dominant characters that were seen as anti-heroes. They represented the new strengths of modern capitalism as owners of a great quantity of money that they were able to accumulate doing all kinds of legal or illegal things. They provoked at one and the same time horror and fascination in readers and spectators.

I then had the idea of writing a book that would discuss continental American identity (*américanité*) in three novels that I considered to have broken the conventions of the traditional regionalist model designed to maintain the identity of French Canadians, *Menaud maître -draveur* (1937), *Trente Arpents* (1938) and *Un homme et son pêché* (1934), in parallel with *Mar morto* (1936), *Terres du bout du monde* (1942) and *São Bernardo* (1934). The references of the inter-American comparison allowed me to exam the dialogic and hybrid nature that reveals the foundations of these American productions (six novels) in their aesthetic and cultural manifestations. This work was published in 2004 by the Laval University Press as the first volume of the collection 'Americana' under the direction of Jean-François Côté.

When I published the book I already belonged to GIRA, the Interdisciplinary Group for Research on America, directed by Frédéric Lesemann and Jean-François Côté in INRS in Montreal. GIRA has researchers from various fields of the human sciences aiming to develop questions concerning what the American continent means in its hybridity. American societies were founded in association with the confrontation between at least two cultures (European and Indian) and in some cases between three cultures including the African. As the Americas grow

ever more diverse, the question of what continental hybridism means yields an increasingly complicated answer. How do Americans really see their hybridity today? Do the Americas have cultures based on real mixing of races and diversity or are American cultures in conflict, with competing and opposing ideologies and subcultures? What progress has been made in defining this continental identity, and what challenges remain?

The researchers of GIRA worked in the most systematic possible way on encounters with the Other. Thus, GIRA began to interact with ABECAN and in 2003 a group of researchers came to Belo Horizonte in order to participate in the 7<sup>th</sup> international conference, which constituted an important point in the development of relationships between our universities. With GIRA, we have also organized several symposiums in ACFAS – the *Association Canadienne Française pour l'Avancement de la Science* - in which we were able to include various researchers from different Canadian and Brazilian universities. In 2007 and 2008, our symposiums had a theme related to Brazilian culture, and we were able to receive colleagues from several universities, like UEFS (Feira de Santana) that is renewing the face of Canadian studies in Bahia. We were able to publish several collective books with the papers of those that participated in our symposiums, as can be seen in the bibliography.

We were also able to develop academic relations with the University of Rennes which has an Institute of the Americas (*Institut des Amériques*), with our colleague Rita Olivieri-Godet (associate professor at UEFS where she taught for more than 15 years) who began to organize the ACFAS symposiums with us. I must emphasize our symposium of 2006 when we were able to pay an important tribute to the Canadian writer Noel Audet who had died at the end of 2005. Noel was a professor of UQAM who had developed fundamental relations with Brazilian researchers.

I should also mention that, during the nineties, I was impressed with all the dynamism of Canadian studies in Brazil and thought that we could also have a center of Brazilian studies in Quebec. With the support of Professor Denise Lavallée, the Embassy of Canada and the president of UNEB we were able to submit a first project to the University of Trois Rivières that had been interested in developing relationships with universities in Latin America. However, as Montreal is more cosmopolitan we decided to address the project of a Brazilian studies center to the

University of Quebec at Montreal (UQAM) where several academic exchanges with Brazilian universities were current.

CERB – the *Centre d'études et de recherches sur le Brésil* - was founded in September 2001. From 2003 to 2005, I was able to do another post-doctorate there under the supervision of Bernard Andrès, the director. At the beginning of 2003, CERB organized the symposium *Nouveau Brésil* which was a very good opportunity for bringing together a great many students from all of Latin America. At that time, Lula was the new President of Brazil and Quebec often reported on his life. The presence of several members of his government in this symposium, such as the minister for agrarian reform, for example, attracted people from everywhere in the Americas.

Later, CERB housed an original project developed by Zila Bernd with the support of Bernard Andrès and Gérard Bouchard in Québec. This project concerned the elaboration of a dictionary of myths and literary figures of the Americas. As Bernd had said there are some dictionaries in the world that show European myths, but never American myths that sometimes have Indian or African roots or European roots that were modified. CERB organized events in UQAM where Brazilian and Canadian professors continued the discussion of the specifics of American literary figures. Finally, the DMFL – *Dicionário de Mitos e Figuras Literários* - was launched during the 9th National Conference of ABECAN, in 2007 in Salvador. This dictionary became an important instrument of integrated research for professors working on Brazilian, Canadian and other American cultures.

In 2004 (until 2009), I became the Brazilian representative of AIEQ – the *Association Internationale d'Études Québécoises*. It was a good experience getting to know what our colleagues are doing around the world and what we could do to stimulate studies on the culture of Quebec in our country. With the NEC of UNEB we continued to promote seminars about Canadian culture and we received a team from Quebec that gave an intensive course on the literature, theater and cinema of Quebec, and on the methodology of teaching French as second language. This interaction is very important for training French teachers in another francophone culture, because for a long time French teachers in Latin America were trained only in the culture of France.

In 2005, I joined the group FIGURA de l'UQAM – *Centre de Recherche sur le texte et l'Imaginaire*. I took part in several symposiums and seminars of

FIGURA and, in 2009, organized a symposium in UNEB associated with FIGURA, with the title: *Figures of modern violence*. The director of FIGURA, Bertrand Gervais, participated in this symposium. He is an important reference as a writer of novels that touch on the problem of violence in the modern world and as a writer of theories about violence in post-modern novels. We published the papers of this symposium through the press of UEFS with the title: *Figuras modernas da violência. Confluências Brasil-Canada*. This symposium was mentioned as an example of innovation in comparative studies at the international meeting of the International Council of Canadian Studies in 2010.

Since March 2010, I have been the vice-president of ABECAN. I continue then to prepare events and articles about Canadian culture and am working for the success of another conference, the 11<sup>th</sup> national conference of ABECAN, which will take place in the Federal University of Bahia – UFBa - with the support of UEFS and UNEB, the latter with its program of post-graduation in Languages where I teach Literature and History and Languages and Media.

Since my post-doctorate in CERB, I have been associate professor of UQAM, renewed last year until 2016. This facilitates my research in Québec and helps me to organize other events. Next year we will be organizing another symposium in ACFAS with the title *Lieux de précarité et d'oubli* which was conceived and discussed in the last event in May 2011 by the researchers of FIGURA, CERB, Rennes 2, UFBa, UQAM, UEFS, UFMG, Université d'Ottawa, Université de Saarbrücken, UNEB and others.

Finally, I may say that I published a novel in Montreal in 2008 that deals with the similarities of and differences between the cultures of Quebec and Brazil. A review by Núbia Hanciau of this book may be found in the journal of ABECAN, *Interfaces*. (<http://www.revistabecan.com.br/arquivos/1259536694.pdf>)

**Abstract:** This text presents the author's trajectory as a Canadianist who has worked to assure the dynamism of Canadian studies in Bahia. With a rich background of studies and research in Universities of Quebec, the current vice-president of ABECAN tells how she has organized events and collective publications in order to unite researchers in Canada and Brazil.

**Keywords:** Quebec literature; media; canadian studies; intercultural



**Résumé:** Ce texte présente la trajectoire de l’auteure comme une canadienne qui a beaucoup travaillé pour assurer le dynamisme des études canadiennes à Bahia. À partir d’une riche expérience d’études et de recherches dans plusieurs universités du Québec, l’actuelle vice-présidente de l’ABECAN raconte comment elle a organisé des événements et publications collectives afin de réunir plusieurs chercheurs au Canada et au Brésil.

**Mots-clés:** Littérature québécoise; media; études canadiennes; interculturel

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