

Robert Henry Moser and Antonio Luciano de Andrade Tosta, eds. Foreword by George Monteiro. *Luso-American Literature: Writings by Portuguese-Speaking Authors in North America*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011.

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In this alluring anthology of what the editors define as Luso-American literature, the reader is invited by a keen foreword and a well crafted introduction to explore “writers whose works reflect deeply on their experiences living in North America” (xxi). The editors begin by tackling the meaning of Luso-American and (re)defining it by including all Portuguese-speaking communities, expanding to a certain degree the geography of *lusofonia* – a term packed with some controversy. Hence, the term is, in theory, comparable to Hispanic-American. The book privileges only authors with ties to the three most represented Portuguese-speaking groups in North America; Portuguese, Brazilian and Cape Verdean, but it is sufficiently comprehensive to provide a glimpse into what constitutes the Luso-American experience as defined by the editors.

The views and texts of this book are too numerous to be adequately discussed here. Briefly, *Luso-American Literature* is a monolingual anthology of fifty-two works, with twenty-eight translated from the Portuguese. The book is divided by country and further subdivided, with the exception of Cape

Verde, by topics that identify certain circumstances affecting Luso-Americans. Each part is also prefaced by a brief introduction that contextualizes the texts that follow, which include a variety of genres. "Part 1: Portuguese Voices" is divided into three parts with works that deal with "Origins and Destinations," "Saudade" and "Cultural Clashes." These texts provide a sample of works from Francisco Cota Fagundes, Jorge de Sena, Onésimo T. Almeida, Katherine Vaz, Alfred Lewis and John Philip Sousa, to name a few, and provide an excellent opening. "Part 2: Brazilian Voices" contains texts by many familiar Brazilian writers and are arranged thematically under "Sojourners and Travelers," *Brazuca* and *Beyond* and "Reimagining the Hyphen." Works by Erico Verissimo, Gilberto Freyre, Silviano Santiago, Moacyr Scliar and others of such caliber, make Part 2 a remarkable read. "Part 3: Cape Verdean Voices" is not subdivided, yet the categories present in Part 1 and 2 are easily applied to the whole anthology. Therefore, in any of the selected works one can explore the "origins and destinations," "cultural clashes," and the "reimagining" of new identities and the travels that define all transnational and transterritorial spaces. Indeed, we could argue, even, that it is the mobile experience that most defines the works in this anthology and consequently, Luso-American literature.

Attempting to collect in one volume works that, in some way, capture what the editors propose as the Luso-American individual is a daunting task. To their merit, the editors make a persuasive argument in their introduction to the book. In a well researched and intelligently written essay, the editors make a case for Luso-American literature to encompass all those belonging or tracing their origin to a Portuguese-speaking country. As stated by the editors and evident by the authors selected, the geography of what constitutes Luso-American literature is vast. This inclusiveness could prove too difficult to defend. A slight exclusiveness would help narrow down the definition of Luso-American literature. For example, some authors included in the anthology could easily be included in Portuguese, Brazilian or Cape Verdean travel or e/immigrant literature, thus positioning them more within their national literary space than in their North American counterpart. In fact, several of them are (Miguéis, Scliar, Barbosa). Also, in the case of Jorge de Sena (there are others) and without getting into authorial intentions, I am not convinced

he saw himself as a Luso-American. These issues bring to mind the Brazilian master Machado de Assis and his “Instinto da Nacionalidade” (1873) essay. Debating what makes literature Brazilian, Machado warns that fictionalizing national features and concerns does not necessarily make such texts capable of capturing a national literary identity. In the same spirit, possibly we still need time to understand or imagine what is the *instinto* of Luso-American literature.

An anthology is by its own nature limited and potentially problematic. It is a work in progress as well. The same can be said of Luso-American literature whose community’s “literary ethnoscape of cultural encounters, of hyphenated experiences [...],” as the editors cunningly put it, still needs further study and definition (xxviii). Yet, the book provides a rich array of multifaceted texts that will surely motivate the conversation about what defines the Luso-American experience. Perhaps the beginning is less important than where to go from here. A foundation has been set, and we can only hope that the discussion will continue with new anthologies and scholarly work that will further delineate what is Luso-American literature.

The texts included are of the utmost quality and should be read and studied. They, indeed, give a unique perspective on the American and Canadian experience from the perspective of individuals rooted, at various levels, in the immigrant, migrant and exile state of affairs. As such, this ground-breaking anthology is a valid and thought-provoking contribution to a dialogue in progress. Perhaps a volume on the concept of Luso-American literature would help define its parameters and clarify the questions raised by this book.

Organizing an anthology can be as knotty as translating – it can always be done differently. Regardless of any limitations, the book is, to my knowledge, the first anthology dealing with the concept of Luso-American literature as broadly conceptualized by the editors: “Portuguese-speaking authors in North America” and will be now a reference on the topic. Despite the questions about what should be considered Luso-American literature and any issues with this term, this book brings together a body of works that are certainly well written from Brazil, Portugal, Cape Verde, Canada and the United States and should be read by those enticed by academic curiosity or merely by the simple pleasure of reading. I was satisfied by both.

