Can one be at once more oneself and more a national being through poetic appeals to the selves and signs of potent Others and their locations in the same hemisphere? Do poets feel that they expand the reach of their craft by using nonprint vehicles, by composing in different languages, or by redefining spaces in relation to alternate territories? Is the substantiation of mass media and electronic technology as cornerstones of contemporary existence worldwide antithetical to lyric or a source of revitalization? Can poems open fresh perspectives on the experience of cybernetic environments? Is the perception of place, with the changes it undergoes, a topic for all genres of present-day literature? Such are some of the questions that motivate the present study of threads of poetry in Brazil in the context of the Americas, that is, in relation to the United States, Spanish America, and the hemisphere as a whole. Both historical and ongoing connections in lyric between Brazil and the USA, two countries of continental proportions, enfold not only national languages and letters per se but tourism, film, music, and other aspects of popular culture as well. Latin American matters in song and verse involve shared mythologies and histories, contrasting and converging styles, and present-day activism. This nuanced nexus—of Brazilian resources, recourses, and discourses in the Americas in the circumscribed domain of contemporary poetry—forms its own part of the encompassing array of processes and situations that comprise globalization.

If an overriding concern of intellectual inquiry and critique in the 1980s was to assess the nature and limits of epochal phenomena subsumed under the rubric of postmodernism, from the 1990s into the early twenty-first century the imperatives of analysis of human endeavor, and the priorities
that continue to drive critical agendas, have been shaped by the subjects of globalization, understood in the most basic sense to mean widespread transnationalization and intensification of the integration of different parts of the planet. When this topic came to the fore of public discussion, the predominant perspectives were those of economics and geopolitics. Considerable attention has now been paid as well to institutional implications and the ramifications for communities. Cultural dimensions of globalization have been the focus of incisive integral studies in social anthropology and of collections of essays by humanists and theoreticians of discourse. Culture in such approaches most commonly operates according to a “conventional social scientific sense” summarized as “the beliefs, values, and lifestyles of ordinary people in their everyday existence” (Berger, 2). Given the central role of mass media in the planetary spread of ideas and products, investigations of expressive culture most often refer to electronic means of communication and the impacts of technology, from film, radio, and television to the ever-expanding Internet. The late 1990s are generally considered to be the years when the Internet truly took hold not only in North America but in such nations as Brazil as well. Even before the definitive assertion of the World Wide Web, Arjun Appadurai distinguished himself both for having shifted emphasis from the accustomed configuration of culture in nation-states to a series of dimensions of cultural flows termed “-scapes” (ethno-, media-, techno-, finance-, and ideo-) and for having relativized fears of rampant Westernization and cultural homogenization. In the account of Fredric Jameson, globalization presupposes essentially a confluence of economic and cultural factors in a “communicational concept” (55) based on technologies and their implantations. Interrelations of local and globalized behaviors also concern analysts of cultural globalization in a fundamental way, especially with respect to counterpractices (protest, resistant discourse, alternative modes of expression) and issues of identity.

There is limited published research directly related to globalization that ponders culture understood conventionally as (elite) aesthetic production (“high culture,” if you will), including painting, sculpture, concert music, drama, fiction, and, of course, poetry. While on an understandably lesser scale compared to varied social-science domains, turn-of-the-millennium literary scholarship indeed began to consider imaginative writing under transnational rubrics, to seek means by which a discipline attuned above all to national formations could respond to the challenges of the age of globalization.¹ To make a transition from a worldwide focus to area stud-
ies, there is a useful allied theory of regional, continental, or hemispheric subglobalization (Berger, 14–15). In this approach, focus can be directed to areas of the world as opposed to the globe as a whole. Like Persian Iran in the Arab-dominant Middle East, Portuguese-speaking Brazil in Latin America is an interesting case of a nation that is the largest and most economically influential in the region but not central in cultural terms because of linguistic singularity.

With respect to polynational study of literatures of the Americas, colleagues in the relatively recent (sub)discipline of American studies have made eloquent appeals for the expansion of outlooks, some limited to immediate neighbors of the United States, others imagining America, as the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera did, as “the territory stretching between the ice-caps of the two poles.” With purposeful inclusion of writing in Portuguese and French, comparative scholars in North America have posited such fruitful critical positions as inter-American literature, New World studies, and transamerican poetics. The first, posited on the integration of “different languages, cultures, and historical experiences” and recognition of “very real differences between the American states,” explores commonalities and similarities in Pan-American literatures. As developed by Earl Fitz, this method can encompass topics as diverse as New World identity in the novel, appreciation of indigenous heritage, the widespread influence of Walt Whitman, and, as seen in chapter 4 here, neo-epic poetry. Roland Greene explains that New World Studies “takes for its object the making of American cultures and of a transamerican culture from an interdisciplinary perspective” and “can be understood as a set of practices that investigate the givenness of local, national, and transamerican worldviews through the collation of literary representation and social fact.” Whether brought to bear to relate early-modern writing in the Americas to metropolitan letters or to illuminate varieties of modernism on this side of the Atlantic, this kind of study wholly enriches appreciation in different contexts.

Transamerican poetics is more specifically related to the genre of lyric. Not a platform per se, but the combined views of various scholars, working for the most part in North America, the transamerican way eschews a planetary point of view and posits a hemispheric approach, one that pursues praxis and attitudes that cross national boundaries from Canada to Tierra del Fuego. Interest lies in efforts to surpass ingrained geolinguistic limits on the assertion of local/regional outlooks when making and disseminating poetry in the final decades of the twentieth century and beyond. A
point of departure was established by Charles Bernstein, who wrote that the cultural space of an “impossible America is transected by innumerable overlaying, contradictory or polydictory, traditions and proclivities and histories and regions and peoples and circumstances and identities and families and collectivities and dissolutions—dialects and ideolects, not National Tongues; localities and habitations, not States.” He complexifies this configuration with a reminder that “everywhere the local is under fire from the imposed standard of a transnational consumer culture and undermined by the imperative to extract it and export it as product.”

A problem with the initial application of this stirring proposal was that it was not wholly transamerican, as it really examined only varieties of English, leaving French, Spanish, and Portuguese aside. Bernstein’s special issue of Boundary 2 was worldwide in scope, including two Brazilian contributions. In the new millennium, in a São Paulo venue, the critic set forth a broader New World vision:

A poetics of the Americas would be less concerned with analyzing the themes and cultural narratives produced in Spanish and English fiction than in listening for—and composing—a collage of distinct language practices across the Americas. . . . I am suggesting that we conceptualize our Americas as a hypertextual or syncretic constellation, with alphabetic, glyphic, and a/oral layers. A constellation is an alternative model for understanding what is often characterized as fragmentation, parataxis, isolation, insularity, atomization, and separate development. Hypertextuality maps a syncretic space that articulates points of contact and that potentiates both spatial connections among discrepant parts and temporal overlays that merge or melt into one another. (“Our Americas,” 87)

Where directions of cultural flows are concerned, the modifier transamerican means within Latin America as well as from North to South America and from South to North, including Central America and the Caribbean. One of the assumptions is that overall globalization and specific regional plans, such as NAFTA, Mercosul (see the final part of chapter 5), or the proposed “free-trade zone” of the Americas, affect changing circumstances in aesthetic production too. Greene (“Transamerican”) specifically hypothesizes that lyrical identities and poetries of countries “are being refashioned under the external pressures of hemispheric transnationalism and the intrinsic logic of a turn-of-the-new-century cultural interdependence.”
Given relative translatability and the spatiotemporal expansiveness of narrative, prose fiction seems to be the literary genre best suited to study in terms of globalization. Lyric is naturally problematic here since it is the most idiosyncratic of aspects in a national, regional, or linguistically-defined transcontinental culture (one example being Portuguese-speaking or Lusophone). Some scholars have suggested that “world” writers actually compose and modify their words with an eye to translatability and English-language markets, especially the USA. Respondents often note that considerations of market are much less relevant in the art of poetry. Issues of globalization and poetry are further complicated if one factors in peripheral status or isolation that may motivate new stylizations, vehicles, and content. If it is somewhat trickier to update assessments of interrelations of poetries and of planetary or subglobal linkages, there are profitable modes to imagine transnational aspects of lyric of a nation or region which get beyond the received wisdom of comparative literature and/or such conventional analytical devices as “influence,” though these certainly cannot simply be set aside. As this book sets out to explore, present-day poets in nations such as Brazil carry on textual, practical, and diplomatic conversations with foreign interlocutors as never before, most notably within the hemisphere. Moreover, efforts to overcome lyric’s constitutional or generic interferences with expanded communications have resulted in manifestations that merit scrutiny from national and extranational standpoints. Most significant in the late-twentieth-century phase of global expansions, elements of varied provenance league Brazil, neighbor nations, and the United States in the domain of lyric, as suggested in the very prospect of transamerican poetics, with its interrogations of perimeters, provinces, and mutations in space. A spatial or territorial paradigm runs through the present deliberations via the concepts of deterritorialization and insularity.

Deterritorialization has been applied variously in studies of culture and globalization. The idea originates in the collaborations of philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychiatrist Felix Guattari, who used it in a geopsychological sense of transference with reference to processes involving movement away from structures in the mind or society that control or coerce. The complementary term reterritorialization involves movement toward another destination or location. In social-scientific applications, deterritorialization comes to mean detachment, dislodging or disassociation of behaviors from specific places, especially nation-states and their “typical” cultures. As a basis for cultural reproduction, Appadurai treats deterritori-
alization as transformations from established places (with physical borders) to spaces (dispersed and not concentrated). Néstor García Canclini defined deterritorialization simply as “the loss of the ‘natural’ relation of culture to geographical and social territories” (239). Tomlinson seeks to unite social theory and a cultural-studies approach to grasp globalization as an empirical condition of the modern world characterized by “complex connectivity,” an “ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences,” and a widespread dissolution of links between “lived experience” and territorial location (2). In this final aspect he adopts García Canclini’s basic explanation, which was tied to the concept of hybridity, focus of much subsequent debate.

Migration and other kinds of transit of people and things generate hybrid artifacts of expression. Pnina Werbner affirms the related critical value of applying a Bakhtinian idea of “intentional hybridity,” a conscious deployment in linguistic and other cultural forms of a mixing intended to “shock, change, challenge, revitalize or disrupt through deliberate intended fusions of unlike social languages and images.” This angle makes increasing sense in the age of globalization as flows of people, languages, and goods, symbolic and material alike, increase exponentially. Deterritorialization, in sum, is a flexible instrument. Jean Franco has noted the appeal of Deleuze and Guattari in Latin American cultural critique, recognizing fruitful applications by the Chilean essayist Nelly Richard—“deterritorialization” not as “negative separation from roots and authenticity, but rather a release of energies that would otherwise be bound to institutions such as the patriarchal family, the nation, and the work ethic”—and the interest of Néstor Perlongher, the Argentine poet relocated in Brazil, a personality who will appear in chapter 5.

Throughout the present pages, there will be numerous and diverse instances of creative and critical manipulation of such (de-)(re-)territorialized concepts. Indeed, this cluster can be (re)deployed to uncover aesthetic lines on the face of globalization and to tease out meanings for poems that reflect or implement, sometimes quite explicitly, interconnectivity or changing perceptions of place. There are myriad ways in which turn-of-the millenium lyrical repertories transcend boundaries and overcome old prejudices, incorporating different sorts of neighborly wisdom but also eyeing and commenting on, without stricture, the present and new realities in play. Poets can witness surface thematic paradigms of globalization, subglobalization, hemispheric sway, and bi- or multilateral relations, incor-