

INTRODUCTION: DIS-PLACED SIGHTS/SITES -
CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON FILM, MEDIA,
AND LITERATURE

Place, space, territory are notions which are constantly being problematized by contemporary cultural productions and critical theories. Paul Virilio, for example, suggests that we are entering a new nomadic era (71) and Eva Rueschmann (ix) calls attention to the issues raised in a world on the move where global cultures are increasingly mobile and disperse (even if connected in complex ways). By the same token, Etienne Balibar discusses the relation between capitalism and the dispersal of peoples, showing that there are those who circulate capital and those whom capital circulates (83). What we have is a panorama where pairs such as global/local, centre/periphery, here/there, national/transnational, inclusion/exclusion are questioned as the borders separating their terms are gradually being blurred.

In tandem with such perspectives, Arjun Appadurai suggests that the modern world “is now an interactive system in a sense that is strikingly new. [...] [It] involves interactions of a new order and intensity” (27). For Appadurai, the newness of our contemporary

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world stems from the rapid advances of technology “in the domain of transportation and information” (29) in such a degree that it has affected and largely multiplied the interactions between cultures in unprecedented ways, coming close to what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in their *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, have called a “rhizomic” world. A world that is “even schizophrenic, calling for theories of rootlessness, alienation, and psychological distance between individuals and groups on the one hand, and fantasies (or nightmares) of electronic propinquity on the other” (Appadurai 29).

The complex entangled structure of the rhizome is seen as a means to explain the rootless, deterritorialized aspect of contemporary world, in which reality, according to James Clifford, “is understood to be an unfinished series of encounters” (13). In his *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Clifford sustains that “the new paradigms begin with historical contact, with entanglement at intersecting regional, national, and transnational levels” (7). This context leads to a perception of the “translocal” nature of culture, rejecting any perception of homogenization in what Clifford calls our “world (dis)order” (8).

Hence, recognizing the open, nomadic trace of the world seen as a rhizome is not intended here to suggest any form of homogenization as if its implied interconnectedness would undermine the local, conceiving the world as one uniform global community. The intricacies of such a spatial perception of the world lie in the encounters, the points of connection, the passages and exchanges engendered in the transit. In other words, to reduce the rhizome to a view of the world as a “global village”—to use Marshall McLuhan’s expression – would mean falling into the trap of globalization as a utopian convergence of humankind towards a solidary future (8), as Néstor Garcia Canclini puts it.

This global interconnectedness, engendered in the intricate, transnational networks of telecommunication, complexify the negotiations of identity, allowing dispersed peoples to have imaginative contact with their homelands but also disturbing the limits of the national in the spectatorial activity. According to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, “media spectatorship impacts complexly on national identity and communal belonging. By facilitating an engagement with distant peoples, the media ‘deterritorialize’ the process of imagining communities” (7).

Contemporary cinema, media and literatures are especially sensitive to these problems, and their narratives, images and sound not only put forward a critique of established spaces but they also—in a very productive way—create other spaces which need to be mapped out. These works produce *dis-placement*, an expression which stresses the play of simultaneities that characterises the contemporary cultural production which is not afraid to explore the space created “in between” the terms of the aforementioned dichotomies (thus questioning how relevant these very dichotomies are for understanding and enjoying such works). Therefore, in order to better investigate such production, sight, hearing and feeling must also be dis-placed.

In this issue of *Ilha do Desterro* we put together a group of articles that foster new critical and theoretical approaches regarding contemporary cultures which take into consideration the political issues that not only dis-place the gaze but also question notions of place/territory. To dis-place, or to be dis-placed, offers a unique opportunity for the construction of new cartographies, maps of sites of resistance and of dissident epistemologies. Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida, for example, reminds us of Appadurai’s attention to the role of marginalized and destitute subjects in the definition of specific localities. Such “dislocated communities” (129), as Almeida puts it, in their creative effort to

reshape spaces, are often focus of violence for they tend to blur the frontiers between oppressed and oppressor. The work of dis-placement, here, has very visible (and repeatedly violent) consequences.

In Yukinory Yanagi's installation "World Flag Ant Farm", ants meander through a constellation of national flags made of coloured sand that is put into plastic boxes which are interconnected by plastic tubes. The tube pathways allow the flux between "nations", indicating the porosity of the borders in a networked "world". As the ants "travel" from one flag to the other, they corrode the flags' patterns, leaving a rhizomic path that suggests the destabilization of the nation-states and thus the dissolution of fixed, purist concepts of the national in a contemporary scenario. The ants' mobility, thus, undermines self-contained notions of identity, deterritorializing the 'self' as their transit (de)composes a certain world (dis)order.

As the ants "travel" across national borders, they seem to entail a movement from the *roots*, as fixed, coagulated notions of identity—represented in the intact shape of the flags before the transit of the ants—to the routes that excavate new possibilities of identities—in the constant transition, transformation and becoming that are engendered by the ants' fluxes. It is noteworthy that the dynamic logic of the installation provides an unpredictable reshaping of the flags, as the ants' trajectory and the paths they leave on the sand cannot be anticipated – even if they are more likely to go from one tube to the other. The erring is constant and the exhibition is in continuous transformation.

The articles reunited in this issue follow, to an extent, the movement of the ants, showing several dis-placement in art and theory, thus blurring borders and generating contamination. They are concerned, in different degrees, with the mobilization of narratives, meaning, desire, and bodies. In this sense, they are akin to Leo Bersani and Ulysses Dutoit's argue that it is not desire that drives narrative,

but it is narrative which contains, directs, and disciplines desire. Narrative is seen as a way to organize experience, albeit a pernicious one, as they debunk the “sense-making orders of narrative” (89). The mobile desire is contained by the power of linear narrative to master and pacify with its “conventions as beginnings, explanatory middles, and climatic ending” (51). The authors’ approach acknowledges the fluidity of perspectives that does not freeze the subject in a position of pure and impassive “seeing”. Bersani and Dutoit seek out interstitial moments in films—moments that pull against the continuing pressure of cinematic storytelling. In these moments there tends to be a lack of self-consciousness about the figures in the frame. What ensues from Bersani and Dutoit’s approach is a suspicion (to the degree of negation) of the mimetic fascination with the images. They propose a way to “escape” mimeticism by dissolving the identification with it into the mobility of the gaze and of desire. Such questions are contextualized within the frame of a contemporary perspective that takes into account the disintegration of a traditional humanist aesthetic (that merely sees art as a civilizing force), and is open to (re)think the de-monic and destructive power of the aesthetic. We are urged to (re)consider the kinds of knowledge or modes of knowing that aesthetic practices enable as well as preclude.

We start this issue with a queer dis-placement of one of the most iconic filmmakers, Alfred Hitchcock. In “Hitchcock’s Queer Doubles” we undertake the task of combing through Hitchcock’s works looking for doubles. Our premise is that many characters who are doubled work as destabilizing narrative forces, impinging a queering of desire that cannot be fulfilled by the codes of classical narrative and style. These double produce an excess that, ultimately, invites spectators to dis-place their own desire. What is at stake, here, is a dis-placement of the body, much like in the next two articles,

“I sing the body dystopic: Utopia and Posthuman Corporeality in P.D. James’s *The Children of Men*”, by Eduardo Marques de Marques, and Genilda Azerêdo’s “Affective (mis)encounters in ‘*The Doll’s House*’ (A discussion of Katherine Mansfield’s short story). Marques’s article reviews the construction of the dystopian body in contemporary dystopian novels, emphasizing the posthuman critique in *The Children of Men*. Marques points out how James’s novel questions the prevalence of productive and able bodies in a future haunted by hypercapital. Azerêdo explores Mansfield’s short story through the lens of the affects that connect characters. Aligning her theoretical approach to the “affective turn”, Azerêdo offers a well-crafted depiction of how affects engender meaning, shedding delicate light on Mansfield’s work.

Adalberto Müller’s “Ambiências afetivas em *Amor à flor da pele* de W. Kar Wai” also presents a dis-placed approach by investing in Hans Ulrich Grumbrecht’s notion of *Stimmung* (mood) in a reading of Wong Kar-Wai’s film *In The Mood For Love*. Müller looks for inscriptions of History in the film, taking into consideration that the function of art is not to describe, or re-present the world, but to make present a world at the moment of viewing (or reading, listening, touching etc).

The next four articles deal with the matter of space and displacements. Ignatius Chukwumah’s “Mythic Displacements in Nigerian Narratives: An Introduction” offers a relevant reevaluation of Nigerian narratives, challenging humanist approaches, mainly when dealing with mythic structures of crime and punishment. Following his discussion in this issue, “Urban Encounters: Stasis, Movement, Editing and Memory in Contemporary Cinema” by Cecilia Melo investigates, through a transnational approach, the representation of cities in four films and how the work of memory creates a more complex geography for contemporary world cinema.

Marcos Rogério Salgado also explores urban spaces in his “A metrópole como lugar do exílio: dispersão e trauma na experiência urbana”, an analysis of *Um Táxi para Viena d’Áustria* by Antonio Torres, and *As Cinco Estações do Amor* by João Almino that emphasizes the loss of speech and the joy of life produced in a traumatic encounter with reality. Lucia Fatima Fernandes Nobre also explores the notion of space, metaphorized in the space of the other in her article “Lugares/Olhares des-locados e a configuração do espaço do outro em *Atonement*, de Ian McEwan e sua adaptação filmica, de Joe Wright”. Nobre is interested in the negotiation of alterity both within the two diegesis (film and book) and between the film and the novel, thus offering a relevant contribution to adaptation studies.

The last article is another important contribution for the studies on the relation between film and literature: “Representação sonora entre literatura e cinema: a questão do ponto de escuta nas adaptações de *Persuasão* de Jane Austen”, by Fernando Morais da Costa and Marcela Soalheiro. The authors offer a discussion of the *point of audition* as a key element in filmic and literary analyses. Closing this issue we have two reviews: Russell West-Pavlov’s *Temporalities* is reviewed by Marcia Tiemy Morita Kawamoto, and Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins reviews George Elliott Clarke’s *Directions Home: Approaches to African-Canadian Literature*.

In the short animated film *Skhizein*, directed by Jérémy Clapin, the protagonist, a young man named Henry, finds himself dislocated exactly ninety one centimeters from himself after being hit by a meteor. The process of readaptation is hard, for this displacement implies an inadequacy that is both spatial and existential. Henry eventually fails to “place himself back together”, favouring a risky and somewhat schizophrenic existence. In this collection of articles, we have tried to foreground the productivity of the notion of dis-

placement in an attempt to map out diverse analytical approaches that could encourage our readers to face the complexities of contemporary works and theories. We did not dare to follow Henry's radical free-floating displacement but we invite you, readers, to measure how far we were able to go.

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