SEARCHING FOR BELONGING AND LIVING WITH *SAUDADE*: EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHIES OF BRAZILIAN LGBTQ+ MIGRATION TO CANADA

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Abstract

Many LGBTQ+ Brazilians drastically remap their lives by emigrating to Canada, having often been denied place-making and the safe (re)production of their queer identities in their homelands. This research traces such northern geopolitical migration trajectories and seeks to understand them at the intersection of queer and emotional geographies. Particular attention is directed to interpreting the feeling of *saudade,* a cultural emotion specific to the Lusophone sphere. Drawing upon 14 semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and 29 photographs of objects that symbolize *saudade,* I operationalize the multi-scalar relations between the queer Brazilian body and the home, the nation, and transnational flows. The findings of this research outline those relationships, highlight spatially contingent and transforming othering processes, and explores the emotional processes that lead to a queer Brazilian diasporic identity of in-betweenness, physically in Canada, but oriented towards queer Brazil.

Résumé

Se voyant souvent refuser la création d'espaces et la (re)production de leurs identités, de nombreux Brésiliens LGBTQ+ réorientent radicalement leur vie vers le Canada. Cette recherche retrace leurs trajectoires et cherche à les comprendre à l'intersection des géographies queer et émotionnelle et à travers une exploration des processus d'altérisation qui se transforment naturellement à mesure que les personnes migrent vers le nord géopolitique. Une attention particulière est portée au sentiment appelé *saudade*, qui est une émotion culturellement spécifique à la sphère lusophone. À partir de 14 interviews semi-directifs, d'un groupe de discussion, et de 29 photographies d'objets symbolisant *saudade*, les relations multiscalaires entre les corps queer brésiliens et la maison (home), la nation, et les flux transnationales sont mises en œuvre. En décrivant ces relations, je souligne la nature changeante et spatialement contingente des processus queer, je démontre les potentialités queer sont mises en œuvre pour recréer la maison (home) par la circulation transnationale des objets ordinaires et la la possibilité d'une identité brésilienne diasporique queer physiquement au Canada, mais orientée vers le Brésil queer.

Resumo

Tendo a criação de espaços e (re)produção segura de identidades queer em espaços públicos e privados frequentementes, muitos brasileiros LGBTQ+ drasticamente remapeiam suas vidas em direção ao Canadá. Essa pesquisa traça essas trajetórias e busca entendê-las na intersecção de geografia emocional e geografia queer através de uma exploração dos processos de *othering* que se transformam em natureza conforme as pessoas migram em uma trajetória geopolítica em direção ao norte. Atenção especial é dada ao sentimento chamado *saudade*, uma emoção cultural especifica da esfera lusófona. Utilizando 14 entrevistas semi-estruturadas, um grupo de foco, e 29 fotografias de objetos que simbolizam *saudade*, eu operacionalizo as relações multi-escalares entre o corpo queer brasileiro e o lar, a nação, e fluxos transncaionais. Ao delinear essas relações, eu destaco a natureza espacialmente contigente e em constante mudança de processos de *othering*, demonstro as potencialidades queer em construir lar, e posiciono a identidade diaspórica LGBTQ+ brasileira em um estado de 'entre', fisicamente no Canadá, mas orientada em direção ao Brasil queer.

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To my sister and best friend, Beatriz: I love you and miss you dearly, and I know that I admire your kindness and heart of gold every single day. To my brothers, Vinicius and José Eduardo, my grandmothers, Darci and Onilda: thank you for being a foundational part of my life. I love you all, and *saudade* hurts, but know that wherever I go, I carry you with me.

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Dedication

To Camila Kurosaki,

I started working on this project at a very hard time in our lives, because you had just left us. So much of it is about *saudade*. Wherever you are, know that we feel enormous *saudade* of you, and that you will forever be family to us.

Rest in peace, we love you.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Brazilian LGBTQ+ Migration to Canada

Brazilian LGBTQ+ geographies, mobilities, and diasporas are complex, diverse, and emotionally charged. This research examines the diverse journeys of Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrants, whose paths in life ultimately led them to Canada, whether temporarily or permanently. Through the generous and vulnerable stories of participants, I focus the analysis on the emotional aspects of queer narratives of migration, rather than financial or legal approaches often used when debating Brazilian mobilities. These embodied emotions (of hope, love, and fear, to name just a few), in multi-scalar articulations with urban, regional, and transnational geographies, were key components of their quests for belonging, security, and an escape from oppression. Out of all the emotions, I give special attention to the particular Lusophone emotion of *saudade* to understand how LGBTQ+ Brazilian migrants living in Canada cope with their new worlds, continuously and transnationally produce their homes, and transform their identities on a journey of in-betweenness.

In Brazil, strong social expectations from a historically hetero-patriarchal society manifest themselves in multiple spaces, such as in homes, schools, and universities (Nogueira dos Santos and de Godoy, 2019; Nogueira Silva et al., 2020; Pereira Silva, 2019; Moretti-Pires et al., 2022), the Church (Segura-Ballar, 2021), sports courts, and online forums (Oliveira Souza and Capraro, 2023; Nabono Martins, 2023; Valkova, 2021). All of these private and public spaces are pivotal to Brazilian culture and society, generating a process of emotional displacement that may take the form of feelings of isolation and non-belonging across multiple

scales: the body, the home, the nation. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that those who can move elsewhere do so in search of not only better socioeconomic conditions, but also an attempt to escape the queering processes that take place in their Brazilian homeland.

Having been denied place-making and the safe (re)production of their identities in many public and private places in Brazil, many LGBTQ+ people choose to migrate to Canada, through the diversity of means available to them (temporary/permanent residency, documented/undocumented, study/work permits), imagining a country that sells itself as differing tremendously from Brazil in terms of sociocultural tolerance. Through their projected international image and a good amount of soft power, Canada becomes, in the imaginary of many living in the so-called Global South, a place that exudes queer potentialities.

Such a tolerant imagined world does not come from thin air. Canada historically projects itself on the world stage as a nation that is both legally and socially queer-friendly. Some elements typically used to construct this image include Canada being one of the first countries to legalize same-sex civil marriage and Canadian prime ministers making appearances at Pride parades in some of the country's largest cities, such as Toronto and Montréal. In international immigration imaginaries, constructions of Canadian politeness and generic interpretations of multiculturalism are attractive to prospective migrants, serving as symbols of a seemingly welcoming and diverse country. Toronto, for example, the nation's want-to-be global city, is a place where some people come to be queer and to be queer of color (Haritaworn et al., 2018). Still, Gilbert and Sotomayor (2025: p. 163) have put Toronto's role as a sanctuary city under scrutiny, especially in the context of non-status immigrants who are folded into national, often contradictory processes of ir/regularization; they explore how "invisibility, hierarchy, and

precarity are built and sustained as a constant feature of everyday non-status life despite some basic services and performances of solidarity and resistance". Other cities, such as Montréal and Vancouver, have a similar reputation for queer-friendliness and boast of their 2SLGBTQI+ villages. The capacity and the extent to which these rapidly gentrifying gaybourhoods foster diversity and queer visibility have also been under scrutiny (Bitterman, 2021). Regardless of these often contradictory perspectives, Canadian cities remain beacons of safety to LGBTQ+ people across the world, attracting queer migrants, and driving personal mobility trajectories.

My research addresses the under-explored emotional drivers of LGBTQ+ Brazilians migration. As the search for imagined futures transforms imagined worlds into lived realities, LGBTQ+ Brazilian people must now navigate linguistic barriers in Canada as native Portuguese speakers, cultural tensions from being Latino, and exposure to a myriad of cultures they weren't exposed to back in Brazil. I argue that one of the main perceptions to be gained from the findings is that from this process of LGBTQ+ mobility, people from Brazil towards Canada, many emotionally-charged othering processes intersect bringing class and racialization to the fore, while questions of sex and gender recede. In this movement across time and space, emotions are produced, reproduced, and take new spatially contingent forms.

1.2 Research objectives and question

My research aims to answer the following question: ***How do the complex migratory experiences of LGBTQ+ migrants from Brazil to Canada illustrate spatially contingent queer emotional processes?*** In other words, my research analyzes the varied emotional geographies of queer Brazilians living in Canada and understands the relationships and dynamics between space and Brazilian queerness. I am particularly interested in how those relationships and dynamics

transform once people undertake migration and have their physical, social, and cultural environments dramatically changed.

My research mobilizes three main objectives, roughly divided in a chronological order of mobility flow from Brazil towards Canada. First, I aim to identify the queering processes that take place in Brazil and motivate transnational northern migration to Canada. This objective is mainly concerned with understanding participants' lives in Brazil prior to any migratory process or, when possible, migratory desire. Considering Brazil's continental territorial size and its ontological diversity, I seek to understand the positionality of the participants inside Brazil, and the many ways historical Brazilian heteropatriarchal sociocultural values may have affected the embodied spatial experience of LGBTQ+ people there.

Second, developing an understanding of the diversity and complexity of emotions embodied by Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrants throughout their migratory journey is another important objective of this research. It concerns itself with the period between desiring migration and fulfilling it. I pursue a comprehension of the role, nature, and intensity of migrants' emotions in generating a desire to migrate. From there, I aim at uncovering in what ways queerness is related to those emotions and how that dictated the choice of moving to Canada and to a specific Canadian city. Aside from fear, this research seeks insights into the roles of hope, love, and discomfort and how they are connected to specific places in Brazil.

Finally, this research highlights how queerness shapes migration and how it is shaped in return, through emotions. It is unimaginable to discuss Brazilian emotionality and mobility (and its corollary, distance) without mentioning *saudade*. Therefore, the final objective of this research is to explore the role of *saudade* in LGBTQ+ migrants' lives in Canada and the ways in

which *saudade* points to an extension of othering processes, but also an identity-making emotion foundational to the (re)production of a unique LGBTQ+ Brazilian diasporic identity.

1.3 Positionality

This research reflects my own personal identity: in likeness to all my research participants, I am a Brazilian self-identifying LGBTQ+ person who migrated to Canada. More specifically, I am a cisgendered homosexual man with a personal history of desiring mobility. Pragmatically, this gives me many of the benefits of an insider perspective on my research. I speak Brazilian Portuguese natively, and perhaps just as importantly, I speak *LGBTQ+* Brazilian Portuguese. I know our insider expressions, jokes, and tonality that so many of us use when speaking to one another in safe spaces. This gave me the advantage of being able to connect emotionally and intellectually with a lot of ease with the respondents during the interviews and focus group. We spoke, in obvious but also nuanced ways, the same language. Being a part of the community also allowed me to easily access social media groups on WhatsApp and Facebook, from where I found most of the participants for this research. I designed this research to methodologically address many of the personal questions and understandings I faced immigrating to Canada as a Brazilian LGBTQ+ person. I experienced firsthand what it is like to feel homophobia on your skin and freedom in holding hands with my husband in the few spaces we would feel safe, only to have that taken away from us on the seemingly gone ultra-right turn of the Brazilian government.

I pushed myself to challenge my own assumptions when I was designing this research. I came here on a study permit with funding from York University to undertake my master's degree, a somewhat rare path given the extremely limited number of international spots in

graduate studies for fully-funded research programs in Canadian universities. Moreover, I recognize the privileges I have in having pursued this path, and I acknowledge that others' experiences may have been much harder and much easier than mine in getting here and then getting settled. I also acknowledged, in designing this research, the many privileges of being white, or at least white passing in Brazil, as well as having come from a middle-class family. I reflected on all these biases before having the interviews and the focus group, and made sure I left them outside the interviewing room as much as possible.

In creating this research, I also designed myself to have somewhat of a dual role, depending on which part of the research process was being executed. I consciously decided I did not want to have any sort of auto-ethnographic approach to this, mainly because I was much more curious about what other experiences were and what they had to say about them, than necessarily understanding my personal journey. Still, my personal experiences informed the way I approached various stages of my research, from design to execution and analysis. Having faced many of the same challenges and accomplishments the research participants did, it was easier for us to establish a connection based on trust, and around our similarities, as well as explore the nuances of the differences in the processes of exclusion and acceptance that we faced as we traveled across the globe and established new homes. My personal experiences as an LGBTQ+ Brazilian migrant in Canada were my initial go-to point of analysis, and I would often find myself either unsurprised by the repeating patterns found in the data, having lived through them myself, or completely baffled by the stark differences in migrant trajectories, desires, and outcomes.

Still, as much as I positioned myself as an "outsider" as often as I possibly could, given my positionality, in an attempt to eliminate innate biases, it was more important to me as a researcher studying a densely emotional subject to be able to connect with my participants. It was not an option for me to allow myself to be the "cold" researcher. I laughed with my participants, I cried with them, and made sure to give each and every one of them a physical or virtual hug, as one would in Brazil, as well as to express my appreciation for their vulnerability and generosity. That is, in my view, the most Brazilian part of this research, the warmth and the fast-built connection with people, however temporary. This bonding process often happened by sharing a cup of coffee throughout the interview (and remarking on its relative weakness in strength when compared to a strong cup of Brazilian coffee), as well as through the casual tone of the conversation, facilitated by queer Brazilian expressions and mannerisms. The atmosphere was also often permeated by a sense of empathy and understanding. Although interviews held on Zoom did not share the same power of human connection, there was still a fleeting sense of kinship and humanizing moments, such as surprise cat appearances or romantic partners showing up to say hello and introduce themselves. These are the aspects I believe also make my research very queer. This is neither an outsider perspective nor an insider look into Brazilian LGBTQ+ migration to Canada, but somewhere in between. Both and none, at the same time.

1.4 Contextualizing LGBTQ+ Brazilian rights through a historic political lens

Brazil has achieved many legal victories in LGBTQ rights since the fall of the military dictatorship that governed the country for over two decades and the establishment of the Federal Constitution of 1988. A series of progressive governments started in 2002, which, although questionably less progressive than advertised (Saad-Filho, 2013), culminated in the legalization

of same-sex marriage as a right in the country under Dilma Rousseff's government in 2011. However, the illegal impeachment of this *Partido dos Trabalhadores* or Labour Party's president, followed by the neoliberal and radical right-wing governments of Michel Temer and Jair Bolsonaro, put such rights at risk.

Discourses of prejudice inflamed the nation, and the thinly veiled queerphobia that seemed to have been at least put under control started to make explicit public appearances (Payne and Santos, 2020). This comes at the expense of a country already notorious as one of the most violent countries against LGBTQ+ people, recent data showing that the life expectancy of a transgender and/or *travesti* person in Brazil is 35 years old (for more on this Brazilian gender identity and reality, see Vartabedian, 2018). Bolsonaro is a self-proclaimed homophobe, and one of his main actions while in power was to shut down and defund the Ministry of Culture, which led to the censoring of many queer art shows and an increase in anti-LBGTQ+ violence (Garcia, 2019). According to Green (2020), two main scandals illustrate the level of politically diffused hate during Bolsonaro's government. First, the murder of Marielle Franco, a city council representative of the city of Rio de Janeiro, an Afro-Brazilian lesbian and activist who consistently spoke up against the militarization of the city. Second, the exile of Jean Wyllys, an openly gay congressman who defended LGBTQ+ rights and suffered extreme defamation through fake news campaigns led by the president's son's cabinet.

Labour Party's Lula returned to power in 2023. He restated the Ministry of Culture and walked hand-in-hand with marginalized groups on his inauguration day. Such political history illustrates the profound tensions that exist in Brazil's territory and imaginary – that of historical conservativism with growing progressive political thinking and voices. More specifically,

Brazil's nuanced LGBTQ+ history proves that although many advancements have been made legally, such as the legalization of gay marriage and the equivalation of homophobia to racism as a crime, sociocultural advancements did not necessarily follow at the same level of progress: homophobia and queerphobia are still very much a reality, and many Brazilian LGBTQ+ people face ontological risks.

Extreme cases of LGBTQ+ discrimination may also lead to homelessness and/or murder. Some cases of non-acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities in Brazil may lead to physical displacement in the form of premature construction of adult lives. In turn, that may lead to financial and emotional strains that put young LGBTQ+ people at a disadvantage in comparison to other people who didn't have to leave their homes earlier in life. Reports found that LGBTQ+ people in Brazil face structural challenges to access and maintain themselves in the job market, with over 70% of interviewees reporting having faced some sort of queerphobia in the workplace (CNN, 2025). At the same time, a report called Rainbow Homes by NIQ, a company that specializes in consumer intelligence, estimates that LGBTQ+ families moved over R$18 billion (roughly CDN$4.5 billion) in the Brazilian economy and that they spend 14% than non-rainbow family households (Matos, 2023: n.p.), suggesting that the Brazilian economy is certainly aware of the economic potential of "pink money".

Brazilian LGBTQ+ people should not be painted as revolving around violence and prejudice, nor are they dependent on it. Brazilian LGBTQ+ culture is as beautiful and rich as overall Brazilian culture, follows the same *ethos* of "*sou brasileiro e não desisto nunca*" (I am Brazilian and I never give up) – a traditional national mindset. Where there is oppression, there is often also resistance, even in national-scale places such as in telenovelas (de Carvalho and

Raupp, 2023), traditional folk music houses (de Muniagurria and Cobra, 2023), and sports courts (Rial and De Almeida, 2024). These profound tensions between oppression and resistance are generally related to feelings of comfort and discomfort, which are constantly negotiated with decisions such as showing or not showing public affection (Rodo-De-Zarate, 2017). Taking all of this into consideration, it is safe to conclude that LGBTQ+ visibility and livelihood in Brazil are complex subjects that vary with intersections of identity and place of residence, such that people's experiences with their sexuality and gender vary tremendously. There seems to be a certain disconnect between Brazil's fairly progressive political, legal and cultural LGBTQ+ systems and the often prejudiced social structures of the country.

1.5 Understanding the potential of attraction of Canada to 2SLGBTQ+/Queer migrants

Insofar as I posit that Brazil can be seen as a conflicting country when it comes to legal versus social queer advancements, I also argue that Canada may be seen as a country that is progressive on both fronts. In Canada, homosexuality has been decriminalized since 1969, and the 1980s AIDS crisis fostered strong activist movements throughout the nation and put queer rights on the public agenda. Canada has since then maintained an international appearance as a champion of queer/LGBTQ2S rights, especially in the years of Justin Trudeau's Liberal government. It has become a central locus for queer/LGBTQ+ migrants and refugees seeking asylum from violence across the globe. Canada has also been deemed a "queer utopia" by the United States media, in part because it is the fourth country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage at the federal

level in 2005.[1] Moreover, married queer/2SLGBTQ+ Canadians experience the same legal rights as their cis-heterosexual peers in regard to marriage, adoption, and housing. (Busby, 2019).

To what extent Canada can truly be considered a safe haven for queer people is an idea that has been put under scrutiny, with some pointing to the continuation of homophobic public policy (Smith, 2020) and some actions from the federal government as simply symbolic (Abu-Laban, 2023). Research also points to Canada as a homonationalist state that selectively embraces some queer rights over others, with particular attention to the ways refugee claimants are expected to construct an "authentic" queer identity to avoid being deemed a "fake" refugee (Murray, 2020). Still, Canada has experienced law reforms that played a crucial role in fomenting queer lives and worlds that can exist and be produced not only in private spaces but also in the public sphere.

Major Canadian cities such as Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver are homes of visibly branded gay villages, and Canada was ranked the safest country in the world for the fifth year in a row for LGBTQ+ travelers according to a report quantifying an LGBTQ+ Travel Safety Index (Spartacus, 2025).[2] Even so, there is lively debate in the literature concerning what used to be a vibrant inner-city queer lifestyle and the current role of the Canadian suburb in fomenting queer geographies (Bain, 2019; Bain and Podmore, 2025). It is important to note that gay villages remain a complex and contested space for LGBTQ+ subjects. Gay enclaves serve as destinations of attraction for LGBTQ+ migrants in global North cities, with their allure promoted in

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[1] The three countries that legalized same-sex marriage before Canada were the Netherlands (2001), Belgium (2003), and Spain (2004).

[2] As an interesting point of comparison, Brazil currently ranks 30th in the "LGBTQ+ Travel Safety Index" ranking. A note on their website states that "although Brazil scored well in most categories, there has been an increase in violence towards the LGBTQ+ community (especially trans individuals)" (Spartacus, 2025, n.p.).

numerous LGBTQ+ tourist and travel materials (Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2014). However, researchers have also pointed out the multiple ways gay villages act as places of exclusion that socially differentiate between intersectional aspects such as race and class. Nash (2006) discusses the complexity of Toronto's gaybourhood as a place that holds the potential for queer political strength and social necessity, but that also cannot escape suggestions that "it was and remains an elitist place where only those who can afford 'the life' have the opportunity to enjoy the space" (Nash, 2006: p. 13). Such elitism is present in the ways that the village remains a hostile and unwelcoming place to racialized queer subjects, despite micro-acts of resistance performed by Black LGBTQ+ people in the area (Rosenberg, 2020). Furthermore, Brown et al. (2016) critique the way queer villages have become sanitized as they are incorporated into municipal fiscal and cultural contributions, an argument resonated by Haritaworn (2020) in their exploration of the ways in which these urban areas continue to perpetuate racial capitalism and settler colonialism. Consequently, the reality LGBTQ+ immigrants may encounter when moving into those cities may be different from what they expected when planning their life in Canada, especially for those who are racialized and classed.

Another component of Canadian identity that serves as a charming factor for immigrants is the official multicultural nation of the country. Multiculturalism[3] has been a policy in Canada since 1971, through Pierre Trudeau's government's "Policy of Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework", which later evolved into the 1985 Canadian Multiculturalism Act. These

[3] The concept of multiculturalism has been explained in many ways over time. May (2021: p. 1939) summarizes academic understandings of multiculturalism as "the active role of the state in the preservation and promotion of different cultures, religions, and minority languages." In the Canadian context, Cameron and Berry (2008) schematize multiculturalism as individuals possessing and sharing a collective identity as Canadians, while also maintaining specific identities tied to their respective ethnocultural communities.

legal frameworks solidified Canada as a multicultural state, not solely because of the policy, but also through the country's deep social history and the socio-cultural practices of Canadians (Wood and Gilbert, 2005). The intended goal of the policy was to improve the quality of intercultural relations in Canada, and the policy essentially advised:

> (i) the maintenance and development of heritage cultures; (ii) intercultural sharing, and the reduction of barriers to full and equitable participation of all Canadians in the life of the larger society; and (iii) the learning of official languages as a basis for such participation (Berry, 2013: p. 664).

Canadian multiculturalism has since then become an ambivalent topic in Canadian politics (Mensah, 2006; May, 2022a) with arguments for and against it. The main criticisms leveraged against the policy are that it helps to sustain social division, it creates ethnic ghettoes, maintains stereotypical cultural ideas, and that the policy is unfavourable towards the particularities of the Québecois and Indigenous peoples of Canada (Mensah, 2006; see the same article for counterarguments to those points). Outcomes of Canada's approach to multiculturalism and its power to attract immigrants may be seen in the data collected for the 2021 census: 25.6% of Canada's population is either Canadian by naturalization or not a Canadian citizen, with the top five places of birth of immigrants being, in descending order, India, the Philippines, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America (Statistics Canada, 2022).[4]

In regard to the relationship between immigration systems and policies, and multiculturalism, May (2022b) argues that there is a level of disconnect between Canada's self-

[4] The other five countries in the top places of birth of immigrants in Canada in 2021 were, in descending order: Pakistan, Hong Kong, Italy, Iran, and Vietnam. (Statistics Canada, 2022). Brazil currently ranks at 40 in the list, with approximately forty-eight thousand immigrants born in Brazil and living in Canada in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022). The government of Canada estimates that the Brazilian community in Canada is of approximately 143,500 people, with Brazilians being the highest source of student enrolment from South America (Government of Canada, 2025).

image as a multicultural success and its restrictive immigrant-receiving outward projection. Most of this image comes from the nature of the Express Entry system, the prevalent way through which people migrate with documents, a points-based and draw system that awards permanent residency to those who reach enough points based on a particular draw. Interestingly, this system is somewhat intended to perpetuate multiculturalism by turning a blind eye to factors of race, nationality, and ethnicity and focusing on high levels of education, the domain of the English and/or French languages, age, and professional skills in the form of work experience. Of course, there are other systems that foment immigration in Canada, especially for temporary residents applying for study, work, or visitor permits. There are also systems in place focused on provincial needs or labour market needs, such as healthcare practitioners and teachers. The number of systems in place for immigration in Canada proves that it remains a need for the country's economic and cultural national vision, and also that "multiculturalism may not be particularly healthy or robust in Canada, but it is by no means on its deathbed" (Kymlicka, 2021: p. 135). Simultaneously, Paquet and Lawlor (2022) found that many Canadians have unrealistic images of immigrants as being mostly asylum seekers and refugees, which is not reflective of immigration numbers, and affects preferences in public discourse related to immigration policies. As complex as multiculturalism is in Canada, it is alive in a period of time when many other Western countries are firmly against it. It remains an important factor in attracting queer migrants from a variety of backgrounds to Canada, in association with Canadian urban centers and LGBTQ+ legal, social, and cultural advancements in the country. In line with Carling and Collins' (2018) argument about the importance of desire in driving migration forward, it comes as no surprise that Canada and Canadian cities exert a strong attraction power to Brazilian LGBTQ+ individuals as they hope and long for safety and proud visible lives.

1.6 Living with *saudade*: desire and mobility

Desire is a concept that played a pivotal role in the development of queer geographies in the 1990s, featuring in the title of the foundational book *Mapping Desire* by David Bell and Gill Valentine (1995). The book explores 'landscapes of desires' through investigations of both the real and imagined eroticised geographies where sexual acts and identities are performed (Bell and Valentine, 1995). By bringing sexual and romantic non-heterosexual desire to the forefront, *Mapping Desire* became a classic in human geography, as well as a point of reference to much of the scholarship that followed on geographies of sexuality/queer geographies. After all, as Valentine herself posited a couple of years prior to the publication of the book, day-to-day interactions do not occur between asexual[5] people, but rather between people with sexual labels and identities, in sexualized places (Valentine, 1993). In her review of Mapping Desirs for *Progress in Human Geography*, Peake (2015) discusses how it made possible "to utter words not found before in the geographical lexicon – buggery, cottaging, cruising, masturbation, sadomasochism, and sexual attraction, as well as friendships, intimacy, love, and romance" (Peake, 2015: p. 2).

In different forms, desire has also played a substantive role in much of migration studies, theories, and literature, often putting aside the emotional, romantic, and/or sexual nature of desire in favour of economic narratives. While Baynham (2017) does not deny that brute economic force plays a relevant role in driving people from their homes, he also recognizes that

[5] It is interesting to reflect on how non-normative sexualities have evolved since then. More contemporary views of queerness differentiate between sexual and romantic identities, with asexual people falling under the spectrum. Of course, Valentine is not necessarily being dismissive of asexuality on this quote but rather alluding to the sexual aspect of identities and labels, which we may now understand to include (a)sexual people as well.

the idea of migration itself as a desire has not been fully developed, nor has the recognition of the role played by emotions and sexuality as parts of migratory processes. Baynham (2017) also argues that economics and political necessities do not necessarily form a binary against desire, but rather that these ideas are intrinsically linked and connected to one another. His points are echoed by Carling and Collins (2018), who argue that economic narratives are also socially constructed and can only be comprehended relationally with migrant bodies, their feelings, and the circulation of affect beyond borders. Thus, Carling and Collins (2018) call for rethinking drivers of migration in favour of aspiration and desire, which consequently may "relinquish the primacy of economic rationality that has long held an almost sacred place in the theories of migration" (Carling and Collins, 2018a: p. 912). The relinquishing of the privileged role economic logic has played in migration studies thus holds the potential for the utilization of desire as an approach for new theories of migration that pay closer attention to questions of subjectivity, identity, and emotions (Carling and Collins, 2018).[6]

Therefore, desire may be seen as a point of intersection between geographies of mobility and queer geographies. Not only because it plays a pivotal role in framing both subdisciplines, but also due to the socially constructed natures of gender, sexuality, desire, and mobility. As Collins (2018a) puts it, based on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1983), interest in migration only exists within a specific social context and only because of the desire applied in that social formation. In the context of my research, I propose the social contexts of Brazilian and Canadian societies and their multiple relations to queerness, as further explored in previous sections. I also

[6] See this special issue of the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies for many examples of articles that explore interesting approaches to desire and migration (Carling and Collins, 2018).

propose that the desire for belonging, a sense of community, and the ability to live proud lives with diminished fear are the important desires that drive people out of Brazil, and that make them decide to try to settle in Canada. It has been made clear in the literature that voluntary migration also comes with its costs, especially that of leaving loved ones behind and beginning a new life from scratch in a country where people have different customs, languages, and cultures. Navigating new legal and financial systems while searching for a sense of queer belonging is a challenge in itself. Baynham (2017) investigates those challenges when exploring the relationship between desire and migration and states that while desire is the force pulling migrants in a new path towards a new space, it also binds the migrant to what was left behind, such as the love of family and friends, as well as home and homeland. Such binding takes different names and is expressed in variegated forms across multiple languages and cultures. In Lusophone countries, it is called *saudade*.

Saudade is a poetic Brazilian/Portuguese noun used to describe the feeling when you miss/long for somebody, someplace, or something. To paraphrase the famous Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa, *saudade* is a feeling that only those who speak Portuguese can truly feel because they are the ones who have a word for it. It has been articulated in Lusophone literature for centuries and explored academically in the literature and historical realms, but never geographically. *Saudade* is a feeling every Brazilian immigrant must deal with when moving out of their country. It is felt when thinking about the ones they left behind, but also when thinking about familiar places, traditional foods, music, and cultural expressions or ways of being.

The existence of *saudade* in migrants has been articulated in the literature as a migrant friction manager (Magalhaes, 2020). Somewhat ironically, *saudade* historically originated in an

attempt by the medieval Portuguese state to settle borders. The literature still debates whether the word is of Latin or Arabic origin. (Magalhaes, 2020) *Saudade*, therefore, is metaphorically illustrative as a concept fluid geographically without a clear spatial origin. However, I would argue that, as a feeling, rather than a concept, *saudade* is a feeling that is not only embodied but also placed. To deal with it, migrants will place pictures on the wall of loved ones or buy traditional culinary ingredients (usually at a much higher price than they would back home) to try to recreate the emotion of being elsewhere, in this case, being home. *Saudade* is a big factor on the weighing scale when Brazilians decide to migrate, and many voices say that the main reason they wouldn't leave the country, despite better social and economic perspectives, would be feeling unable to live with *saudade* every day.

Saudade, therefore, points to two queering processes, one in Brazil and another outside. It is a perpetuator of emotional im/mobility even for those who have the financial capacity to move North.[7] In Canada, it is a constant reminder that a part of the migrant now belongs there, but a huge part will always remain back in the South. Even for those who find a form of belonging, they may also feel othered. Despite *saudade*, and in negotiations with it, the migratory movement still happens. The latest data indicates that over 130,000 Brazilians are living under legal status in Canada, a number that has grown exponentially since 2015 with the establishment of the Express Entry system, which acts as a pathway to permanent residency (Statistics Canada, 2022). Given research pointing out that a national average of 12.04% of Brazilians identify as not straight (Spizzirri et al., 2022), it is safe to assume a good portion of those people are

[7] Most Brazilians migrate north. According to Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2024), in the context of the Anglosphere, the largest Brazilian diasporic communities may be found in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Some also migrate further south to Australia and New Zealand.

LGBTQ+. The existence of social network groups such as “Queer Brazilians in Canada” and specific YouTube channels geared towards LGBTQ+ Brazilians who want to/have moved to Canada is also evidence of some of the actors and networks that help create the platform for the LGBTQ+ Brazil-to-Canada movement.

However, it remains that the Canadian immigration system can be meritocratic depending on the immigration stream, usually privileging formal education and work experience, as well as monetary achievement. In turn, such requirements indirectly cater to a specific demographic in Brazil: the white and the wealthier. Previous research has pointed out the fact that the geographical economic reality in Brazil is vast and uneven, and higher educational and financial privilege is tied to real and perceived whiteness (Salata, 2020). Although this does not mean that every Brazilian migrant in Canada is either white or wealthy, it points to the existence of an additional barrier to mobility for some queer Brazilians, especially those who are black, indigenous, or poor.

1.7 Complicating ‘queer’ as an identity umbrella term in Brazil

Throughout this thesis, I alternate between calling the research participants “queer” and LGBTQ+. However, as a foreword, I warn of my worry about horizontality and linguistic imperialism. ‘Queer’ as a localized word of German roots widespread in the Anglophone world has nothing to do with the Portuguese spoken in Brazil. The phonemes are not put together in a way that is coherent with the language. Moreover, the history of queer as a word of empowerment is that of giving new meanings of power to what was meant as an offense. That was never the case for Brazil, whose inhabitants do something similar with words such as

"*viado*" and "*bicha*" – both versions of the f-word, now commonly used between members of the community to refer to one another. Both words, however, only concern gay men.

Therefore, I would like to push against the notion that terms coined in the so-called Global North in northern hemispheric contexts can be straightforwardly applied to the rest of the globe, especially given the fact that the meaning doesn't travel perfectly through space and that historically language has been used to perpetuate colonialism and imperialism. Thus, asking a run-of-the-mill LGBTQ+ person in Brazil how they identify themselves will usually lead to an answer that corresponds to one of the letters in LGBT+, and rarely queer. When it does so, it is usually by people with higher levels of education in the context of academic spaces – these people are also often white and middle-to-upper class. Nevertheless, my research concerns migrants who will have encounters with the word queer throughout their journeys and maybe even identify themselves as such when moving to Canada. It may also happen that the lusophone identities do not truly encompass somebody, and that in coming to Canada and being able to be queer, they find joy and relief. Therefore, the word queer should not be placed carelessly in Brazil or used to characterize Brazilian bodies as a universal umbrella term.

Nevertheless, the term *queer* and sub-consequential queer research has had many profound encounters with decolonial thinking, analyzing binaries of margins/center, for example, as well as marginal/dominant and blurring the lines of community/nation/state (Bakshi, 2020). Therefore, I maintain the use of 'queer' in this thesis to refer to the sub-discipline of queer geography and its concepts and theories not only because they are currently the most diffused, but also because I find the most common alternative, "geography of sexualities," insufficient due to its lack of care for and attention to gender identities. Thus, I do not question the power and

depth of the term queer or the importance of queer geographies. My reservations are about its application on the ground when doing research with and describing the lives of LGBTQ+ Brazilians -- using it as a large umbrella term that may create another identity binary of queer/non-queer, and does not translate to the local language. Finally, the term has been articulated in-depth regarding questions that go beyond sexual/gendered identity, as a sense of disruption to binary productions of knowledge and existence, and its profoundness as a framework is appreciated and applied throughout my research.

Chapter Two: Emotional Geographies of Queer Migration

2.1 Introduction

Geographical literature provides some insights and explorations of migration from Brazil to North America (Goza, 1994) and highlights the relevance of social networks to the migratory process and community-building as one of the causes of leaving, as well as a rise in violent crimes (Brasch, 2009). A quantitative survey conducted with Brazilians living in Ontario traces their social and economic background (Magalhaes et al, 2009). However, there are some gaps in the literature, both in queer migration as a broad topic and even more so in the Brazil-Canada trajectory. Other disciplines in the social sciences tackle the subject (Vartabedian, 2018), but not much exists in the geographical field. Even in Brazil, only 0.4% of Geography articles discuss queer geographies and are usually in new journals of lower academic prestige (Silva et al., 2014). As I articulated before, the feeling and concept of *saudade* are of deep importance to this research due to its specificity to Brazilian people in general. Although it has been previously articulated in other disciplines (Silva, 2012), it hasn't been so in geography, even though it is clearly an emotion with profound ties to spatial and temporal dimensions. Moreover, there has been no contribution to the literature so far regarding the connections between *saudade* and LGBTQ+ Brazilians, let alone larger research of Brazilian migrants' emotions as they travel through space and time. Thus, there is much to be added to the discipline from the Brazilian context, which is rich in place-based specificities, contexts, and tensions (hetero-gay, trans-travesti, pre/post-democracy, new-middle-class-poor-rich, white-pardo-black, and so on). This literature review seeks to delineate a framework for my research at the intersection of

geographies of queerness and emotion, by synthetizing recent debates in migration studies, especially queer diasporas, Brazilian mobilities, culture-specific emotions, and home.

2.2 Emotional paradigms of space

My research is situated at the intersection of the subfields of queer and emotional geographies. Although it may seem that such subfields are in deep connection to one another, given the highly emotional nature of queerness itself, that has not been the case in geographical scholarship, where literature at this intersection is scarce. I argue these two subfields share a major objective in common, namely, to blur the lines of what is considered to be traditional geographical research.

Emotional geographies explore the many relationships between the reproduction of specific social orders and how emotions emerge from it while also becoming part of the constitution of a place (Davidson et al., 2016). As such, the subfield has the potential to challenge what we consider valid research and question the role of the subject in it (Anderson, 2009). In the history of this discipline, this subfield works with political issues, and highly gendered ones. This approach to geographical inquiry traces its beginning point to the seminal editorial published by Anderson and Smith (2001), where they call for more attuned awareness to the co-constitutive dynamics of emotions, society, and space. Simultaneously, they point out the political and gendered aspects of emotions and the potential of using their socio-spatial dimensions to shift from the "glaring obvious, yet intractable, silencing of emotion in both social research and public life" (Anderson and Smith, 2001: p. 7). When it comes to the relationships between emotion and space, Anderson and Smith (2001: p. 3) argue that "detachment, objectivity and rationality have been valued, and implicitly masculinized, while engagement, subjectivity,

passion and desire have been devalued, and frequently feminized". Their editorial was followed by the 'International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Emotional Geographies' in Lancaster (UK), in 2002. The conference was organized by Joyce Davidson, who called for over 80 papers on topics of emotional geographies, a suggestion that many scholars had started to answer to the call made by Anderson and Smith in their editorial (Bondi, 2005).

Of course, emotional geography did not develop itself in a scholarly vacuum. It can be understood as the continuation of many of the developments human geography had undertaken since the 1970s, but especially in the 1990s, with the substantial body of work written by feminist geographers concerning the body, subjectivity, and the incoherences of geography as a discipline. Bondi (2005) traces three relevant origins to emotional geographies: humanistic geographies, feminist geographies, and non-representation theory. In broad terms, the humanistic geographies of the 1970s criticized the privileging of the objective and the rational at the expense of subjective aspects of human life in research. It considered people's complex experiences of place and space and provided an alternative to the conceptualization of geography as a field permeated by assumptions originating in neo-classical economics, such as economic rationality (Bondi, 2005).

Bondi (2005) also describes the foremost contributions of feminist geographies, which politicised those rich subjective experiences of space and place (Pile, 2009). A considerable part of the literature in the 1990s was concerned with feminist works with the body by authors such as Linda McDowell and Gillian Rose (Davidson and Milligan, 2004), who sought to subvert associations such as considering masculine to relate to rational, mind, objective, while the feminine is linked with the emotional, body, subjective (Bondi, 2005). In other words, if

humanistic geographies framed the discipline and its subjects as coherent, bounded, and universal, feminist geographies criticized the incoherent, permeable, and opaque aspects of human subjectivity (Pile, 2009). Therefore, by paying attention to women's spatial and placed experiences, feminist geographers were concerned with how emotions supported and restricted sexual and gendered experiences of place and space (Pile, 2009). Such insights, ideas, and concerns initially contributed to the formation of emotional geographies, especially in contexts of embodiment, disability, chronic illness, and mental health problems (Bondi, 2005). They informed much of Anderson and Smith's editorial (2001) by disrupting binaries of mind/body, rational/emotional, and self/other, and focusing on emotions as fluid, embodied, and relational, only able to be understood in specific contextualized spaces. At the same time, spaces must be *felt* to be understood (Davidson and Milligan, 2004).

The interest in embodiment and embodied emotions was not limited to feminist geographies but sparked much fascination and debate in the social and cultural geographies from the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s (Davidson and Milligan, 2004; Bondi, 2005). The last field of scholarly development Bondi (2005) outlines as contributing to the emergence of emotional geographies is non-representational theory, which insists on the significance of those things that could not be represented, be it textually, linguistically, visually, or otherwise (Pile, 2009). Non-representational theory starts with the work of Nigel Thrift, who, focused on the relationships between social theory, geography, and culture, emphasizes embodied experiences and actions in place of representations (Bondi, 2005). In doing so, non-representational theory centralizes affect in its framework rather than emotion, due to affect's interpretation as pre-discursive, non-individualized, and conceptual, in opposition to emotion, which tends to be associated with cognition, empirical, and individualized (Bondi, 2005). The

largest contribution of non-representational theory to the formation of emotional geographies lies in the philosophical debate between those two concepts and their implications, with some scholars arguing for the formation of a separate field called affectual geographies (Pile, 2009).[8]

From its origins in the early 2000s, emotional geographies became a successful paradigm of research in human geography, leading to its institutionalization and the publishing of the first edition of the journal *Emotion, Space, and Society* in 2008 (Dittmer, 2011). As of August 2025, the journal is on its 56th edition and has published over nine hundred articles. The journal was founded by authors who were a foundational part of establishing the subfield, namely Liz Bondi, Joyce Davidson, and Mick Smith. Geography's "emotional turn" is evidenced by the quadrupling of publications in emotional geographies starting in 2010 (Lucherini and Hanks, 2020). In her recent review of the subfield, Ho (2023) identifies three areas of recent scholarly development that demonstrate the multiple ways social and cultural geographies have attended to the role of emotions and affect in exploring ways of knowing and being, individually, relationally, and collectively. These areas of recent development and topical trends are: (i) affective negotiations and emotional intensities in and across spaces; (ii) traversal emotions at work; and (iii) emotions and digitally mediated spaces. The fact that emotions persevered as a tool and framework for spatial inquiry demonstrates how they are "woven into the fabric of our everyday lives (…), and yet they also serve to recompose and transcend these mundane aspects of our existences in intense experiences that mark unique moments" (Davidson and Smith, 2009: p. 440).

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[8] I often find emotional and affectual geographies to be complementary to one another, rather than opposed. That being said, my research is mostly concerned with subjective, conscious experiences of place, sometimes even attempts to represent feelings (such as *saudade*) materially in places like the home (see Chapter Five). Therefore, I would feel comfortable placing my work under 'emotional geographies'.

2.3 Centering the queer body

Another subfield of geographical inquiry strongly influenced by the advances of feminist geographies in the 1990s, and of centrality to the theorizations of my thesis, is queer geographies. If emotional geographies benefited from feminist scholarship questioning the privileged (and masculinized) role of 'objective' in detriment of subjective and emotional perspectives, queer geographies were enriched by feminist analytical tools and methods that insisted on the centrality of sex, gender, and bodies (Carlkin and Freeman, 2020). As a subfield, queer geographies surfaced by focusing on the normalization and contestation of heterosexuality and male/female binaries in spatial dynamics (Binnie and Valentine, 1999). More than anything, it started as an attempt to make Geography "messy" (March 2021), to blur the lines between taken-for-granted concepts such as 'subject' in research, and to give voice to marginalized groups that desperately needed it, coming out of the 1980s HIV/AIDS crisis.

Queer geographies were also informed by major engagements with poststructuralism, especially with the development of queer theory. Informed by the works of Michael Foucault and Judith Butler, as well as other authors such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Michael Warner, queer theory understands sexuality as fluid and non-essentialist (Castree et al., 2013). Foucault argues that discourses of heteronormativity and patriarchy were central to articulating sexuality as a social regulatory framework. Butler, inspired by the work of Foucault, asserts that sexual identity is not innate to someone's essence (what one is), but rather it is a performative aspect of human identity (Castree et al, 2013). Performativity would become one of the key concepts of queer and feminist geographies, with geographer Gillian Rose drawing on Butler's conceptualization to rethink the concept of 'space' as being performatively produced. Queer

theory itself was first brought into geography by David Bell, in his 1994 article *All hyped up and nowhere to go* (Bell et al, 1994), written in collaboration with fundamental scholars of queer geography, Jon Binnie, and Gill Valentine. In their writing, the stage was set for much of the scholarship that would follow by arguing that the production of space is sexed. They explored how different sites were subject to normative expectations of what sexual activity could acceptably take place there, and what sexual subjects could occupy that space (Bell et al., 1994). In other words, queer geographies began by exploring the relationship between the dynamics of heteropatriarchal power and the re/reproduction of space, as detailed later in the pioneering book *Mapping Desire* (Bell and Valentine, 1995). An important scholar to the development and framing of my thesis is Australian geographer Andrew Gorman-Murray. Gorman-Murray is a leading researcher in queer geographies, whose work encompasses several theoretical inquiries related to the socio-spatial dynamics of sexualities and queerness, often in collaboration with Canadian geographer Catherine Nash. Some of the topics he explores and that relate to my work are related to the ways queer people create and negotiate home (Gorman-Murray, 2007b; Boccagni, 2023), his theoretical framework for 'intimate mobilities' (Gorman-Murray, 2009; Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2015; Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2014), and the emphasis on the emotionally embodied nature of queer migration (Gorman-Murray, 2007a; Gorman-Murray, 2009; Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2019) and other sexed emotional geographies (Gorman-Murray, 2017). As such, his work often encapsulates the intersection of queer and emotional geographies with mobility studies, and is a significant contribution to this thesis.

Since its outset in the 1990s, queer geography has influenced the way in which geographers have theorised spatial identities (Castree et al., 2013) and, inspired by feminist interventions, questioned what counts as appropriate geographical knowledge and the implied

biases in doing research (Calkin and Freeman, 2020). The notion that bodies and places are performative and co-constituted was well-established by the end of the 1990s (Johnston, 2016). The field has been criticized for being overly regulatory and filled with inequalities (Nash and Bain, 2007), being predominantly white (Rosenberg, 2017), and having been used for colonial/imperial purposes (Haritaworn, 2020). A multitude of spaces have been explored, but are mostly concerning large urban centers, with scholars pointing to a 'metronormativity' within the field that ignores the epistemologies and ontologies of queer suburbanism (Podmore and Bain, 2020). Moreover, anxieties have been raised in terms of its uneven approach to intersectional characteristics of social identity (Brown, 2012). Intersectionality emerged from feminist legal scholarship and was formally brought into geography by Gill Valentine (2007), although intersectional explorations of sexuality had existed for quite some time (for example, on Peake, 1993). Intersectionality seeks to pay attention to the connections and limitations between one-dimensional, identity-based oppressive structures (Brown, 2012), such as sexuality, gender, race, and class. Brown (2012) points out the privileging of some aspects of identity over others in the literature, and the ironic consequence of potentially ranking (hierarchizing) social identities.

Nevertheless, queer geographies have provided Geography as a discipline with not only a necessary disruption to its white masculine roots, but also important questions of positionality, politics of knowledge production, identity, and structure (Oswin, 2019). Although 'queer geographies' and 'geographies of sexuality' are sometimes used interchangeably, both fields exist at the same time, with theoretical tensions related mostly to identity politics, theory, and praxis (Browne, 2006; Oswin, 2008). Geographies of sexuality concern themselves with non-normative sexed subjects. Queer geographies, through queer theory, tend to offer a deeper engagement with criticality and the contestation of naturalized hierarchical roles in society. As such, the latter has

sought to build larger criticisms of normative hierarchies and power relations, challenging oppressive systems beyond sexuality.

Thus, the relationship between queer geographies and emotional geographies becomes clearer. Both subfields share scholarly history and have common roots in feminist geographies (and, to a certain extent, in poststructuralism). Meta-analytically, both subfields have been "queered" in the geographic literature, which has often valued the objective, positivistic, and masculine (Oswin, 2019). Moreover, both fields disrupted the discipline in their understanding of subjects (positionality of the researcher, identity of participants) and gave legitimacy to topics that were set aside as not valid for academic research before (emotions, sex, everyday life). Emotional geographies have at their core an interest in how feeling and affect are woven into space and time (Davidson et al., 2016), and therefore, can be seen as a 'queered'[9] approach to geography. and therefore, it has served well as a framework for queer migration analysis in the past. Having framed a history of both subfields in Geography and provided some details on key concepts that inform the design and analytical approach to my research, I now turn to reviewing how the dynamics of queer and emotion inform understandings and insights into migration and mobility.

2.4 Emotional geographies of queer migration

Migration starts in the body and continues through it. Most of the literary work on mobility concerns questions of push and pull economic factors, the 'laws' of migration, assimilation, and

[9] Some may call this a 'feminine' approach to geography, but an attention to queer theory leads me to questioning what feminine in this case would even mean. To instantly associate feminine with emotional is highly contested and an essentialist perspective.

cross-cultural encounters (Van Hear et al., 2018). Gorman-Murray (2007a) calls for a deeper understanding of migration, especially when it comes to queer migrations. One of the ways it proposes that migrations be queered is by paying attention to a sense of belonging and the embodied experiences of migrants and refugees. In doing so, the researcher avoids the façade of the "cool interpreter", as Anderson and Smith (2001) argue, doing away with separations of researcher and participant, private and public, domestic and global. The question of scale is therefore of deep importance to emotional and queer migration studies. Migration starts in the body and is enacted by it. The microscale of an emotion felt in a place (the body, a city, a region, etc) is one of the pivotal mechanisms that elicit the mobility of queer people (Gorman-Murray, 2007a). Before exploring these mechanisms and their relationship to larger-scale systems and non-emotional factors, I first turn to a framework to define queer migration.

Queer is by itself a term with multiple definitions, which, as I discussed previously, has been questioned as a valid universal term when put under critical analysis of linguistic and cultural imperialism. Therefore, queer migration does not entail simply the displacement of non-heterosexuals. Gorman-Murray (2009) defines queer migration as occurring whenever bodily desires and emotions influenced by sexuality influence the decision to leave a specific place and choose a specific destination. Other factors, such as economic and educational reasons, may occur, but if sexuality is involved, it is a form of queer migration. However, much of the literature on queer migration tends to erase the spectrum of gender identities. For my research, I am also including any non-cisgendered identifying person under the queer migrant category. Many transgender men and women are, in fact, heterosexual, and to exclude them from the queer migration narrative would be the perpetuation of deep systemic issues of transphobia.

When proposing a (re)conceptualization of queer migration, Gorman-Murray (2007a) posits that queer migration should be understood as "an embodied search for sexual identity—an individual search which can be materialized at differing, multiple scales and paths of relocation" (Gorman-Murray, 2007a: p. 111). If sexual-identity affirmation is often the foundation of migratory movements, their diversity may be framed as 'queer identity quests', multi-scalar personal journeys through space and time that are subjectively constructed around a search for an integrated wholeness (Knopp, 2004). These identity quests have two aspects: psychic and physical. Psychically, they can be understood as built around searches for physical, emotional, and ontological security in a disciplining (cis)heterosexist world; physically, queer identity quests become geographically realized as spatial displacement through mobilities aiming for order in frequently hostile power structures (Knopp, 2004). Gorman-Murray (2007a) adds that the displacement of the queer body *itself* is informed by the personal, individualistic nature of the migratory journey. Therefore, the concept of 'embodied queer identity quests' accommodates the multiplicity of paths, and spatial and temporal scales of queer migration (Gorman-Murray, 2007a), and relocation processes are embedded in multiple (personal, individual) aspects of relocation processes (Gorman-Murray, 2009).

Feminist migration studies have also previously shown that migratory decision-making is not solely based on rational terms of political and economic rationales (Silvey, 2004). Migrants are not "disembodied" actors (Silvey, 2004). Migrants, their bodies, and their embodied emotions weigh heavily in mobility decision-making. This "driving force" of migration has been put under scrutiny several times in the literature. In the specific case of queer migration studies, feelings that have taken center stage are fear (Bhagat, 2018), love, comfort, and discomfort (Gorman-Murray, 2009). Gorman-Murray (2009) sets forth an interesting framework after studying queer

migrants from Europe to Australia, classifying queer migration into three types: a) coming out migration (the movement of non-cisheterosexual people to re-invent themselves and discover sexual desires), b) gravitational group migration (people moving towards neighbourhoods with a large presence of LGBTQ+ people), and c) relationship migration (mobilities with a partner to consolidate a same-sex relationship, or moving away after ending said relationship). In the context of this research, I was interested when designing this research to see to what degree those three categories would or would not apply in the case of Brazilian LGBTQ+ migration. As discussed in detail in Chapter Four Othered, transformed: Brazilian LGBTQ+ migration to Canada many of the narratives presented by the research participants would fit well into one of these three categories. On the other hand, the complexity of mobilities and human relationships leads me to also argue that these categories are not mutually exclusive, and some of the participants would fit into all of these categories at once. Therefore, although Gorman-Murray's classification is valid in the context of my research, I refrain from using it as an overarching framework to explain the mobilities of my research participants.

2.5 Queer diasporas

Queer diasporas have been conceptualized since the 1990s as a proposed research field that analyzes how "people with diverse sexual and gender orientations navigate spaces outside their homelands" (Proudman, 2024: p. 2), at the crossroad of queer migration and diaspora studies. The foundational question of what queer diaspora is can be answered in a variety of ways. Diasporas have evolved from referring to the scattering of people escaping from extreme hardships such as war and famine, to now more broadly encompassing people who migrated outside of their ethnic homeland and are still oriented towards that place (Brubaker, 2005). More

recently, Grossman (2019) proposes an understanding of diaspora as composed of six intertwined components: transnationalism, community, dispersal and immigration, outside the homeland, homeland orientation, and group identity.

What would it mean, then, to research *queer* diasporas? Researchers have framed queer diasporas as more than simply the study of the dispersion of LGBTQ+ people from their homelands. Queer studies, like diaspora studies, concern disorientation, dislocation, and unsettling (Ahmed, 2006). According to Rouhani (2016: 232), "a focus on queerness helps to dislocate diaspora studies from a simplified, nostalgic, depoliticized relationship to the family, nation and home, while a focus on diaspora helps to bring questions of race, colonization and globalization to the centre of queer studies". Kosnick (2016) also highlights that the attention given to queer in migration studies was scant and much of it focused on how asylum seekers and individuals escape from homophobic oppression. Through this predominance of asylum seekers, queer subjects were positioned as "a lone figure asking the Western state for benevolent incorporation" (Kosnick, 2016: p. 126). The field has recently evolved with a larger focus on South-to-North migration and rural-to-urban mobilities (Seo, 2025). Seo (2025) also identifies three thematic trends in recent queer migration studies. The first trend related to law and policy governing queer migration focuses on how non-normative sexualities inform laws and policies that rule over cross-border mobility and membership to the polity. The second trend on sexual politics of citizenship and borders "highlights the ongoing relevance of sexuality in how the boundaries of citizenship and the nation are imagined, constructed, and policed" (Seo, 2025, p. 121). The third trend related to sexual transnationalism and globalization examines how cross-border sexual culture traverses through transnational spheres and is (re)produced temporally and

contextually. My research and the analysis of spatial processes and the transnational construction of identities and queer homes fit well into this last category.

Importantly, Ahmed (1999) warns against positioning migrant ontologies as a necessarily transgressive mode of existence, to which Wesling (2008) concurs and adds that to queer diaspora is to reopen the question of the dynamics of the sexual and the global. Wesling's (2008) article "Why queer diaspora?" also provides fundamental arguments for the operationalization of the conditions of geographical mobility to create new insights into gender and sexuality by going against the notion that 'queer' and 'diaspora' are necessarily disruptive of fixed identity categories and therefore represent liberation. Therefore, Wesling (2008) argues instead that to queer the diaspora is to examine new articulations of normativity, and of the queer subject being also produced *through* transnational capitalism. Luibhéid (2008: p. 172) provides a similar argument, stating that "queer migration scholarship thus highlights the fact that normative sexualities (not just those who are deemed deviant) require historicization, are produced within relations of power, and change, including through migration." In the context of my research and in light of those arguments, I avoid fetishizations of the queer migrant body as necessarily disruptive of binaries and normativity. I deliberately conceptualize in terms that highlight the relations of power and change as related to the emotional, the internal, the intimate, and the private aspects of LGBTQ+ migrants. Thus, my research does not focus on how the migratory process itself is transformed through the queer diaspora, but rather I emphasize the particularities and analyze the epistemological and ontological evolving nature of the barriers that queer migrant bodies face in the search for belonging and liberation.

2.6 Brazilian mobilities

Brazilian migration to Canada, both queer and not, goes at least as far back as 1902 (Siscaro, 2022). However, the number of Brazilians in Canada began to increase more consistently from the 1980s onwards, with a significant rise in the 1990s and 2000s, driven by the country's political and economic crises, as well as an increase in violence (Machado et al., 2022). Statistics Canada estimates that the number of new Brazilian immigrants almost tripled between 2016 and 2021, when compared to the period between 2011 and 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2022). Still, very few qualitative studies reflect on the nature of Brazilian migration to Canada after the 2000s, aside from a general overview of this movement (Barbosa, 2009), a Greater Toronto Area-focused dissertation on Brazilian acculturation strategies (Da Costa, 2014), and a report about Brazilians living in Ontario (Magalhaes et al., 2009). Although my research suggests several possible connections to justify this "second wave" of Brazilian migration, such as the emergence of the Express Entry program as a migration facilitator and intermediary policy and the rise of the Brazilian middle class in the 2000s, the particular immigration modalities are beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, all of the studies previously mentioned are concerned with the Brazilian immigrant population at large, without a focus on intersecting identities and sexualities. They are also focused on material and financial expectations, as well as the common migratory theme of "searching for a better life," with little attention to the relationships between emotion and mobility. Therefore, my research highlights significant gaps in the Brazilian emigration literature and addresses a portion of them through the lens of LGBTQ+ migrants.

Research from a range of disciplines exists that highlights Brazilian mobilities and provides some insights into Brazilian migratory movements, diasporas, and the beginning of unique ethnicities. Notably, researchers have focused on Brazilian diasporas in Ireland (Alves de Faria, 2024; de Renó Machado, 2024; Maher and Cawley, 2016), Japan (McKenzie and Salcedo, 2014; Roth, 2002; Scottham and Dias, 2010; Tsuda, 2000; Zell and Skop, 2011), in Portugal (Fernandes et al., 2020; Ribeiro et al., 2021; Van Meeteren and Pereira, 2016), and in the United States (Goza, 1994; Marcus, 2011; Margolis, 1995; Zell and Skop, 2011; Zubaran, 2008). Literature on Brazilian migration to Canada is not extensive, but some examples are Goza (1994), which discusses the expansion of a Brazilian labour force in North America in the 1990s; Brazilian navigations of the Canadian legal system and their incorporation into Ontario (Goza, 1999); and Barbosa (2017)'s book *Brazil and Canada: Economic, Political and Migratory Ties, 1820s to 1970s*. According to the Brazilian government, in 2023, Canada held the ninth largest Brazilian diasporic community with around 143,500 persons, a number comparable to Brazilian diasporas in Argentina, Italy, Germany, and Spain (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2024). It becomes clear then that Brazilian mobilities need an update in geographical terms and holds the potential for many other studies of Brazilian diasporic communities.

The studies mentioned so far cover a range of topics related to Brazilian mobilities, but most share a common thread of focusing on socioeconomic and legal issues, the relevance of interpersonal social networks, and labour mobility. Although important to understand relevant aspects of Brazilian migration, I argue that most of the Brazilian mobilities literature so far has had a tendency to address Brazilian migrants as a monolith, escapees in search of financial gain. By overly focusing on socioeconomic and structural features, this subfield of migration studies may indirectly fall into dangerous tropes related to Global South migrants, especially Latin

American people on the move. I am not arguing that socioeconomic factors do not play an important role in Brazilian immigration. It is clear from the literature that a search for better financial conditions and access to global markets in countries considered to be less violent than Brazil is a pivotal migration driving force for Brazilians who are searching for a better quality of life. What I argue for is that much is lost by ignoring the many nuances of Brazilian society, especially when it comes to important intersections of identity and questions of class, race, gender, and sexuality in enabling (im)mobilities. There are three paths my research seeks to address this gap in the Brazilian mobilities literature. The first one is related to the scalar analytical focus used to understand participants' backgrounds and frame their narratives. Instead of using a national scale, which tends to homogenize Brazilians, their personal narratives are analyzed through a regionalized scale in relation to their bodily scale, which pays more attention to the particularities of the histories and geographies of the participants. In addition to that, my research focuses specifically on queer migrants to capture the many insights that a Brazilian queer diaspora can provide and the multifold ways gender and sexuality may question cisheteronormative Brazilian sociocultural values and interact with the Canadian constructions of migrants, queerness, and society. Finally, I bring a more nuanced understanding of Brazilian mobilities by highlighting the role of emotions and affect in driving migration forward, especially when it comes to their homemaking in Canada and the culturally specific feeling of *saudade*.

2.7 Culturally specific emotions

Although emotions are to a certain extent universal, the way in which they are produced linguistically and culturally matters and leads to important differences in how they are embodied

and the role that they play in human societies. Sometimes, the geographies, histories, and languages of a particular people may lead to the creation of culturally specific emotions. Such emotions may be defined as culturally specific emotions (Mesquita, 2022; De Almeida and Rodrigues, 2025), i.e., unique affective manifestations of a people's culture. An example would be Japanese (culture, language, society) and *ikigai*, the feeling of life worth living, having purpose (De Almeida and Rodrigues, 2025; Mathews, 1996), as deeply ingrained in Japanese life. Germany calls the joyful feeling of someone else experiencing a setback *schadenfreude*, and so much of its irony is historically, culturally, and socially constructed (Van Dijk and Ouwerkerk, 2014). Welsh culture provides a specific emotion very similar to what Lusophone peoples call *saudade* in the form of *hiraeth*. *Hiraeth* may be roughly defined as an "indescribable longing which consumes the exile and points to something beyond mundane reality" (Filmer-Davies, 1996: p. 1). I explore *saudade* and its philology, history and geography in Chapter Five *Saudade,* through the homes of Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrants. *Saudade* is understood as the paradoxical feeling of nostalgia for something or somebody that is not physically present, but also the joy of being able to feel that nostalgia because it means you have that something or somebody in your life. It differs slightly from the aforementioned *hiraeth* due to the joyful element of appreciation present in *saudade*. *Saudade*, therefore, is not unique in being an emotion culturally (re)produced by a certain people, but it is particular to the experiences of Lusophone peoples.

In her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Ahmed (2014) describes how feminist and queer scholars have shown that emotions matter a great deal for politics, and the possibilities that arise from not neglecting emotional intensities as a form of world-making. Ahmed (2014) details how words, and consequently, culture, emotions, and politics, may get more attached to some subjects and some objects. In the case of this research, *saudade* is the culturally produced

emotion, charged with political potential and emotional intensity that gets attached almost axiomatically to the Brazilian migrant. Spatial distance leads to physical absence, which often leads to *saudade*. That *saudade*, in turn, may get attached to mundane objects, many of which are explored in Section 4. Discussion on culturally specific emotions often leads to an important debate around translatability. The translatability debate questions whether such words may even be directly translated into other languages. There are authors who posit that the words that represent culturally specific emotions are impossible to translate without a verbose explanation (Valsiner, 2007), but there are also others who argue that not only are those translations possible, but they are able to capture the nature of the emotion in both languages (Silva, 2023). Magalhães (2020) prefers that a translation not be attempted, to leave room for vagueness, wondering, and interpretation. My position as a researcher is that *saudade* is indeed impossible to translate directly into English without unpacking the word significantly. As such, I provide a lengthier explanation when appropriate to provide a more direct reference to the reader, but I much prefer the vagueness of the poems and lyrics that are found later throughout the *saudade* chapter.

2.8 Home, queer home

The concept of home and the space of the house are often conflated in contemporary Western societies (Gorman-Murray, 2007c). Geographers have attempted to complicate or negate this conflation by inviting understandings of home as at once material and imaginative, “not only a physical location, but also intersecting aspects of shifting cultural associations and ideal meanings (Duncan and Lambert, 2004). Feminist geographer Alison Blunt (2003) details how home has been understood by geographers across multiple scales, as well as the abundance of topics that have been explored through geographical analysis of home. The first scale is

domestic, with studies focusing on housing, household structures, and domestic divisions of labour. Second, citizenship and the discourses of multiculturalism have been studied at a national scale. Third, beyond the national scale, home is central to research around diasporic places of belonging, as well as cultural geographies of home and memory. Blunt and Varley (2004) suggest that home traverses these scales from domestic to global in ways that are at once material and symbolic. Gorman-Murray (2007c) concurs by conceptualizing home as imaginative, discursive, and material. Therefore, to understand home in geography and other social sciences, one must look beyond home as a physical space to include insights into how home is co-constituted around questions of materiality and discursiveness.

The symbolic nature of the home has been explored at length by scholars in queer geography. In their article for *Mapping Desire*, appropriately named '*Wherever I lay my girlfriend, that's my home'*, Johnston and Valentine (1995) explore the symbolic construction of lesbian homes as places where identities are performed and come under surveillance. Idealizations of home often interact with prevalent notions of the heterosexual home, usually revolving around heterosexual conceptualizations of the nuclear family. Johnston and Valentine (1995) suggest that homes can become *loci* of a clash of identities between the 'daughter' from a heterosexual family and the lesbian, which robs the parental home of associations with 'privacy' and 'paradise'. Therefore, the homes can satisfy the needs and desires of the daughter, but not of the lesbian.[i]. Blunt and Dowling (2006) further that argument when suggesting that dominant ideologies of home marginalize some relations while privileging others. This tension between desire, home, and sexuality is later articulated with mobilities in the literature as one of the key reasons people of non-normative genders and sexualities migrate (Gorman-Murray, 2007b). Thompson highlights this tension and the imaginative aspect of home by positing that "people

imagine their own homes in vastly different ways and this in turn impacts whether they wish to leave for greener pastures, and/or whether they desire a place dissimilar to their own" (Thompson, 2016: p. 81). Thus, home plays a key role in articulations of home, mobility, and non-normative identities.

In his attempt to queer the home, Gorman-Murray (2006) argues that to do so involves the elimination of the discursive equalization between the domestic space and heteronormative socialization and the heterosexual (Western) nuclear family. His research shows that gay men and women have displaced this inherent domestic heteronormativity by selectively opening up the private space of their homes to non-normative counter-discourses, bodies, and activities (Gorman-Murray, 2006). He also suggests that for a house to become a home, its occupants must populate it with a diversity of meanings, feelings, and experiences (Gorman-Murray, 2007b). All of these aspects are also pivotal parts of people's identities, and so the space of home is also often seen as a key site for identity construction, an important source of the self (Wise, 2000; Blunt, 2003). That is not to say that practices of homemaking are positioned as an essentialist part of identity construction, but rather that they integrate and materialize changing notions of self over time, integrating and materializing different expressions of subjectivity (Young, 2005). In other words, home is symbolic of the self, and that symbolism is often made material via homemaking practices, with the material design of the home may be continuously reworked to support LGBTQ+ identities and relationships (Gorman-Murray, 2007b). This idea is particularly important to this thesis when it comes to articulating the emergence of the home as a site of *saudade* expression in Chapter Five. After all, studies in geographies of home are foregrounded in the idea that they are located "on the thresholds between memory and nostalgia for the past, everyday life in the present, and future dreams and fears" (Blunt and Varley, 2004: p. 3).

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

I sought to answer the question of "***How do the complex migratory experiences of LGBTQ+ migrants from Brazil to Canada illustrate spatially contingent queer emotional processes?"*** throught qualitative research structured by a three-stage process. The first stage of the research focuses on gathering stories about the migrant journeys that the participants experienced through individual semi-structured interviews. Therefore, this stage of the research focuses on life in Brazil and the migratory journey itself. The second stage is a focus group on the shared feeling of *saudade,* as well as the queered experiences of the participants while in Canada, and possible futures moving forward. The final stage relates to transcribing, coding, and analyzing the data collected in their stories and relating them to the literature.

It is important to me as a researcher to conduct the research under a queer framework, which I intend to articulate through two main issues: the question of subjectivity and the deconstruction of typical interview structures. As outlined in *Queer Methods and Methodologies* (Nash, 2016), it is crucial to understand that non-heteronormative identities are not structured solely by sexual and gender aspects. Race, culture, and socioeconomic background play an important part in defining people, and the multiple intersections of these aspects create the ground for how migrants articulate their lived experiences in their destinations. Brazil's large scale as a country and societal fragmentation aspect as a society only serve to further inform such identities, leading to LGBTQ+ individuals having very different experiences depending on whether they came from the Northeast, North, South, Midwest, or Southeast geopolitical regions.

Therefore, I fully expect the grounded experiences of people to be reflective of such diversity, and I am thankful that I was able to interview participants who come from each of those regions. Participants' regional backgrounds were respected and communicated regarding all of those aspects, which is not often the case in the literature produced in a country that often perpetuates internal xenophobia, as is the case with internal migration from the Northeast to São Paulo.

In addition, I also believe it to be important to crack and disrupt the discipline of geography a bit further. Traditionally, a very white, heteronormative, masculine discipline, the critical and cultural turn from the end of the 20th century has been reshaping what it looks like ever since. It is essential to take into consideration binaries that come into play in geographical research regarding knowledge production and dissemination. Chief amongst them, the insider/outsider binary needs to be disrupted and queered. I did so not only by clearly acknowledging my positionality as one of the people this research talks about, as a Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrant, but also by structuring the interview in a manner that takes into consideration queer and feminist praxis. What I mean by that is the importance of building relationships of trust and care throughout the interview and focus groups, as participants share, probably, the most important step they have ever taken in their lives, filled with emotions. Thus, emotional geographies also came into alliance with the queer aspects of research, especially considering that one of the biggest contributions from my research is to articulate the feeling of *saudade* in the discipline of geography as a place-based, grounded feeling that migrants must live with and negotiate throughout their lives in a new country.

3.2 Relationship building, outreach, and data collection

I utilized purposive sampling to interview 14 individuals who met the following criteria: a) they hold Brazilian citizenship; b) they are currently residing in a Canadian city; and c) they identify as LGBTQ+ or do not identify themselves as heterosexual or cisgender. Participants were recruited through posts that I circulated online on social media, calling for people to participate in the research, initially on two Facebook groups for LGBTQ+ Brazilians living in Canada. The first interviewee kindly suggested I join a WhatsApp group called Queers in Toronto, another group exclusively for LGBTQ+ Brazilians living in Canada, of which I was not aware before our interview. Many interviewees were found in that WhatsApp group, through a single message calling for participants. There was some snowball sampling in addition, with two of the interviewees recommending friends for the interview that I ended up being able to incorporate into the process. One interview spontaneously led to me interviewing their wife, who happened to be in their house at the time, and she agreed to the interview.

Finally, I also interviewed BR01, a personal friend of mine whom I have known for a long time: his mother was my fifth-grade teacher, he was my acoustic guitar instructor, and we both undertook exchange programs in Canada in 2015. From there, I followed BR01's journey transitioning online, from a distance, and he was one of my main motivations and inspirations to migrate to Canada in 2023. My interview with BR01 was different from others due to the previous years of building friendship and personal trust with one another. It had a more casual tone, as we shared recent updates from both of our lives and retraced the history of our friendship through our migration journeys. It had a more personal and less formal aspect than other interviews, expressed through more casual language (often inappropriate in its level of

passionate swearing, in the context of a public library). I asked BR01 all the same questions I asked other participants, with the addition of more precise questions since I had followed his life from afar using social media, and I was curious about the recent developments in his life, such as coming out as a transgender man and starting the transition processes in Canada.

BR01 ended up being an important piece of the snowballing process because, through him, I was introduced to two other transgender/gender non-conforming people, finalizing a total of 14 research participants for the semi-structured interviews. Interviews happened in the Toronto Reference Library for participants living in Toronto and online via Zoom when necessary, or for participants living in different cities. Although my initial intention was to travel to participants' cities to hold the interviews and attempt to build relationships more profoundly with them in person, funding constraints restricted me from doing so. Interviews were held from December 4, 2024, to February 16, 2025.

The Brazilian LGBTQ+ immigrants interviewed in my research represent a diverse range of intersections between sexuality, gender, age, and regional identity in Brazil. Almost all of them migrated to Canada after Jair Bolsonaro was elected president in 2017, a trend I discuss later. Only one participant migrated before 2014. Therefore, although unintentional in the design of the research, the data collected reflects a specific period in the immigration of Brazilian LGBTQ+ individuals to Canada and does not capture the totality of LGBTQ+ migrants' experiences and motivations over time. Indeed, most participants cite the rise of ultra-right politics and discourse in Brazil as a deciding factor that interacts with embodied fear and perceptions of physical and mental safety, which in turn encouraged their mobility.

Recruitment for the focus group happened in a similar fashion. I sent out a participation call in Brazilian Portuguese on three channels, but I also sent private messages to people whom I had interviewed before and who lived in Toronto, explaining the focus group's purpose and asking if they were interested in participating in it. All eight interviewees from Toronto were interested, but only two were available. The other two participants were recruited through the WhatsApp group, and the final participant was BR13's husband, whom I had met when I first interviewed BR13 but had not had the chance to interview yet. The focus group then happened with a group of five people in the Toronto Reference Library on March 16, 2025.

All the in-person interviews and the focus group were recorded using my personal phone and the premium version of a recording application called Voice Recorder and Voice Memos, which made for easier management of the audio files and high-fidelity audio quality from the recordings. Both the interviews and the focus group were undertaken in Brazilian Portuguese, and their audio files were transcribed using aTrain, an automatic transcriber software that is offline and therefore does not feed data to online clouds. Finally, I checked the transcripts in comparison with the audio tracks for possible faults and errors in transcription. In the final text, participants' identities were protected by being anonymized through the assignment of codes from BR01 to BR17.

3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews: There, and Between.

The semi-structured interviews focused on the "there" and the "during" of the migratory process. This means that the questions focused on participants' Brazilian contexts, the queering processes experienced there, as well as the decision-making process to move, addressing the first two objectives of this research. Due to the often challenging nature of migratory processes, especially

involving sexuality as a factor in systems of oppression, as well as issues of distance to family and loved ones, professional setbacks, and financial strains, I anticipated strong feelings in regard to the questions that I asked, either positive or negative. Through participants' responses and reactions, I was able to understand how these emotions related to places in a multi-scalar manner and to identify recurring relationships between participants' responses and a particular scale when answering specific questions, which I detail and discuss later. Emotions also come into play when discussing the migratory process, the choices made during that process, and the ways in which Canada was imagined by the participants before immigrating. Interviews were designed to last approximately an hour, but all of them ended up being very productive and lasting closer to the two-hour mark. A sense of kinship and safety was established at the beginning of each interview, and most participants reported being thankful for the opportunity to describe an important part of their lives that they often do not find the time to reflect upon.

3.4 Focus group (in Canada, and moving forward)

The second stage of the data collection stage relates to the shared experiences LGBTQ+ migrants experience in Canada in the form of a focus group, complemented by eliciting auto-photography of *saudade* from participants. The focus group happened with two of the previously interviewed LGBTQ+ migrants and three new interviewees as well, found through the same recruitment channels used for the interview (Facebook and WhatsApp 'Brazilian Queers in Toronto' group). Alongside *saudade*, the focus group also focused on the possible queering processes that participants may have encountered during their time in Canada so far, such as racism, xenophobia, or microaggressions related to their cultural or linguistic background. Participants had very different lived experiences based mostly on their backgrounds, and while none felt that

the price of *saudade* was too high to warrant the notion of returning to Brazil, the possibility of doing so and the act of performing home visits were explored as well, and are further detailed in Chapter Five. An interesting spectrum of integration into Canadian society and attachment to queer Brazilian identities emerged, which is made explicit and analyzed in Chapter Five.

3.4.1 Auto-photography of *saudade*. As an initial starting point for the focus group, participants were asked to share any number of photographs of objects or places in their homes that represent the feeling of *saudade* to them. The use of photographs in geography is part of the 'visual turn' of the discipline that started in the late 1990s, in many parts informed by the previous decades of scholarly work of the larger 'cultural turn' of the social sciences (Schwartz and Ryan, 2021). Photographic data in geography used to be collected with the use of disposable cameras, but recent changes in smartphone technology now make it possible for studies to use participants' own photo-archives from their portable devices (Sharp, 2025; Bain and Podmore, 2025). Photography may be employed in various methods, such as photo-elicitation (Bain et al., 2015; Mollet, 2025), photovoice (Sutton-Brown, 2014; Mortensen and Questiaux, 2025), and auto-photography (Johnsen et al., 2008; Bain and Sharp, 2025).

I complemented the focus group with two of these modalities: auto-photography and photo elicitation. The method of auto-photography represents a move away from 'perfect' images constructed by researchers; the uneven dynamic of power between researcher and 'researched' is challenged when the participants take the photographs themselves (Rose, 2001). Prior to our focus group, participants were given somewhat loose directions of what they were expected to photograph: objects that represented the feeling of *saudade* on their lives, and that preferably followed two criteria: a) this object has been brought from Brazil to be placed in Canada with a

specific purpose related to *saudade*, or b) this object has been acquired in Canada with the intent of representing their *saudade* of Brazil.[10] In an attempt to provide participants with as much 'evenness' in the power dynamics of our focus group, no other directive was provided; participants had the freedom to visually capture and represent *saudade* in any manner they saw fit. Based on my own experience with *saudade*, I expected the visual representations provided by participants from come from home, as an intimate, personal, subjectively constructed place in their lives where I theorized *saudade* would probably permeate. I later turn to further explorations of the contents and narratives of the photographs, but for now, it suffices to say that my expectation came to fruition – all the photographs provided represented subjective constructions related to the home and homemaking practices of the participants.

In addition to defying the researcher/researched binary in the social sciences, geographers who work with auto-photography and photo elicitation have often found value in the insights of how participants understand and interpret themselves and their place in the world (Johnsen et al., 2008). The photographs presented by the participants provide a solid resource that aids participants in constructing and telling narratives about themselves and their geographies without sacrificing their social and personal contexts (Latham, 2004). These resources are then analyzed as an often-complementary method to more orthodox methods in qualitative research and provide additional, subtler insights (Johnsen et al., 2008). Indeed, photo elicitation provided a powerful resource in the structure of the focus group. Participants reported being excited about

[10] One of the participants misunderstood these directions and instead brought pictures of the home he had just left behind in Brazil, and some of the things he had to let go of such as his acoustic guitar. This led to one of the more interesting photographs and discussions of the focus group (see Figure 5.1). In hindsight, if I repeated this methodology, I would simply ask them for anything related to *saudade*, allowing for even more openness and personal power of narrative.

sharing the photographs they had brought with them on their smartphones, which provided the method with a sense of personal engagement and collective experience. In turn, each participant turned their smartphone towards the rest of the group, described the image they were showing, and detailed its emotional relevance to them. Participants and I often spontaneously reacted with warmth, support, and empathy, as we related to the shared display of emotion of whoever was sharing their photographs, and, by extension, sharing *saudade*. This part of the focus group served the purpose of creating a sense of bond and collective experience between participants who shared at once similar and disparate journeys of migration, but all permeated by *saudade*. *Saudade*, as articulated in much more detail later, was a strong subject for a focus group because it resonated with all participants as an integral part of their everyday lives. Therefore, this exercise of auto-photography and photo elicitation explored embodied emotions (*saudade* was often accompanied by love, sadness, or grief), but it also shed light on how *saudade* is articulated and placed in the world by Brazilian queer migrants in acts of micro (re)productions of home and memory.

When I conducted the focus group, I had been living in Canada for a year and a half and had not visited my family and loved ones in Brazil since then. Based on my own experiences as a LGBTQ+ Brazilian migrant living in Canada with *saudade*, I anticipated strong emotions to arise from this part of the research, and I did not want these emotions to be quelled by traditional academic standards of anemic research. On the contrary, any emotions that came up were dealt with respect and mutual care by members of the focus group and the interviewer. As a matter of fact, a strong sense of communal support emerged throughout the time we had together, and I would feel comfortable saying that the focus group was initiated before I had programmed it to do so. I had called to book a room in advance in the Toronto Reference Library, but when I

arrived there, the room was not booked on their system. Luckily, they had a room to spare thirty minutes after the programmed time. In the meantime, participants arrived and generously understood the situation and agreed that they could stay for as long as necessary for the focus group to be finalized. Those unexpected[11] extra thirty minutes allowed for engagement with one another in a more casual manner, which I would feel comfortable calling a very Brazilian manner: we were drinking coffee together and talking very casually while we made acquaintances with one another, perhaps too loudly for the main hall of the library. During the focus group, when one participant expressed a potential difficulty or barrier in their current lives in Canada, others would quickly jump in with ways of supporting them and potentially solving those issues. Participants were asked for permission for me to share the photographs they had presented with the academic community. I note that some participants brought framed photographs of loved ones to the focus group that they have around their houses. Out of respect for ethics and the privacy of their family members and friends, I do not discuss nor include those photographs in this thesis. The photographs I was given permission to use and that do not include other people were included in the final thesis.

After our focus group, I solicited that participants send me the appropriate digital files (i.e., the ones that did not depict other people) for analysis and inclusion in my thesis. I collected all the digital files in an encrypted folder on my laptop. In addition to that, I had previously re-recorded the focus group using the voice recorder of my personal smartphone, alongside my personal laptop's voice recorder for safety. The audio file generated was transcribed from Brazilian Portuguese using the software aTrain, and then coded, as described in more detail later.

[11] And, for me, anxiety-inducing.

The transcriptions contained the 'voice' of the participants and the narratives in relation to the photographs shown, and I analyzed the photographs provided in conjunction with the data presented by them during the focus group, as well as the conversations that followed each photograph. Johnsen et al., (2008) argue that auto-photography, when analysed quantitatively, brings the intention of the photographer to the front, providing insights into what is important to *them*, and accounting for *their* subjective interpretations without having content and meaning imposed by the researcher. Therefore, I analysed the photographs qualitatively, being especially attentive to when expressions of *saudade* and related emotions would emerge from participants' narratives, not only through the visual and textual contents, but also shifts in their tone and voice. Due to noticing the commonality of 'home' as a predominant space of *saudade* expression, I analyzed the data again, looking for patterns of similarity or disparity related to 'home'. Johnsen et al. (2008) also suggest that the researcher's own position and knowledge will inevitably shape their general interpretation of the images. That was certainly the case, as participants' stories and photographs would often elicit in me an emotional reaction and response, alongside personal reflections on the subjective role similar objects have in reflecting my experiences with migration, Brazilian-ness, and Canada. As such, the meaning behind pictures of a Brazilian front yard, of books from famous queer Brazilian authors, or even traditional 'grandma' dishcloths caught my attention in a stronger manner than it probably would for researchers who were not also LGBTQ+ Brazilian migrants living in Canada. This bias was diminished by the nature of auto-photography: pictures taken by the participants themselves, as well as the narratives they presented to the focus group, ensured that their perspectives and places of significance were a significant part of the content analysis of the data collected (Johnsen et al., 2008).

3.5 Data coding and evaluation

Transcripts were coded using ATLAS. ti, mostly through thematic inductive coding by finding emerging similar themes and patterns in the data. When that was done, I went through the data again to perform deductive coding using keywords from the research objectives outlined in my research proposal. Coding the interviews led to the creation and maintenance of five parent codes, namely: adaptation and transformation; space; migration and identity; emotional landscape; and politics. These parent codes contain a total of 39 child codes. Out of all parent codes, unsurprisingly, migration and identity were the most recurring themes, holding 33% of citations. This was the parent code for multiple relationships between questions of mobility and questions of identity, such as acceptance, tolerance, belonging, and regional identities.

The focus group data were coded following the same abductive coding strategy from the interviews, generating a list of 3 parent codes (definitions of *saudade*, photographs, home) and 13 child codes. When writing Chapter Five on *saudade*, I used quotations and thematic analysis mostly from the focus group. However, *saudade* was naturally a recurring, spontaneous theme in the interviews as well, generating a code of its own, through which I also found insights and quotes that I used when writing Chapter Five. The content and themes found through the data coding and analysis were then analyzed in relation to one another and put in conversation with existing literature on similar themes. The quotes that ended up being used throughout this text were all translated from Brazilian Portuguese to English by the author.

Coding was done keeping in mind the overall goal of integrating all aspects of this research together, in relation to its objectives and main research question, in an attempt to understand how queerness transforms migration, and how, in turn, migration is transformed by

queerness as well. More specifically, coding was purposely performed seeking to understand how, in this migratory process, LGBTQ+ Brazilian affects are catalysts of migration and enable the maintenance and continuation of mobilities. It was also relevant to understand how journeys were placed and made material and emotional throughout the entire process. The similarities and differences from the data served to illustrate the ontological and epistemological diversity of the people involved and pointed towards possible futures emerging from this transnational process.

Of the fourteen people interviewed, seven self-identified as cisgender men, three self-identified as transgender men, three self-identified as cisgender women, and one person did not wish to disclose their gender identity. Most respondents were in their 30s (8 respondents), with an equal number in their 20s and 40s (3 each). Eight interviewees currently reside in Toronto (ON), three in Montréal (QC), two in Vancouver (BC), and one in Regina (SK). All but five of the interviewees had migrated to (usually) larger urban centers throughout Brazil before moving to Canada. I now turn to participants' narratives as they relate to this mobility of domestic nature and put the scale of embodied emotion in relation to a traditional regionalization of the Brazilian territory.

Chapter Four: Othered, Transformed: Brazilian LGBTQ+ Migration to Canada

Mil nações moldaram minha cara
Minha voz, uso para dizer o que se cala
Ser feliz no vão, no triz é força que me embala
O meu país é meu lugar de fala!
-Elza Soares[12]

4.1 Introduction: Many otherings

This chapter examines the migratory experiences of LGBTQ+ Brazilians in Canada, with a particular focus on the spatial relationships of emotions and Brazilian queerness. It follows a quasi-chronological migratory logic that tracks the evolution of queering processes as people immigrate from Brazil to Canada. Othering is the outcome of a discursive process that stigmatizes differences, real or imagined, by presenting them as a negation of identity, and thus creating a dominating in-group ('us', the self) against a dominated out-group ('them', the other), often a motive for discrimination (Staszak, 2009). The process of rendering geographical 'others' is foregrounded on binaries that transpose us/them to a variety of aspects of identity: eastern/western, urban/rural, heterosexual/non-heterosexual, male/female, and many other dichotomies. Throughout this chapter, I conceptualize othering processes around this definition and explore the myriad ways the participants in this research were rendered othered throughout their journeys of becoming (the self, the other, the migrant).

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[12] *A thousand nations shaped my face*
My voice, I use it to say what is made silent
To be happy in the gap, on the edge, is the strength that envelops me
My country is my place to speak of [with authority] – Elza Soares

I structured this chapter using a linear temporal scale, but I remain fully aware that migration is a perpetually incomplete process that is personally and subjectively differentiated. Scholars have often used the language of 'stuckness' or 'limbo' when talking about the temporal conditions of migration (Hage, 2009; Straughan et al., 2020), especially for those waiting for documental approval, refuge, or asylum. Migrants do not exist in a parallel reality, but such understandings highlight the experience of these subjects as in between (Sanò et al., 2022, referencing Turner, 1967). Still, when attempting to answer my main research question, which seeks to understand how these othering processes are transformed across space and time, a somewhat linear scale of time was useful in finding patterns in the data provided by the participants. Moreover, these chapters also attempt to answer calls made by scholars of queer and emotional geographies, which ask for a centering of the body in studies related to socio-spatialities. To achieve that, I employ a relation approach to scale centered around the body. Throughout this chapter, the othering processes are understood in relating the body (and parts of the body, such as the mouth, the throat, and the hands) to regional and national scales, as well as in relation to itself.

I start this chapter by contextualizing how the regional scale is made discursive and symbolic in Brazilian imaginaries, and its importance in anchoring regional identities that intersect with aspects such as gender, sexuality, race, and class. I explore how othering processes occur pre-migration in mobilities inside the Brazilian national boundary, often taking the form of internal xenophobia, orientalism, and homonationalism. I follow by detailing the concept of exploratory journeys and how they point to differentiations in the multiple migratory processes. Then, I explore how hope and fear are articulated through the act of holding hands and the impact on queer lives of the recent conservative rise in Brazilian politics, as well as the

generation of desire to migrate. I finish by arguing that once people land in Canada, the othering processes mentioned before bring different aspects to the forefront in place of sexuality, such as race, sociocultural values, and class.

4.2 Regionalized othering: *Brasil, mas qual?*[13]

Brazil is a country of continental dimensions, and its territory is traditionally divided into five broad politico-administrative regions that group together its 26 states and federal district into regions based on geographic, socioeconomic, and cultural criteria. Although this division is not the only one proposed, it is the one sanctioned by the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), which broadly organized the vast country into North, Northeast, Southeast, Center-West, and South regions. This decoupage bears little domestic political and economic consequence as Brazil remains a strong federal unit. Nevertheless, it weighs heavily on the Brazilian imagination, reflecting the profound cultural differences between Brazilians, expressed in accents, foods, and everyday practices and values, as demonstrated throughout this chapter. Thus, Brazilians often view their country as a unified entity, but they also frequently point out the existence of what one participant calls "many *Brazils* within Brazil." The map below provides a visual reference point to which the reader may return, and depicts the political administrative division of Brazil into regions, as well as the 26 federative units (states) and the Federal District, which houses the country's capital, Brasília.

[13] Brazil, but which one?

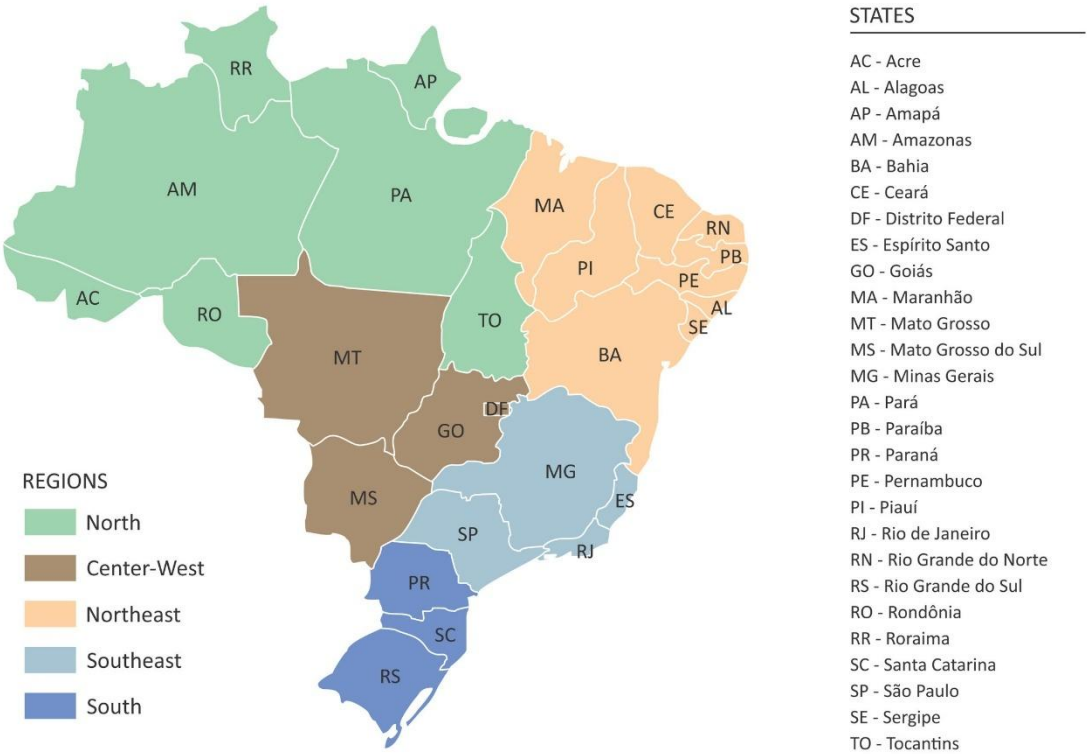

Figure 4.1: Map showing the states and regions of Brazil.
Source: Mappr (2025).

Without planning per se, my research captures voices from at least one participant of each region: eight from the Southeast, two from the North, two from the Northeast, one from the South, and one from the Center-West. Most participants experienced internal migration across different regions and shared their experiences across Brazil before making the decision to move to and settle in Canada.

A pattern emerged in the interviews, particularly regarding emotions and the presence (or absence) of a supporting queer infrastructure and network in participants' respective regions, as well as the emotions and mobility that may arise from their internal migration experiences. Most

participants from the Southeast came from São Paulo, which is usually seen as Brazil's most queer-friendly city. Indeed, most respondents highlighted the numerous LGBTQ+ bars and events to which they had access in the city, as well as the communities they were able to build, particularly those located in São Paulo's central regions, which generated feelings of love and hope. Complex emotions of fear and love, as well as anger and discomfort, relate to São Paulo when thinking about queer spaces and community. These sensations arose in the interviews from both a sense of queer unfriendliness and a perception of unsafety, as well as due to São Paulo's nature as a bustling metropolis with over 40 million people. As BR07, an entrepreneur currently living in Vancouver, states:

> I became so resentful of São Paulo; I think it's such a noisy city, and I'm not on that vibe anymore... I was in São Paulo two months ago, and, damn… how do people actually live there? It is unhealthy… No, there really is too much noise, too many people, too much gray (BR07, 2025).

BR04, a computer scientist currently living in Montréal, concurs and stated that she felt "kind of fed up with the São Paulo chaos, you know, traffic, taking two hours to get anywhere… That was another thing that made me not choose Toronto. It would be almost another São Paulo". BR04's perception of Montréal is that it is a smaller city that still promotes a vibrant urban lifestyle. Both these quotes demonstrate how queerness and sexuality are not always a central factor that generates mobility, and these two participants direct their anger and fatigue at the very nature of big-city life.

On the other hand, BR14's interview highlights how queerness is a significant factor in the association of emotion with place and mobility. The only city he had lived in prior to moving to Toronto was São Paulo. His experiences of the city are highly dependent on the scale of the neighbourhood. He describes feeling constant homophobia and othering in the region where he is

from in the city, the Eastern Zone, which is one of the less affluent areas of São Paulo. Those feelings changed completely when he moved close to his university in the more central, bohemian neighbourhood of Vila Madalena. There, he was able to create a strong queer network and foster more positive emotions, as well as meet his partner, which eventually encouraged him to move to Canada.

BR14's experiences are echoed by another participant, who also grew up in the Eastern Zone of São Paulo. BR13 describes his experiences growing up in a poorer neighbourhood and navigating through "very hostile and hard" environments, such as the neighbourhood streets and his school, where he was consistently bullied with homophobic jokes told by his colleagues at his expense. As he grew older, BR13 also ended up moving within the city of São Paulo, creating a strong sense of queer community and home for himself through chosen family and friends that embraced his identity as a gay man, as well as being able to more freely express his identity through objects and artwork in his home related to his queerness. Distance from his original home allowed him to construct his sense of self, while also pursuing a career in education as an English teacher. BR13's story illustrates how transitioning between spaces can transform negative emotions into positive ones, such as those associated with education and the school environment.

Another important part of the Brazilian Southeast narrative comes from two transgender men, BR11 and BR09. Both of them come from the metropolitan area of São Paulo and describe powerful negative associations with their suburban neighbourhoods due to a lack of safe queer spaces and the constant verbal and physical harassment they suffered from not conforming to the gendered expectations people had of them. BR09 describes deeply traumatic experiences of

sexual and gender violence, which eventually led to him moving away to Toronto "with nothing but 800 dollars in my pockets" and claiming refugee status in Canada (I revisit BR09's experience as a Brazilian refugee claimant in Canada below). Except for one, the other seven participants who were born in the Southeast region did not move too far from their birthplace, with only minor internal relocations across the region itself, usually due to family dynamics or their professional lives.

This exception is BR08, a queer therapist and counsellor who was born in a smaller city in the state of Minas Gerais and is currently living in Toronto. BR08 describes her experiences coming from a very religious family with a strong religious dynamic, and her traumatic experiences with conversion therapy for "ex-gays" in an evangelical church that led to struggles with accepting her sexuality. Although BR08's story contains profound moments of personal pain, it ultimately becomes a poignant tale of hope:

> The first time I came out, I was 15 years old. So, 1994. It was tough for me because I came from a very traditional *mineira,*[14] spiritist[15] A family that was indeed very, very traditional. The only person I knew of or heard stories about [being gay] was an aunt on a farm we used to go to all the time. Everyone would say that she was the dyke aunt and things like that. It was horrible; the comments were horrible. So, when I started to feel that weird thing, which was weird to me, the attraction I started to feel for a girl at a store, it was torture (BR08, 2025).

In this quotation, BR08 reflects on how the traditional values of her state were fundamental in fostering emotions of pain and fear, with what she views as a very traditional regional culture influencing her family to not accept her sexuality. BR08 is one of the participants with the most intense experience of internal migration in Brazil, having also lived in the North and the Center-

[14] *Mineira* or *mineiro* describe a person or a thing that came from the state of Minas Gerais, in Southeast Brazil.
[15] *Spiritism* or *Kardecism* is a religion of French origin highly diffused and practiced throughout Brazil.

West regions of the country. Her mobility was driven by a variety of reasons, sometimes academically and professionally motivated, but most of the time by a search for belonging and acceptance, or finding queer love and hope, which ultimately led her to finally relocate to Campo Grande (MS), in the Center-West region, with her then-girlfriend. One of the most impactful moments of BR08's story is how her family eventually accepted her identity: "Around the time I was immigrating, that is when my family finally accepted me" (BR08, 2005). Thus, her story expresses an array of relationships between spaces, such as the church and the farm, queerness, intense emotions, and the concept of mobility.

Brazil's diverse physical and cultural regionalization also led to what one respondent described as xenophobia. BR03 was born in the Northeast region and first moved to Rio de Janeiro, in the Southeast, before migrating to Toronto. Although xenophobia is generally articulated as a form of social discrimination against people who come from other countries, it is also frequently used in similar contexts to the ones narrated by BR03. Research demonstrates how *nordestinos*[16] suffer from "hundreds of years of systematic cultural and social misrepresentation and otherization," especially when migrating to the South and Southeast regions of Brazil (Serrão, 2022, p. 183). As Serrão (2022) explains, it is not that these regions were not accustomed to migration; Brazil had encouraged and financed European and Japanese migration to these regions on multiple occasions. However, the *nordestino* was not, in the federal government's view, the "ideal" migrant. BR03 exemplifies this pattern of othering by saying that the first time he suffered xenophobia was not in Canada (although he later describes experiences

[16] *Nordestino* or *nordestina* is describes a person or thing that originates in the Northeast region of Brazil.

with xenophobia in Toronto as well), but rather when he initially moved to Rio de Janeiro, which was his first profound experience with othering:

> I was discriminated against [in Rio de Janeiro] because I am *nordestino*. I was discriminated against because I was not *carioca.*[17] I went through many situations of discrimination, even inside the LGBT environment, where people did not want to have a relationship with outsiders. Because of my nordestino accent, I could not get a job (BR03, 2024).

This quotation highlights the relevance of the dimensional proportions of Brazil and the diversity found therein to the construction of social identities and processes of exclusion. BR03 was not made 'other' in Rio de Janeiro because of his sexual identity, but rather because he came from a different region, which is made visible through his *nordestino* accent. Weinstein (2015) describes the relationship between the Brazilian South(east) and Northeast regions as a form of internal Orientalism, where the Southeast is a reflection of the colonizer (white, European, modern, industrial, capitalist) and the Northeast becomes the portrait of the colonized (backwards, economically dependent on the south(east), provider of labour and raw materials). I argue that this perspective is correct yet incomplete. Narratives such as BR03's point to a complementary form of internal homonationalism, where the southeast part of the country is seen as a queer-friendly region of non-cisheteronormative possibilities that promotes LGBTQ+ rights, while the northeast is usually portrayed as a heteronormative region of masculinist oppressive logics. These binaries (colonizer/colonized, progressive/backwards, queer/cisheteronormative) are directly disturbed by people such as BR03, a queer person from the northeast who believes in

[17] *Carioca* is an adjective that describes a person that was born in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

challenging gender and sexual stereotypes by, for example, wearing clothes from the opposite sex to disrupt regional moral expectations.

All participants who were born in the northeast region of Brazil exhibited a profound sense of pride in their birthplace, particularly in its culture and natural beauty, which is evidenced in their childhood memories of local cuisines, traditional songs, and attachment to places. At the same time, *Nordestinos* portray their region and the cities they live in as complex places. BR12el describes his hometown of Fortaleza as a place where he experienced "a lack of sense of safety", as bars and clubs for the LGBTQ+ community that would open and close "within the year", leading to a lack of a socio-spatial point of reference for socialization of the queer community in the city.

The lack of infrastructure where queer people can socialize and exist visibly without constraints in their cities/regions and the absence of clear spaces for safe socialization are echoed by other research participants from the North and Northeast regions. BR10 expands on this idea by stating that although there may be some change in this regard from the younger LGBTQ+ community in the northern city of Belém, there certainly are no action plans that connect LGBTQ+ people to the job market, which makes things much harder for adaptation and thus creates a queer movement out of the city. BR10 moved to São Paulo not only in search of better job opportunities, but also because she had a pre-established community of LGBTQ+ friends living in São Paulo who could help her settle in the city upon arrival. BR10's migration story exemplifies the pivotal role the concept of a chosen family plays in the lives of queer individuals. In BR10's (2025) words: "If they had not sheltered me, that process would have been that much harder. When you already have a space, a bedroom or a living room to stay in, which was my

case, that becomes your starting point." This suggests that queer quests of identity are facilitated by chosen family, those people who are labeled outside the heterosexist/biological perspective of what constitutes family.

Another participant from Belém in the North describes that city as feeling like "a large village," where he had to employ strategies to live openly as an LGBTQ+ individual in some places, but not in others. BR02, a professor currently living in Regina (SK), carefully chose places where he could hold hands with his boyfriend, such as the Docks, a tourist complex on the Amazon River, and large city malls. BR02 discusses how that was limiting, but it was never a focus for him. He was rather focused on advancing his academic career, and all his domestic and international migratory movements were based on academic decisions that would get him closer to a professorship. BR10's and BR02's stories are tales of hope for a sense of normality in other aspects of life, including the professional and academic spheres, while also distancing themselves from the limitations of their birthplace.

Connections between identity, emotion, and regionalization also took centre-stage in the narratives of BR05, an interviewee who was born in the South. BR05 (2024), who was born and raised in a small military city in the Rio Grande do Sul state countryside, explores how she never saw herself as "that tropical Brazilian person," nor did she fully identify as fully *gaúcha.*[18] a "rebel teenager that did not like the sun nor the beach," pointing to feelings of emotional displacement and a lack of sense of belonging to stereotypical national and regional factors.

[18] In the Brazilian context, *gaúcha* is the feminine adjective describing a person born in the Rio Grande do Sul state. It is important to note that the word (and its masculine counterpart *gaucho*) also have a broader meaning of cattleman in other South American countries, particularly in Argentina, Paraguay, Chile, and Uruguay.

BR05 describes the discomfort she felt when accompanying her mother to the clinic at the age of 11. Her mother, suspecting her sexuality, asked the doctor to confront and talk to her about it. The doctor told her not to worry about anything of this nature until she was 18 years old. She navigated this complicated family dynamic, with a mother who often chose silence instead of dealing directly with her identity, alongside her desire for "the complete opposite" when it came to immigrating. BR05 moved from her small city to Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul's capital, straight to Montréal in search of a place that was "the extreme opposite" of the places she knew in Brazil in terms of culture, society, and weather.

In sum, by putting the scales of the body and the region in relation to one another in the Brazilian context, a feeling of discomfort becomes evident. This discomfort was described in multiple ways by interviewees, from direct consequences of queerness and ways of being outside the norm, to moral expectations from a particular region, to not fitting into an expected lifestyle, or deeply rooted prejudice based on colonial roots. The next section situates the body, particularly the hand holding space, in relation to a national scale of Brazilian politics and examines how fear and hope trigger a transitional moment of geopolitical mobility.

4.3 Hope, fear, and the act of holding hands

The previous section examined some of the various othering processes that Brazilian LGBTQ+ individuals experienced, which catalyzed domestic migration in Brazil across cities and regions. In turn, this section is concerned with the initial steps of immigration out of Brazil as a process that initiates through desire and is then articulated through a variety of emotions. I begin by defining exploratory journeys, a type of pre-immigration travel that was important to many of the participants. Then, I analyze the important role of national politics in Brazilian international

migration, particularly as it is enacted through the dissemination and amplification of queer fear. Finally, I turn to queer hope and juxtapose its place in queer hands against the national conjecture as the final impulse that drives mobility forward.

None of the participants in this research had lived in a country other than Brazil for an extended period. However, many of them had undertaken exploratory journeys to Canada before embarking on more consequential mobilities. Exploratory journeys are a pre-immigration movement that allows individuals to research, assess opportunities, and explore the feasibility of permanent or long-term immigration, as well as the suitability of settlement. Some Canadian provinces, such as Manitoba and Saskatchewan, encourage exploratory visits and may use them to facilitate specific immigration pathways through their Provincial Nomination Programs (PNPs). These visits may also be used as attempts to secure a job that could lead to a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA), which facilitates immigration and may even earn points through Canada's Express Entry system. Despite the purposeful and pragmatic aspect with which these journeys are portrayed on provincial immigration webpages, many interviewees describe a stronger emotional aspect to these visits. This is not to say they did not have intentions of using them to facilitate their mobility; however, such opportunities are rare, and all but one stayed in Canada after their exploratory trip, in his case, to claim refuge from violence. These trips had the concrete intention of enhancing a résumé through short academic courses or gaining experience in English as a second language institutions, but their most significant focus was evaluating Canadian society, weather, possible adaptation, and the extent of the tolerance and respect they would feel as LGBTQ+ individuals.

Such journeys were, however, very costly, and therefore social class often determined which participants could afford such exploratory journeys, as well as the duration of such trips, which ranged from a week to several months. Many others came to Canada for the first time for long-term or permanent immigration, and made their decision to migrate based on perspectives of what the Canadian lifestyle is, which they would usually find online or anecdotally from people in their networks. Consequently, participants who undertook exploratory journeys appear to have had an easier time adapting to Canadian culture and experienced fewer cultural shocks compared to those who did not visit Canada prior to immigration. Such exploratory journeys also allow for having better-established safety and support networks within the new host country. Many participants in my research ultimately undertook some sort of exploratory journeys to larger urban centers in Canada, specifically Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver. I now turn to the two most prevalent emotions in this in-between stage of their migratory journey — hope and fear.

Fear is probably the most common emotion explored in LGBTQ+ migration studies (Mole, 2018; Rank, 2002; Yue, 2013). Such fear often results from the many ways in which national heteronormativity and sociocultural values marginalize sexual and gender minorities, leading to a fear of a lack of legal protection that creates the desire to search for safer environments abroad. Mobility becomes even more complicated when intersectionality is taken into consideration (Shelton and Ceneskie, 2022), particularly in relation to class (Vuckovic Juros, 2022) and race (Tschalaer, 2021). LGBTQ+ fear is not a novel phenomenon in Brazil. A notable example is the despair felt throughout the military dictatorship period (from 1964 to 1988), when fear and moral repression were an institutionalized tool of social control. Cintra Santos (2023) tells the story of how the queer community marched for the first time on June 13, 1980, to

demand an end to the violence maintained by the police in downtown São Paulo. Thus, fear can be historically and geographically framed in Brazil as a tool of repression, but also a catalyst of collective queer resistance. Fear, as expressed by BR01 (2025), also generates agentic resistance as well, when possible and desired, in the form of migration.

> I remember looking at my now ex-wife and telling her, 'We have to leave this place, Brazil, before the next election.' I am not staying here, I said, I am not staying here until the next election, not even if I have to leave the country a day before it happens. I knew conservatism was going to win.

Jair Bolsonaro was elected president in 2018, propelled by mass populist appeal to fear amid an economic and political crisis, while also catering to those who sought a return to military dictatorship in Brazil. Bolsonaro ran a campaign based on alt-right politics of authoritarianism, misogyny, and homophobia, evidenced in many of his speeches during the campaign -- many of which enticed violence against any whose existence went against the "Brazilian traditional family values." In his own words, when referring to the COVID-19 pandemic and health crisis, "Brazil has to stop being a country of faggots" (Gomes, 2020). According to Ribeiro Dos Santos and Ericson (2022: p. 128), Bolsonaro positioned normative masculinity as a "condition to overcome the public health crisis that was responsible for the death of over 670 thousand Brazilians." This is one of many examples of the state-sanctioned violent discourse related to LGBTQ+ people during Bolsonaro's presidency.

Of course, Bolsonaro did not create homophobia and queerphobia in Brazil, nor was he an isolated phenomenon, but rather one of the many political faces of a "return of neoconservatism, along with a desire for homogeneity, consensus, standardization, polarizations, and universalism in several social relations" (De Mello Ferraz and Miquelon, 2022: p. 69). However, Bolsonaro's election was a significant moment raised by most research participants as

a milestone in the journey that either initiated more concrete plans to leave the country or accelerated already existing ones. Most of them describe how, during Bolsonaro's presidency, their perceived sense of safety and security worsened, even enduring acts of verbal violence they had not suffered before. BR06 (2024) talks about how "*bolsonarismo*[19] reigns free in Ribeirao Preto" and tells the story of kissing goodbye at the end of a date when people from a passing car started calling them "monsters and a work of the devil", noting that this was "the first time this happened to me here". BR04 describes this moment in Brazil's history not as a moment of fear, but as one of "a lack of hope in Brazil."

Hope is another common emotion found in migration studies, often coming out of fear and acting as an active component of resistance and resilience (Pettit and Ruijtenberg, 2019; Collins, 2018; Mar, 2005). Bayramoğlu (2021: p. 173) argues that "queer hope not only helps to map out possible future routes… but also operates as a driving political force that sustains queers' determination to remain in the public sphere". Out of all the emotions discussed during the interviews, hope was the most prominent, manifesting itself in a multitude of ways. BR13 (2024) illustrates the potential of queer hope and queer migration to create possibilities of resistant futures: "I would rather be a gay father in Canada [than in Brazil] and that has everything to do with our safety, the safety of this potential future child from suffering violence because their parents are gay". BR13 also points to mobility as a means to "escape from a place where we are less, and where we are less welcome." This necessity of an escape is also echoed by BR05 (2024), who talks about "the hope and fear of escaping" when alluding to fleeing from complicated family dynamics that involve physical and emotional violence to her as a lesbian. To

[19] *Bolsonarismo* refers to the political movement and ideologies associated with Jair Bolsonaro.

other participants, hope was often seen not only as a search for belonging and an escape from queer despair, but also as the hope of establishing oneself and fulfilling their ambitions, whether they be academic or creating a more financially stable life with less fear.

Therefore, hope played a crucial role in respondents' mobility and their decision to leave Brazil. That leaves the question of why and how Canada became the place where such hope and imagined worlds could ideally be transformed into reality. Although some participants chose Canada because of existing family or friendship ties, the reasoning of most participants is well-summarized by BR08's (2025) testimony:

> Canada is super progressive. It is *the* most progressive country. Why did I choose Canada? That's the reason, because I knew Canada was one of the first countries to accept gay marriage, to legalize weed, and everything else. Who knows, maybe there [in Canada] I will be able to be myself without being put in a box… So I had this hope, it was the biggest hope inside my heart: I would be able to be me.

BR08 articulates a sentiment that is echoed by many other respondents, placing significant emotional weight on queer ontological hope. That is to say, the nature and necessity of being oneself without the constraints placed upon queer bodies is articulated through hope and made into reality by the act of migrating to a country where the imagined possibilities are of freedom and progressiveness. By transporting their body and life to a different physical place, LGBTQ+ Brazilian migrants were able to do away with experiences such as the one described by BR04 (2024), where she strategically performed heteronormativity in Brazil because "sometimes, if we leave others in a state of doubt, we do not go through what many others, more visible LBGTQ+ people, go through in Brazil".

Therefore, Canada, through its nationally projected image of queer friendliness and tolerance in print and social media, becomes the idealized place of queer liberty to the LGBTQ+

migrants I interviewed. Perhaps the best way to illustrate the hopeful relationship between the nation of Canada and embodied emotion is to place it in the act of holding hands with a same-sex partner. Many participants explore the hand as a bodily site of affection, describing holding hands with their romantic partner as an action that should be safe enough to be demonstrated in public, but is often not. According to BR02 (year), in his hometown of Belém, "it is not everywhere that I can hold hands in public." Yet, for BR07 (2024), "holding hands in public is not an option." BR03 (2024), one of the participants who was able to perform exploratory journeys, articulated how in Toronto, "I could see (gay) couples holding hands, having public displays of affection, and that deeply moved me." Every participant who undertook an exploratory journey noted how witnessing proud public queer lives had an impact on them and created a memory that generated desire and hope for an world otherwise. BR13 (2025) was not one of those who made a pre-immigration visit, but he describes how, after moving to Toronto, he was able to "walk on the streets, hold my boyfriend's hand, feel comfortable giving him a kiss in public and even talking to people from my neighbourhood and saying: 'that is my boyfriend, that is my husband.'" Therefore, holding hands becomes an important public symbol of freedom and a micro-act of political resistance when placed in relation to other bodies, the streets, the neighbourhood, and the city.

4.4 Life in Canada and other otherings

'O Canadá ou os peitos?'[20] was the question BR01 (2024), a transgender man living in Toronto for the past decade, asked himself. BR01 (2024) describes his journey of becoming who he

[20] 'Canada, or the tits?'

wants to be, and how that happened through two parallel stories: his migration and transition journeys. Throughout these journeys, BR01 had to negotiate expressing his gender identity through his body and his need to escape what he predicted to be a strong conservative turn in Brazil. Even before understanding himself as a transgender man, BR01 always wished for a full mastectomy to combat dysphoria. Mastectomies have been, since 2013, covered under gender-affirming care in Brazil's universal healthcare system (*Sistema Único de Saúde*), but those who wished for one used to have to find a private doctor to perform the surgery, an expensive endeavor. When confronted with the price of a mastectomy, BR01 asked himself: "Canada, or the tits?". When I asked what he chose, the answer was a prompt: "Canada". He has now had the mastectomy through Ontario's healthcare system and lives a fully visible queer life with his wife. BR01 is one of the three transgender men interviewed, whose stories share the affirmation that their transition would not have been at the same progressed state if they had not immigrated to Canada.

Jacob and Oswin (2023: p. 214) describe how transgendered migrants "consistently manage the tension between the intimate felt and the geopolitical," a sentiment well-placed in the stories above. I take care not to romanticize the experiences of my respondents, especially the trans migrants, out of respect for the dangers described by Jacob and Oswin (2023). Positioning Canada as an exceptional "safe haven" for queer migrants erases the many othering experiences migrants still go through in Canada and its history and continuing present of settler colonial violence. BR09 (2025), one of the participants, describes "the horrors" of dealing with the Canadian immigration system as a refugee claimant, being made to relive "absolutely traumatic and violent events" of his life through the course of three years of dealing with legality and bureaucracy to maintain and update his status in the country. His own experience is of dealing

with transphobia from one of the judges in the hearing, and one of the lawyers offered by the state. BR09 (2025) describes how he loathed having to prove his identity again and again to get a status document. He also describes the sadness felt when he had his Brazilian passport taken from him and torn apart, a common procedure for refugees. His refugee claim is made based on a past of sexual and gender violence he suffered in Brazil. He also reports feeling sadness in not currently being able to return to Brazil to visit loved ones and re-experience Brazilian culture, given that refugees in Canada are allowed to visit any country with their documentation, except their country of origin.

Therefore, there is a complicated tension between what Canada has to offer to queer people as a country and the many legal systems and policies that (some) queer migrants have to navigate in their lives. Such systems and policies can often be violent and oppressive. This also aligns with the experiences that Jacob and Oswin (2023) and their overall conclusion that trans and gender non-confirming experiences as refugees in Canada differ significantly from those of LGB people. As a matter of fact, although BR01 (2024) was able to establish himself financially over time and landed a job where he felt safe to live a visible transgender life, the experiences of the Canadian job market for BR09 and BR11 differ and are characterized by instability. It is also important to point out that Brazilian refugees are a relative rarity in Canada, even those who make claims based on gendered and sexuality-based violence, in many ways due to the perception that Brazil is a legally progressive nation. According to Statistics Canada, in 2024, 0.01% of refugee claims came from Brazil, and half of those were denied.

These testimonies begin to demonstrate how queering processes assume different contours throughout migrant lives. Experiences related to feeling othered tended to move from

being othered based on their sexuality and/or gender identities towards other aspects of migrant life, especially questions of accent, cultural behaviours, xenophobia, isolation, and difficulty adapting to the Canadian job market. This is not to state that participants stopped suffering variations of queerphobia in Canada. As stated earlier, BR03 (2024) experienced internal xenophobia in Brazil when he moved to Rio de Janeiro, but had not experienced homophobia in the workplace until he moved to Canada:

> The first time I experienced homophobia in the workplace was in Toronto. I was not considered for an internal selection process because my colleagues knew I was gay… When I was working with human resources, I told people there I had suffered homophobia, I even told them how it happened, and I left it in writing for them. Their only reaction was to say, 'I am sorry this happened to you.'

BR03 compares the emotions that arose from the othering experiences he felt in Rio de Janeiro to the ones he experienced in Toronto by saying that suffering xenophobia in Brazil left him with sadness. Suffering xenophobia and homophobia in the workplace in Canada left him motivated because he was able to transform that anger into emotional fuel to continue his everyday life. BR03 further challenged the notion that Canada is a safe haven of tolerance for migrants:

> I would say Canada gives this image of tolerance to immigrants, but there *is* xenophobia. To call it by its name, it is passive-aggressive xenophobia… Yes, yes, we want immigrants, for the jobs that we [Canadians] do not want. We want immigrants to work in cafés and clean the library floor, but for the job vacancy for which they are qualified, they are not given a chance to try. They do not participate in interviews, and their accent is often a reason for them to be eliminated from the process.

The issue of speaking in accented English resonates with other participants' lived experiences, but it is important to note that perhaps it would not apply to the same extent if they were black Brazilians or of a more visibly racialized minority. BR01 (2024) also describes how the first time he felt homophobia "on the skin" happened for the first time in Canada, placing and mapping the emotion on his body that he felt when his colleagues would stare at him because of being "a

dyke" when he was visiting Canada for an exploratory journey and studying at an English as a second language learning facility. BR10 (2024) also describes how the language learning environment became a space for exposure to misogyny and homophobia. BR10 came to Canada as a permanent resident and spent the initial portion of her Canadian life studying in the francisation program in Montréal. The francisation program of Quebec is composed of a series of free-of-cost French language courses aimed at promoting "participation in the collective life; sharing the way of life and values of the Québecois(es); discovering and enriching Quebec culture; integration in the job market" (Gouvernement du Québec, n.d.). BR10 describes the program as being essential to her adaptation to Quebec culture and life, building an initial network in Canada, and landing her first job. At the same time, she explains how the diverse culture of the courses also exposed her to a multitude of prejudices. When asked what kind of prejudices, BR10 answered:

> Every single type of prejudice. Every single one… Consider that inside their heads, that is not prejudice. So, sometimes they would offend everyone in a single sentence. They would step on every human right. So you have to take a deep breath. The teacher would intervene in some instances, but there were other professors who would say, "Let them kill each other; I will not intervene, and that's it."

Thus, these educational spaces, intended for cultural integration and adaptation, also become places of discomfort, anger, and fear, while simultaneously promoting hope. Other places where respondents experienced othering included academic and professional workplaces.

Many participants describe the frustration of not having their skills recognized in the workplace or by the job market, feeling as though they are being set back in their professional and financial lives. BR02 (2024) discussed the sense of discrimination faced by people from the Global South in academic selection processes, for example. BR12 (2024) was very resentful and

angry that it took him twelve years to be able to exercise a profession in which he had years of experience in Brazil. BR12 is a psychologist, a highly regulated profession in Canada, where individuals must hold a doctoral degree to practice as therapists, a requirement the profession does not have in Brazil. He describes the frustration of facing barriers in having his previous experience recognized and diploma validated, even though he felt he had just as much knowledge and experience, if not more, than his Canadian peers. This devaluation represents another significant transformation of othering processes, rooted in professional and academic expectations.

Many participants placed the source of their othering in their accent. In the same way hope was located by mapping it in the space of the hands, so is othering located in the mouth and the throat. Many of the interviewees describe how they experience “normal” lives -- until they open their mouths and their accent is noticed. This noticing of the accent is followed by what they describe as an attitude shift, a change in the way they are perceived, and an overall sense of feeling othered because of the way they speak. BR03 (2024) describes the shock he felt when his ex-boyfriend started to take speech therapy as an attempt to “fix” his accent. In further reflecting on othering and the Brazilian accent, BR08 (2025) affirms: “I continue to be othered. I forever will be. If I go to a nursing home here, I will be the Brazilian immigrant, the Brazilian therapist. I will always be othered, but the level of discomfort I felt is not the same as that I experienced in Brazil”. Her answer suggests a direct association between the level of discomfort experienced and the gravity of the othering process, a direct comparison between the violence lived in Brazil and the more nuanced issues she faces in Canada. Despite being othered, the intensity of the othering is also transformed and changes in nature, which is probably a good explanation for why most participants said they would never voluntarily return permanently to Brazil or move

from Canada to another country. The will to stay remains despite the many tensions and complexities of migrant life in Canada (to name a few, isolation and difficulty adapting to the climate and languages, racism, struggles with migrant rights and documentation, financial strains, and difficulties adjusting to the job market). Such will seems to be founded in the quest for identity itself through the sexualized and gendered aspect of the desire to migrate. I conclude this chapter by giving closer attention to this refusal, juxtaposing two complex feelings: isolation and a sense of belonging.

4.5 Isolation, and a sense of belonging

"No, I am not from here… No way. I am from Brazil, I am Brazilian. I *am living* here (in Canada). Do not place me in another culture" (BR13, 2025). The complex transformation of the Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrant's ontology is well-defined in BR13's quote. Although his body is physically in Canada, his sense of identity remains, in many ways, rooted in Brazil. This revelation came as a response to an interaction at the gym, which quickly escalated from friendly to frustrating when he was questioned about his sense of self by refusing to say he was from Canada. Still, BR13 and many other participants responded positively when I asked if they felt a sense of belonging and community in Canada. Most of the time, that sense of belonging was articulated through the reward of achieving what they had hoped to change in their lives during the in-between stage of migration: a lessened sense of othering due to homophobia or queerphobia. Many participants describe visiting Brazil and feeling the need to return to Canada, the place where most of them now consider 'home.'

Interestingly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, many participants describe feeling more immersed in Brazilian culture after migrating. They now report listening to Brazilian music more

often, watching Brazilian movies and telenovelas, and attending more stereotypical events, such as samba and *feijoada* parties. Therefore, their everyday experiences in Canada led to a more attuned sense of Brazilian-ness. I argue that this happens for two main reasons: distant relationality and the feeling of *saudade*. Distance seems to create the necessary space that erases or minimizes queerphobia and allows immigrants to experience their own culture in ways they were not able to before because of who they are. Most participants stated that they had always felt part of Brazilian culture, but two of them described feeling like outsiders to the culture and having consumed Anglophone culture for most of their lives. One of them also completely rejects certain aspects of Brazilian culture and distances himself from it as much as possible. The next section revolves around the axis of *saudade*, and therefore, I leave this exploration for that section.

Although distant relationality serves as a cultural facilitator for immigrants, it also generates the last feeling I wish to explore in this section: isolation. Through the many otherings described before, resulting mainly from xenophobia, racism, classism, linguicism, and cultural differences, Brazilian LGBTQ+ immigrants in Canada also relate to the many difficulties in creating significant bonds in Canada. Cultural differences play a significant role, with some respondents noting the perceived closeness of Canadians to forming meaningful friendships compared to the spontaneity and openness of Brazilians, who will "simply sit at a bar table and make friends in a night while drinking beer" (BR01, 2024). BR13 describes himself as highly social and talks about how he took circus classes and expected to create many friendships from that place, only to be disappointed and to conclude that his "biggest challenge here was loneliness".

The strategy employed by many respondents over time was to socialize with other Brazilian immigrants, often queer Brazilian immigrants, or to socialize and form bonds with people from diverse cultural backgrounds also living in Canada. BR05 (2024), for example, talks about how one of her best friends in life is a Palestinian man she met while working in Montréal, with whom she continued a meaningful relationship even after leaving work. These everyday practices and strategies align with negotiations of previous hopes and fears to create a unique sense of belonging in Canada.

4.6 Conclusion

In sum, this chapter examines the transforming epistemologies and ontologies of queer migrants as they navigate multiple emotional landscapes of mobility between Brazil and Canada. By examining the interaction between regional values and culture, queer bodies and emotions, I describe how non-normative sexualities and gender identities led to feelings of discomfort that promoted initial mobilities inside the Brazilian territory. Then, by juxtaposing the body, especially the hands, against national political events and a rise in neo-conservatism in Brazil, I argue that this initial discomfort was transformed into fear and despair, in conjunction with hope, which acted as catalysts for international migration. Finally, I relate the body, especially the mouth and throat, to various Canadian cities and spaces, such as the workplace and language learning facilities, to highlight how queering processes evolved by diminishing the intensity associated with queerness and amplifying xenophonic otherings. In turn, this leads to contradictory yet complementary feelings of isolation, anger, and frustration, as well as happiness and contentment in constructing a complex queer Brazilian migrant sense of belonging.

In doing so, this chapter adds to the literature that answers the call made in Anderson and Smith's (2021) editorial in emotional geographies, by paying special attention to the co-constitutive dynamics of emotions, society, and space. It also provides a nuanced understanding of the othering processes that shape queer migratory journeys from Brazil to Canada, and the multiple facets that take centre stage at different steps of mobility processes: sexuality, gender, class, regional cultural identity, and race. I sought to queer Brazilian migration to Canada by understanding it in accordance with Gorman-Murray (2007a) as a process of embodied search for sexual identity at differing multiple scales of relocation. Although I did not necessarily frame them as 'queer identity quests', they do follow Knopp's (2004) dual conceptualization of queer migration as psychic and physical. Psychically, the data showed the search for emotional and physical ontological security in relocating to Canada. When it comes to the physical aspects of queer mobilities, this chapter displayed how LGBTQ+ people navigate often hostile power structures, especially when facing politically validated conservative discourses of homophobia and transphobia in the political sphere.

Finally, by foregrounding subjective discursive emotion (hope, fear, love, discomfort) in my analysis of the data, I attempted to follow queer and feminist geographers' frameworks that understand the migratory decision-making process beyond economic narratives and rationales (Silvey, 2004; Gorman-Murray, 2009). Placing emotions in micro-scales across the migrant body brought interesting insights into how the desire to migrate emerges from the multiple otherings narrated in this chapter. I now turn to analysing one of those embodied emotions and its relationship to home and homemaking. This feeling is of special importance to Brazilian culture and society, and it is called *saudade*.

Chapter Five: *Saudade,* through the homes of Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrants

> *A saudade é o bolso onde a alma guarda aquilo que ela provou e aprovou... É o rosto da eternidade refletido no rio do tempo.*[21] Rubem Alves

5.1 Introduction: living with *saudade*

This chapter continues the chronological arc and follows queer journeys of becoming out of Brazil towards Canada, by focusing on the "here and now" of their trajectories as migrants. It explores the material and imaginative geographies of how the complex feeling of *saudade* is embodied in the lives of Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrants living in Canada and how it is placed and mobilized in their worlds to make queer diasporic homes. Although a translation that does *saudade* justice is hard to make for the English language, it can be roughly understood as a poetic lusophone emotion, representing missing/longing for somebody, someplace, or something that is absent. Thus, *saudade* may be regarded as a culturally significant emotion that looks at once to the past (through the lenses of memories) and to the future (via a hopeful expectation of fulfilling that absence) and that is deeply embedded in Portuguese and Brazilian poetry, literature, history, and everyday life.

I was particularly curious about the critical ways *saudade* interacted with queerness and intimate mobility, given the way many of the interviewees previously pointed to narratives of "escape" and searching for new worlds abroad. If many of the queer people interviewed left

[21] *Saudade* is the pocket where the soul stores that which it has proved and approved… It is the face of eternity reflected in the river of time (translated by the author).

Brazil with feelings of fear and anxiety, how would they feel *saudade* with the current temporal and spatial distance to their past? This section attempts to articulate *saudade* through the lenses of geographical inquiries by analyzing the data kindly provided by five research participants in a focus group, in addition to a few excerpts from the interviews mentioned in the previous section, which seemed to inevitably steer towards *saudade* at a certain point. We sat on a round table in the Toronto Reference Library in March 2025 for around two hours, with the purpose of sharing Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrants' experiences with *saudade* and participating in an attempt to collectively understand how the feeling is placed in our internal and external worlds. Prior to our meeting, I elicited from the participants pictures of objects and spaces in their homes and everyday lives that were placed with the particular purpose of representing *saudade* to them. I hope that with this emotional methodological exercise, I am able to understand how *saudade* connects to a variety of geographies of everyday life for people living between spaces and places, of whom migrants are a prime example. I pay particular attention to the contexts of queer homes and encounters with a Canadian new world.

This chapter acts as a sort of microscope in relation to Chapter Four Othered, transformed: LGBTQ+ Brazilian migration to Canada. Out of the many feelings, otherings, and places explored there, I concentrate on the emotion of *saudade* and the space of the home to understand the lived experiences and future possibilities in the participants' lives. Given the absence of *saudade* in the Anglophone geographical literature, I start by attempting to conceptualize this emotion by gathering philologists' and historian studies of the emotion. The sections that follow that initial contextualization revolved around gaining more nuanced insights into how diasporic Brazilian subjects were constructing their Canadian homes in relation to their identity, in material, imaginative, and discursive ways, as conceptualized by Gorman-Murray

(2007b), who was in turn inspired by the work of Duncan and Lambert (2004). To understand the material aspect, I work with Pérez Murcia's (2023) concept of 'transnational circulation of homes' to describe how the homemaking practices are informed by *saudade* and the transnational transportation of items that hold emotional weight across national borders. Then, the symbolic side of queer homes is brought to the forefront using Fortier's (2020) idea of 'motions of attachment' to understand the continuous and messy process of homemaking. I end with an analysis of the discursive, by positioning the Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrant as living in a state of 'neither here, nor there', as indicated by the pervasiveness of *saudade* throughout their journeys of becoming.

5.2 Contextualizing and queering *saudade*

Se queres compreender o que é saudade
Terás que antes de tudo conhecer
Sentir o que é querer e o que é ternura
(...) Saudade é solidão, melancolia
É nostalgia é recordar viver. [22]

Renato Teixeira

I initiated the focus group by asking participants to respond to what I described as a "profound question that has haunted generations and generations of lusophone poets" – that is, to describe *saudade*. Before I turn to the participants' poetic and emotionally charged attempts at defining

[22] If you want to understand what *saudade* is
You will have to, before anything, get to know
What is desire, what is tenderness
(…) *Saudade* is loneliness, melancholy
It is nostalgia, it is to recall living. (translated by the author).

saudade, I begin by delineating some interesting ways in which *saudade* has been articulated in other disciplines, namely philology, literature, and history.

Unsurprisingly, *saudade* is the highlight of many works of literature written in the Portuguese language and, therefore, subject to scrutiny by many linguists and philologists over the years. A critical philological analysis of *saudade* in the Portuguese literature is provided by the Romance languages philologist Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcelos, an important figure in Portuguese feminism and the first woman to teach in a Portuguese university (University of Lisbon), in her work *A Saudade Portuguesa* (1914). Seara (2004) describes how Vasconcelos dissects the lyrical and etymological dimensions of *saudade* to be seen as an emotion that arose "from the very dawn of Galician-Portuguese poetry, even before 1200" when troubadours would compose *cantigas*[23] to be sung and danced to in medieval courts, castles, parks, and parties. *Saudade* was one of the major themes of *cantigas,* and even though the etymological forms were archaic, there could already be found in the lyrics "the tender, soft, submissive, resigned qualities of the Portuguese passion" that unfolded *saudade* in two parts: care and desire (Seabra, 2004: page 114).

Such early definitions of the feeling are corroborated by those found in the Michaelis dictionary (named after Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcelos' sister), one of the most used dictionaries of the Portuguese language. There, *saudade* is defined as "a nostalgic and melancholic feeling associated with the memory of an absent person or thing, distant or extinguished, or the absence of things, pleasures and emotions that were experienced and are now gone, that are

[23] *Cantigas* are medieval songs associated with Galician-Portuguese oral literature and traditions.

considered positive and desirable goods." Its etymological root is the Latin form *solitatem*, related to solitude and loneliness. Different philologists offer an alternative origin to *saudade* by tracing it back to one of the languages and cultures that most profoundly impacted the Iberic Peninsula – Arabic. Silva (2014) suggests that *saudade* may be related to Arabic words such as *suad*, *saudá*, and *suaiadá*, which mean blood trampled and black inside the heart. Being neither a philologist nor a linguist, I refrain from choosing a side on this debate, but I find it particularly interesting and telling that the historical geography of the Iberic Peninsula may have shaped *saudade* into what it is today. Both definitions also strike me as lyrical and profound, and relate back to the poetic nature of the feeling. Finally, in a clear allusion to Portuguese colonialism and the European age of exploration, the Michaelis dictionary also provides an interesting definition of *saudade* as "*a cantiga sung by sailors on* the high seas." These events would eventually transport *saudade* across the globe to *Tupiniquim* lands, where *saudade* would become the main topic of the first *bossa nova* song, *Chega de Saudade* (No More *Saudade*) by Tom Jobim, cementing itself in Brazilian cultural history.

Magalhães (2020) reasons that *saudade* was historically an essential part of the Portuguese identity-building project by King Duarte I in the fourteenth century, when he was trying to emphasise independence from Castile. Magalhães (2020) states that *Dom* Duarte's book where he seeks to define then-spelled *suydade* is "full of remarks about 'our language' and 'our customs'" and that "desire to be precise about *saudade* has walked hand-in-hand with attempts to set borders", especially in the context of the beginning of Portuguese colonialism and expansion in Africa's northern coasts. It is important to point out, then, that *saudade* can also be found in similar forms outside of Brazil in Portugal, in places such as Galicia and Cape Verde. Finally, I concur with De Almeida and Rodrigues (2025) categorization of *saudade* as a 'culturally based emotion', an

emotion possibly specific to a particular group of people. Such emotions are felt universally, meaning any person is able to feel such emotions, but coming from a particular cultural background makes it possible to easily communicate the intricacies and complexities of said emotions. Some other examples would be German's *schadenfreude*, Welsh's *hiraeth,* and Japanese's *ikigai*.

When I asked focus group participants to define *saudade*, I had the impression that an entire baggage of culture, language, poetry, history, and geography was carried in their speech. Most responses also evoke the concept of distance as relevant to their articulations of the emotion, providing an important link to geographical inquiry. BR13 (2025) defines *saudade* as:

> *Saudade* is the love that stays. I find that to be a very beautiful definition. *Saudade* is the same size as the love you have for someone, for something, for your country… When I am not in that place, with that person, this love still exists. And then maybe I do not know how to express it, so it lives inside me as *saudade.*

Therefore, for BR13, *saudade* is a feeling exacerbated by spatial and temporal dispersion, and not being able to be physically in the same space as somebody whom they love. This same feeling was echoed by other participants, who argued that it would probably be the best way of attempting to give *saudade* a definition. BR14 (2025) relates to BR13's comment by saying:

> I think *saudade* has everything to do with loss… It is the way we find to internalize the feelings you have for something and keep that inside you. Once something is not near you anymore, what remains is the connection, the link that was established, but that was lost or made larger by distance.

This conversation quickly led to participants expressing how hard it is to express *saudade* when speaking English in Canada. They agreed that anglophone alternatives such as "I miss you" and "I long for (something)" do not carry the same emotional weight and complexity. BR16 (2025) states that "what happens is that *saudade* is something we feel in Portuguese." These findings suggest that *saudade* is intensified by physical and temporal distance, but also that there is a strong element

of the social construction of spaces for its exacerbation and maintenance in the body. That is to say that because "here" (in Canada) most people do not speak Portuguese, the expression of an important feeling to Brazilian people is rendered limited, misunderstood, hard to explain, and consequently, othered.

Thus, through spatial/temporal/social/relational distance, *saudade* becomes an indicator of queerness, of incomplete belonging either here or there, and living a life in between spaces. I find it inevitable, therefore, to recall the traditional colonial image of the Portuguese sailor presented before, that of a sailor braving the seas after conquest and trade, chanting *cantigas* of *saudade* of home and loved ones, an idealization of the intersection of global mobility and the masculine. This research finds that *saudade* queers that imagery by exposing the Brazilian queer immigrant, in contact with their embodied emotions, braving the world not in search of conquest, gold, or spices. The Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrant traverses the world in a quest for imagined worlds of belonging, safety, and futurity in a possible new home away from their old home. Consequently, they are bound to live with *saudade* of a world that did not fully accept or tolerate them, where complete freedom and expression of the self were not possible. *Saudade* becomes an indicator of this paradoxical *trovador*, who at once renounces their origin and sings of *saudade* of the things they have left behind (their home, their families, their friends, etc.), and transforming mobilities towards the local and the feminine.

5.3 Transnational circulation of home: Brazilian LGBTQ+ homemaking in Canada

A casa da saudade é o vazio
O acaso da saudade, fogo frio
Quem foge da saudade, preso por um fio

Se afoga em outras águas mas do mesmo rio. [24]
Maria Bethania

Saudade is paradoxical by nature. As BR14 (2025) put it halfway through our focus group: "the thing is, *saudade* hurts, but it also makes you smile." This section concerns itself with both the hurt and the smile while seeking to answer the question of how Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrants living in Canada cope with the painful aspects of their lives and the micro-resistances they enact in producing their public and private lives in Canada. With that purpose, prior to our conversation, I elicited photographs from each participant to be shared with the group. Each photograph was supposed to represent symbolic *saudade* made material in an attempt to understand the ontology of Brazilian queer homes in Canada. Therefore, I asked them to capture places and objects in their homes that were put there with the intention of representing memories of significance to them from their lives in Brazil. This exercise in sharing *saudade* led to a beautiful, emotional moment for us in that time and space, and a collective understanding of the similarities and differences that LGBTQ+ Brazilian migrants share in dealing with *saudade* in their everyday lives and how central *saudade* became for placemaking (and more specifically, homemaking).

The result is a collection of 29 photographs that vary widely in subject, from pictures of family and friends to candles, guitars, objects from deceased family members, childhood toys, Brazilian plants, and dishcloths queering Catholic sayings. I did not impose any sort of limitation

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[24] *Saudade*'s home is emptiness
Saudade's happenstance, cold flame
Those who run from *saudade*, stuck by a wire
Drown themselves in other waters, but of the same river. (translated by the author).

on the quantity of pictures that participants could share, which led to an uneven distribution of photographs as well. Interestingly, the longer the participant had been living in Canada, the more pictures they brought, especially considering that those were the people who also had the time for visit trips to Brazil, at the end of which they reported always bringing back something to place in Canada.

I turn to Pérez Murcia (2023) to conceptualize the act of utilizing mundane objects to reproduce home and create a sense of belonging and normalcy as 'transnational circulation of home,' which Pérez Murcia describes as a "set of practices adopted by families to keep themselves sentimentally connected despite the geographical distance between the places they inhabit" (2023: page 193). According to Sandu (2013), home can be conceptualized as both a private site of renegotiation of identity, memory, and belonging, and a public place with the potential for informal learning, socialization, and community integration. I articulate both of these conceptualizations, alongside Magalhães' (2020) study with Venezuelan migrants in Brazil that formulates two distinct types of *saudade*: precise and vague. Precise *saudade* is conceptualized as *saudade* about "this" or "that" (*saudade* of my mom, my friends, my school, Brazil, etc.), while vague *saudade* is that of 'a lot of things and nothing in particular.' Both of these types of *saudade* were articulated throughout the focus group, but this section focuses on the first type, that is, precise *saudade*. Some of the pictures were representations of what participants perceived as being inaccessible in Canada, or just completely different from what they were used to in Brazil.

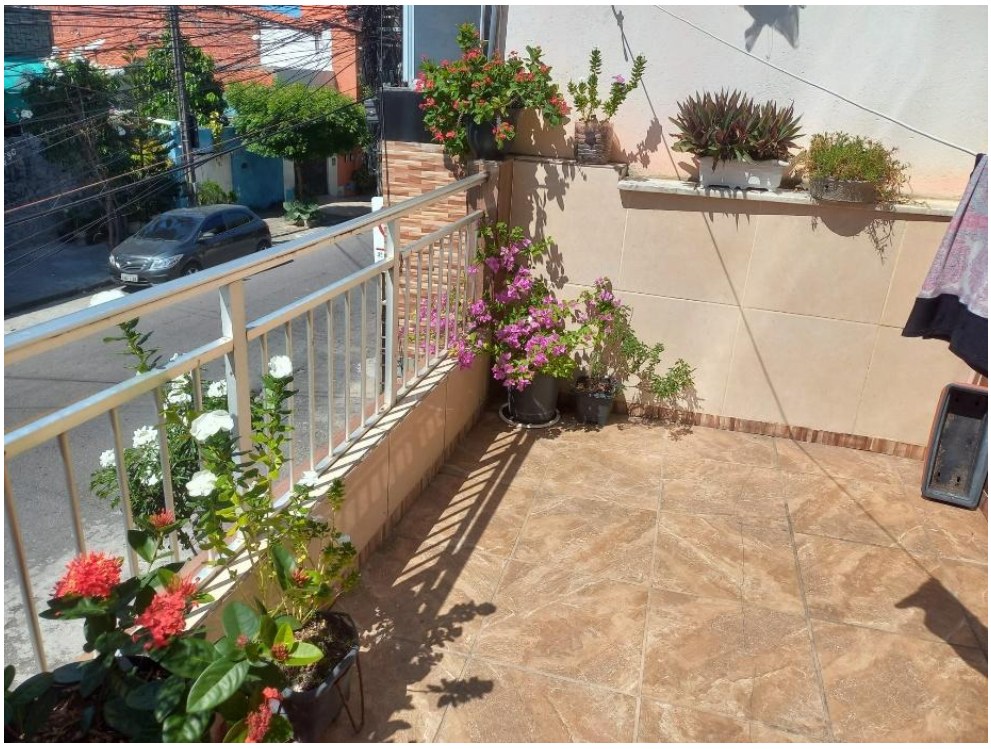

Figure 5.1: Brazilian *varanda*, bright colourful flowers, lots of sunlight.
Source: BR15 with permission.

Figure 5.1 was provided by BR15, who had moved to Canada 10 months before our focus group, and describes his life as more minimalist, having come to Canada essentially bringing only his clothes in his luggage. One of the pictures he brought was a photograph he kept on his phone that reminded him of Brazil, with a traditional Brazilian front yard we would call *varanda*, a lot of natural sunlight, plants and flowers growing everywhere, and clothes getting dried under the sun in the corner of the picture. When speaking about it, he describes it as such:

> It is a place I really miss from Brazil. I used to live there with my mother and my brothers, and the house has this *varanda* where I used to play the guitar during the night, late afternoon... Here (in Canada) our apartment is super small, so I miss being in that *varanda* with my mother's plants.

BR15's photograph illustrates an image of Brazil that is immediately compared to the Canadian counterpart by the group:

> *BR13:* What they call a front yard here is just something else entirely, right?
> *BR15*: Yes… They are so narrow, at least in our apartment.
> *BR13*: They also do not hold the same cultural weight ours do, I believe.
> *BR15*: Also, the cold. It is impossible to live as I did in Brazil, wearing shorts outside, playing guitar.
> *BR17*: Give it two years (laughter).

The comparisons evoke a certain sense of loss of freedom, with the Canadian weather inhibiting the possibility of being outside at any given time, wearing light clothes, and enjoying the sunlight. This restrictedness imposed by climate is also projected into society by the participants, who differentiate between the act of having a beer with friends in Brazil as a carefree, spontaneous act when compared to the structured manner social outings have in Canada, as well as the nature of the conversations, which to them seemed to lack the flourishing and poetry of a conversation in Portuguese.

Figure 5.2: "Futuristic lesbian, convict dyke" dishcloth.
Source: BR13 with permission.

Figure 5.3: *Havaianas* flip flops
Source: BR17 with permission.

Figures 5.2 and 5.3 provide examples of the transnational circulation of homes through the transportation of objects. These are mundane items from everyday Brazilian life, flip flops and a dishcloth, of which homes in Brazil will usually have a collection, but when brought to Canada, serve to evoke memories and articulate a cultural and emotional sense of normalcy. The dishcloth in Brazil traditionally carries religious motifs, but the one BR13 and BR17 brought to Brazil is queered by carrying an ironic take on those themes: in it, there are lyrics to a satirical viral LGBTQ+ song and meme from the 2010s. Flip flops from the brand Havaianas became a symbol of Brazilian identity and beach culture, but for BR13 and BR17, they also bring back memories of the person who gifted them and the cats who destroyed them with their claws.

The objects represented in those photographs, and others brought by participants such as candles, cupholders, plushies and aprons are not only *saudade* made material through routine objects, but *saudade* being utilized to create a 'home away from home,' a transnational continuity of Brazilian LGBTQ+ identity that serves to affirm cultural citizenship and a perceived differentiation between 'us' and 'them.' This identity differentiation, embodied in their

everyday lives and materialized in their homes, is important for some of the participants, who express the desire to be integrated into Canadian society, but also the fear of losing their Brazilian identity and the *saudade* from the everyday social practices and geographies they were used to.

5.4 Motions of attachment: hailing ghosts from the past

In their analysis of the memoir of US-Italian lesbian Mary Capello, Fortier (2020: p. 125) argues that "the diasporic home is already queer because it is always somehow located in a space of betweenness". This diasporic queer home, then, is not fixed, but rather continuously produced by people between "here" and "there" through a series of what Fortier (2020: p. 130) calls motions of attachment:

> The motions of journeying between homes, the motions of hailing ghosts from the past, the motions of leaving or staying put, of 'moving on' or 'going back', the motions of cutting or adding, the motions of continual re-processing of what home is/was/might have been.

As such, an important part of the physical and emotional process of homemaking is remembering home and giving it new meaning. Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2023) argue that homemaking illuminates three critical aspects of migrant integration: a) homemaking exposes the articulated dimensions of migrants' emotional geographies through the significance of people's perspectives and practices of home; b) it correlates the social, environmental, and material circumstances under which migrants get settle and create their homes; and c) it exposes the minute labour that migrants go through and the constellation of social practices performed to create a sense of stability and predictability. I argue that, for the Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrant, *saudade* and the processes associated with it become the articulating engine through which

migrants enact homemaking and their motions of attachment in a search for normalcy and stability.

Indeed, BR16 expressed how being away from their childhood home was an important process through which they reconciled with some aspects of their childhood and were able to make their new home in Canada. He tells the group that distance from (old) home and *saudade* created the potential for resolutions with his family and himself in regard to his transgender identity. When I asked him whether he felt that he would have reconnected with his parents if he had not moved to Canada, BR16 (2025) answered:

> I do not think so, I do not think so, because there is an enormous need for us to *not* share the same space for a while. A lot of heavy stuff happened at home, and I could not live there anymore. So, with that space between us and not speaking for a while, we noticed how painful it is and how much we miss each other. So, we made an effort for things to work out. In my case, *saudade* was the spark that reconnected family bonds.

BR16's story is a good example of what Fortier (2020: p. 130) calls "hailing ghosts from the past". Through *saudade*, distance, and spatial dynamics, when producing his new home in Canada, he was able to give new meaning to what home *used to be*. I find it telling that one of the pictures he shared with the group is a photograph of himself in kindergarten, dressed as a clown, which he uses to connect with his inner child, a symbolic representation of the queer migrant coming to terms with childhood, home, identity, and migration.

Figure 5.4: Clown, childhood, new meaning
Source: BR16 with permission.

The conversation then moved to the motions of attachment and emotional detachment migrants have to perform when homemaking in Canada, such as going through their personal collections of items built over the years, such as books, manga, and art. They talked about "the ridiculous act" of trying to fit a life into two luggage. When talking about the curation of what items to bring to Canada, BR17 (2025) describes it as:

> I ended up bringing more symbolic things. I brought symbols. So, it became an interesting exercise. There was this business of wanting to start things over from zero, but also not wanting to leave behind all that was important to me. I wanted to bring everything; there was a little bit of a desire to have both.

In conclusion, these motions of attachment in homemaking highlight the state of in-betweenness of the queer diasporic subject. Living with *saudade* illustrates the emotional labour of adapting to a new environment, while creating the social and material conditions to establish a sense of normalcy and stability in relation to the ghosts of past homes. Queer homes, as a symbolic and

material space, become a place that carries the potential of resistance to complete assimilation, while also allowing for integration. Through the transnational practices of homemaking and motions of attachment, migrants live in a perpetual state of rupture and continuity, symbolized by *saudade* and the social, cultural, and material practices that place it in their everyday lives.

5.5 Visiting home and coping with *saudade*: queer reflections from neither here, nor there

Só uma pessoa no mundo deseja sentir saudade:
aquela que nunca amou.
E esse é o maior dos sofrimentos:
não ter por quem sentir saudades,
passar pela vida e não viver.
O maior dos sofrimentos é nunca ter sofrido.[ii25]
Pablo Neruda

In Portuguese, when *saudade* becomes too deep and starts to hurt too much, people say they need to *matar a saudade* (murder *saudade*). This dramatic turn of phrase is said casually, and the irony is that no matter how many times you 'murder' *saudade*, it may always come back to life. That is true especially for the Brazilian immigrants who return to Brazil to pay a visit to family and loved ones, delight themselves in childhood comfort food, and experience the odd feeling of being a visitor in a place they once called home. This diasporic transnational pendular movement of "coming home", visiting one's place of origin, and then returning to the place to which they

[25] Only one person in the world desires to feel *saudade*:
the one who never loved.
And this is the biggest of sufferings:
to not have someone for whom to feel *saudade*,
to go through life and not have lived.
The biggest of sufferings is to never have suffered (translated by the author).

migrated is well-documented in the migration literature (for some examples, see Fortier, 2001; Marschall, 2017; Miah et al., 2023).

O'Flaherty et al. (2007) findings complicate home visits by arguing that only a small percentage of migrants visit home at all, with significant distinctions between which groups have the financial and emotional capacity to do so and which groups do not. My research findings agree with those notions on three fronts. First, the financial ability to return home is dependent on the amount of time the migrant has been living in Canada. The tendency from my participants' responses was to demonstrate that the initial years of being in Canada are a quest for financial stability in response to the expenditure of the migratory process itself and the need to adapt to job markets that differ tremendously from the ones back in Brazil. Second, the document system in Canada for migrants may not even allow them to visit back home with guaranteed entrance back in Canada. For example, students who apply for a permit extension and whose original study permit has expired cannot leave and re-enter Canada without first obtaining another visa. This condition places an extra financial and emotional burden on some immigrants, who may, despite *saudade*, choose not to visit home. Another poignant example is the case of BR09 (2024), whose refugee status in Canada means that they risk having their permanent residency revoked if they visit Brazil on the grounds that that may be perceived as a halt to the dangers that led them to seek asylum in the first place. Finally, we have the case of people like BR16 (2025), who in our focus group expressed the sadness of potentially having to return home because their post-graduate work permit was about to expire and he did not yet have enough points to qualify for Express Entry and Canadian permanent residency, despite having been living in Canada for years. When I asked the group about how the intensity of their *saudade* varied, *BR16* (2025) stated:

> It varies so much. Sometimes I think that because I am facing the possibility of having to return (to Brazil), maybe, because of the end of my visa, I start feeling *saudade* from here. Even while I am still here, I keep thinking that if I have to go back, I will not have the same safety anymore. If I have to go back, I will not have that, which I grew used to and is so good for my life, you know? And I also always feel *saudade* for the things from there.

This finding is a strong reminder of how fragile and ontologically vulnerable migrant life can be for those on temporary status seeking permanent residency in Canada, especially for transgender and gender non-conforming people, who are implicated in heteropatriarchal global and national systems of capitalism. As Jacob and Oswin (2023: p. 214) articulate "rights are only recognized when one becomes a part of a nation-state, and our sense of safety, belonging, and home is deeply bound up in this folding". Therefore, in spite of desires to *matar a saudade*, many may not be able to do so, and *saudade* itself becomes an indicator of some of the many queering processes and otherings that LGBTQ+ Brazilian migrants may face when relocating to Canada, as described in more detail in the previous section.

For those who can visit Brazil and desire to do so, these visits to homes become an essential form of attachment in the construction of their Canadian homes and the (re)production of their migrant identities. Many of the photographs presented in the group symbolized an identity state of in-betweenness enacted through the transnational circulation of items and homes. Some were brought to Canada when they first travelled there, others were brought after repeated home visits.

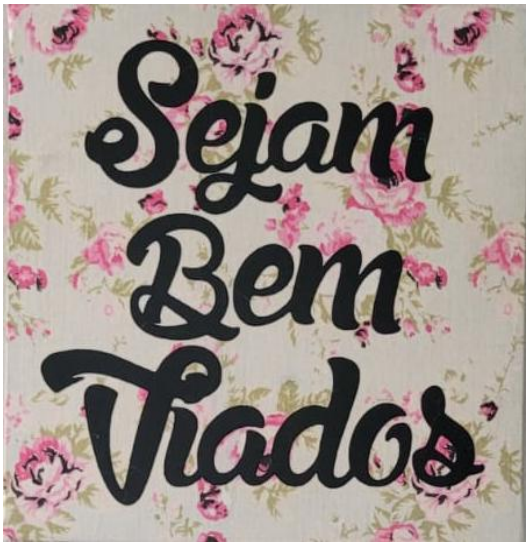

Figure 5.5: “Be very faggot.”
Source: BR13 with permission.

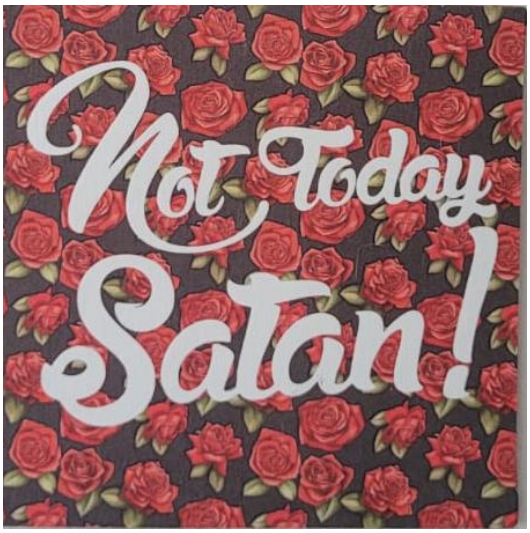

Figure 5.6: Bianca del Rio’s catchphrase on RuPaul’s Drag Race
Source: BR17 with permission.

The satirical paintings BR17 and BR13 have in their household dual symbolism. The first painting is a representation of Brazilian queerness and sense of humour, a wordplay with “be welcome” and “be a faggot” in Portuguese, resulting in “be very faggot,” re-appropriations of one of the slurs historically used to diminish the Brazilian gay subject. The second one plays with Bianca del Rio’s

catchphrase on RuPaul's Drag Race, a reality television competition that catapulted itself as a foundational piece of the current global queer imaginary. Symbolically, they represent a connection between their Brazilian identity, queerness, and both a global and national narrative of LGBTQ+ empowerment and visibility. At the same time, what made these paintings worthy of being transported across the globe goes beyond those characteristics. It is the fact that it was gifted to them from a beloved friend, someone of whom they feel *saudade*. The pictures BR14 shared have a similar symbolism:

Figure 5.7: Poster of a Brazilian documentary; "an ideal for everyone by everyone" from a vegan restaurant; "good morning" angelical cat
Source: BR14 with permission.

These items were not gifts, but purchases made by BR14 in an attempt to represent his quest with personal identity and taste after moving to a more LGBTQ+ friendly area of São Paulo. BR14 (2025) expresses that:

> When I was in Brazil, I really liked these little things, like T-shirts and eco bags that have what for me is my identity, my identity in Brazil. Like, it is my way of expressing what I

> like, what interests me. Here, there is a different meaning. I think that even more than bringing my identity from there, it is bringing that baggage, it is bringing Brazil here.

These findings point to what Magalhaes et al. (2009) described as vague *saudade*, that which pertains to nothing and to everything all at once. BR14 does not necessarily feel *saudade* of the documentary itself, to which he has access even in Canada, or *saudade* of vegan food, which he may also easily find in Toronto. BR14 connects his identity to an overall sense of Brazilian-ness and Brazilian queerness, and it is important for him to carry that vagueness of what Brazil means with him when he is living in Canada. Concerning vague *saudade*, Magalhães et al. (2009: p. 292) posit that "what is poetic in *saudade* is the room it leaves for wandering". Thus, as much as *saudade* becomes an indicator of Brazilian queer migrant othering in Canada, it also holds the potentiality for something unique, a Brazilian LGBTQ+ etymology and ontology that is neither here nor there, an imagined world made concrete by the potential of being physically in one place while carrying the other within you and even sometimes, placing it in their homes. A way of living on constant crossing of borders, and through memory and emotion, an enactment of migration as a continuum and a (re)production of the self.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter started the task of elaborating the Lusophone culturally specific emotion of *saudade* in the geographical literature. I looked at once at the past and the present, in line with Blunt and Varley's (2004) argument that domestic geographies exist on the border of memories of the past, everyday life in the present, and future desires and fears. I extrapolate their argument to the Brazilian queer home in Canada and articulated it using *saudade* as a central axis that represents the temporal intersection they describe. I started by attempting to define and contextualize *saudade* in the social sciences and the lusosphere, and queered it by re-orienting the emotion

from colonial masculine roots of logics of conquest and expansion towards queer emotion and search for home and identity.

Then, I placed a considerable parcel of narrative power in the hands of the research participants through the method of auto-photography. This method generated a compilation of 29 photographs representing *saudade* made material, which were complemented by participants' narratives of the material process of the (re)production of (re)settlement at a transnational scale through the circulation of emotional materials such as dishcloths, photographs, artwork, posters, and gifts from family, biological and/or chosen. This process was understood using Pérez Murcia's (2023) concept of 'transnational circulation of homes' and allowed for understanding homemaking practices as a continuously produced articulation between materiality and identity.

Such a continuous (in other words, incomplete, perpetually in-between) practice of queer diasporic homemaking was then analyzed using Fortier's (2020) notion of 'motions of attachment', the symbolic constant (re)visit of home that allow for transformations not only in the physical space of the house, but also in interpersonal relationships between non-normative migrants and their families and/or loved ones. Finally, this chapter contributes to the literature in geographies of (queer) home by accepting Gorman-Murray's invitation to eliminate the discursive conflation between domestic space and the heterosexual nuclear family (Gorman-Murray, 2006) by demonstrating how Brazilian LBGTQ+ migrants living in Canada have invited non-normative discourses, bodies, and activities into their homes in order to 'queer' it and cause non-heteronormative socialization and identity-affirmations (Gorman-Murray, 2006). These can be seen especially in Figure 5.5, Figure 5.6, Figure 5.7, and the analysis that followed them.

In sum, this chapter takes a microscopic view of the larger-scale processes detailed throughout Chapter Four, by broadly focusing on one space (the home) and one emotion (*saudade*). Both of these ended up having larger connections: home to multiple other homes across national borders, and *saudade* to other emotions such as grief, love, and sadness. By highlighting the inevitable role of the culturally-specific emotion of *saudade* in Brazilian LGBTQ+ diasporic life, a nuanced insight into migrant ontology is provided as being perpetually continuous, incomplete, or in-between.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The diasporic journeys of Brazilian LGBTQ+ people to Canada are emotional, personal, and subjectively constructed around both Brazilian and Canadian socio-spatial dynamics, but also something exterior to them. That something is the highly emotional aspect of relocating and dramatically remapping lives in the face of many othering processes. These othering processes do not cease to exist, but are transformed across time and space by bringing different intersectional aspects to the front when being mobile across Brazil and Canada. Sexuality, race, gender, class, ethnicity, language, and sociocultural values become highlighted in creations of 'us' and 'them'. In (re)making home across the globe, *saudade* is a central emotion in the Brazilian diaspora, through which homes are made material, symbolic, and imagined. Such homes provide insights into the transnational practices of homemaking and point to a continuous state of *saudade* that foregrounds an 'in-between' state of being, perpetually neither here, nor there.

This chapter concludes this thesis by providing a synthesis of the main research outcomes of this study after relating them to the research questions and objectives outlined in the introductory section of this work. Then, I discuss the contributions made to the geography literature through the findings of this research to our understanding of queer LGBTQ+ mobilities from Brazil to Canada, insights into queer diasporic homemaking, and an initial seed of *saudade* in the geographical literature. I end by discussing the methodological limitations as well as possibilities for future research.

This research is anchored at the intersection of queer geographies, emotional geographies, and migration studies. In Chapter Two, Emotional Geographies of Queer Migration, I discussed how developments in humanistic, feminist, and cultural geographers informed much of the conceptualizations and ambitions of the research. I started by highlighting emotional geographies as an emerging field of geographical inquiry that seeks to place more value on less privileged aspects in geographical research, such as desire, passion, subjectivity and engagement (Anderson and Smith, 2001). I brought attention to debates revolving around differentiating affect and emotion, and positioned my work as preferring the approach to emotion as a discursive aspect of human lives. This was done by designing the research questions around named emotions (love, hope, fear, *saudade* to name a few) and allowing for empathy and human connection to permeate the research design, methods, and my practices in the field. From there, the literature review explored how queer geographies have evolved over their beginnings in the feminist scholarship of the 1990s and engagements with poststructuralism to influence the way geographers have theorised spatial identities (Castree et al., 2013) and what counts as appropriate geographical knowledge, as well as the implied biases in research (Calkin and Freeman, 2020). Queer geographies centralize the queer, non-heteronormative, or non-cisnormative body in their analysis and follows the notion that bodies and places are performative and co-constituted (Johnston, 2016). My research interacts with those ideas through two main fronts. First, and more obviously, it is research about LGBTQ+ people and their lived embodied experiences across space and time. Second, it sought to place queer embodied emotion in the centre of the analysis, in relation to other scales (regional, national, domestic), as a method to explore non-cisheteronormative mobilities.

Importantly, the research was also designed and analyzed following suggestions and arguments laid out by geographer Andrew Gorman-Murray throughout much of his literary

production. Gorman-Murray was an excellent source of theorizing for this research, given that much of his work is concerned with socio-spatial dynamics informed by queerness, emotionality, identity, mobility, and domesticity. His main argument for queer migration is that it should be understood as "an embodied search for sexual identity – an individual search which can be materialized at differing, multiple scales and paths of relocation" (Gorman-Murray, 2007a: p. 111). In relating the findings of this research, I attempted to highlight those many individual searches and their materializations across multiple scales of resettlement. I brought attention to the many otherings that occur across mobility, and how they are shaped by intersecting aspects of identity, and, therefore, occur differently from person to person through embedded aspects of relocation processes (Gorman-Murray, 2009). I related that idea especially by highlighting how a regional scale of cultural identity in Brazil paves the way for sociocultural spatial differentiation that may serve to promote othering processes inside the country, such as internal xenophobia, orientalism, and homonationalism.

Chapter Two Emotional Geographies of Queer Migration continued by presenting a synthesis of studies in Brazilian mobilities and migration, being attentive to the prevalence of studies in Brazilian diasporic communities in the United States, Japan, and other countries. Studies related to Brazilian immigrants in Canada were limited, often presented as an afterthought in studies placed in the United States, or limited to a provincial scale (mostly Ontario). This research adds to the literature on Brazilian mobilities, but it is important to note that it is specifically about a segment of the Brazilian population and therefore most (if not all) of the findings here cannot be generalized to the experiences of cisgender or heterosexual Brazilians. That is one of the limitations of this research, one that I hope is addressed soon. The number of Brazilians in Canada is significant (over 130,000 according to Statistics Canada, 2022), and I hope that the particular

Brazilian aspects of identity entice a future, perhaps more general, research of this relevant diasporic community.

Finally, the literature review attempted to place *saudade* as a culturally-specific emotion, and presented some other examples of emotions that can be considered as such. Because many of the *saudade* methods resulted in socio-spatial dynamics related to the home, Chapter Two ends by describing how geographers have engaged with the concept of home and practices of homemaking over time. Of particular interest is the idea that homes can be queered (Gorman-Murray, 2006) and conceptualized as imagined, discursive, and material (Gorman-Murray, 2007b), a place of special interest in geographical literature, especially when seen through the lenses of non-normative sexed identities (Johnston and Valentine, 1995). These two particular sections were foundational in framing and relating '*saudade*' to 'home' in Chapter Five.

I engaged with the literature and designed this research in seeking to attend to the many calls described above for being attentive to emotions and embodied experiences. I also attempted to blur the lines between researcher/researched through the methods, especially auto-photography, and the empathetic and emotional nature of the fieldwork practice itself, in many parts facilitated by my positionality as a researcher. Drawing from a series of semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and auto-photography, I also sought to empower the research participants to tell their own narratives on their own terms. The data collected, its analysis, and results were organized into two separate findings chapters.

Chapter Four Othered, transformed: Brazilian LGBTQ+ migration to Canada operationalizes a critical emotional geography approach to the research findings that emphasized a relational tendency between the body and diverse scales across different points in time. It

started by addressing life before migration, through which a regional scale was most prevalent when participants were responding in the semi-structured interviews. The regional identity became an important factor in LGBTQ+ Brazilian identity by providing more accurate perspectives on participants' social and cultural backgrounds. These backgrounds are related in different ways to queerness and generate feelings of discomfort and a sense of being outside the norm. Through this analysis, special attention is paid to participants moving from the Northeast and North regions of Brazil to southern regions (Center-West, Southeast, South), and a possible understanding of the many prejudices *nordestinos* face when moving south. This process can be understood as xenophobia and a form of what the literature understands as internal orientalism and, I suggest, internal homonationalism.

When moving from pre-migration to initial desires of mobility and the migratory process itself, there seemed to be a jump in scale emerging as a pattern in the data. National and transnational, in relation to the body, exposed feelings of love, hope, and fear in association with political events and narratives in Brazil and Canada. The act of holding hands was explored as a bodily placement for the feeling of hope and the idealization of safety, tolerance, and freedom that could potentially be found in Canada by LGBTQ+ subjects. The micro-scale of the hands is put in relation to the Brazilian nation-state and inflammatory queerphobic discourses that generated desire to migrate in many of the research participants. Finally, the section ends by analyzing the variegated and complicated ways queerness is transformed once Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrants arrive in Canada and start to settle and search for stability. Othering processes were found in relation to language barriers, accents, job market insertion, and hardships navigating Canada's immigration systems, especially in regard to refugees and transgender people. In addition, many participants did find in Canada what they were looking

for, such as a sense of belonging, the possibility to live public and private visible queer lives, and the opportunities to enact gender transition with speed and security that participants reported would not have happened if they had not migrated in the first place. The many otherings described in this chapter highlight the changing nature of othering processes across temporal and spatial scales, by bringing to the forefront different intersectional aspects of identity. Future research could seek to test these findings by reproducing the research with different nationalities and different combinations of the prevalent geopolitical axis, Global South – Global North. It could test if the nature of the otherings that are brought forth is the same as the ones detailed in Chapter Four or not, and why. It could also seek to study normative sexualities in Brazil and compare the findings.

In chapter Five, *Saudade*, through the homes of Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrants, I introduced *saudade* in the Anglophone geography literature by first paying attention to the ways other disciplines have traditionally framed this emotion. Philology and history were particularly important, and an understanding of *saudade* as a traditionally masculinized emotion was made clear through its medieval and modern uses in *cantigas* of sailors traversing the seas for conquests. I queered that term by relating it to my research participants, sexual and gender deviant subjects traversing the globe in search of belonging, community, and acceptance. This research also found that *saudade* was a crucial aspect of homemaking for Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrants. I related homemaking to two key concepts from the literature: the transnational circulation of home through transportation of mundane items, and motions of attachment through which the old home is revisited and reformulated through new meaning. By exploring the photographs, I elicited from the participants in our focus group, my research found that *saudade* was another indicator of queering processes by highlighting loneliness and physical separation,

but it was also the vessel of possibility through which some people were able to reconnect and re-form family ties despite (and because of) the distance. Finally, the findings from this section point to the production and maintenance of a Brazilian LGBTQ+ migrant identity of in-betweenness, where imagined homes and material homes collide in the everyday lives of people living in Canada, but oriented towards Brazil. Therefore, through these research findings, coding, and analysis, this research was able to fulfill its main objective. It traced queering processes that are spatially contingent and evidenced by emotions and analyzed how they transformed when migrants dramatically remapped their lives domestically and transnationally.

There are a few practical and methodological restraints that I recognize limit the scope of possibly generalizing these findings. First, elements of this research could have been fleshed out and made for two different projects: one revolving around migration itself, the other around *saudade*. I believe the two were so intimately related and embedded in one another that it would be hard to discuss one without going in-depth into the other, and I am glad I chose to do so in this unified project. Still, a larger dataset and perhaps more focus groups would serve to be able to analyze even more diverse narratives, themes, and patterns, leading to more plausible generalizations. Second, this research does not encompass the full spectrum of what it means to be Brazilian, in spite of the across-the-board regional representation. Brazil remains a complex, nuanced, and often paradoxical country, and future research could analyze the role of class and critical questions surrounding race in Brazilian diasporic processes. It also does not fully encompass the totality of the LGBTQ+ spectrum, notably lacking bisexual representation. Finally, snowballing and purposive sampling were made in such a way that facilitated recruitment but also limited the range of the interviews and the focus group. Because 57% of the participants were in their 30s, and only three had moved to Canada before 2017, there are no

narratives from people who have been living in Canada for a very long period of time, which I am certain would add a certain level of richness and depth to the findings of this research. Finally, *saudade* is not a uniquely queer cultural emotion, but one that is a foundational part of Portuguese and Brazilian cultures. This research sought to queer *saudade* when placing it in the geographical literature, an approach that resonated better with the overall narrative and the objectives designed, but a point can be made that it would also be interesting to understand the relationships between *saudade* and key geographical concepts in broader contexts. Still, I hope that by highlighting the personal, emotional, and subjectively constructed register of LGBTQ+ migrants, I have provided a strong case for the importance of emotional geographies. I was, hopefully, able to humanize the aspects of a geographical process that often features narratives of rational economic agents, by favoring the analysis on lived and embodied experiences in an attempt to represent the nuanced, multiple potentials of migration.

Future research could be made to address these issues and refine these findings by having a larger dataset, more diversity in participants' migratory experiences and identities, and many further explorations of *saudade* and geographies. For example, how does *saudade* come into play on mobilities enacted inside the Brazilian national territory? What other roles does it have in the construction of a queer Brazilian identity? What functions does *saudade* serve in connecting memory and urban planning? What are the colonial relationships that both support and challenge Brazilian LGBTQ+ mobilities? How do queer migratory journeys that took place prior to the 2010s differ from those presented in this research?

As a final note, this research is being written at a turning point in the history of the world. Extreme right-wing nationalism is on the rise in many places, and cisheteroactivist movements

seem to be sparking with much more frequency, often taking the form of white supremacy. Even though ultraconservative discourses of prejudice and queerphobia are generally not well-regarded in Canada, anti-immigration sentiments have been on the rise in the past few years. There seems to be a shadow that looms over political affairs at the moment, and an overall concern that relates to this research, given that queer lives and migrant lives are inherently political lives, and the main focus of an enormous part of discourses at the moment. Indeed, Canada has recently started restricting its immigration processes and reducing its immigration intake targets for the years ahead. Future research could also address this changing landscape of immigration policies and human rights, and the many emotions articulated through them. Although I suspect many of these emotions have turned more negative, this research finds that *hope* fosters resistance and is a catalyst for change. And so, I hope that our rainbow continues to shine brighter than any shadow that tries to consume it.

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List of interviews

BR01 (2024). From Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Interviewed by the author. December 10, 2024.

BR02 (2024). From Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. Interviewed by the author. December 9, 2024.

BR03 (2024). From Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Interviewed by the author. December 5, 2024.

BR04 (2025). From Montréal, Quebec, Canada. Interviewed by the author. January 4, 2025.

BR05 (2025). From Montréal, Quebec, Canada. Interviewed by the author. January 5, 2025.

BR06 (2024). From Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Interviewed by the author. December 6, 2024.

BR07 (2024). From Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Interviewed by the author. December 12, 2024.

BR08 (2025). From Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Interviewed by the author. February 16, 2025.

BR09 (2025). From Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Interviewed by the author. January 3, 2025.

BR10 (2024). From Montréal, Quebec, Canada. Interviewed by the author. January 4, 2025.

BR11 (2025). From Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Interviewed by the author. January 14, 2025.

BR12 (2024). From Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Interviewed by the author. January 13, 2025.

BR13 (2025). From Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Interviewed by the author. January 15, 2025.

BR14 (2025). From Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Interviewed by the author. January 25, 2025.

BR15 (2025). From Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Interviewed by the author. March 16, 2025.

BR16 (2025). From Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Interviewed by the author. March 16, 2025.

BR17 (2025). From Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Interviewed by the author. March 16, 2025.