

Eric Fillion, *Distant Stage: Quebec, Brazil, and the Making of Canada's Cultural Diplomacy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022)

ERIC FILLION'S *Distant Stage* is a unique and needed book for Canadians to better understand their relationship to Latin America and its impact on the country. The book focus on Montreal-born Jean Désy, Canada's first minister plenipotentiary (1941-43) and first Ambassador (1943-47 in Brazil, and on his innovative approach to use music and visual arts in order to strengthen bilateral relations. Due to Désy's initiative, in 1944 a bilateral cultural agreement was signed between the two countries, the first one ever for Canada.

The book is unique on two fronts: it addresses a neglected topic, as if Canada never had a shared history with Brazil, or Latin America in general. It also innovates by focussing on culture and not on business as is usually the case for the few academic works that exist. Moreover, the book is a contribution to the understanding of cultural diplomacy and the role of Quebec (and Quebecers) in Canada's international history. Finally, there is no other book that looks at South America as a stage for Canada's nation building.

The author clearly shows how a closer proximity was important for both countries due to the changes brought by World War II – when Atlantic trading routes were disrupted, and the United States had an increasing economic and political influence in all of the Americas. Therefore, Brazil and Canada, two middle powers, attempted to use each other to counterbalance American dominance. This was especially relevant for Brazil, which had been quite active in pushing for diplomatic exchange, while Canada snubbed Brazil and other countries in the region.

For Jean Désy, the post in Brazil – after having to leave his post in Belgium due to the war – gave him an opportunity to not only strengthen bilateral relations, but also to use it to promote Quebec's culture on an international stage. As the author points out, Désy believed that cultural relations “could nurture mutual understanding in addition to providing opportunities to develop a compelling image of Canada for the world to see.” (4) That was done by highlighting the common Latin and Catholic backgrounds shared by Brazilians and French Canadians. Thus, by promoting French-Canadian artists internationally it was hoped that it could have an impact on the role of francophones in Canada's federalist system. Or as the author states: “Brazil was a distant stage where internal Canadian identity politics and aspirations could be played out.” (9)

Having a non-anglophone world partner was also vital for Brazil as it offered an alternative from the long history of British and American imperialism. Fillion shows that this was made clear by President Getúlio Vargas – who spoke fluent French – when he first met Désy. Fillion also shows that emphasizing the Latin connection between Brazilians and Francophones was relevant because of the fact that Canada had been perceived as an English-speaking country due to the representations conveyed by the Canadian executives from the mighty Brazilian Traction, Light and Power Company. Yet, the idea that Anglo and French Canadians coexisted in a harmonious way, was parallel to the idea of racial harmony that was being popularized in Brazil at the time, creating a parallel between the two countries, at least with Rio de Janeiro and Montreal's white elites.

In that first meeting Vargas also made the point that Canada resembled Brazil's diverse ethnic makeup. Fillion remarks

that it was unclear what Vargas was exactly referring to, but it gave Désy the idea to develop strong relations by using this official discourse. As the author indicates, Canada wanted to be seen in South America as a country free of racism, in the same way that Brazilian elites wanted their country to be portrayed as one of racial harmony. Despite the fact that both were racist countries which excluded non-whites.

The discussion on Carmen Miranda, although not a major section of the book, is very interesting. Fillion identifies her as an informal ambassador of culture in the United States, thus, also influencing Canada, mainly due the popularity of the Miranda's Hollywood movies. Fillion points out a moment in the 1940s when Alys Robi's French version of one of Miranda's most popular song, *Tico-tico no Fubá*, "fulfilled listeners desire for the exotic" (156) popularizing Brazilian samba music in Canada, especially in Quebec. Fillion does well in discussing her non-threatening image to North American audiences: despite the fact that Miranda was white, she represented the image of a racially mixed Brazil. Yet, he also points out that samba was not the music Brazilian elites wanted to export, despite the fact that the official discourse at the time was one of racial democracy and racial plurality.

Finally, the book shows that Désy's innovative diplomatic approach did not result in closer bilateral relations between Brazil and Canada. The 1944 cultural agreement remained forgotten, even hidden, so that no other country would be tempted by a similar type of agreement. Therefore, the Department of External Affairs "lost sight of what could be accomplished, domestically and internationally, by using culture as an instrument of diplomacy." (199-200)

The book covers complex issues pertaining to the history of both countries.

In order to do this, Fillion carried impressive research – including primary sources in Portuguese, French and English from archives in London, Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, and Halifax.

Fillion's book is therefore an important contribution to the historiography of the Americas and relevant for Canadians to understand the past and the world beyond English/French perceptions and interpretations. Yet, readers should be aware that this book was written for Canadians and Canadianists. Although it can contribute to some discussions in relation to Brazilian foreign relations, aspects related to Canada's past, and the role of Quebec can be a bit unclear for non-Canadian specialists. Still, that was not the book Fillion proposed to write, and his work highlights how Brazil has had a shared history with Canada.

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Mara Montanaro, *Théories féministes voyageuses. Internationalisme et coalitions depuis les luttes latino-américaines* (Montréal: Éditions de la rue Dorion, 2022)

AVEC *THÉORIES féministes voyageuses*, la philosophe Mara Montanaro éclaire les contributions des féminismes latino-américains dans les résistances et les soulèvements contre la violence capitaliste et ses expressions extractivistes. Cet ouvrage est un condensé de philosophie féministe qui examine les filiations théoriques et pratiques qui ont nourri l'élaboration des féminismes décoloniaux latino-américains des dernières décennies. S'appuyant sur la notion de théorie voyageuse d'Edward Saïd pour proposer celle des théories féministes voyageuses, Montanaro accorde une importance primaire à la circulation des