

CURRENT CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES IN LITERATURE, FILM, AND CULTURAL STUDIES

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And since I am a novelist, and a firm believer in the power of stories to affect and alter the realities of our world, I believe stories set abroad and stories set in one's own home serve much the same purpose: to explore what it means to be alive in the present moment, that is, in the current.
Esi Edugyan, *Dreaming of Elsewhere*

In a lecture later published by the University of Alberta Press under the title *Dreaming of Elsewhere: Observations on Home*, Canadian writer Esi Edugyan discusses some of the concepts which have been greatly debated in the past decades, such as identity, citizenship, displacement, home, among others. For Edugyan, such notions, connected to a sense of belonging, are permeated not only by an awareness regarding the “constructedness” of their meanings, but also by the many stories/narratives that inform the different positions taken along one’s journey in life. Storytelling, as the epigraph above suggests, is intimately connected to the exploration and reinvention of one’s own world as well as the world of others. In Edugyan’s words, “[w]e have always dreamed of elsewhere. It is our privilege as creatures of language who exist within narrative space ... And it is our responsibility, as well. ... If every act of empathy is a leaving of the self, then such journeys are more necessary than ever in this world” (32).

This broad sense of traveling or dislocation is embedded in literary works and in different kinds of cultural productions – including film, visual art, performances, etc. – as well as in the various critical perspectives present in the acts of reading and thinking about art. “Dreaming of elsewhere”, as Edugyan seems to suggest, is a form of being displaced, or taken out of our comfort zones, redirecting our critical eyes towards an unending dialogue between selves and others. In this

context, it becomes vital to clear some space in which this “dreaming” can take place.

The journal *Ilha do Desterro* has, for almost forty decades, promoted such kinds of dialogues and exchanges, constituting a significant forum of debate in the area of English studies. As Renata Wasserman has already pointed out, since the publication of its first issues, *Ilha* has “covered a wide array of topics in literature, language, film, linguistics, and literary theory” (207). In an article in which she presents an overview of the kind of scholarship published in the journal, Wasserman demonstrates the importance of *Ilha do Desterro*, both in Brazil and abroad, mainly due to the plurality and originality of its critical perspectives. Moreover, as Wasserman also asserts, “[a]s one might expect, *Ilha* changed both format and organization along the years, adopting the norms governing international professional publications while preserving its focus on the literary and other relations between Anglophone literatures, then adding film, and Brazilian culture” (207).

With that in mind, since the publication of vol. 69.1, edited by Rosane Silveira, *Ilha* has inaugurated what Silveira has called “a new tradition for this journal” (11) as it now includes, in its yearly volumes, alternately, one non-thematic issue dedicated to current approaches in the study of language and one dedicated to the study of literatures in English. The inclusion of such



kinds of issues originated from a new editorial policy, launched in 2016, and conceived by *Ilha do Desterro's* Editor-in-Chief, Anelise Reich Corseuil, together with the journal's editorial board. Thus, issue 70.1 marks yet another significant moment for the journal, being the first non-thematic issue focusing on literary and cultural studies. As the plurality of topics addressed in this present volume demonstrates, the inclusion of non-thematic issues has widened *Ilha's* scope as well as renewed its important role as a publishing venue for up-to-date research.

This issue presents a collection of twenty-five articles and two book-reviews, including works developed by researchers from seventeen different Brazilian higher education institutions as well as from three international ones. Such range continues to show *Ilha's* wide reach in gathering scholarship being produced in different contexts and from various perspectives and backgrounds. Moreover, volume 70.1 includes articles addressing topics in the fields of drama, film and adaptation studies, literary and cultural criticism. Among the main subjects addressed in this volume, one finds issues related to the history of slavery, black identity and images of black women, colonial resistance, Latin@ writing, immigrant experiences, communal practices, fantasy fiction, self-translation, representation, narrative structures, narratology, literary genres, filmic adaptations, censorship in the film industry, postmodern parody, gendered and queer identities in film, the Australian gothic, intermedia approaches, the gangster movie, digital realities and artificial languages, authorship and performance, realism in theater, and heterotopias.

Thirteen articles in the field of literary and cultural criticism open this present issue of *Ilha do Desterro*, addressing, for the most part, fictional prose narratives and poetical works. In "Por um Lugar no Império: Inglesidade, Pertencimento Negro e Memória Nacional em Dois Contos de Andrea Levy," Denise Almeida Silva analyzes the short-stories "That Polite Way that English People Have" and "The Empty Pram," by English writer Andrea Levy. One of Silva's main arguments is that, through her writing, Levy recuperates the history of black slavery in England and in the Caribbean, thus

resisting its invisibility in English official historical accounts. Silva also argues that Levy's fiction interrogates the concept of Englishness, bringing to the fore the experience of Caribbean immigrants in England as well as the author's own experience as a British citizen from Caribbean descent. The denouncement of racist practices is also present in Angela Teodoro Grillo's "Ao Som do Jazz... Os Estados Unidos da América na Poesia de Mário de Andrade." Having as its main object of analysis the poem "Nova Canção de Dixie," by Mário de Andrade, Grillo addresses how the Brazilian writer resists the pervasive racism that continuously subjugates black people in the United States. Basing her discussion on genetic criticism and on comparative literature approaches, Grillo presents a compelling argument about the position taken by Andrade in relation to what she calls "a growing pan-Americanist exchange between Brazil and other Latin American countries, and the United States." For Grillo, Andrade's poem reveals his critique towards racist politics and the historical events taking place in the U.S. during the 1940s.

Two other articles from this first group of critical texts also articulate issues connected to migration and identity in the context of the United States. In "Decolonizing Queer Time: A Critique of Anachronism in Latin@ Writings," Eliana Ávila recuperates the epistemological meanings and the theoretical significance of the term Latin@, elaborating mainly how the term has been commonly associated to geographical displacement as well as to temporal anachronism. Starting from a theoretical discussion about queer time and straight temporality based on decolonial and Latin@ studies, Ávila also presents a critical reading of Daisy Hernández's 2014 memoir *A Cup of Water Under My Bed*, demonstrating its (and other Latin@ texts') resistance to what she calls "contemporary forms of anachronism." In a different line of thought, but still focusing on issues connected to immigration in the U.S, Douglas Ceccagno's "Pergunte ao Pó de John Fante e o 'Sonho Americano' dos Imigrantes" explores the experience of Italian immigrants and their descendants in the first half of the twentieth-century. By analyzing Fante's novel *Ask the Dust* (translated into Portuguese as *Pergunte ao Pó*), Ceccagno argues that its protagonist

and narrator could be read as Fante's *alter ego*, who challenges the ideology of the "American dream" since presenting the complex and ambivalent relations of identification that permeate the immigrant's experience in North-America.

The United States is once more the main stage in Rafaela Scardino's "Reivindicar o Direito à Cidade: Cooperação, Ocupação, Comunidade." In this article, Scardino recuperates the context of the 2008 economic recession in the North-American country through a critical discussion of the novel *Sunset Park*, by Paul Auster, and its presentation of collaborative and communal ties established by a group of young people who occupy an abandoned house after it had been ceased by financial institutions during the real estate crisis in the U.S. Having sociologist Richard Sennett's ideas as a critical framework, Scardino argues that Auster's novel presents a new and reconfigured economical model of cooperation.

In the article "Rethinking Motherhood and Motherly Love in Toni Morrison's *Sula* and Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*," Ane Caroline Faria Ribeiro and José de Paiva dos Santos have as one of their main objectives an examination of how Morrison's and Naylor's novels defy and reconstruct the image of the black matriarch. By focusing specifically on a close analysis of two women characters, Eva Peace and Mattie Michael, Ribeiro and Santos argue that the portrayal of black women in these novels resists the controlling images imposed on them as well as presents the multiple roles they have in their social contexts. Slavery is again revisited in Andrew Howe's "River of Blood: George Martin's *Fevre Dream* and the Road to Dark Design," but this time from a different perspective, since Howe discusses the connections between the history of slavery and of the American Civil War to George Martin's horror narratives and his embracement of dark fantasy. For Howe, in the novel *Fevre Dream*, Martin begins to explore elements which will mark his later works, also presenting the image of the "sympathetic vampire", which, in this novel, is associated to what Howe calls "moral ambiguity and the brutality of power." Fantasy fiction and the uncanny are also explored in "Entre Humanos e Bestas: o Insólito Ficcional em *The Great*

God Pan e Shame," by Shirley de Souza Gomes Carreira. In this article, Carreira establishes a connection between the fantastical world represented in Arthur Machen's and Salman Rushdie's novels and the social and political contexts of their time. Despite acknowledging the fact that both authors produce works in different historical moments, Carreira proposes to analyze how they use the metamorphosis of characters as a narrative device for their political critiques.

In "From Samuel Beckett to Nancy Huston: a Poetics of Self-translation," Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida and Julia de Vasconcelos Magalhães Veras establish a dialogue between the works of two different authors, but whose poetics demonstrates an affinity in relation to their bilingualism and to the practice of translating their own works. By pointing out Huston's recognition of Beckett as an influential precursor in writing in a foreign language, Almeida and Veras argue for the centrality of self-translation in these writers' literary journeys. A novel by Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje is the main object of analysis in Sigrid Renaux's "Modalities of Representation and Perception in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*." In this article, Renaux discusses the interrelations between fact and fiction, history and storytelling, and representation and the perception of reality in Ondaatje's novel. Approaching *Anil's Ghost* as an example of what she calls resistance literature, Renaux elaborates on the complexities of a piece of historical fiction that has to account for the different kinds of "truths" surrounding traumatic events such as the ones experienced in Sri Lanka in the 1980s and 1990s.

The three final articles in this first group investigate issues related to the constitutive elements of narratives. In "*The Luminaries*: A D—ned Fine Tale, but of What?," John Scheckter analyzes the novel *The Luminaries*, by New Zealand writer Eleanor Catton, taking into consideration both her critical acclaim as well as negative responses from readers who are frustrated with her use of structuring frameworks much in vogue in the nineteenth century (the historical time depicted in her novel), as astrological and mathematical discourses, for example. Despite the kind of totalizing claims of such frameworks,

Scheckter's main argument is that, in *The Luminaries*, Catton "highlights irreducible uncertainty within systems that loudly proclaim their totality." Débora Almeida de Oliveira and Sandra Sirangelo Maggio's "The Deadly Perception of the Witness: Focalization in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*" emphasizes the significance of narratological elements, especially the use of focalization, to a more accurate comprehension of the narrative strategies used by Australian writer Markus Zusak in his novel *The Book Thief*. Basing their discussion on Genette, Bal, and Rimmon-Kenan, Oliveira and Maggio demonstrate the key role performed by the novel's narrator in the unravelling of Zusak's narrative. The last article of this section, William Vieira's "Obituário Ontem e Hoje: do Biográfico *Fast food* a uma 'Literatura de Jornal,'" recuperates the history of publication of obituaries, from its origins in British newspapers (as argued in the article) to its later location in anthologies. Interested in recovering the main literary and aesthetic characteristics of this kind of publication, Vieira sees obituaries as a literary genre still occupying an important social and cultural role.

A collection of nine articles focusing on film and adaptation studies constitute a second group of texts included in this issue of *Ilha do Desterro*. In "A Adaptação Cinematográfica de *Uma Tragédia Americana* e *Otello* em *Match Point*," Ana Paula Bianconcini Anjos recovers the history of cinematic adaptations of Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, establishing a parallel between Dreiser's novel, Woody Allen's film *Match Point* and Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Otello*. Anjos argues that, although not many critics have commented upon the similarities between the plots of Dreiser's and Allen's works, *Match Point*, in different contexts and scenarios, recuperates important issues explored in *An American Tragedy*, such as class/social mobility, the greediness for economic power, and the censorship suffered by the film industry in the context of war. Also focusing on adaptation studies, but with a particular emphasis on the use of parody, Avital G. Cykman, in "Parody and the Gas Station in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*," analyzes Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film *Romeo + Juliet* as a pop-culture cinematic adaptation of the Shakespearean tragedy. As Cykman argues, based on

a critical discussion about the concept of postmodern parody and on a close analysis of what she calls the gas station sequence of act one, scene one, Luhrmann's use of parody provokes film viewers to question and critique received cultural images and traditions, being more than mere playfulness.

The interconnections between literary narratives and filmic adaptations is still the focus of Fabiana Gomes Assis's "Orlandos: Intercâmbio Entre Virginia Woolf e Sally Potter", in which the author introduces what could be called a postmodern approach to Woolf's work. With a special interest in critical perspectives that do not try to reconcile the contradictions and ambiguities in Woolf's writing, Assis analyzes Sally Potter's 1992 filmic adaptation of *Orlando* taking into consideration the representation of gender and social roles. For Assis, it is precisely the critique of social practices, present both in Potter's adaptation and in Woolf's narrative, that makes the movie a powerful re-reading of Woolf's text. Gender and identity are issues once more revisited in "Deslocamentos e Identidades no Gótico Australiano: o Caso de *Picnic at Hanging Rock* e *Piquenique na Montanha Misteriosa*," by Luciana Wrege Rassier and Cynthia Beatrice Costa. In this article, Rassier and Costa present a critical reading of filmic adaptations, focusing particularly on the characteristics of the Australian gothic and how it has been used and adapted both in Joan Lindsay's novel and in Peter Weir's film. For the authors, the disappearance of three white schoolgirls and their teacher in the bush would reveal not only a still pervasive colonial fear in an Australian context, but also a kind of cautionary tale surrounding women's geographical dislocation and independence.

In a different line of thought, but also exploring the interrelations between literature and cinema, Caio Antônio de Medeiros Nóbrega Nunes Gomes and Genilda Azerêdo propose an intermedia reading of the movie *The Raven* (2012), directed by James McTeigue. In their article "Poe, Entre o Cinema e a Literatura: uma Leitura Intermediática de *The Raven*," Gomes and Azerêdo articulate what they call "the process of intermedial referencing," taking into consideration how Poe, as an iconic figure, together with the literary scene of his time have been re-accessed and represented in

the movie. The life and work of another iconic figure are revisited in Andrei dos Santos Cunha and Elaine Barros Indrusiak's article "Serguei no México: Greenaway e a Representação Pós-moderna do Artista Queer," in which they present a critical reading of Peter Greenaway's *Que viva Eisenstein!* (2016), a movie based on Soviet film director Serguei Eisenstein's travels in Mexico. Basing their analysis on a discussion of the *biopic* as a film genre, Cunha and Indrusiak demonstrate how Greenaway subverts the conventions of the genre by choosing a non-realist approach and by interconnecting Eisenstein's explorations of a queer identity to aesthetic and personal transformations. Focusing on yet another film genre, but this time the gangster sound movies, Elder Kôei Itikawa Tanaka, in "O *American Dream* e a Cultura das Aparências em *Little Caesar*, de Meryvn LeRoy," discusses the importance of LeRoy's film to the construction of the image of the gangster in American cinema. Considering the historical moment of the 1930s in the United States, Tanaka's main argument is centered on how *Little Caesar* inaugurates the protagonism of the American working class in Hollywood while, at the same time, it represents workers as being associated to organized crime. Through the re-articulation of what Tanaka calls "the culture of appearances and the ideology of the American Dream," for the author, *Little Caesar* presents a potential critique of American social and economic practices in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The two final articles on film and adaptation studies explore the representations of virtual realities and artificial languages in contemporary cinematic productions. In "Chronos Sickness: Digital Reality in Duncan Jones's *Source Code*," Márcia Tiemy Morita Kawamoto proposes to investigate the interrelations between reality and digital reality in Jones's film, arguing that *Source Code* produces a different concept of time in science fiction movies. Elaborating on the notion of "chronos sickness," Kawamoto demonstrates how the movie challenges chronological time and offers new possibilities for the understanding of time as virtual. Israel Alves Correa Noletto and Margareth Torres de Alencar Costa's "Nadsat - The Language of Violence: from Novel to Film" analyzes the use of the

artificial language "Nadsat" both in Anthony Burgess's novel *A Clockwork Orange* and in Stanley Kubrick's homonymous filmic adaptation of Burgess's work. Based on Iser's reception theory and on a descriptive analysis of the glossopoeia present in the works, Noletto and Costa's main arguments are centred on the impact the use of this artificial language has on readers and viewers of the works under discussion.

Three articles connected to the language of theater or to dramaturgical choices in specific playwrights' works close the section of critical texts in this issue. In "The Preface as Stage: The Theatrical Trope and the Performance of Authorial Identities in the Nineteenth Century," Geraldo Magela Cáffaro presents a discussion about how authors such as Charles Dickens, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry James use theatrical devices in their prefaces, such as the images of the stage manager and the dramatist, not only to reach out to their audience but also as possibilities of constructing and performing their roles as authors. Basing his analysis on the idea of authorship as performance, Cáffaro argues that references to the theater in Dickens's, Hawthorne's, and James's prefaces create a tension between what he calls "authorial self-fashioning and the fragmentation of the author."

Gustavo Ponciano Cunha de Oliveira, in "Os limites do realismo em *The Mutilated*, de Tennessee Williams: Expressionismo e *Verfremdungseffekt*," approaches Tennessee Williams's dramatical texts as challenging a more traditional view of what has been called descriptive realism. Starting from an overview of critical material produced about Williams's works, Oliveira identifies a certain hesitation from the part of critics in locating Williams as a realist writer. In this context, Oliveira recuperates Williams's *Plastic Theatre* manifesto as confronting realist conventions, and proposes to read *The Mutilated* through its expressionist characteristics and through the Brechtian concept of *Verfremdungseffekt*. Such approach allows Oliveira to articulate Williams's unique view of realism. In a somewhat different line of thought, and focusing on a British play, the article "Spatial Politics in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*," by Elham Kazemi and Mohsen Hanif, discusses how Stoppard's reconstruction of the

experience of two minor characters in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, namely Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, allows him to reflect about the political and power regulations which normalize subjects' understandings of place. Basing their analysis of Stoppard's text on Foucault's notion of heterotopia, Kasemi and Hanif point out the destabilizing impact suffered by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern when confronted with the fragmentation of power experienced in the context of the play.

Finally, two book reviews close volume 70.1. In the first review, Elisa Correa Santos Townsend and Christiane Heemann assess Lesley Blume's *Everybody Behaves Badly: The True Story Behind Hemingway's Masterpiece The Sun Also Rises* (2016), while Régis de Azevedo Garcia considers Tomsom Highway's *A Tale of Monstruous Extravagance: Imagining Multilingualism* (2015). Both Blume's and Highway's works represent significant texts in literary and cultural studies.

After this brief presentation of the critical journeys taken in this current issue of *Ilha do Desterro*, it is not difficult to see how scholarship in English – and, as is the case of volume 70.1, scholarship that is related to the fields of literatures in English, and to cultural and film studies – has faced the challenge of critically responding to literary and cultural productions that have informed, in Edugyan's word, “what it means to be alive in the present moment, that is, in the current” (32), even if one considers the ephemeral and transitory nature of present time. In this context, this non-thematic issue of *Ilha* invites readers to continue to engage in the act of “dreaming elsewhere,” seeing it as a possibility to ponder upon the need for a continuous dialogue between selves and others in the world.

References

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