
REIMAGINING NEOLIBERALISM, GLOBALIZATION, LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION: AN INTERVIEW WITH PROF. DR. DIANA BRYDON

REIMAGINANDO O NEOLIBERALISMO, A GLOBALIZAÇÃO, A LITERATURA E A EDUCAÇÃO LINGUÍSTICA: UMA ENTREVISTA COM PROF. DR. DIANA BRYDON

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INTRODUCTION

When we think of globalization, neoliberalism, literature and language education, we might think they are distant terms which belong to different inquiry research fields. In this sense, people (and some academics) believe that they should be investigated separately by sociologists, economists and educators (who would “naturally” be the specialists of the fields). We might also run the risk of assuming them as taken-for-granted terms. However, as contended by Dr. Brydon in this insightful interview, such keywords need not only to be problematized contextually, but also within and outside transnational boundaries/contexts. In the case of the neoliberal doxa Brydon asserts that (2019, this interview), “that’s partly my problem with neoliberalism in that it is - for many people- a jargon that is a meaningless word”. I do agree with Dr. Brydon provided that neoliberalism has reached a level of emptiness in which people and many academics simply realize it exists but do not see it as the greatest root of social inequality and disenfranchisement. In relation to Globalization, Dr. Brydon – who coordinates the CGCS – Centre for Globalization and Cultural Studies (University of Manitoba, Canada) – recalls the objectives of the Brazil-Canada Knowledge Exchange Project BR-CAKE), transnationally developed between 2010-2014 in Canada and Brazil: The project aimed at building “on an evolving network linking universities and local teachers groups in Brazil and Canada in collaborative research designed to foster the co-creation of new knowledge developing transnational literacy” (CGCS, 2019, online). In this interview Diana analyses the results of the partnerships wisely pinpointing the accomplishments, flaws, and expectations.

Still according to BR-CAKE, “Transnational literacy encompasses the growing list of literacies necessary for successful innovation in the global knowledge economy. They combine global consciousness with the development of skill sets or competencies suitable for full participation in the knowledge society, including multilingualism and cross-cultural understanding, the capacity to make informed choices and to create new ways of working in a rapidly changing world”. Brydon (2019, this interview) complements that “the project hoped that globalization could bring a more understanding across cultures”.

In this interview, Dr. Brydon also discusses the dichotomy between literature and language/linguistic studies by suggesting the reimagination of both fields. In the case of literature, she introduces speculative literature as a possibility to (re)imagine “horrific dystopian worlds” – on one hand, and a “world where people value negotiation, compromise, and solutions that may not be ideal to any of the partners but that are livable for all of us” – on the other. A world that is liveable for all of us! Having been a student of Diana, I can certainly remember her classes, her lectures and our conversations throughout the past 10 years. I clearly see in her classes, texts, lectures and projects a generosity and humbleness that aim at a more livable, possible, utopian, and equitable world. Towards the end of the interview – besides so many other interesting conversations – Brydon mentions the

importance of keeping our dialogues and projects on the move. She also leaves her academic colleague and friend Walkyria Monte Mór some beautiful words. I do agree with every single word, and I think that Walkyria deserves this special edition that *Pensares* journal is editing. I would like to thank Dr. Brydon for this important conversation we had in Winnipeg in January 2019. These are times of ultra conservative and neoliberal discourses and actions being perpetrated not only in Brazil, but in many parts of the world. Dr. Brydon challenges such discourses and actions by leaving us with a pinch of Freirean hope.

INTERVIEW WITH DIANA BRYDON

Daniel Ferraz – *Professor Brydon, first of all, thank you very much for this interview. I would also like to point out the honour of returning to Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba, where I did my “sandwich” PhD under your supervision. Also, thank you for co-supervising my PhD students – Daniela Ferreira (UFES) and Karina Fadini (UFES) – here at the UofM. In order to contextualize this interview for Brazilian readers, and as you know, this is a special edition of Pensares Journal in honour to Prof. Walkyria Monte Mór, would you tell us how you two met? Could you tell us about the academic projects you have developed in partnership with Brazil?*

Diana Brydon – I first met Walkyria at the ABECAN in Autumn 2005, through Lynn Mario Menezes de Souza, whom I had met on my first visit to Brazil. Walkyria and I became friends at once and I was pleased a year or two later to host her at what was then my new job as Canada Research Chair at the University of Manitoba (UofM). I knew I wanted to work more closely with her, since the focus of our individual projects seemed so complimentary, so when an opportunity to apply for a CRC IDRC grant came up, we applied for that. Although we were unsuccessful in that particular competition, we used it to set up the basis for the more ambitious project that became our SSHRC-funded Partnership Development Grant. That was initially a three-year project that we extended into 5 years of co-cooperative collaboration working across the divisions amongst teacher education and language and literature studies, and seeking to spark dialogue between Canadian and Brazilian studies. We brought together people working in Applied Linguistics, Literary studies and Teacher education with the goal of developing transnational literacy and critical thinking across writing and reading studies. Post-colonial, national and globalization theories provided the context for our thinking, with all the contradictions and frictions that work within and across these fields.

D.F. – *Still thinking about contextualization, or your loci of enunciation, what can you tell us about Canadian language and literature education; bilingual/plurilingual education? More specifically, how have the UofM and the CGCS dealt with these issues?*

D.B. – The Canadian system as you know, is fragmented, with education being a provincial responsibility and the federal government taking an interest in research creation. In Canadian universities, there is insufficient dialogue between Education faculties and Arts or Humanities faculties in which literary studies, at least English, has become increasingly separated from language studies, which is the province of

linguistic departments. Modern language departments other than English do teach language and literature in a much more integrated fashion because they could not work without that, but because English is considered one of the official languages of the country, there is a default assumption that the language should not be taught in literature departments. Students for whom English is a first language are ideally learning their grammar and vocabulary before coming to university, and English as an additional language or a foreign language is once again taught by specialists in those areas. University of Manitoba works through a similar division of responsibilities. They have brought in a private firm to teach English to international students and I think that they also offer such training through their continuing education programs. These are issues that my university continues to struggle with and our default solutions at the moment are far from ideal. Basically, we function in English. International students need to be bilingual or multilingual and students for whom English is a first language need not venture further unless they wish to do so. Pedagogical thinking is slowly being influenced by theoretical developments in bilingual and plurilingual education but the bottom line is that circumstances require our students to be fluent in English, whatever other strengths they bring from their diverse skill bases.

D.F. – *Regarding the neoliberal, neoconservative and neofascist times we (Brazilians and some many other peoples in the world) have faced, not only after the recent presidential elections results, but also in Michel Temer's presidency, how do you think these projects such as "Brazil-Canada Knowledge Exchange Project: Developing Transnational Literacies" (Canada-Brazil, 2009-2012) can help us understand what is happening in Brazil, in the USA, Canada, and in some countries in Europe? Or do you have any advice on how to deal with so many frustrations and drawbacks in relation to recent politics and education in Brazil?*

D.B. – That is **the** most difficult question we are all facing nowadays. As you say, not just in Brazil and Canada but everywhere. And I think that the advice will be different depending on these specific contexts in which you work in. When we started this project (Brazil-Canada Exchange Project, University of Manitoba-USP, 2010-2014) there was hope that globalization could bring a more understanding across cultures, but in fact that hope has diminished in the years since we began the project. One of the goals of the project was to counter negative stereotypes of other cultures in Canada. Many Canadians still view Brazil through a media lens that focuses on violence, corruption, environmental destruction; all of which has been exacerbated in recent years by the election of your current leader.

I think that the kind of work that you are doing (FERRAZ, 2015, 2018) – and other people in the National Project are doing – in stressing the importance of Visual Literacy along with linguistic literacy is crucial for helping to counter those stereotypes. They are not just stereotypes that other cultures have of Brazil, but they are also stereotypes that many Brazilians have of their own culture as well. When I was looking through this 2004 Global corruption report I was interested to see that Transparency International actually said that there was corruption, but it was not actually as extensive as many Brazilians believed it to be. So it's a complicated situation.

I believe that the current government was elected because of perceptions that the previous government was corrupt – which was partly true – but the corruption of the elected government was somehow neglected or ignored or not acknowledged. This is connected to how stereotypes managed to hang on in people's imagination because there is always a grain of truth to a stereotype. It starts with a grain of truth but then it becomes exaggerated so that it actually becomes untrue in its final impact.

D.F. – *And visual plays an important role in these contexts...*

D.B. – Exactly! The visual can play a very important role in that, in reinforcing people's prejudices and stereotypes; reinforcing what people already bring into an image. It's very difficult for the kind of stepping back – in critical thinking – that our projects were committed to: to counter that because people don't like to feel criticized, people don't like to be told they're wrong, and so how does one work through showing people that being critical is not being negative? It is not attacking another's belief but it's rather showing them the complexities that have led them to that belief, and encouraging people to see a bigger picture; to understand that there's more to the situation than they might first have thought. And to see as well that there is always a creative side to critical; the critical critiques according to a belief that people can do better; that the world can be different; that we don't have to live with corruption, we don't have to live with social injustice, we can find our way to creating a better world for everyone.

It's an understanding that, there, certain things can create a better society for all; that certain things like creating a public service in which people have trust, having a tax base that's fair and that enables the government to supply a safety net for everyone; that enables everyone to get a good education so that they can earn their own way and pay their own taxes. There is so much creative that can be done from a critical perspective. We have to counter that stereotype that critical literacy is only about negative criticism; it's rather about understanding! An understanding in a deeper way. Maybe that term isn't the term that we want to hang on too much anymore...

D.F. – *...especially in Brazil right now.*

D.B. – Especially in Brazil right now. Once you get into a situation which is polarized where people feel entrenched in particular views, then you have to step back a bit and maybe – as you said yesterday (FERRAZ, 2019) – be quiet for a while in order to figure out the best way to move forward. And you certainly need to understand where other people are coming from. It's understandable that people in Brazil would be afraid of street violence; that people in Brazil will be sick of corruption.

So, what you have to address then is: What's the best way to address those problems? Because people who thought that the Government they have just elected was the best way to address those problems! We think they are wrong, and we think that the record since the election suggests that! But you can't just say that out loud, right? You have to first of all take their views seriously and where they're coming from seriously, and then that's what literacy is all about in the expanded way that we understand it. It's not just knowing your alphabet, not just only grammar but

understanding the way things work and the important role that language plays informing people's assumptions and shaping their understanding.

D.F. – *Thank you. That leads to my next question which is also connected to my talk yesterday when I mentioned that – at least in my reading and in my very personal perspective – education in Brazil has failed to a certain extent. I know that this might be very shocking, but I think this has to do with these contexts you mentioned.*

As a coordinator of the “Brazil-Canada Knowledge Exchange Project: Developing Transnational Literacies” (2010-2014) and an honorary member of the Projeto Nacional de Letramentos (2009-2019), what is your evaluation of the trans-literacies developed between Brazil and Canada along these 10 years?

D.B. – It's an excellent question and it does follow on directly and I think that there is a grain of truth in what you say. Perhaps we were too ambitious, perhaps we were too hopeful, but I would say that to a certain extent our project in many ways has failed in what it hoped to accomplish. I would say however that there are strengths as well and maybe the strengths show the way forward.

I think that our project was enormously successful in terms of people, and in terms of training the next generations in thinking critically and creatively about these issues, and in expanding their understanding of what is at stake and maybe what can be done. Both projects trained several generations of new researchers and teachers – including teachers working in classrooms – beyond the university, so not just teacher training within the University. They also succeeded in forming strong teacher researcher networks between Canada and Brazil. On the level of one-on-one interaction, we were extremely successful. There were however other goals we had... we found that reaching into the wider community was much harder probably because of the disciplinary silos; it was much harder to form communities of understanding beyond specifically disciplinary training and either something like Applied Linguistics, or Literature and beyond Canadian studies on the one hand and Brazilian studies on the other.

I think that the Brazilians in the project were much more open and much more willing to learn, and much more willing to share. We did succeed in expanding the network with Canadians interested in Brazil and involved with Brazil, but our hopes for expansion were far too ambitious in what we were able to achieve. I was a bit surprised about the stereotypes that colleagues that were not part of the project still hold about Brazil; though now that I see all the media coverage that has been received over the past years I can understand where those stereotypes are coming from. There is a belief – I don't think it's justified – that the Canadian education system is better, Canadian scholars are better, and that it's a lopsided arrangement in which Brazilians have a lot to learn from us but we have little or nothing to learn from them.

I think that there is a prejudice amongst first language English speakers meaning that English is all you need, and less willingness to understand even the value of a bilingual education, although that is beginning to change in some quarters slowly. It is beginning to change as indigenous languages are being officially recognized, and as more money is going into teaching and sharing and understanding them. Their different ways of living in the world are indicated by

different linguistic systems. In that sense, I think that the challenge of global climate change has encouraged people to respect indigenous languages and the very different perspectives they bring to living together in the world and with the land; understood as to include water and the seas, the oceans... so I think we have to recognize that change is slow.

I agree with Gayatri Spivak when she mentions that the only change that sticks is that one-on-one mind changing that comes from dialogue, from sharing views, and going to Brazil and meeting with individual Brazilians, talking to them is the best way for Canadians to learn about Brazil; and coming to Canada for Brazilians works the same way.

Our project did what it could to encourage that amongst students and people at all levels. We had some undergraduates, Mas and PhD students involved. We brought in new networks of teachers through the National Project from around Brazil, and certainly the partnership between Winnipeg and Glendon in Toronto was a very strong and growing partnership that has yielded terrific results. At a more modest level, we do have two PhD students working at the University of Manitoba now who came out of the project are working with education faculties here – Carla Costa and Gustavo Moura – and we have in the English Department Vanessa Nunes doing cultural studies, literary studies and comparative studies of Brazilian/Canadian culture and literature, and translation.

So progress has been made in a very small way but in terms of the larger picture; how much could we ever do in terms of countering an agenda that says that globalization is the neoliberal agenda, conflating the neoliberalism with globalization? Our goal was to suggest that certain theorists saw potential in transnational cooperation for going beyond the neoliberal; the cliché ownership of globalization, to suggest that global contexts could work differently; contacts and networks could work differently.

Our project could provide some of the models for people who are working in other countries. There are many people in other countries who are still looking to Canada, to Canadian studies and Canadian literature in particular for ways of working and living with diversity, and for ways of thinking in globalization as different from the zero-sum game that neoliberalism suggests.

I find solace in projects like Anette Singh's where she stresses the importance of welcoming friction, not seeing friction as something that separates peoples into camps in which they just want to fight and bash each other, but rather finding the potential in friction to generate motion and light; to generate understanding...if it's welcomed, as if not something that you are afraid of, but it's something that you learn to live with and work with. Because that is the way! That is the only way we're going to move forward.

We have to counter those stereotypes of globalization and there is a lot of good theoretical work that's doing that. Anette Singh (2014) again has done another number of projects on Words in Motion in the ways in which certain keywords resonate differently in different national and regional contexts, and again there is the "Dictionary of untranslatables" (CASSIN, 2004) that's very useful for showing us the ways in which certain words are not transparently translatable. It's the opacity of the translatable that again can lead us to better understanding of others, and then help us to work together.

D.F. – *Excellent. Maybe I should refrain that talk in relation to the failure of education. What I meant is that when you think about Portuguese language teaching, for example, they have 5 classes per week whereas we – English/foreign language teachers – have just one class. Thus, what has Portuguese language education done in terms of forming critical active citizens in Brazil? It is a provocation. Then, I totally agree with you. I think many of us English language educators have done our jobs – even with one class per week – in the sense that nowadays the new curricula for many teacher education courses in Brazil have been influenced by the National Project of Literacies (NPL). Many professors of the universities which belong to the NPL have worked on curricular change. Curricula have been reshaped in order to include literacies, globalization, philosophy of language/education, language and culture.*

So, my next question is related to your previous works. In the text “Reading Postcoloniality, Reading Canada”, published in 2004, also brilliantly presented in Brazil, you mentioned that “Given such problems in defining the scope of the postcolonial, many have wondered if it is a term worth fighting for. Does it help critics understand current Canadian debates about multiculturalism, racism, postmodernism, and appropriation of voice, or does it, obscure these issues through homogenizing and universalizing a metaphorized marginality to such an extent that these problems can be made to disappear, at least from the domain of theoretical discussion?”.

Bearing this in mind, do you think that postcolonial studies, now being reframed as decoloniality in Latin American contexts should be rethought in Brazil? What I mean is, many of us feel frustrated in face of neofascist political orientations after the actions being taken in 2019, and in that sense, we have not been able to cope with multiculturalism, racism, gender diversity, disenfranchisement...

D.B. – Yes, I think that terms become old and outlive their usefulness. They become entrenched so that people hear them and think they know what they mean without acknowledging that they are context-specific in time and place. There was a moment when postcolonial worked but that moment has now passed. It doesn't mean we can't still learn from the theorists associated with it, but it does mean we need to think about these questions differently. In Canada, younger generations now see the postcolonial as a kind of dominant hegemony that they need to critique as something that no longer meets the needs of the moment, and specifically no longer meets the recognition that Canada is a settler colonial society, and that indigenous genocide and indigenous demand for justice have still not been met.

Thus, Brazil is also settler colonial society – though a very different kind of settler colonial society – and it's been a struggle even to get people to recognize that. I remember when I wanted to include Brazil in the book I was editing on these questions and the reviewer just couldn't see the relevance and the point. Times have changed since then, and I am sorry I abandoned that project. In that particular book, I was hoping to put together views on multiculturalism in different settler colonial societies. I also think multiculturalism though is a term that has outlived its usefulness. I contend that even decolonization is being critiqued.

There is a recent article by two critics in Canada titled “Decolonization is not a metaphor” (TUCK; YANG, 2012) and there is a sense that all of these keywords are being used as metaphors rather than addressing on the ground questions of treaty rights education, governance, citizenship. There is a tendency to want to separate the material from the so-called metaphorical, and I think it is mistaken, because I think the strength in critical literacy is that it insists that you cannot separate them; language too is material and has material effects.

Metaphors do political work. Just as you pointed out images do political work. Thus, it can be a problem to just dismiss the kind of work that literary or decolonization critics are doing. It is important to recognize that there is always a problem that the post-colonial didn't include the action of a verb. The strength of decolonizing initiatives is that it suggests that there is something that is constantly moving and changing; it is an action. And it's an action that will change its tactics and strategies at different times. I think that you can never call a person or a nation postcolonial.

The postcolonial theories that I learned from were always insistent on the ground action – and so I think that in Latin America, for example Mignolo's work (MIGNOLO, 2000) on decolonial difference is really important, and has been productive and continues to be helpful. I believe Canadians can learn from that work as well, but it could be that we need to think in terms of smaller actions and smaller words and move away from these large gestures.

That's partly my problem with neoliberalism too, in that it is – for many people – a jargon kind of meaningless word. It means more if you say someone is in favour of opening up the Amazon to mining, or if someone is in favour of torture or dictatorship, or someone is in favour of giving people guns than it does to use a blanket term like neoliberalism where people just turn off. Then, I'm not too happy with that term either plus I think that even for academics liberalism is a very complex term. Even what liberalism means it's totally different in the United States, in Canada and other parts of the world. So once you get into neoliberalism it becomes even more complicated. It's a term I try to avoid.

I've always tried to avoid globalization as well, and to talk about globalizing processes, because those processes work differently in different parts of the world. So postcolonial studies (PCS): Have they failed in Canada and Brazil? In the short-term perhaps; in the longer-term, no! Because they've set the ground for people to move forward. You really needed that early pioneering work in order to get where we are now. Although Canada has always been recognized as a colony that never really sank in to people's minds until recently. There was a phase from colony to nation, for being Britain's colony, and this was seen as natural and good, where the indigenous genocide was ignored and said that it was inevitable and necessary. So, what does a colony mean? I think that the postcolonial has been successful in suggesting a change in how colonization was understood. Though of course it pushes back now to people arguing: “It wasn't all bad!”. It's sort of one step forward and two steps back!

It can be useful to say that PCS have failed in terms of spurring people into further action, but if they just lead people to despair and doing nothing, it's a mistake because we always have to keep hope and we have to build with what we've got, we have to start with where we are, and with what works best in that context.

One trend that has been used, for instance Mignolo (2000) going back to earlier centuries – from the 19th century – when he sustains that the European arrival in America changed a lot of things, was very useful.

I am very interested in the work of speculative fiction writers just like Vandana Singh (2008) who says that modernity itself – what Mignolo has called colonial modernity – was preceded by very different ways of understanding the world and how people live together with other living beings, animals, rocks, ideas of a Gods or spirits; you can see that the so-called fantasy and science-fiction actually are more realistic than what we had with modernist realism. So even in literary studies – in terms of thinking about genre and in terms of what we have accepted: okay, “what is realistic? What is realism and what is not realism?” needs to be challenged. That can have repercussions in the political and economic world as well.

D.F. – *In “Cross-Talk, Postcolonial Pedagogy, and Transnational Literacy” (BRYDON, 2004, p. 57) you mentioned that “More recently, I have been again surprised by continuing hostility toward casting Canadian literature in postcolonial contexts and dismissals, both passive and active, of anything postcolonial, either literature or theory”.*

When I was your student at the Graduate classes of Literature, I do remember many of our discussions, for example Dionne Brand’s book, and how these discussions could have been directly connected to society, education, and our lives. In Brazil, we still see a tendency of separating literature and languages. Moreover, when it comes to Literacies projects, it seems to me (by hearing many literature professors) that literature is practically excluded from the discussions. Do you think that literacies or transnational literacies projects should dialogue more with literature, postcolonial, decolonial studies?

D.B. – Yes, I do. But I believe that literature and literary studies need to change, too. I think there is a tendency to think of literature with a capital L and then to associate it solely with the development since the 19th Century in terms of modernism and postmodernism. That goes right back to my previous answer of course because I think that things are changing, and previously derided genres such as children's literature, science fiction, fantasy literature, are now being re-evaluated for the contributions that can make to understanding the human imagination, and how we live together in the world.

So, I think that there has always been a very strong conservative tendency in literature departments to speak only in terms of aesthetics or the propriety of genres and to be critical of works that cross genres. In terms of your interest in the visual, for example, we have graphic fiction that's becoming more and more important and even mainstream figures like Margaret Atwood publishing their on graphic fiction, something that she has always been interested in. Creativity across the image and the word – bringing them together in order to produce friction – is changing the way literature itself is understood.

Our department recently added media to its title to show that we just don't look at literature, film, and theatre, but we also look at all forms of media, and we consider literature as a specific form of media but recognize that literature itself is always expanding and changing its boundaries. There is a recognition that in Latin America

and even in European countries like France and Spain that people tend to read *telenovelas* or read graphic fiction more than they read mainstream fiction. At the moment, there is a lot of ferment going on; there has been a lot of controversy in Canada recently with various groups who feel that they have been shut out of mainstream Canadian literature, that is called CanLit for short.

There is a sense that being a CanLit establishment that shuts out indigenous, black, Asian, racialized voices, transgender; that there is a very dominant kind of CanLit, and that has made a number of people very angry. There were a couple of scandals in the past two years (maybe we don't want to go into this for they are very specific to Canada) but that have highlighted this dissatisfaction with mainstream Canadian literature. It is a time of change, and I think it is important to – when you're teaching literature – recognize regional and national specificity, but I've always preferred to teach Canadian literature in transnational and Global contexts.

Recently I've been teaching courses in speculative fiction, teaching Canadian speculative fiction alongside African American and African Indian speculative fiction in order to show the synergies and differences among them... but I would say that in Brazil maybe people read less than they read in Canada; that books are perhaps seen as elite preoccupation; they are expensive....

D.F. – *Even the digital ones you have to pay, right?*

D.B. – Yes, even the digital ones. You have to pay, although Vandana Singh's books are very cheap on Amazon and one of my favorites is free if you are a member of Amazon Prime, I guess. It's called "Entanglement" (SINGH, V, 2017), which is a great globalizing word. We are all entangled, right? People may not want to recognize it, but we are. And so you're quite right: what's happening in Brazil has quite an impact globally.

D.F. – *How do you conceive of the future of language and literature education, and (trans)national literacies in face of contemporary times? And my question has also to do with one of my worries about teacher education in Brazil. In general terms, nobody wants to be a teacher anymore in Brazil, some people are not interested anymore in language and literary studies. It's very complex.*

D.B. – It's very complex because everybody has to make a living, and part of what's happening with this neoliberal agenda – which is a very useful umbrella word for talking about these things – is that many of the professions are in a sense being deprofessionalized; in that they no longer provide a secure living and maybe no longer earn the respect that they once earned in the wider society. The economic agenda of always looking for the cheapest option and always trying to make things supposedly more efficient actually makes them work less. But how do you prove that? It's difficult! I think that the pendulum swings on one way and then it swings back, and I think that people are recognizing on the one hand that reading digitally does change our brains; it does change how we understand and how our brains work. Will that be a permanent change or will people want to go back to earlier ways of working with language in terms of reading and learning? It's hard to say at the moment because you've got movement in both directions.

I think there will always be a demand for highly skilled personnel who are asking hard questions and who are not satisfied with the status quo or easy ways out. But how do we create a society that is more equitable?

This is the hardest question that you've asked and it's the most important question. On the one hand, I don't think anyone can predict the future; the future is something we have to make, and it is something we have to imagine first. This is again why speculative fiction is so useful because we can imagine horrific dystopian worlds and we can read about them and say: "No, we don't want that!", or we can imagine better utopian worlds – Margaret Atwood has a term that combines the two – because again any utopia will be too extreme, too purist and will contain dystopian elements in it.

What we want I think is a world where people value negotiation and compromise; value solutions that may not be ideal to any of the partners but there are liveable for all of us. It does come down to how human beings choose how they want to live together and those are choices we make every day, and the decisions we make certainly have to be through collectivities, through communities, through unions and societies that are unionized, but there are other ways of to form collectivities, non-governmental organizations... I think we just have to figure it out together. And figure it out together the way we did in our project.

Our project was designed by a group of us getting together, choosing the language, choosing the strategies, designing the workshops and designing the readings we would use to guide us to questions that we wanted to answer. And we ran into all kinds of problems that come when you cooperate across languages, across time zones, across different technological orientations. You know, skype didn't always work; people didn't always have time, but you have to keep working at it. And I do think that the research funding organizations that recognize the importance of physical travel can be helpful, even though it's becoming more and more difficult with governments setting up more and more obstacles along the way.

We just have to keep going, and we have to find ways to nurture our ability to imagine otherwise, and in some contexts literature can do that; in other contexts maybe it will be cinema or television, or film, or community plays, or productions...

D.F. – *Diana, I'd like to thank you so much! As you know this interview will be in a special edition in honour to Professor Walkyria Monte Mór who has been an academic partner of yours. Thank you very much for your valuable contributions, your talk, your kindness, I really got (positively) emotional sometimes with your words...*

D.B. – Well, let me add something about that Walkyria because I learned so much from her, from working with Walkyria and watching her work with other people. Her generosity is legendary but it cannot be stressed enough. I cannot think of a model educator whose example is so multifaceted, theoretically sophisticated but on the ground so practical. I mean, she fed us physically with her brilliant cooking, she fed us emotionally with her support, she fed us intellectually with her understanding of the complexities of these issues, and her ability to make them accessible the different kinds of audiences working at different levels of understanding. She is a brilliant teacher and she makes teaching an admirable occupation that anyone would seek to join, but she's also of course a brilliant researcher whose research contributions have

made an enormous difference. So, I couldn't be more honoured and more pleased than to be included in this special issue, so thank you so much for thinking of me!

D.F. – *Wow, that was beautiful, thank you!*

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