

Introduction:

Celebrating Portuguese Diaspora Literature in North America

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The editors would like to dedicate this issue of *Gávea-Brown*, number 47, to a retrospective view of Portuguese Diaspora Literature in North America (PDLNA), as well as a prospective vision of this same literature for the decades ahead. Relative to other Euro-American literatures, PDLNA is not only one of the youngest but also one of the most modest. This is due to two main factors, the principal of which is that the arrival of Portuguese in the U.S. in high numbers only occurred just prior to the 1960s until the mid-1970s. Additionally, the rate of literacy among Portuguese migrants prior to that date was one of the lowest among all European migrant groups to the U.S. and Canada. However, as a result of the arrival in the country, starting in the very late 1950s, of a significant number of more educated individuals—many with an elementary school education, some with the equivalent of a secondary education, a few with university degrees—and the placement, among the new migrants, of a much higher value upon education than their ancestors had ever placed, there occurred a marked change. This development would become especially noticeable in the 1980s and increasingly afterward as it translated into a greater number of university degrees among Portuguese, especially Portuguese Americans, and a higher number of books published (and of higher quality) than theretofore by Portuguese migrants and their descendants. We can now (2023) say, without any fear of contradiction, that Portuguese-American letters have attained, in both the U.S. and Canada, a degree of development, quantitatively and qualitatively, that justifies the inclusion of PDLNA in the study of ethnic literatures in secondary schools and universities in areas interested in the Portuguese presence in North America. This study of PDLNA could also extend to Portugal, particularly the Azores and Madeira.

The editors also envision, and hope, even as the number of new Portuguese migrants to North American has been declining since the mid-1970s, that more and more writers of this literature continue to find inspiration in their past, their present, and the collective effort of helping to carve their future while maintaining and strengthening what is worthwhile in Portuguese heritage in our two North American countries.

The editors would also like to express their hope that this issue—and towards this end we assemble the greatest number of interviews with authors and professors of Portuguese ever published in any single issue of *Gávea-Brown*—would foment and strengthen the sense of community—a **Luso Letters Community**—among Portuguese people and their descendants who live in all areas of the United States and Canada. We believe this sense to be important as we move toward the future. The path of creativity can be a lonely one indeed, and the path of ethnic literature can be very challenging. Both are best traveled in broad self-awareness, togetherness, and mutual support. We also appeal to our brethren, friends, and colleagues on the other side of the Atlantic to continue to work with us to strengthen the bonds that history forged but are now in our hands to alter, guide, and improve. This issue of *Gávea-Brown* hopes to make a contribution in this direction by assembling a number of interviews with authors, scholars, and professors of Portuguese who may have never taught PDLNA but have shown interest in doing so.