# ANGLO SAXONICA

REVISTA **ANGLO SAXONICA** SER. III **N. 14** 2017

University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies
Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa

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SER. III N. 14 2017

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# SPECIAL ISSUE ON / NÚMERO ESPECIAL
# HOME_LANDS

*Guest Editors / Organizadores Convidados*

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# HOME_LANDS

# Introductory note

# Introductory note

Since the creation of the "Department of Homeland Security", in the aftermath of 9/11, 2001, the term *homeland* has become a staple word in political discourse and popular imagination alike, in the United States and around the world, raising invariable questions in the minds of academics, students and lay people as to its meaning(s) and overall implications. With this in mind, the Centre for Comparative Studies (CEC) and the University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies (CEAUL) held a one-day seminar on September 27, 2016 precisely to address the transcultural and transnational range of significations the term *homeland* currently elicits in American Studies, in particular how its transdisciplinary scope seems to be of late interfering with cognitive, social and geopolitical territories, imagined communities, and the public and private organization of homes (and) lands.

What are the boundaries of the "American" homeland? Where do, within this compound noun, connotations of "home" end and visions of "land" begin? What images and roles is a homeland made of? What can different approaches to the notion of homeland tell us about past and present strategies of territorialization and reterritorialization? These were some of the most pressing questions we hoped to find answers to during this one-day event.

To help us answer this set of interrogations, we were graced with the presence of two distinguished keynote speakers, Professor Amy Kaplan, Edward W. Kane Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, and Professor Paul Giles, Challis Professor of English at the University of Sydney, both of whom shared with us their invaluable insights into these matters. In her address, "Invincible Victim: The Israel Paradox in the Discourse of Homeland Security" Amy Kaplan delved into the political

rhetoric associated with homeland security, drawing clear parallels between the United States and Israel. She argued that in post 9/11 there emerged in the U.S. a language and vocabulary connected with the "war on terror" of similar contours to that which was used in Israel during the Second Intifada, whereby the "homeland" is described as an entity both existentially vulnerable and militarily invincible. The Bush Administration was quick to adopt this language in a wide range of matters related to national security. Drawing on two examples from popular culture (*World War Z* and *NCIS*), Kaplan maintained that Israel has influenced the way policing of American cities has become militarized, a situation which she illustrated through several instances of cooperation between the United States and Israel which were enacted under the aegis of security.

Paul Giles, on the other hand, chose to reflect in his talk, "Lost Homelands: The Expropriation of American Studies in the Anthropocene Era" (the Portuguese translation of which he has kindly allowed us to include in this special section of *Anglo Saxonica*), upon the importance of International American Studies in the redefinition of the concept of *homelands* in ways that allow us to face more effectively the challenges posed by an age in which the demands of geopolitics and technological advances represent a major threat to the survival of humankind. Drawing on historical examples of aesthetic representation of the relations of (wo)men and the boundaries of territory, Giles shows how the reciprocity between geographical regions can be construed as a principal matrix instead of the discreteness of "homeland security", and argues that the displacement of the national occurs on a cyclical basis. In the twenty-first century, the United States, he claims, finds itself in a similar position to that of Indian communities in seventeenth-century America, with traditional social organizations being threatened by extraneous forces that they cannot control. Therefore, he develops arguments from his latest book, *Antipodean America* (2013), defending the existence of a correlation between the internationalization of American Studies and the projection of Indigenous culture as a conceptual matrix that reorders planetary culture according to radically different spatial and temporal coordinates.

The texts below, a small selection of the papers presented during the seminar, are an example of the variety and breadth of subjects covered by the participants in the event, denoting not just the vitality of the theme,

but also the need for further examination, scrutiny and reassessment on the part of those directly involved in the debate.

Gonçalo Cholant and Isabel Caldeira, in their essay "Homeland (In)Security: A Racial House Called America", offer their reflection on the concepts of "home" and "homeland", arguing that the rhetoric of surveillance, much more pervasive since 9/11, has always been particularly directed at non-whites over the course of U.S. history. They show that the situation is not new insofar as "alien", "undesirable" and "dispensable" populations are concerned, observing that in the current economic climate, dominated by neoliberalism, the poor and dispossessed, the majority of whom are black, tend to fall victim of a legal system that invariably punishes them disproportionally. They also maintain that the rhetoric against illegal immigrants coming out of the White House since President Donald Trump's election, fraught with nativist sentiment, has impacted negatively on race relations, and embodies an idea of America that is essentially conservative in nature (exceptionalist) and against the very notion of multiculturalism. They draw one's attention to the dangers of populism when the definition of "the people" is a problematic one in itself, posing a danger to democracy by a process of exclusion, whereby those who are not considered to be part of the system are debarred from it. Immigrants (recent, illegal) and non-whites fall into this category. Race, as they suggest, prevents many blacks from calling America "home", poverty and destitution thwarting their rights as citizens. Coupled with fear, police brutality, harsher law enforcement rules, American blacks feel, therefore, ever more unsafe and insecure in the country they call home.

In her paper "A Home Built by Words: Linda Hogan's *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World*", Isabel Alves discusses the Chickasaw author's notion of home/place, drawing on the latter's collection of essays *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World*". Alves argues that Hogan's memoir is in fact this author's own way of showing that there is hope and possibility insofar as our existences are concerned if we reconnect with nature, suggesting that Hogan sees the natural world as a dwelling place, a home "permeable and flexible in its borders". As Alves points out, nature and the natural world are used by Native Americans, Chickasaw Indians included, to overcome much of what is broken and fragmentary in their lives, historically the result of violence,

dislocation, and dispossession. Without nature there is no possibility of having what one calls a home, a place of relationships and a repository of stories, both personal and communal. Harmony with the natural world, thus, assumes an invaluable significance for Native populations, embodying both spiritual and emotional balance. In her essay, Alves maintains as well that through words Hogan creates for herself a home, a "textual space", in effect, which she uses to resist and survive the world around her. Words and language, consequently, according to Alves, continue to play an important part in the lives of Native American authors, a source of sustenance, spiritual and other, a potential promise of inhabiting the world differently. They are, as Hogan observes, quoted by Alves, "the defining shape of a human spirit. Without them we fall. Without them, there is no accounting for the human place in the world" (*The Woman* 56).

In her article, "Worlding America?: Homelands and Geopolitical Cartographies in post 9/11", Teresa Botelho discusses the recent attention given to the spatial dimensions of literature. She highlights in her paper the implications of overlapping geographies, some of which disrupt the domain of cultural and territorially-based sovereignty, while interrogating notions such as national literature and hegemonic formations associated with the notion of "homeland". By examining two American post-9/11 novels, Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2008) and Amy Waldman's *The Submission* (2011), Botelho carefully examines how these works traverse dominant narratives and their respective spaces with "other" places and histories, pointing out some of the transnational and geopolitical tensions inherent to the governing concept of "homeland".

As editors of this thematic section, it is our hope it can provide readers with a clearer understanding of some of the contours surrounding the notions of *home* and *homeland* as these intersect the literature, politics, and history of the United States. It is a modest contribution to a complex set of ideas at a time when security matters continue to draw passionate responses and recurring concerns not only in the United States, but in many countries around the world as well.

*Edgardo Medeiros da Silva, Margarida Vale de Gato,*
*Teresa Casal and Susana Araújo*

# Pátrias Perdidas: A Expropriação dos Estudos Americanos na Era do Antropoceno

*Paul Giles*
Universidade de Sydney

# Pátrias Perdidas: A Expropriação dos Estudos Americanos na Era do Antropoceno[1]

No futuro, quando os historiadores culturais olharem para a década do pós-11 de setembro, não será de admirar que considerem o termo *homeland* (pátria, nação, território nacional, terra-natal, etc.), [2] como uma das suas palavras-chave à semelhança de *utopia* nos anos 60 ou *conspiração* na década de 70.[3] No século XXI, a ideia de proteger a pátria ameaçada tornou-se parte integrante da cultura americana e de outras culturas ocidentais. A série televisiva *Homeland*, estreada em 2011 e tendo por base a série israelita *Prisoners of War*, pôs o dedo na ferida que se tornou latente em todo o imaginário cultural americano durante a última década: a segurança nacional, a ideia das crianças e da família como ícones que requerem proteção, a perigosa proximidade entre o território doméstico e externo, e a forma como estes são mediados através das novas tecnologias — violação de dados, transferências de ficheiros, entre outros. Nesse sentido, a análise de Arjun Appadurai, em 1995, sobre a mobilidade sistemática entre fronteiras nacionais — através dos termos "etnopaisagem" (*ethnoscape)*, "tecnopaisagem" (*technoscape*), "financiopaisagens"

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[1] Tradução de Nuno Sousa Oliveira, revista pelos editores.

[2] *Pátria* e/ou *nação* são as traduções mais frequentes para o termo *homeland*, ainda que não recubram todo o significado de *homeland*, vocábulo constituído pelas palavras *lar/casa* e *terra/território*. Nos E.U.A., com a legislação de 2002 (*Homeland Security Act*) e a criação do Departamento para a Segurança do Território Nacional (*Department for Homeland Security*), o uso legislativo e mediático do termo *homeland* vê a sua esfera interpretativa e conceptual alargada a questões políticas de carácter territorial. O termo passa, assim, a identificar um território nacional recorrentemente associado a políticas securitárias. *(N. dos Ed.)*

[3] Sobre "utopia", ver Jameson, 199; e Miller, 202, sobre "conspiração".

(*financescapes*), ideopaisagens" (*ideoscapes*) e "mediapaisagens" (*mediascapes*) — encontrou uma reação ideológica baseada nos medos psicológicos, sociais e económicos do deslocamento. Podemos dizer que a era de Donald Trump é mais uma resposta oblíqua à globalização, mesmo que a ênfase aqui recaia nos receios e não nas oportunidades associadas a este fenómeno. Encontramos também outra versão de engrandecimento, a roçar o fetichismo, desta vocação teleológica de *homeland*, na reação popular contra os migrantes em muitos países da Europa e na Austrália, onde a questão das "pessoas de barco" (*boat people*) que atravessam o oceano para clandestinamente entrarem no país tem recebido grande atenção política. É também, naturalmente, um grande problema nos próprios Estados Unidos, onde o sucesso espetacular de Trump deve ser entendido como intrinsecamente associado à permeabilidade das fronteiras nacionais como indicam os fenómenos de *outsourcing*, empresas americanas a recorrerem a *offshores*, o deslocamento de mão-de-obra e de capital para fora das fronteiras norte-americanas, e assim por diante.

Durante o paradigma da Guerra Fria, de oposições binárias inflexíveis entre nacional e estrangeiro, os Estados Unidos reforçaram a sua ideologia de liberdade política e de ação, colocando-as em claro contraste com os valores de coerção e uniformidade associados à antiga União Soviética. Contudo, a atual rivalidade norte-americana com a China é, de longe, menos suscetível ao que Alan Nadel (1995) chamou "contenção cultural", uma vez que envolve uma desestabilização interna do bem-estar económico nacional pela forma como as multinacionais deslocam a sua produção para centros asiáticos onde os salários são baixos e os lucros altos, levando a que trabalhadores americanos sejam despedidos. A mobilidade de capital transnacional põe em causa a lógica da empregabilidade nacional. No seu livro de 2006, *The Audacity of Hope*, o próprio Barack Obama admitiu sentir nostalgia pelos velhos encantos de uma América que anseia por ordem: "the pleasures I still get from watching a well-played baseball game, or my wife gets from watching reruns of the *Dick Van Dyke Show*" (31). Contudo, admitiu também que, cada vez mais, estes sonhos de um espaço doméstico bem preservado e regulado acabam por ser frustrados por questões complicadas da tecnologia global, com o "debate da imigração" a representar, fundamentalmente, nas palavras de Obama, mais um exemplo de perda de soberania: "Not a loss of jobs but a loss of sovereignty,

just one more example — like September 11, avian flu, computer viruses, and factories moving to China — that America seems unable to control its own destiny" (264). Assim, os americanos descobrem que têm uma noção desconfortável de mundo às avessas, aquilo a que Obama chamou "their world turned upside down". Face àquilo que aqui descreveu como desafios das ameaças transnacionais (*challenges of transnational threats*, 290), Obama desenvolveu durante o seu governo uma política pública de "abertura à mudança" (*openness to change*, 292), em que tentou convencer os americanos de que as suas economias liberais com base nas leis de mercado representam a melhor oportunidade de uma vida melhor, não apenas para si próprios, mas para todos, i.e., "people around the world" (316). Mas este era claramente um desafio difícil, e o livro de Obama citava Robert Rubin, Secretário do Tesouro dos E.U.A. na administração de Bill Clinton, no sentido de não ser líquida a manutenção da qualidade de vida americana: "to avoid a long-term decline in U.S. living standards if we opened ourselves up entirely to competition with much cheaper labor around the world [is] a complicated question" (cit. *in* Obama 174). Isto não é exatamente um voto claro de confiança na capacidade, por parte dos Estados Unidos, de triunfar em todas as frentes numa nova ordem mundial.

Esta crise nas fronteiras que tem sido suscitada principalmente pela disseminação em larga escala de novas tecnologias da comunicação não devia, creio, ser encarada com qualquer surpresa pelos académicos que acompanharam a forma como os Estudos Americanos lutaram contra diversos espetros da internacionalização durante os últimos vinte anos. É importante reconhecer até que ponto o Brexit, Trump e fenómenos semelhantes são motivados por intensas preocupações populares sobre o impacto da globalização no dia-a-dia das pessoas. "We have to bring jobs back from places like China, Japan, and Mexico", escreveu Trump no seu livro de 2015, *Crippled America*, dizendo em seguida que a América precisa de reaver os empregos para os seus (87). É fácil reconhecer o etnocentrismo destas reações, o seu aparente desprezo por outros centros de gravidade mundiais, e é também verdade que, tal como ressalvou a campanha presidencial do Partido Democrata, com o imenso lucro que as suas empresas fizeram no estrangeiro, não deixava de ser curioso que Trump se queixasse de *outsourcing*. De facto, Trump era um candidato curioso sob vários aspetos, e é crucial que nós, enquanto especialistas de Estudos Americanos

sejamos capazes de compreender o apelo emocional do tipo de discurso que Trump fez na Convenção Nacional Republicana em julho de 2015, quando declarou: "Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo".

No encontro *Institute of World Literature* que teve lugar no verão passado em Harvard, houve uma discussão informal ao jantar sobre o Brexit, ao qual, como seria de esperar, o corpo docente se opunha de modo acérrimo, com um dos seus membros a sugerir que uma mudança constitucional tão fundamental só deveria ter entrado em vigor caso tivesse uma maioria de dois terços, e não uma vitória por 52-48 como sucedeu, ainda que, sendo a demografia dos votantes de 26 milhões de eleitores uma diferença de 4% em favor da maioria, esta represente um mandato popular de cerca de 1 milhão de eleitores. Não quero com isto, naturalmente, expressar qualquer simpatia política para com o Brexit, até porque usei o meu voto por correspondência a partir da Austrália a favor da manutenção do Reino Unido na União Europeia. Contudo, é grande o meu desconforto face à noção de que os votos de alguns devam, na prática, valer menos do que os de outros, ou de que um referendo popular deva ser objeto da manipulação de autoridades burocráticas no interesse de uma espécie de sabedoria suprema de "especialistas e elites". De facto, a noção de que um determinado grupo de pessoas deva valer três quintos de outro, é um caminho que as nações ocidentais já percorreram no passado, com resultados muito infelizes; foi, como é sabido, de três quintos o compromisso que se alcançou entre os estados do sul e do norte durante a *Constitutional Convention* dos EUA de 1787, relativamente à questão de como, para fins legislativos, deveriam ser contados os escravos aquando da determinação da população total de um estado. Entre os diferentes tipos de economias de mercado transnacionais, é essencial não transferirmos para as classes as formas de discriminação que antes se reservavam para as raças. Nesse sentido, o apelo da filósofa política Nancy Fraser por uma "paridade de participação" (*parity of participation*) no tocante à globalização, envolvendo o desmantelamento de obstáculos institucionais que impedem a participação igualitária de todos na vida social, surge como um imperativo ao qual todos os líderes mundiais têm de responder urgentemente (289).

Fraser analisou uma mudança de paradigma na qual o enquadramento territorial da nação enquanto entidade administrativa autónoma já não pode ser dado como adquirido, e, por conseguinte, na qual "as exigências de demo-

cratização meta-política" (*demands for meta-political democratization*) envolveram a necessidade de as elites políticas formularem argumentos para a imposição de determinados valores por si adotados, que antes se consideravam sinónimos dos interesses do estado. Tal disjunção carrega uma ressonância particular num mundo no qual o princípio da representação, tanto filosófico como político, foi distorcido (Fraser 189). Assim como as classes trabalhadoras marginalizadas deixaram de confiar nos líderes nacionais para representarem adequadamente os seus interesses, também o próprio princípio da representação democrática, que envolve uma afinidade muito próxima entre uma localidade geográfica específica e a priorização de determinados interesses, tem vindo a desaparecer. Numa altura em que as dificuldades e provações, sejam elas económicas ou ambientais, derivam, provavelmente, mais de uma condição planetária do que de proximidade, a questão de como alinhar a demarcação do espaço com qualquer enquadramento legal ou jurídico tornou-se extremamente problemática.

Em vez de identificar aquilo que Donald Pease (2009) descreveu como a imposição de um modo de excecionalidade americana a todo o mundo, no interesse de prolongar um estado de emergência permanente, quero aqui sugerir uma proposta contrária, mas de certa forma, complementar, relativa aos modos como as fronteiras dos E.U.A. se dissolveram de tal maneira que se fundiram completamente num *continuum* planetário. Tal como sucede com o fenómeno Donald Trump, estes dois movimentos opostos estão paradoxalmente interligados; assim como o protecionismo reacionário de Trump ganhou popularidade com a crescente fluidez das fronteiras globais, também o conceito de Pease de um estado imperial de excecionalidade americana pode ser entendido como uma resposta a um mundo multidimensional no qual o aparato do poder unipolar deixa de ser válido.

Na sequência da discussão das "correntes globais" de Appadurai (37), o enquadramento que quero aqui considerar é o do Antropoceno, que se tornou, naturalmente, proeminente no discurso das Humanidades nos últimos anos. O ambientalismo, como notou Frederick Buell em 2001, foi um dos fatores principais da globalização, ainda que durante os anos 90 não lhe tenha sido prestada a devida atenção, dada a ênfase no pós-modernismo enquanto manifestação de cosmopolitismo multicultural e de uma "lógica cultural do capitalismo tardio" (*cultural logic of late*

*capitalism*) (48-49). Por outras palavras, o ambientalismo e o transnacionalismo tornaram-se pontos de referência fundamentais na passagem para o século XXI, mesmo para aqueles, como Trump, que se opuseram veementemente às suas premissas. Conforme observado por Timothy S. Murphy: "Counter-globalization should be our horizon of expectation for the culture of globalization as well" (24). Ursula K. Heise resumiu a premissa do Antropoceno a uma era na qual os humanos, funcionando como uma nova forma geológica, transformam as estruturas básicas do planeta, e assim, o termo — cunhado em 2000 pelo cientista Paul Crutzen — tornou-se atualmente uma forma abreviada para denotar a compreensão de que todos os habitantes do planeta Terra devem ser vistos como mutuamente envolvidos numa formação ecológica comum que transpõe fronteiras nacionais (Heise 451). Isto é passível de se entender como um desenvolvimento das importantes práticas de transnacionalização que emergiram na última década do século XX, e não será por coincidência que muitos dos estudiosos empenhados em abordagens ecológicas do tema tenham eles próprios uma relação intelectual oblíqua ou híbrida com a academia dos E.U.A. Heise estudou na Universidade de Colónia antes de ir para a Califórnia; Wai Chee Dimock, organizadora do volume *Shades of the Planet* (2007), que foi influente nesta área, nasceu em Hong Kong e ensina agora em Yale, embora a sua noção de "tempo profundo" (*deep time*) tenha algumas afinidades com versões chinesas da temporalidade; Dipesh Chakrabarty, autor de um importante trabalho teórico sobre o conceito de alterações climáticas, nasceu na Índia e estudou na Austrália antes de se mudar para a Universidade de Chicago, sendo que um dos seus primeiros livros, *Provincializing Europe* (2000), abordava uma descentralização das perspetivas ocidentais tradicionais do ponto de vista geográfico e conceptual.

No seu artigo "Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change", Chakrabarty defende o seguinte: "The current conjuncture of globalization and global warming leaves us with the challenge of having to think of human agency over multiple and incommensurable scales at once". Este problema de "escalas incomensuráveis" representa, por sua vez, determinados problemas epistemológicos para uma disciplina baseada numa área específica, como os Estudos Americanos cujos modelos de resistência e agência políticas dependem, pela sua tradição, de uma delimitação específica de fronteiras territoriais (1). É este modelo de delimitação que facilita

a inclusão de diversas comunidades dentro de uma estrutura quase familiar, como se o mundo dos Estudos Americanos e, potencialmente, os próprios Estados Unidos, fossem uma comunidade alargada, capaz de abraçar a diferença num enquadramento bem estabelecido de *e pluribus unum*.

Houve, evidentemente, tentativas de acomodar algumas intervenções ambientalistas recentes dentro das mais familiares dinâmicas de oposição radicais que têm caracterizado o mundo dos Estudos Americanos, como, por exemplo, no trabalho de Sabine Wilke, na Universidade de Washington, que descreveu o Antropoceno com estas palavras: "A serious challenge to the basic axioms of Western metaphysics" (67). Wilke defendeu que, num modelo antropocénico, "all relations between humans and non-humans unfold within the realm of interconnectivity" (68) — dentro de uma visão ontológica centrada no objeto (*object-oriented ontology*, *idem*) em que o modelo kantiano de dualismo intelectual se torna redundante. Porém, tal apropriação política do ambiente planetário — Wilke enfatiza a necessidade de um enquadramento normativo de justiça ambiental global (72) — arrisca-se a ignorar os aspetos mais impenetráveis do Antropoceno, o facto de ser muito difícil conceptualizá-lo ou analisá-lo de uma forma transparente. No seu livro mais recente *The Birth of the Anthropocene*, Jeremy Davies, professor no Departamento de Inglês da Universidade de Leeds, falou do paradoxo retórico segundo o qual o Antropoceno dos geólogos não é propriamente um conceito antropocénico. Por outras palavras, a ideia de que as alterações climáticas são criadas pelos seres humanos — etimologicamente, "antropoceno" sugere fabrico humano, como em antropomórfico — interage mal com a noção, muito mais plausível, de que podemos definir este tempo através de instrumentos científicos humanos. Como afirma Davies, o Antropoceno, intelectualmente, é algo que só é possível datar corretamente em retrospetiva, à imagem daquilo que acontece com o Holoceno, com a idade do Fanerozoico e assim por diante. O facto de inúmeras datas terem sido propostas como ponto de partida do Antropoceno reforça esta sensação de obscuridade: uns sugeriram 1492, quando Colombo descobriu a América; outros preferiram apontar para o aparecimento de regimes europeus capitalistas e para o capitalismo do comércio global de mercadorias nos séculos XV e XVI; outros, ainda, sugeriram que a fronteira deveria ser traçada muito mais recentemente: no primeiro teste nuclear do Manhattan Project em 1945

ou durante o ano da Guerra Fria de 1952, depois da cinza nuclear de plutónio, em consequência do primeiro teste de um dispositivo termonuclear de grande escala nas Ilhas Marshall. Tudo isto reforça a tese de Davies de que é quase impossível correlacionar uma escala temporal tão extensa com perspetivas históricas contemporâneas, devido às diferentes escalas envolvidas. Se traçarmos a rutura de Ganduana — de longe o maior continente do início da Idade Fanerozoica — na atual formação da crosta continental, podemos ver que, de acordo com os geólogos, foi Ganduana que se fragmentou, formando a América do Sul, a África, a Índia e o bloco Austrália-Antártica, há algumas centenas de milhões de anos. Mas a tese de Davies é a de que é prematuro tentar inscrever o Antropoceno em qualquer tipo de tabela cronostratigráfica, uma vez que ainda não temos certezas sobre este período, e podem ser necessárias ainda mais centenas de milhões de anos até que possamos — nós, ou talvez os descendentes dos académicos, se ainda os houver —adotar uma perspetiva mais criteriosa. Aquilo que quero deixar bem claro é que a Tabela Cronostratigráfica Internacional é já muito antiga, com as suas escalas geológicas calculadas em milhões de anos, não se coadunando propriamente com a política ambiental das alterações climáticas, cujos horizontes conceptuais e temporais são, necessariamente, muito mais limitados (Davies 76, 89-90, 93-104).

Em 2017, resta-nos, então, não uma verdade científica ou um manifesto político, mas uma mera hipótese, uma forma potencialmente produtiva, mas controversa, de compreender a relação entre a civilização humana e o seu ambiente planetário. Esta teoria do Antropoceno deveria ser entendida como uma categoria heurística e não passível de ser empiricamente comprovada, permitindo-nos ainda assim correlacionar as condições contemporâneas com o tempo profundo e com uma escala temporal e espacial de distâncias radicais. Como escreveu Shital Pravinchandra, a crítica ambiental recente contribuiu para provocar a quebra de barreiras numa série de disciplinas intelectuais, colocando as Humanidades em diálogo com as ciências naturais, sem deixar de ter em conta o pensamento em termos da espécie *(species thinking*[4]), juntamente com o papel da

[4] *Species thinking* é um termo cunhado pelo historiador social Dipesh Chakrabarty para caracterizar uma consciência analítica que toma a espécie (humana, mas não só) como objeto, não apenas como existência aceite. (*N. dos Ed.*)

neurociência e da biomedicina, assim como o da ecologia, os quais se têm vindo a imiscuir com uma consciência liberal mais tradicional (ver Pravinchandra, "One Species"). Contribuiu ainda para aquilo a que Michelle Burnham chamou "oceanic turns" (viragens oceânicas) nos Estudos Americanos, juntamente com a noção sugerida por Monique Allewaert de uma América do Norte constitucionalmente coerente que compete com um continente em dissolução, "a liquefying natural world" (341). Esta nova consciência do mundo, por sua vez, assistiu à mudança da Antártica, de um lugar periférico no mapa, para o centro, à medida que o enfoque no degelo das calotas polares leva a que as relações entre as diferentes partes geográficas do planeta sejam integrais, e não marginais, às preocupações dos estudos de área (veja-se, a este respeito, Blum, "John Cleves Symmes"). O mapa da figura 1 mostra como a forma do planeta muda quando visto da perspetiva do Polo Sul; mais, torna-se claro como a ponta da América do Sul fica perto da Antártica, e é hoje estranho pensar que até à construção do caminho de ferro transcontinental dos E.U.A.,

Figura 1. Mapa do mundo centrado na Antártica

na década de 60 do século XIX, a mercadoria que era transportada de Nova Iorque para São Francisco tinha de dar a volta pelo Cabo Horn, na ponta da América do Sul. A Austrália e outras partes do Hemisfério Sul tornaram-se também mais visíveis em termos conceptuais neste domínio planetário; na sua obra *A Reef in Time*, o historiador ecologista australiano J. E. N. Veron parte de um enfoque na Grande Barreira Coral para escrutinar, criticamente, a prática segundo a qual se descrevem com os mesmos termos enquadramentos biológico, evolucionário e geológico, defendendo que esta visão "míope", como lhe chama, levou, tanto a uma "confusão" conceptual, como a uma incapacidade de implementar políticas corretivas para enfrentar as alterações climáticas em escalas temporais mais abrangentes (222). Este é um exemplo da ala mais ativista da política ambiental, comparativamente à abordagem de Davies, cuja maior preocupação é a análise desconstrutivista das conceções do Antropoceno; não obstante, por aqui se percebe que o modelo dos estudos de área da Guerra Fria, implicando a divisão do mundo em regiões distintas e formações nacionais, foi agora substituído por um modelo do Antropoceno no qual as relações de reciprocidade se tornaram mais cruciais. Esta evolução deveu-se não a uma qualquer generosidade particular dos Estados Unidos ou da Europa Ocidental, mas porque, quer as novas tecnologias, quer as estruturas ecológicas e ambientais do planeta, exigirem agora diferentes formações intelectuais.

É importante reconhecer que estas perspetivas planetárias estiveram sempre implícitas na literatura americana ao longo dos séculos dezanove e vinte, e que o atual interesse crítico nos temas planetários mais não faz do que recuperar um discurso que antes terá sido ofuscado pelas orientações mais domésticas do Novo Historicismo, cuja crítica privilegiava o modo como questões de raça e género se manifestavam num contexto nacional. A relação conturbada entre *homeland* e planeta foi explorada de diversas formas durante o século dezanove por Edgar Allan Poe, cuja escrita nunca encaixou adequadamente no paradigma nacionalista dos E.U.A. Apesar de sensível a alguns aspetos da agenda patriótica do movimento *Young America* nos anos 40 do século XIX, Poe expressou um ceticismo evidente relativamente à sua parcialidade para com os cidadãos nacionais: propensão para, segundo ele, "toadying Americans & abusing foreigners right or wrong" (Widmer 108). Do mesmo modo, o apoio entusiástico de Poe à Expedição Exploratória dos E.U.A. que partiu para cartografar o Oceano

Figura 2. Mapa da viagem marítima em *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* de Edgar Allan Poe

Pacifico em 1838, sob o comando de Charles Wilkes, decorreu tanto do seu investimento em reconceptualizar o mundo segundo um ponto de vista alternativo, como do seu interesse intelectual pela ciência. Em *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, publicado, não por acaso, no mesmo ano da partida da expedição de Wilkes, Poe projeta a viagem do seu navio, a sul, percorrendo, segundo o narrador, "the wide and desert Antartic Ocean" (234) — sinal da dissolução do mundo familiar (figura 2). A imagética de "fissura" (*fissure*) e "abismo" (*chasm*), que cobria esta desolada paisagem dos mares do Sul, indica um estado de desorientação através do qual aquilo que o narrador descreve como fenómenos invulgares, endémicos a uma região fascinante ("a region of novelty and wonder", 236) se justapõe a visões mais normativas. Eis o relato de Poe:

> A sullen darkness now hovered above us, but from out the milky depths of the ocean a luminous glare arose, and stole up along the bulwark of the boat. We were nearly overheaded by the white ashy shower which settled upon us and upon the canoe, but melted into the water as it fell. (238)

Por um lado, esta é uma representação típica do romance gótico em Poe, uma cena de alteridade que deriva de um mundo de fantasia. A invocação de Poe de uma imaculada brancura de neve ("the perfect whiteness of

the snow", 239) confere, por outro lado, uma especificidade geoespacial distinta a esta viagem, algo que vai ao encontro do interesse do autor pelo modo  como a vista da Antártica transpõe as coordenadas planetárias, e do seu correspondente ceticismo em relação à própria noção de segurança nacional.

Também na obra de Melville, *Moby Dick*, a lógica da viagem de Pequod passa, em parte, por ir muito a sul do Equador (figura 3), com a referência de Melville, no capítulo 44 do romance, ao "Tenente Maury" (199), do Observatório Nacional em Washington, um importante hidrógrafo americano da altura, cujo livro *The Physical Geography of the Sea* (1855) influenciou fortemente a direção das rotas marítimas comerciais. Nesta obra, Maury apontou que a circulação das correntes do oceano sul era de natureza diferente — "broad and sluggish" — das mais estreitas e rápidas correntes do norte — "narrow, sharp, and strong currents of the north" (72). Lançou ainda a sugestão de que o mundo poderia ser, convenientemente, repartido: "be divided into hemispheres, consisting, the one with almost all the land in it, except Australia and a slip of America lying south of a line drawn from the Desert of Atacama to Uruguay (...) [the other] an aquous hemisphere, [containing] all the great waters except the Antlantic Ocean, (...) [with] New Zealand (...) the nearest land to its centre" (27-28). Para Maury, tal assimetria global era prova de um plano divino no qual o Hemisfério Sul teria sido deixado de fora do esquema original, como inerentemente subordinado ao Norte, sendo o primeiro comparado a uma "caldeira" (*the boiler*) e o segundo a um "o condensador da máquina a vapor" (*the condenser of the steam-engine*).

Embora tais afirmações possam agora parecer bizarras, esta visão providencial das circunstâncias físicas da Terra, uma espécie de versão cósmica do Destino Manifesto, era relativamente banal por volta de 1850, sendo uma ideia partilhada por, entre outros, o amigo de Maury, o eminente geógrafo de Princeton, Arnold Guyot, cujo famoso livro *The Earh and Man* foi publicado em 1850. A estratégia usada por Melville no seu livro de 1851, *Moby Dick*, passa, contudo, por questionar, de forma deliberada, as afirmações de Maury, invertendo-as, com a associação de metáforas de inversão a perspetivas, assim como a localizações geográficas específicas, como quando a morte é descrita nestes termos: "the great South Sea of the other world" (444). Melville usou os seus rendimentos de direitos

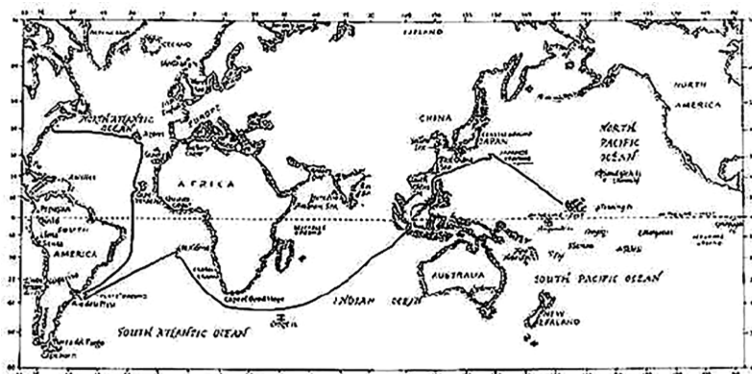


Figura 3. A Viagem de *Pequod* em *Moby Dick*, de Herman Melville

de autor de *Typee* para, em 1847, comprar os seis volumes de Charles Wilkes intitulados *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, publicados em 1845, e os seus romances seguintes baseiam-se muito na investigação científica de Wilkes sobre o Oceano Pacífico no Hemisfério Sul. Wilkes afirmou ter "descoberto" o continente da Antártica e, mesmo tendo em conta a sua predisposição para exageros, é incontestável que a sua expedição ajudou a colocar a Antártica no mapa, no sentido literal e metafórico.

A Antártica ganhou, novamente, maior visibilidade nos estudos sobre o Antropoceno. Neste mundo de degelo Antártico, segundo Ian Baucom defendeu em 2014, o "novo método" de história tem como condicionante uma ameaça de extinção, não permitindo mais uma ordem "to orient us toward a future measured against the promise of freedom, but instead (...) a future marked by the threat of extinction" (140). É aqui que o trabalho ambiental entra em colisão com a tradicional ênfase dos Estudos Americanos naquilo a que Brook Thomas chamou "narrativa de emergência progressiva" (*narrative of progressive emergency*), na qual os grupos marginalizados — afro-americanos, hispânicos, a comunidade *gay* e lésbica, entre outros — lutaram pelo reconhecimento pleno e a inserção no domínio privilegiado da liberdade americana (32).

Embora tal modelo de emergência progressiva não se coadune com o imaginário antropocénico, o facto é que clarifica, em retrospetiva, o papel dos indígenas americanos na formação da consciência nacional dos E.U.A.

Em *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau menciona as pontas de seta que desencantou ao arar a terra, deduzindo daí: "an extinct nation had anciently dwelt here" (156); tal correlação entre nação e extinção, a forma como determinadas comunidades enfrentam a ameaça da extinção, é um tema recorrente no trabalho de Thoreau e de outros escritores americanos. Por outras palavras, podemos dizer que a situação dos Estados Unidos no século XXI, vivendo não tanto com a promessa da liberdade, mas sob ameaça permanente de extinção, os aproxima teoricamente do país dos indígenas americanos, no qual as ameaças de deslocação e de desterritorialização de comunidades nacionais há muito pairam, e desta perspetiva podemos reconhecer, de uma maneira mais clara, pontos comuns entre os indígenas americanos e os Estudos Americanos. Embora as metáforas religiosas do apocalipse sejam há muito uma característica familiar da literatura e da cultura americanas, a retórica da extinção, implicando não tanto uma apoteose ou transcendência espiritual, mas uma integração da civilização ocidental com os ciclos naturais da Terra, revelou-se um fenómeno, de certa maneira, menos comum.[5] Contudo, os diferentes pontos de vista espácio-temporais abordados pela rubrica intelectual do Antropoceno podem ser úteis na reconceptualização de *American homeland* (pátria, nação, território americano, etc.) dentro de um outro tipo de espaço discursivo.

Joshua David Bellin comentou a forma como os críticos tenderam a ignorar o papel "determinante" dos índios, não só na literatura indígena americana, *per se,* mas na literatura americana em geral. Bellin traçou o percurso deste tema, que trata como uma questão de "interdependência "intelectual", em autores como Thoreau, Benjamin Franklin, Catharine Sedgwick, entre outros, cujas reflexões se cruzam, de modos curiosos, com as reflexões de escritores indígenas americanos como Samson Occom, o membro da nação Mohegan que, no século XVIII se tornou padre presbiteriano (Bellin, 2, 98). No seu livro de 1827, *Hope Leslie*, Catharine Sedgwick contrapõe as narrativas de conversão associadas aos colonizadores do século XVII com uma sensação de contrariedade e contradição que deriva, em parte, do anacronismo estrutural no qual o romance, que decorre 200 anos antes, contradiz, implicitamente, modelos lineares de história,

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[5] Sobre a propensão apocalíptica, ver Levine, "American Studies in the Age of Extinction".

enfatizando, ao invés, a qualidade ficcional da narrativa histórica, dissolvendo assim, antíteses entre a história dos Índios e do colonizador branco. De facto, todo o romance de Sedgwick se baseia num estilo de anacronismo duplo, através do qual a reformulação retroativa da história dos brancos se torna proporcional à *longue durée* da história dos indígenas, que por sua vez é apenas acessível de forma parcial através de fragmentos retóricos. Como notou Jeffrey Insko num interessante ensaio sobre o romance de Sedgwick, a narrativa alcança eficazmente níveis de significação em dois "registos temporais" distintos, baseando-se, ao longo do texto, em interseções cómicas que se sobrepõem às categorias temporais convencionais (189). Sábado à noite é descrito como uma "má altura para temporalidades" ("wrong season for temporalities", 192), por uma das personagens puritanas, por exemplo, enquanto Sir Philip Gardiner, disfarçado de puritano, se queixa em voz alta da perspetiva de "transgredir o tempo sagrado" ("trespassing on holy time", 202), de uma forma que, imagina ele, lhe granjeará o respeito dessa comunidade da Nova Inglaterra. A questão aqui é que isto é, precisamente, o que o romance faz, transgredir o tempo sagrado, ou melhor, reconfigurar a variação temporal como um aspeto da diferença cultural, contemplando, assim, formas de projeção do tempo e do espaço como medidas variáveis, isto é, como as diferentes comunidades recriam os seus modelos de tempo sagrado. Dana Luciano desenvolveu, recentemente, uma importante investigação acerca da proliferação de temporalidades na cultura americana do século XIX, e da ausência de futuridade geralmente associada à cultura indígena americana, a sua putativa rejeição da teologia linear ou progressiva. Em vez disso, Luciano defendeu a necessidade de enfatizar a historicidade do tempo em si, uma área na qual, como sugeriu em 2007, o Novo Historicismo ainda não se atrevera a penetrar (286). Também Helen Carr escreveu, de forma perspicaz, sobre a curiosa modulação segundo a qual a ideia do indígena deixou de ser um símbolo dos Estados Unidos, no século XVIII (conforme podemos encontrar na carta de Benjamin Franklin de 1751 sobre como a Liga Iroquesa poderia representar um modelo para a constituição americana) para passar a representar, no século XIX, tudo o que os americanos não eram (8). Parece-me que um diferente tipo de ênfase antropocénica na perspetiva da extinção, e na questão de como a cultura dos E.U.A se relaciona com escalas temporais radicalmente distintas, oferece uma oportunidade de encontrar

formas de entender os Estudos Americanos como tendo tido sempre uma relação mais contingente do que necessária com determinadas fronteiras espaciais e temporais, através das quais o tempo anglo-americano padrão se desapega da sua rotina regularizada, sendo que a justaposição entre culturas europeia e indígena cria, como no romance de Sedgwick, justaposições temporais desconcertantes. De facto, o tema do simpósio que deu origem a esta comunicação, "Home_Lands and the Borders of America", pode ser entendido em relação às fronteiras dos Estudos Americanos, uma vez que o que aqui está em jogo é a problemática circunscrição do assunto. A questão de como as fronteiras americanas (tanto espaciais como temporais) mudam quando são vistas de fora para dentro, e não de dentro para fora, é uma questão chave para a América e para os Estudos Americanos no século XXI.

Este novo tipo de modelo teórico envolve uma extensão do enquadramento espacial e transnacional naquilo que chamo o trans-temporal, onde o movimento que ultrapassa as fronteiras nacionais envolve a transgressão das fronteiras de tempo e de espaço. No seu recente ensaio "Melville and Pacific Perspectives", Melissa Gniadek ligou a ideia de ler Melville a partir de uma diferente situação geográfica na Nova Zelândia à experiência de estar rodeado de baleias reais e de testemunhar aquilo que referiu nestes termos: "the intensity and intimacy of the moment as the bulk of the whale surfaced near the whaleboat" (315). Ela relacionou este tipo de leitura fenomenológica com um desvio de interpretações mais abstratas e universalistas, um desvio compatível com o tipo de posicionamento móvel e desmistificação de autoridade centralizada a que a própria ficção de Melville convida. Gniadek, pertinentemente, observou que um texto como *Benito Cereno*, por exemplo, é sobre "reading and the places that we read from" (324-325). Assim, o texto de Melville torna-se, não só numa alegoria doméstica da escravidão, como sucede na interpretação do Novo Historicismo, mas numa exploração do poder do mar e, de um modo geral, da relação entre a terra firme e o oceano aquoso. Este reconhecimento de como as práticas de leitura, e, de facto, as práticas de interpretação cultural em geral, se interligam com os sistemas de poder permite-nos reconstituir as *homelands* e as fronteiras da América na era do Antropoceno graças às formações espácio-temporais inversas, um mundo virado do avesso do ponto de vista geográfico e epistemológico (Gniadek 322). Este é o tipo

Figura 4. Fiona Hall, *Wrong Way Time* (2014). Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

de leitura além-fronteiras a que a ficção de Poe e de Melville convida, mas é também uma perspetiva crítica que, em geral, tem sido reprimida pelos contornos nacionalistas dos Estudos Americanos, que tendem a circunscrever as narrativas planetárias a uma circunferência doméstica.

Foi precisamente a este tipo de formações espácio-temporais inversas que a artista conceptual australiana Fiona Hall deu expressão visual na sua instalação de 2014, *Wrong Way Time*. A exposição de Hall, que esteve na Bienal de Veneza, consistia numa série de obras visuais concebidas especificamente para desafiar as convenções sobre a temporalidade. O vidro de um dos relógios em destaque estava tapado por uma seta em U, em sentido anti-horário, pintada a vermelho sobre os anéis de crescimento de uma árvore, como que a exemplificar as disjunções entre as medidas humanas e o tempo da natureza, e, tal como referiu a curadora da exposição, Linda Michael, uma sensação de que estamos perto do fim do antropocentrismo (27). O conceito de tempo a mover-se no "sentido errado" de Hall pode ser visto como uma crítica às práticas globais na política e nas finanças,

uma sensação de estarmos "a andar para trás", numa era à qual David Hansen, num ensaio sobre Hall, chamou "ecocídio planetário" (*planetary ecocide*, 46); mas, como reconheceu Michael, em Hall esta ideia está também relacionada com o "potencial de transformação" (*potential for transformation*), uma capacidade imaginativa para reordenar o mundo material abordando-o de uma perspetiva anti-horária e questionando assim as normas da sequência progressiva (Michael 28). Hall sublinhou que *Wrong Way Time* se centrava numa visão globalizante do mundo, e a exposição incluía muitas intercalações ornamentais de relógios com crânios, juntamente com uma ênfase contínua na inversão, tal como exemplificado pela legenda omissa gravada no estojo de um relógio: "Endings are the new beg", estando truncada a palavra "princípios", i.e., princípios (ver Zeccola, online). Outra obra desta exposição, *Kuka irititja (Animals from another time)*, era composta por modelos criados a partir de ervas indígenas e outros materiais oriundos de criaturas extintas e ameaçadas retiradas do deserto australiano, construídos por Hall em colaboração com os "tecelões do deserto", Tjanpi Desert Weavers (figura 5). Estes modelos empalhados foram envoltos em camadas de tecido camuflado militar, de modo a registar os efeitos nocivos da colonização britânica e, em particular, dos testes nucleares feitos em Maralinga nos anos 50, no frágil ecossistema desértico e na vida da sua população aborígene (ver Michael 30). Hall referiu a estranheza da sua exposição como "quirkness and humor", uma *mise-en-abîme* de humor negro em que os animais falsos aparentam usar uma veste camuflada, um modo de vestir cujo principio é, precisamente, fornecer uma aparência semelhante à da natureza, permitindo aos soldados fundir-se com o meio envolvente (in Zeccola, online).

A obra de Hall, *Wrong Way Time*, carrega múltiplas ressonâncias que implicam não só as direções erradas do tempo, mas também as direções nas quais qualquer tentativa para reconstituir o passado envolve, necessariamente, um estilo reflexivo de anacronismo e reversão. Isto é consistente com o estilo reflexivo de anacronismo e reversão em *Hope Leslie*, de Sedgwick, e, na verdade, com a própria natureza problemática da representação da cultura global indígena, que envolve questões de erros de tradução e de pertença híbrida a diferentes espaços discursivos. Tal como Hall trabalha com a cultura aborígene australiana e dela extrapola uma perspetiva radicalmente diferente sobre o tempo ocidental, também a

Figure 5. Fiona Hall, *Kuka irititja (Animals from another time)* (2014). Cortesia de Roslyn Oxley Gallery, Sidney.

cultura nativa americana se integra no Antropoceno para ser reconhecida como parte constitutiva do domínio americano em geral, da mesma forma que os próprios Estados Unidos devem ser vistos como uma parte constitutiva, se bem que por vezes relutante, de uma orbita planetária mais ampla. A noção de *homeland* tem invariavelmente uma dimensão negativa ou inversa: a pátria, ou lar/terra natal, de outrora. Há, assim, um aspeto elegíaco inerente ao termo, uma vez que implica uma entidade protegida que somente pode ser reclamada pela nostalgia, ou que está sempre prestes a perder-se. Quando a administração de George W. Bush transformou a ideia de lar (*home*) na construção mais formalizada de "segurança interna" (*homeland security*), paradoxalmente, chamou a atenção para a vulnerabilidade de um espaço que, durante a maior parte do século XX, se constituiu como domínio naturalizado, tomado como garantido pelos americanos brancos como seu direito de nascença. Traduzir *home* como *homeland* (pátria, nação, território nacional, etc.) é, por definição, tornar permeável o nosso lar, suscetível de ser infiltrado por agentes externos.

Na verdade, vários aspetos positivos decorrem de uma desconstrução das conceções de propriedade do território nacional, particularmente em relação a políticas de raça e de género, mas é precisamente a reação emocional contra tal sensação amorfa de deslocamento que levou ao sucesso das políticas reacionárias de Donald Trump, que são reacionárias no sentido mais estrito do termo, uma reação contra ansiedades cuja proveniência dificilmente pode ser racionalizada. Porém, tais trajetórias reativas extravasam de forma sintomática do domínio político para o académico, onde a tendência para aderir à tese excecional como base epistemológica de análise se tem feito sentir. Tão ou mais irracional do que o fenómeno Trump é, a meu ver, a tentativa de reivindicar os Estados Unidos como uma "nação redentora", como lhe chamou William V. Spanos, que se tem queixado da viragem para a globalização dos Novos Americanistas — "overdetermine the global perspetive at the expense of the local" — empenhando-se em reforçar a prerrogativa da exceção: "the mythic status of American exceptionalism — and the violence that it has disavowed" (xvi, xix). Spanos realça como uma visão calvinista providencial da história ainda influencia a psique nacional americana, o que não é, de todo, falso; considerar, no entanto, o que é "americano" como mero sinónimo de excecionalismo, da forma como Spanos o faz, é subestimar radicalmente todas as forças de materialismo geográfico e histórico que sempre procuraram circunscrever o cenário americano de exceção, tornando-se assim, desde o século XVII, um lugar de conflito intelectual e turbulência material em detrimento de um poder unilateral. A ecologia geográfica que sustenta os Estados Unidos não é jovem, há milhões de anos que o país mantém a mesma forma continental, mas os recentes estudos teóricos permitiram, e sem dúvida exigiram, que compreendêssemos a sua geografia sob uma nova luz, que reconhecêssemos como os Estados Unidos se relacionam com o mundo em vez de os aceitarmos como uma miragem resplandecente, na célebre expressão de John Winthrop em 1630, "a city upon a hill" (91). Tal como a autoridade de Winthrop foi ferozmente contestada por Thomas Morton e por outros que não reconheceram a sua narrativa de legitimidade bíblica durante a primeira metade do século XVII, também o mítico cenário de exceção americano foi desde sempre circunscrito por forças que trabalharam para refutar o sentido de poder centrípeto a que se arrogou. Tal como Israel, a Grã-Bretanha ou mesmo Portugal, os Estados Unidos não são, na verdade,

um estado providencial; todos são territórios políticos com fronteiras jurídicas e formas específicas de jurisdição nacional, historicamente determinadas, cujo peso sobre os assuntos planetários se tem gradualmente atenuado num mundo de proliferação nuclear, políticas económicas de *outsourcing* e aquecimento global.

Jurgen Habermas, no seu livro *The Postnational Constellation*, afirmou que ainda não apareceu o político com a ousadia de abordar o problema de como as políticas eleitorais poderão funcionar na era pós-nacional, face à preferência de todos os políticos, independentemente do seu partido, de reciclar o mito de que os assuntos complicados são suscetíveis de serem resolvidos dentro do domínio nacional:

> The diagnosis of social conflicts transforms itself into a list of just as many political challenges only if we attach a further premise to the egalitarian institutions of rational law: the assumption that the unified citizens of a democratic community are able to shape their own social environment and can develop the capacity for such interventions to succeed (...).The idea that one part of a democratic society is capable of a reflexive intervention into society as a whole has, until now, been realized only in the context of nation-states. Today, developments summarized under the term "globalization" have put this entire constellation into question. (60)

Seria preciso um político corajoso para admitir abertamente perante o eleitorado as limitações da sua jurisdição, apesar de me parecer que Obama esteve perto de assumir esta *persona* em várias ocasiões durante o seu segundo mandato, e é provável que esta seja uma das razões das fortes críticas às suas políticas. As verdades duras são sempre difíceis, e é por esta razão que os Estudos Americanos Internacionais continuarão a ser importantes, porque recusam, por uma questão de princípio, aceitar as narrativas tautológicas do excecionalismo dos Estados Unidos nos seus próprios termos. A reação emocional em defesa de um excecionalismo americano espetral que vemos entre apoiantes de Trump e em alguns académicos é semelhante a um investimento na retórica das construções fictícias de um país, o que de certa forma é bastante compreensível. A tarefa dos atuais Estudos Americanos Internacionais é a de compreender como as fronteiras dos Estados Unidos operam como ficções culturais, tendo, simultanea-

mente, uma existência muito mais problemática em relação à jurisdição global e às duras realidades da política internacional. O século XXI não é um mundo sem fronteiras, é, antes, um mundo em que a tensão entre espaço protegido e impulsos de desterritorialização atingiram um nível tal que desestabilizou radicalmente o quotidiano, e uma das tarefas dos investigadores de Estudos Americanos, em qualquer parte do mundo onde se encontrem, é a de analisar como estas ficções de *homelands* de fronteiras circulam tanto a nível estético como político.

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## Abstract

This essay will consider how the concepts of *homeland* and *homeland security* have been modulated in an era when environmental concerns for the state of the planet are increasingly emphasized. Paul Crutzen's notion of the *Anthropocene*, first articulated in 2000, suggests that all inhabitants of planet Earth should be seen as involved mutually in an ecological formation that crosses national borders, and this can be seen as a development from the critical practices of transnationalism that emerged in the last decade of the twentieth century. My paper will analyse ways in which such economic and environmental pressures have served increasingly to destabilize the traditional parameters of the nation state, and, drawing on Catharine Sedgwick's novel *Hope Leslie* (1827), I will trace affinities between current planetary conditions and the ways in which Native American settlers interacted with, and were largely overwhelmed by, white Puritan settlers in seventeenth-century Massachusetts Bay.



Keywords

American Studies; Anthropocene; Transnationalism



## Resumo

Este ensaio examinará a forma como os conceitos de *pátria* e *segurança da pátria* têm sido ajustados, numa época em que as preocupações ambientais relativas ao nosso planeta são cada mais evidentes. O conceito de *Antropoceno*, de Paul Crutzen, definido pela primeira vez em 2000, sugere-nos que todos os habitantes do planeta Terra devam ser vistos como mutuamente envolvidos numa formação ecológica que atravessa as fronteiras nacionais, e que tal possa ser entendido como um desenvolvimento da práxis crítica associada à ideia de Transnacionalismo que surgiu na última década do século vinte. Este texto analisará a forma como as pressões de ordem económica e ambiental têm servido cada vez mais para desestabilizar os parâmetros do estado-nação. A partir do romance de Catharine Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie* (1827), iremos identificar as afinidades existentes entre

as condições planetárias nos dias de hoje e o modo como as populações nativas do continente americano interagiram e ao mesmo tempo foram, em larga medida, subjugadas pelos colonos puritanos brancos, na Baía de Massachusetts, durante o século dezassete.

Palavras-Chave

Antropoceno; Estudos Americanos; Transnacionalismo

# Homeland (In)Security: A Racial House Called America

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# Homeland (In)Security: A Racial House Called America

"Homeland" became a catchphrase after 9/11, when George W. Bush created the Department of Homeland Security. Commenting on the concept's migration into the official national vocabulary, Josh Marshall remarks: "Implicit in the 'homeland' terminology is an imperial vision of America's role in the world," a word that, he adds, is "utterly alien to American English and foreign policy discussion" (Marshall). "Homeland" speaks of an overpowering concern with defence, which tends "to lock us down into a fortress America mind set with all the tendencies toward authoritarianism and militarism the posture brings with it" (Marshall). Along the same line, Leslie Savan writes in *The Nation*: "'Homeland' is more specific than 'America' — it encourages us to visualize ourselves getting bombed or buried under debris from falling office towers, to see America as a fortress that can and will be breached" (Savan). Barack Obama during his two terms was also a fan of the term to describe anti-terrorist measures and airstrikes against middle-eastern threats.

The vague contours of the concepts of "home" and "homeland" in this context demand our perusal. Michael Walzer in "What Does It Mean to Be an 'American'?" (2004) remarks that the United States is not a "homeland," a "*patrie*" (634), calling into question the meaning of a "common or communal home" for a country of immigrants for whom there are effectively "a multitude of fatherlands (and motherlands)" (634). His argument revises and reinforces Horace Kallen's in his famous essay at the beginning of the 20th century, "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot" (1915). Walzer is, like Kallen, referring to immigrants, for whom America as "home" may be problematic. What we find significant, however, is that

black people are but briefly mentioned by Kallen and utterly invisible throughout Walzer's overview.

Walzer is right when he underlines the fact that the *first* ones — the Anglos, although also immigrants — constitute the only group that is allowed to regard themselves as unquestionably "native": "[t]he term 'Native Americans' designates *the very first* immigrants, who got here centuries before any of the others. At what point do the rest of us, native grown, become natives?" (634; our emphasis). But he does not mention the indigenous populations of the New World, who are in fact the only ones entitled to claim that designation. Nor does he seem to be aware of Richard Wright's 1940 novel, *Native Son*. Had he been he might have felt compelled to formulate otherwise his considerations on Anglo-Americans as Natives. Africans preceded many other groups who came to America centuries later, but they were neither seen as immigrants, nor as Americans, since whiteness was the common feature of the on-going construction of the nation. The fact is that, although his main argument tackles citizenship and its (im)balance with ethnicity, Walzer never dwells on racial difference.

Primacy (in *the very first* immigrants) implies superiority and there have been several periods in American history when that sense of superiority has meant justification for exclusion in many forms. Anglo-Saxonism and white privilege rationalized the removal and extinction of Indians who resisted the civilizing politics of assimilation, and kept the Founding Fathers from rejecting the enslavement of black people; they also served from then on to inform nativist resistance to immigrants, especially if they were not white. For example, ideas of a superior American race identified with the Anglo-Saxon origin are present in the thoughts and writings of the imperialists of the 19th century (*cf.* Horsman 4-5; 301-2; Lens 149-292).[1] Significant in this regard is also the resurgence of nativism in the early 20th century[2] (*cf.* Higham 2000) — lately so visible again in the

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[1] We are referring to 19th-century authors like Josiah Strong (*Our Country*, 1885), Henry Cabot Lodge ("The Business World vs. the Politicians," 1895), or Albert Beveridge ("The March of the Flag," 1898).

[2] We are referring to figures like E. A. Ross ("American Blood and Immigrant Blood," 1914), or Madison Grant (*The Passing of the Great Race*, 1916).

Tea Party movement (although they would rather regard themselves as "Patriots"), or in Donald Trump's politics;[3] or still the restrictions to immigration, such as the 1921 Emergency Immigration Act (significantly named the National Origins Formula), which explicitly sought to maintain the appropriate racial and ethnic balance (meaning Caucasian) of the U.S. population (*cf.* Jacobson, 1st section). It worked by restricting the entrance into the country of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, or other non-European countries, being its principle re-enacted in the recent political measures of Trump's presidency.

The current Administration is using the kind of rhetoric and the type of policy that has characterized those moments of intolerance and discrimination in American history: the two executive orders recently signed by President Donald Trump at the Department of Homeland Security reinforce the militarization of the United States-Mexican border, his discourse on illegal immigrants generally depicts them as criminals. Aviva Chomsky in her 2014 book, *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal* complicates the meaning of "illegality" when referred to immigrants. Starting with the obvious notion that laws are made and enforced by humans, she underlines the fact that laws serve the interests of some groups in society, the privileged and powerful ones (1). As she also remarks, a large part of the population of the U.S. were illegal immigrants, before the concept of "illegality" had even been invented, which occurred only after 1965. By that time the demonization of immigrants particularly targeted Mexicans and Latinos. In an interview about her book's publication, Aviva Chomsky links the interests of the labor market with racial discrimination and access to citizenship:

> (...) illegality is one way that is currently used to keep a significant portion of the country's population in second-class status. Different methods have been used over time, but if you

[3] Brentin Mock even compares Trump's discourse with that of the white supremacist of the early 20th-century Madison Grant. "On Immigration: Who Said It, Trump or White Supremacist Madison Grant?" Citylab. *The Atlantic*, Sep 7, 2016. http://www.citylab.com/politics/2016/09/on-immigration-who-said-it-trump-or-white-supremacist-madison-grant/499037/

> look at any moment in US history, there has been *some* legal method of disenfranchising part of the population, and maintaining them as a cheap labor force. Past systems include slavery and racial discrimination. It's very convenient for employers to have access to disenfranchised workers, and it's also convenient in some ways for citizens in general — it helps citizens have access to cheap food, cheap goods, cheap services, all produced by people who don't enjoy the same rights that citizens do. (Karlin)

As the first political measures against immigrants of the new Administration ruled by Donald Trump start to put into practice the promises of an already troubling presidential campaign, we are led to conclude that this authoritarian concern with upholding a core America is not new, nor is it exclusive to a post-9/11 era. It recovers a prevailing conservative conception of America that is hardly capable of balancing a mythic diversity — or multiculturalism — with a tradition of Anglo-Saxonism. Or should we call it, with Mitchell Zimmerman, "the stubborn remnants of white supremacy"?

All exceptionalisms tend to feed nationalisms and the current moment is dangerously eloquent about this tendency. More than a mere policy, we are facing the expression of an ideology that conceives of the greatness of the nation as based on the defence of the people, while "the people" are mystified to have an active voice that, after all, only pertains to the sovereign powers. But who are "the people" anyway and who can speak in their name? When in power, populists will end up creating an authoritarian state that excludes all those who are not considered part of the authentic "people," be they either the elites they criticize, or the minorities these are accused of supporting. That is exactly what Jan-Werner Müller argues in his new book, *What Is Populism?* (2016): "(...) populism tends to pose a danger to democracy. For democracy requires pluralism and the recognition that we need to find fair terms of living together as free, equal, but also irreducibly diverse citizens" (3).

Brexit's "Taking back control" and Trump's "Make America great again" (a rerun of Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign) are recent slogans that trigger a self-confidence lost by a working class beaten by the 2008 economic crisis, or a middle class which has lost status, and populist leaders like

Donald Trump and Nigel Farage show a fine instinct for these popular feelings. As Ian Burumanov remarks, "Trump is a Gatsby gone sour. He played on the wounded pride of large communities and inflamed the passions of people who fear the changes that make them feel abandoned. In the United States, this brought out old strains of nativism." These leaders take advantage of the popular feeling of having been tricked by an economic liberalism that produced a western world even more unequal and unfair, guaranteeing the prosperity of a 1% at the cost of the impoverishment of all the rest of the population. They are effective because they address "[t]he notion of natural superiority, of the sheer luck of being born an American or a Briton," and offer "a sense of entitlement to people who, in terms of education or prosperity, were stuck in the lower ranks of society" (Burumanov). "America first" are the most remembered words in Trump's inauguration speech, denoting an exacerbated protectionism of American (economic) interests and a not so subtle nationalism. These were followed in the subsequent weeks by harsh measures in immigration policies, "extreme vetting" that effectively worked as a ban on six predominantly Muslim nations, making clear that Trump's intentions of keeping the homeland safe from terrorists created an environment of global uncertainty. The promise of the border wall with Mexico is another example of the isolationist policies of the current Administration, as well as the xenophobic declarations about "bad hombres," "rapists" and "drug dealers" that are supposedly flooding the American territory from the South. The land of freedom, of Pax Americana, is clearly closing its doors to the world.

Following Donald Trump's election, Toni Morrison, writing for *The New Yorker*, commented on the role of whiteness in the construction of American identity, and argued that, in order to become real Americans, immigrants must leave behind their previous notions of who they are. In this process the component of whiteness is fundamental as the unifying force that binds the nation:

> All immigrants to the United States know (and knew) that if they want to become real, authentic Americans they must reduce their fealty to their native country and regard it as secondary, subordinate, in order to emphasize their whiteness. Unlike any nation in Europe, the United States

> holds whiteness as the unifying force. Here, for many people, the definition of "Americanness" is color. (Morrison 2016)[4]

Along this line of thinking, Michelle Alexander, in *The New Jim Crow* (2010) compares white supremacy to a religion of sorts, a belief system that has its origin in slavery and serves to reconcile the democratic principles of the era with the reality of the plantations (26). The author defines: "[t]he term mass incarceration refers not only to the criminal justice system but also to the larger web of laws, rules, policies, and customs that control those labelled criminals both in and out of prison" (23). Alexander makes explicit the how the systems of control of black bodies in the United States were just redefined through history, but never completely abolished. She further states: "[l]ike Jim Crow (and slavery), mass incarceration operates as a tightly networked system of laws, policies, customs, and institutions that operate collectively to ensure the subordinate status of a group defined largely by race" (24). As she argues, this belief system outlasted the institution of slavery and was adapted into different models, such as Black Codes, Jim Crow, and in our times, mass incarceration.[5]

The concept of mass incarceration has been used in the last forty years to refer to the number of incarcerated people in the United States' prisons. As we find in different sources, the United States now accounts for less than 5 percent of the world's inhabitants — and about 25 percent of its incarcerated inhabitants. But, as Adam Gopnik writes, even Pfaff recognizes that it would be absurd "to look at a typical prison population and deny

[4] In an earlier interview Morrison says: "in becoming an American, from Europe, what one has in common with that other immigrant is contempt for me — it's nothing else but color. Wherever they were from, they would stand together. They could all say, 'I am not that.' So in that sense, becoming an American is based on an attitude: an exclusion of me." See Bonnie Angelo's interview with Toni Morrison, "The Pain Of Being Black," *Time*, May 22, 1989.

[5] Adam Gopnik refers to the new book by John Pfaff, *Locked In: The True Causes of Mass Incarceration* (2017). Pfaff is a reformist who questions Michelle Alexander's thesis. For this Law Professor the political rewards searched by prosecutors account for the great wave of incarceration.

that it is connected with a history of racial oppression — a history that radically contours our life chances based on our color" (Gopnik).

Moreover, the racialization of Africans was extended to undesirable immigrants and has a longstanding history in American society. Just think of the Chinese who, in the 19th century, were depicted with the stereotypical traces that were attributed to black people (*cf.* Takaki); or, more recently, the Latinos who are usually referred to as a "racialized minority" (*cf.* Telles 2008; Massey 2013; Kretsedemas 2014).[6] From early on, the U.S. has shown difficulties in dealing with "alien" bodies and 20th century discourse on multiculturalism and difference could hardly convince the most critical minds.[7] Robyn Wiegam in her 1995 book, *American Anatomies*, reflects on the spirit of the 90s and the critical debates about multiculturalism and "difference" alongside what she calls "the broader reconfiguration of white racial supremacy since segregation's institutional demise" (2). She therefore expresses skepticism toward the optimistic announcement of a post-racial era ushered in by Barack Obama's election

[6] One can also bring into the discussion the example of the Irish, who ranked side by side with African-Americans in many aspects in the social order when they first arrived as immigrants, but could nonetheless hold on to their whiteness as some form of superiority. Although white, and sharing English they did not share the privilege of the Native grown. Ta-Nehisi Coates also mentions the Irish in his investigation of the relation between body control and social domination, exploring the dynamics that lead to the social exclusion of these subjects: "[p]erhaps the Irish too had once lost their bodies. Perhaps being named "black" had nothing to do with any of this; perhaps being named "black" was just someone's name for being at the bottom, a human turned to object, object turned to pariah" (60). *A Mercy*, Toni Morrison's novel of 2008 is a very eloquent narrative on racialization in the New World.

[7] Andrew Jakubowicz refers to the growth of social and ethnic conflict in societies of diverse populations, such as the UK, Australia, or the U.S., "gluing together with economic stratification, to create the potential for major structural fragmentations." And he adds: "Pockets of marginalised and angry young people, communities which disengage from each other, and ever more heavily militarised internal government security forces, now characterise societies where civil rights, which were recently seen to be the capstone of human social achievement, are being dissolved. The policy needs remain, to build social cohesion and reduce social anger. If the policy is not to be called 'multiculturalism' it still needs to achieve a diverse range of goals in an integrated and effective form."

in 2008. Its limitations lie, as she argues, in the fact that "the post-racist possibility of America [is] often figured by the centrality of the Anglo-Americans as the heroic agents of racism's decline" (Wiegam 2). Wiegam also traces "the way social hierarchies have been rationalized . . . by locating in the body an epistemological framework for justifying inequality" (2). Black and brown bodies are thus disempowered by a western racialized discourse that sanctions the political practices that target them (192). We argue that the logics of racialization that have been for long applied to African-American subjects continue to be applied to immigrants who also personify a racialized self in white America.

For Ta-Nehisi Coates in *Between the World and Me* (2015), his letter to his son in the aftermath of Trayvon Martin's assassination, America has to be confronted with and made accountable for her *self-affirming* exceptionalism. So he ironically states:

> One cannot, at once, claim to be superhuman and then plead mortal error. I propose to take our countrymen's claims of American exceptionalism seriously, which is to say I propose subjecting our country to an exceptional moral standard. This is difficult because there exists, all around us, an apparatus urging us to accept American innocence at face value and not to inquire too much. And it is so easy to look away, to live with the fruits of our history and to ignore the great evil done in all of our names. (11)

Unfortunately, in Coates' view, what is exceedingly exceptional is the ability of (white) America to overlook its brutality towards those who are not part of the Dream of America, this in spite of the history of strife and persecution experienced by the very ones who fashioned the Dream. He writes: "America understands itself as God's handiwork, but the black body is the clearest evidence that America is the work of men" (14).

In the same direction, in the aftermath of the Civil Rights era, in a letter dated November 1971, James Baldwin, addressing "Sister" Angela Davis, who was then in prison, begins by saying:

> One might have hoped that, by this hour, the very sight of chains on black flesh, or the very sight of chains, would be so intolerable a sight for the American people, and so unbearable

> a memory, that they would themselves spontaneously rise up and strike off the manacles. But, no, they appear to glory in their chains; now, more than ever, they appear to measure their safety in chains and corpses. (Baldwin)

Almost half a century later, Baldwin's words are still topical since black people continue to be victimized in great numbers — either murdered or in chains —either to grant the safety of the "Native Americans," or in the scope of the rhetoric of "preservation of order" and security.

In an essay significantly entitled "Home," which is the opening article of the collection *The House that Race Built* (1997), Morrison reasons about the idea of America as "the racial house [that] can never be "home," for "home" would be "a-world-in-which-*race*-does-not-matter." Her dream of inhabiting "the race-free home I have never had and would never know" is only viable within the world of imagination — meaning fiction — the only space where she, as a writer, can feel sovereign. For virtually everywhere "race magnifies the matter that matters" (5). Coates also writes about the place of African-Americans in the grand racial house throughout the different eras of American history. He cunningly tracks white Americans and their economic project in the attire of the Dream, exposing how far "the Dreamers" were able to go in pursuit of black bodies to turn them into a natural resource, which proved malleable and adaptable to different times:

> As slaves we were this country's first windfall, the down payment on its freedom. After the ruin and liberation of the Civil War came Redemption for the unrepentant South and Reunion, our bodies became this country's second mortgage. In the New Deal we were their guestroom, their finished basement. And today, with a sprawling prison system, which has turned the warehousing of black bodies into a jobs program for Dreamers and a lucrative investment for Dreamers; today, when 8 percent of the world's prisoners are black men, our bodies have refinanced the Dream of being white. Black life is cheap, but in America black bodies are a natural resource of incomparable value. (Coates 138-139)

From slavery, to Jim Crow, to mass incarceration, this history is clear and raises the question of (in)security of black folks in their own homeland.

Poverty and destitution dispossess people from their full citizenship, creating subjects that become the scapegoats of a society that lives in permanent anxiety and fear. When policing is allied with the fear of losing the legitimacy of superiority, white America takes measures to control the Other, who is feared because he (most commonly a male) is criminalized. The problem is that fear prevails on both sides: what can be found in the construction of the dispossessed subject under such circumstances is a mindset in which the fear of crime and criminals is as present as the fear of the police, the ones who are supposed to protect you and yours. These circumstances might have taken the shape of an overseer in a plantation, a Ku Klux Klan supporter who was responsible for uncountable lynchings, a policeman who shoots first and asks questions later, and who is rarely persecuted for doing so. Toni Morrison offers her own analysis on this history of the vulnerable Others:

> To keep alive the perception of white superiority, these white Americans tuck their heads under cone-shaped hats and American flags and deny themselves the dignity of face-to-face confrontation, training their guns on the unarmed, the innocent, the scared, on subjects who are running away, exposing their unthreatening backs to bullets. (Morrison 2016)

The conversation regarding the structural forces that create these imbalances are difficult to be addressed, since the police force is the embodiment of the patriotic ideal. After all, the police are those who are willing to offer their lives for the safety of the homeland. However, Coates' analysis of the police force as a collective entity that continues to protect the whiteness of America and its idealistic Dream is very powerful:

> The truth is that the police reflect America in all of its will and fear, and whatever we might make of this country's criminal justice policy, it cannot be said that it was imposed by a repressive minority. The abuses that have followed from these policies — the sprawling carceral state, the random detention of black people, the torture of suspects — are the product of democratic will. And so to challenge the police is to challenge the American people who send them into the ghettos armed with the same self-generated fears that

> compelled the people who think they are white to flee the cities and into the Dream. (Coates 83)

Questioning such an authority, as is happening now, creates tension and heightens the sense that if you are not with the police, you are against it. Given the context of police brutality, some questions arise: is the U.S. the real homeland of African-Americans and racialized immigrants? Is this the place where they can feel safe?

Considering the "race question" in the U.S., Loïc Wacquant has carried out a comparative research involving the reality of other countries and concludes that the politics of penalty in the West shows the link between neoliberalism and the deployment of punitive law-enforcement policies, which usually target the fringes of societies (1). The criminalization of poverty, and consequently of race, is part of a larger structure of state violence. The practice of penalty is presented by official propaganda as a need for security — in Wacquant's formulation "an alarmist, even catastrophist discourse on 'insecurity'" (2). The "deserving citizen" is addressed by this discourse as the "crime victim" at the hands of "the (dark-skinned) figure of the street delinquent" (3). In Wacquant's analysis, all the vulnerable — blacks, browns, poor, and immigrants — get together again: "These punitive policies are the object of an unprecedented political consensus and enjoy broad public support cutting across class lines, boosted by the tenacious blurring of crime, poverty, and immigration" (3). In his article "From Slavery to Mass-incarceration: Rethinking the 'Race Question' in the US" (2002), Wacquant underscores the interconnection between poverty and criminalization in the current political environment of economic liberalism, making clear the links between the carceral reality and the colonial legacy of racism, as well as the logic of the capitalist system. For this author, the prison has turned into a "surrogate ghetto," an "organizational means for the capture and management of a population considered contemptible and expendable in the post-Civil Rights and post-welfare era" (195).

The killings of Trayvon Martin (2013), Eric Garner, and Michael Brown (2014), as well as the acquittal of George *Zimmerman* (Martin's killer), and the grand jury's decision not to indict the police officers involved in the other two cases gave birth to the "Black Lives Matter" movement, a contemporary response and a public cry for help of black and

brown communities who constantly see their rights and their lives as being undervalued and at risk in the U.S.[8] Two other cases of assassination of black subjects by the police force — Alton Sterling and Philando Castile (2016) — need to be pondered as well. Sterling was killed by multiple wounds to the chest on July 5th, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, an event filmed by several bystanders. Castile was shot on July 6th, 2016 in Falcon Heights, Minnesota, during a traffic stop for an alleged broken taillight. His girlfriend Diamond Reynolds published a Facebook live video during the approach of the police, beginning shortly after Castile was shot. It created an audience of millions, denouncing how police excessive use of force is pervasive and how situations like a traffic stop may escalate into a killing, especially if the subjects involved are not white.

Racial profiling is evident in these episodes, and in the case of Castile it is a clear case of "driving while black." In all these and other cases there is a clear power imbalance between police forces and black subjects. No matter how compliant the latter may be, their efforts do not prevent them from being attacked by those who are supposed to protect them. We are reminded of Ellison's Invisible Man's speech at Tod Clifton's funeral, looking at his black friend confined in a coffin too small for his stature as a community hero, his life too young and promising to have been met by death at the hands of a cop just because "nigger" rhymes with "trigger":

> Tod Clifton is crowded and he needs the room. "Tell them to get out of the box", that's what he would say if you could hear him. "Tell them to get out of the box and go teach the cops to forget that rhyme. Tell them to teach them when they call you *nigger* to make a rhyme with *trigger* it makes the gun backfire. (Ellison 458)

The public acceptance of the post-9/11 culture of surveillance, security and securitization rely, as Arun Kundnani and Deepa Kumar rightly observe, on "the security narrative of hard-working families (coded white) under threat from dangerous racial others." In their analysis, "the

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[8] On the birth of the movement, see the recent book by the award-winning journalist Wesley Lowery, *They Can't Kill Us All: The Story of Black Lives Matter* (2017).

production of racialized 'others' as security threats" (Muslims being the most recent target) "help stabilize capitalist social relations." The current system of mass surveillance "is analogous to and overlaps with other systems of racialized security surveillance that fed the mass deportation of immigrants under the Obama administration and that disproportionately target African Americans, contributing to their mass incarceration" (Kundnani and Kumar). The authors look at the culture of surveillance that is being institutionalized and argue that an adequate analysis of this situation should be centered on race as the legacy of empire:

> It is racist ideas that form the basis for the ways national security surveillance is organized and deployed, racist fears that are whipped up to legitimize this surveillance to the American public, and the disproportionately targeted racialized groups that have been most effective in making sense of it and organizing opposition. This is as true today as it has been historically: race and state surveillance are intertwined in the history of US capitalism. Likewise, we argue that the history of national security surveillance in the United States is inseparable from the history of US colonialism and empire. (Kundnani and Kumar)

One aspect that is really relevant is how surveillance culture expands both sides, and it may manifest a form of resistance when used by the general public: besides the body cameras worn by officers, in conjunction with security videoing that is well spread and meant to monitor the population and police activity, citizens are using this resource as a form of creating evidence to counteract the official narratives. Solidarity is then spread out through social networks raising consciousness.

But race cannot be addressed by itself. What must be under scrutiny is a whole transnational capitalist system with a colonial legacy, a system based on economic, racial, and gender discrimination. Baldwin also accounts capitalism for the victimization of blacks: "We know that we, the blacks, and not only we, the blacks, have been, and are, the victims of a system whose only fuel is greed, whose only god is profit" (Baldwin). He comments on the image of Angela Davis "in chains" on the *Newsweek*'s cover (1970), her black body targeted: "You look exceedingly alone — as alone, say, as the Jewish housewife in the boxcar headed for Dachau, or as

any one of our ancestors, chained together in the name of Jesus, headed for a Christian land." (Baldwin). Baldwin reminds us that, even when cultures or identities are different, much may be shared in people's struggles whenever lives are taken by a dominant one who dispossesses people of freedom, citizenship, and humanity. As Angela Davis also points out: "(...) the greatest challenge facing us as we attempt to forge international solidarities and connections across national borders is an understanding of what feminists often call 'intersectionality.' Not so much intersectionality of identities, but intersectionality of struggles" (Davis 168). Davis aptly titles her most recent book *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle* (2016), reaffirming the need to never stop re-examining reality and its power imbalances. We also believe that a constant alertness, energized by the contributions of writers and intellectuals along the various forms of public resistance, social networks, and intersectional/transnational solidarity may oppose these threats to the best principles of democracy.[9]

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[9] June Jordan's poem "Moving Towards Home" (1985) is a magnificent example of poetry as an expression of transnational solidarity, in this case with the Palestinian people (*Living Room: New Poems, 1980-1984*. New York, NY: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1985).

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## Abstract

In this essay we propose a reflection on the meaning of "homeland" and "home" for individuals and groups, citizens of a second order, who are profiled as "alien," "undesirable" and "disposable" in the U.S. We argue that the post-9/11 rhetoric and policy of surveillance and security is not new to American history; they just expose and magnify the longstanding roots of an Anglo-Saxonist sense of racial superiority and white privilege in colonialism and capitalism. Blacks, browns, as well as undesirable immigrants have been marked by color or "illegality" and pressed into poverty and destitution. In the current political circumstances, not exclusively in the U.S., they are the most vulnerable victims of a system of economic liberalism which resorts to racial profiling, police militarization, and massive incarceration. One of the most evident consequences is the fact that prisons, mostly private ones, are predominantly filled with individuals belonging to these groups. Public resistance, social networks, and intersectional/transnational solidarity may oppose these threats to the best principles of democracy.

Keywords

Home; homeland security; racial profiling; immigration; mass incarceration

## Resumo

Neste artigo propomos uma reflexão sobre o significado de "homeland" e "home" para indivíduos e grupos, cidadãos de segunda classe, que são classificados nos E.U.A. como "estranhos," "indesejáveis" e "descartáveis." Argumentamos que a retórica e as políticas de segurança e vigilância pós-11 de Setembro não são novas na história americana; elas somente expõem e amplificam uma noção de superioridade racial anglo-saxónica e de privilégio dos brancos, que desde sempre estiveram presentes, herança do colonialismo e da exploração capitalista. Negros e mestiços, do mesmo modo que imigrantes indesejáveis, têm sido marcados pela cor da pele ou pela "ilegalidade" e empurrados para a pobreza e a destituição; na atualidade, não só nos E.U.A., continuam a ser as presas mais vulneráveis num

sistema de liberalismo económico que recorre a várias formas de definição de perfis raciais, à militarização das forças policiais e ao encarceramento em massa. Uma das consequências mais evidentes está no facto de as prisões, na sua maioria privadas, estarem predominantemente repletas de indivíduos pertencentes a estes grupos. A resistência popular, as redes sociais e a solidariedade interseccional/transnacional podem contrariar estas ameaças aos melhores princípios da democracia.

Palavras-Chave

"Home"; "Homeland security"; perfis raciais; imigração; encarceramento em massa

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# A Home Built by Words:
# *Linda Hogan's Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World*

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# A Home Built by Words: Linda Hogan's *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World*

## 1. Linda Hogan and the power of words

In *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*, Linda Hogan's memoir, the Chickasaw author says that, for a long time and as the result of an imposed silence by family and by history, she had "little of the language [she] needed to put a human life together" (*The Woman* 56). Without words, she continues, "[o]ur own bodies became our language" (56), thus she, and the other girls she grew up with, would hurt themselves, inflicting wounds on their bodies. In order to overcome the emptiness and pain, she used to ask "the whole of creation to take [her], the hurt person, out of her body and let someone or something better inhabit it" (57). According to Hogan, the relief came through language: "Words," she says, "are the defining shape of a human spirit. Without them we fall. Without them, there is no accounting for the human place in the world" (56). For her, the salvation came with words "anchored to the earth, to matter, to the wholeness of nature" (56); words cured her: "something did come in, and it saved me: a love for all nature, all life, a place created by words; I live in a place words built" (58). Using ancient stories and songs from the oral traditions of the Chickasaw and weaving together autobiography and history, *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World* (1995) is Hogan's testament of hope and possibility concerning different ways of inhabiting the world. As many other contemporary Native American writers, Hogan's vision is based on "[a] historical sense of dispossession, the search for a place and past rooted in the oral tradition, the presence and pleasure of a communal identity co-extensive with the land, the transformative power of language" (Gray 802). Native American traditions understand that the world is made of stories, and these are, according to Hogan,

"at the very crux of healing, at the heart of every ceremony and ritual in the older America" (*Dwellings* 37). Moreover, it is my purpose to emphasize Hogan's definition of home, one built out of the relationship with nature, and, therefore, a home of more inclusive and permeable borders. For Hogan, the natural world is home, a place from which she seeks to achieve restoration and healing, mending what she sees as "the broken connection between us and the rest" (40). In this sense, my suggestion is that *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World* is both a spiritual and political narrative about different ways of inhabiting the world, providing Hogan with a textual space to build a home for herself and for all her relations, and a site to resist and to survive.

In American Indian thought, Scott Momaday observes: "words are intrinsically powerful" ("Native Voice" 7). The Kiowa author also affirms: "at the heart of the American Indian oral tradition is a deep and unconditional belief in the efficacy of language," therefore, "through words, one can bring about physical change in the universe" (7). His words illustrate that for the traditional native cultures words were part of daily life and played an important role within the tribes. In the pre-Columbian era, all members of an Indian tribe listened to tales, and most of them composed and sang songs, facts which emphasize that for the Indians words were not only entertainment. Instead, myths and tales fulfilled an educational mission: they taught the younger generations the beliefs and the history of the tribe. Songs had a purpose as well: they functioned as medicine, as morale builders before a battle, as prayers to increase the fertility of the earth, or assure a successful hunt. Therefore, oratory played an important role not only in political decisions, but also during the performance of rituals. However, in the wake of white colonization, this understanding of the intricate interdependency of world and language could not prevent the Native American History from being defined by displacement and loss. Accordingly, Linda Hogan affirms: "There was not a language for such pain" (*The Woman* 59). To fight forgetfulness of "an older order" (121), she decides to tell her story, believing that each story "contains a thread out of the dark human labyrinth into light and wholeness" (20).

For Linda Hogan, relations are the foundations of any home; for her, home implies an organic interrelatedness with all creatures: human and non-human, and "a reliance on modes of knowing the world that are

centered in relationships, in the body, in intuition, mysticism, the emotions, the heart, as much as in the rational and logical mind" (Anderson 6). In this sense, *Dwellings* is an example of the cultivation of the qualities "of receptivity, caring, humility, sympathy, gentleness, appreciation for beauty, relationality and reverence for life" (7). Should these qualities be seen as common ground between Hogan and other (women) writers and if her words build the house she inhabits, hers is also a search for a language that heals human relationship with the rest of the natural order: "one that takes the side of the amazing and fragile life on our life-giving earth" (*Dwellings* 59).

Patrick Murphy states that Hogan's three key concepts are cultivating, nurturing, and listening (101). All of them, the critic contends, "based on a sense of answerability and a recognition of relational difference, (…) requiring commitment over time, which in a sense is the most basic definition of inhabitation" (101). In fact, it is precisely this alertness towards the world that allows her to listen to the hidden voices of her fellow inhabitants, the land, and animals, and it is from that predisposition to be open-minded that she builds a relational home. A home in which she is not alone, but surrounded by and in dialogue with all the other participants of the world. That is what she learns from traditional ceremony: "the participants in a ceremony say the words 'all my relations' before and after we pray; those words create a relationship with other people, with animals, with the land" (*Dwellings* 40). More importantly, though, is the transformation the ceremony suggests; as Hogan claims, "the real ceremony begins where the formal one ends, when we take a new way, our minds and hearts filled with the vision of earth that holds us within it, in compassionate relationship to and with our world" (40-1). The ritual is significant, for in a world growing apart from nature, the spoken words favour "the deepest sense of being at home" (41). Hogan's words respond not only to a personal absence: "I first grew into my remembered life in a house without words, and as a child, I became wordless outside of home (*Woman* 92), but involve a larger answer: her words ask for resistance and participatory relationship with the other inhabitants of the world. Hogan believes that, as N. Scott Momaday said, human lives are made of words (21). Consequently, *Dwellings* is a literary place where inhabitation is possible, that is, by fostering traditional practices, it highlights an alternative mode of agency

and operation based on respect for humanity's common home; in itself, *Dwellings* "becomes a ceremony that brings an ancient way of being and knowing into the present" (Wohlpart 133).

## 2. Dwelling in the home words build

At the beginning of *Dwellings*, a compilation of 16 nonfictional essays, Linda Hogan (b. 1947) states that the book is tempered by her work with animals, her love for the earth, her hunger to know what dwells beneath the surface of things (*Dwellings* 11).[1] In addition, she hopes that the book "contributes to an expanded vision of the world" (12). Hence, this reading reflects my understanding of Hogan's writings as an example of how, in our disenchanted age, her words engender new possibilities for inhabiting the earth and for (re)interpreting the concept of home, in the sense that her work, informed by the native traditions with which she was raised, enlarges the above-mentioned concept of home, which includes "people, animals, land—the alive and conscious world" (12). As already alluded to, her work springs from her native traditions, and thus underlines an empathetic, imaginative and respectful relationship with nature. Moreover, like Joni Adamson, I see that "Native American oral traditions and cultures offer us models for communities in which we might more justly govern the relations and generate the practices of humans in the environment" (xx). Importantly, Hogan's narrative is rooted in tribally-specific creation stories, also referring to the landscapes, waterways, plant and animal life which characterize her indigenous experience and knowledge. That is, her narrative defines her home.

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[1] As a brief introduction to Hogan's work, I would highlight the following elements: daughter of a Chickasaw father and a White mother, she was born in Denver, though her tribal homeland is Oklahoma. Her first novel, *Mean Spirit*, was published in 1990. She has also written two other novels: *Solar Storms* (1995) and *Power* (1998), all of them bringing together tribal concerns and environmental issues. Hogan also wrote a memoir, *Woman who watches over the World* (2001), several poetry books, and a book of essays, *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World* (1995).

The stories of the Natives in the U.S. are mostly versions of devastation caused by the loss of the land, home and identity because of the colonial history.[2] As Jace Weaver explains:

> (…) Native peoples are spatially rather than temporally oriented. Their culture, spirituality, and identity are connected to the land — and not just land in a generalized, fungible sense but their land. The act of creation is not so much about what happened *then* as it is what happened *here*. (qtd. in Fitzgerald 37)

In this sense, *Dwellings* illustrates and reinforces the notion that home for Native Americans is connected to displacement and forced dislocation, but it also highlights that in order to go back to their home(land) writers set themselves about to recreate through imagination and words their dwelling, their home place. Clara Chung affirms that Hogan's *The Woman Who Watches Over the World* is her personal memoir in search of home (66). But I suggest that even before the publication of her memoir, Hogan was writing about home in *Dwellings*. Throughout the book, Hogan intertwines narratives of violent processes of home loss with narratives which build a home place through resistance and remapping of a new path towards home: for her and for all her relations. Moreover, although History has been disruptive to many tribes within the U.S., there are voices, like Hogan's, that search for a way to translate the possibilities of cure and care: "In American Indian traditions, healers are often called interpreters because they are the ones who are able to hear the world and pass its wisdom along" (*Dwellings* 50). Throughout Hogan's essays, a mixture of literary pieces of personal and collective stories and landscapes, she writes about creation stories that allow us "to hear the world new again" (51). She also reminds

[2] *Cf.* "Knowing one's "place" within "the land's story" is part of being at home in Indian Country or on Indian land, and this knowledge forms the essence of the land narrative framework. Because of the colonial relationship of Native nations with the U.S. and Canadian governments, the "places" within "the land's stories" have become disrupted by a myriad of factors, including forced removals, relocations, and environmental crises" (Fitzgerald 25).

her readers that although Westerners have also known the voices of the earth as the myth of Orpheus attests, that initial communication with the worlds of the animals, the plants, the water and the minerals has been broken and, as a result, “a spiritual fragmentation and ecological destruction” (52) has been increasing over the years.

In *Dwellings* Hogan rarely refers to interior places; her dwellings are in the exterior, even when she is inside caves or when she describes the sweat lodge structure where a ceremony is to be performed. If in the first essay, “The Feathers,” the reader is introduced to the physical structure of her home, in the following essays ‘home’ becomes earthen and spiritual. In “All my Relations,” home becomes a place of relationships: “the entire world is brought inside the enclosure” (*Dwellings* 39), namely the natural world:

> Young lithe willow branches bent overhead remember their lives rooted in ground, the sun their leaves took in. They remember that minerals and water rose up their trunks, and birds nested in their leaves, and that planets turned above their brief, slender lives. The thunderclouds travel in from far regions of earth. Wind arrives from the four directions. It has moved through caves and breathed through our bodies. It is the same air elk have inhaled, air that passed through the lungs of a grizzly bear. The sky is there, with all the stars whose lights we see long after the stars themselves have gone back to nothing.… [W]e sit together in our aloneness and speak, one at a time, our deepest language of need, hope, loss, and survival. We remember that all things are connected. (*Dwellings* 39-40)

This passage is an illustration of Indian writing for, according to Donald Fixico, it combines oral tradition, tribal mythology, the Indian notion of time, and a deeper concern for natural cycles with a persistent connection to home. He states: “home is our strongest point of reference, where our people come from, our community, and it renders to us a sense of balance and identity” (qtd. in Fitzgerald 5). After the ceremony, the one which, according to Hogan, “includes not just our own prayers and stories (…) but also includes the unspoken records of history, the mythic past, and all the other lives connected to ours, our families, nations, and all other

creatures" (*Dwellings* 37), the participants "are returned to the great store of life (…), and there is the deepest sense of being at home here in this intimate kinship. There is no real aloneness. There is solitude and the nurturing silence that is relationship with ourselves, but even then we are part of something larger" (41). The same perspective defines the moment that she, as a voluntary in the Birds of Prey Rehabilitation Foundation, enters the bordered world the birds inhabit: "there is a silence needed to compose ourselves before entering their doors, and we listen to the musical calls of the eagles, the sound of wings in the air (…) then we know we are ready to enter"(150).

## 3. A cosmic and relational home

Throughout Hogan's spiritual history of the living worlds she presents two significant ways to overcome "the wound between us and the world that contains our broken histories" (*Dwellings* 76). One is the already referred to magic power of words. In contrast with a "language of commerce and trade" (45), Hogan advocates an emotional and spiritual language, one that "accommodates magical strength and power" (46). In contrast with a utilitarian view of nature, Hogan affirms that "what we really are searching for is a language that heals (…), one that takes the side of the amazing and fragile life on our life-giving earth (...), a language that takes hold of the mystery of what's around us and offers it back to us, full of awe and wonder" (59). Moreover, she emphasizes, "we need new stories, new terms and conditions that are relevant to the love of land, a new narrative that would imagine another way, to learn the infinite mystery and movement at work in the world" (94).

According to Hogan, another way of overcoming our fragmentary lives is to relate to nature, to be in contact with its permeable frontiers and flexible borders and its cycle of life. In fact, for the Native Americans, land, animals and self are not separate entities; instead, they see them as a continuum of interdependent relationships, and thus acknowledge "that the world is the container for our lives" (*Dwellings* 46), that is, the home in which we are guests. A relevant example is "What holds the water, what holds the light," a text that aims to make readers aware of the generosity of earth and sky, of the permeable frontiers between water and earth, along

with the need for forgiveness. The jar "was a thin clay that smelled of dank earth, the unfired and unshaped land it had once been. In it was rain come from dark sky. A cool breeze lived inside the container (…)" (43). When she drinks from it, she reminds the reader that that jar was made in Mexico City, once called Iz ta pa lapa, the place where Montezuma lived during the time Cortés and his Spanish soldiers savagely colonized the indigenous people and the land. For her, the relationship extends further, for that jar "might have been made of the same earth that housed the birds of Iz ta pa lapa," it might be "a bridge between the elements of earth, air, water, and fire but was also a bridge between people, a reservoir of love and friendship, the kind of care we need to offer back every day to the world as we begin to learn the land and its creatures, to know the world is the container for our lives, sometimes wild and untouched, sometimes moved by a caretaker's hands" (46). Thus, these are words which urge us to see life, other lives, "as containers in a greater, holier sense" (45).

> If human beings have been destroying the common house,[3] *Dwellings* reminds each reader that it is possible to reconnect with nature and the creation around us. Thus, humans should learn how to move, how to flow and how to adapt. The cycle of water may teach humans about the cycle of life; in "Stories of Water" Hogan tells her readers:
>
> the journey of water is round (…), moves in a circle, following us around the world…. It has lived beneath the

[3] *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (2015). This encyclical letter is the Pope's contribution to the contemporary environmental debate; in it, the Pope urges people to see how the notion of the common good and a sustainable common home are inseparably linked. On indigenous people, see, for instance, paragraph 146: "(…) it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions…. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best. Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture."

> lights of fireflies in bayous at night when mist laid itself about cypress trunks. It has held sea turtles in its rocking arms. It has been the Nile River…. It has come from the rain forest that gave birth to our air.… The clouds flying overhead are rivers. Thunder breaks open, and those rivers fall (...) giving itself back, everything around river, in a circle, alive and moving. (*Dwellings* 107-8)

The above passages about water not only illustrate Hogan's cosmic notion of home, based on relationships, but they also highlight the fact that throughout History—throughout U.S. history— the acts perpetrated by humans have often destroyed these relationships. They also exemplify that survival resides in the power of words to revitalize, to energize the way humans see and understand the world. Hence, Hogan's belief that: "what we really are looking for is a language that heals [human] relationship with the rest of the natural order" (*Dwellings* 59). "We are looking," she insists, "for a tongue that speaks with reverence for life, searching for an ecology of mind. Without it, we have no home, have no place of our own within the creation" (60). A view Hogan restated in a recent interview; when asked about her favorite place in the world, she replied: "my home. Where I live, the dwelling place."[4] Her answer may be understood as relating to the larger and inclusive idea of home as postulated by Heidegger: home not only as a physical place where one resides, but the place from where one builds relationships with the world. In this sense, *Dwellings* means a particular way of being on the earth. For Hogan, her place is not only a geographical location, but a site where many stories have taken root, namely tribal ones, thus representing a "sacred land," a place of relationship. Indeed, she promotes connections between her physical house and the outside world by opening windows and doors, and, for instance, planting hyssop everywhere in the room so the hummingbirds would come into the house. She affirms that by doing this she means "to maintain peace,

[4] *Cf.* Linda Hogan: "Dwellings of Enchantment: Writing and Reenchanting the Earth," http://ecopoeticsperpignan.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Linda-Hogan-Writers-interview.pdf

to repair what is broken," and, in addition, "to keep her own self in touch with the world" (Hogan, "Dwellings of enchantment" 10).

For Hogan, to dwell means to live in harmony with the earth, "to be of a place in such a way that earth is honored" (Wohlpart 158), and thus the appeal for caves, beehives, wood houses, and nests. Her reverence for nests, for instance, is a symbol of her quest for a beloved home, one that intertwines human and non-human world, much like the moment when in the fallen nest near her home she recognizes a piece of blue thread entwined with feathers, sage and strand of wild grass:

> That night resting inside the walls of our home, the world outside weighed so heavily against the thin wood of the house. The sloped roof was the only thing between us and the universe. Everything outside of our wooden boundaries seemed so large. Filled with night's citizens, it all came alive. The world opened in the thickets of the dark. The wild grapes would soon ripen.… Horned owls sat in tree tops. Mice scurried here and there. Skunks, fox, the slow and holy porcupine, all were passing by this way. The young of solitary bees were feeding on pollen in the dark. The whole world was a nest on its humble tilt, in the maze of the universe, holding us. (*Dwellings* 124)

Accordingly, Hogan believes that the natural world operates as a nest, a home, sheltering human and non-human alike, an example of that "enduring sense of the fluidity and malleability, or creative flux, of things" (Allen 255), so congenial to American Indian thought. As Hogan's real home, an architectonic structure defined not so much by its walls but by its open windows and doors, its openness to the exterior, she builds, with words, a construction that invites readers to understand the importance of nature and open themselves to forms of "terrestrial intelligence" (*Dwellings* 95).

## 4. Conclusion

To conclude, Hogan's spiritual history of the world is a textual space where she builds a home for herself and for all her relations, aiming to promote and highlight the interdependence and connectedness of all living things.

Such a home, one in which words and nature are bonded, though not just particular to American Native culture—Thoreau's cabin in the woods is "a dwelling on the earth, a frame whose limits made the forest its larger extension" (Harrison 226), Morrison's non-racist home of words is "an open house, (…) generous in its supply of windows and doors" (4), and Rachel Carson's aspiration for a house of life in which to make ourselves at home in this world—such a home is, nonetheless, an experiment showing how the borders between nature and self become blurred, reminding us that we need to listen to nature, the mother home, to learn from it in order to be born to a different, open, and more flexible perspective. Furthermore, Hogan, like many other Native writers, is "actively searching for ways through which home can serve as a strategy of representation, a means of articulation, a pattern of recognition, and a site for self-positioning" (Chung 234). In this sense, in *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living world*, the idea of 'home' involves creativity and process; it is a site for resistance, and an image of survival sustained by language and ceremony. Paraphrasing Lorraine Anderson, *Dwellings* gives us a vocabulary and a way of seeing (home). Ultimately, with Hogan's words resonating in our consciousness, we must turn to the place we call home and look closer; in time, and through a respectful bond to that place and its creatures and through a commitment of care and attention, that place—home—can come "to reside in us as surely as we reside in it" (*Sisters of the Earth* XX).

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**Abstract**

In the face of colonial displacement, home becomes a recurring topic in Native American writing. In defiance of the wound inflicted by a dominating culture and of the pain caused by the fragmented and tragic history of Indians in America, Linda Hogan's statement — "I live in a place words built" — illustrates her struggle to find a language which can account for a personal (and collective) place in the world. On the other hand, Hogan's experience and words are related to "the earth, to matter, to the wholeness of nature." It is, then, my purpose to emphasize Hogan's definition of home, one built out of the relationship with nature, and, therefore, a home of more inclusive and permeable borders. For Hogan, the natural world is home, a place from which she seeks to achieve restoration and healing, mending what she sees as "the broken connection between us and the rest." In this sense, my suggestion is that *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World* is both a spiritual and political narrative about different ways of inhabiting the world, providing Hogan with a textual space to build a home for herself and for all her relations, and a site to resist and to survive.

Keywords

Linda Hogan; home; power of words; nature; relationships

**Resumo**

Perante a deslocação forçada provocada pelo colonialismo, 'casa' torna-se um tema recorrente na escrita nativa americana. Face à ferida infligida pela cultura dominante e à dor provocada pela história trágica e atormentada dos Índios na América, a declaração de Linda Hogan—"Eu vivo no lugar que as palavras construíram" — ilustra a luta para encontrar uma linguagem que descreva o seu lugar pessoal (e coletivo) no mundo. Por outro lado, a experiência e as palavras de Hogan estão ligadas "à terra, à matéria, à totalidade da natureza." Neste sentido, e a partir de *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World*, proponho-me enfatizar a definição de 'casa' presente na obra, algo que Hogan constrói a

partir da sua relação com a natureza e, por isso, entendida como um lugar inclusivo e de fronteiras permeáveis. Para Hogan, o mundo natural é entendido como casa, um lugar no qual ela procura renovação e cura, tentando corrigir o que para ela é "a relação falhada entre nós e aquilo que nos rodeia." Assim, interpreto *Dwellings* como uma obra que narra uma história simultaneamente espiritual e política acerca de outros modos de habitar o mundo, um espaço textual onde Hogan constrói uma casa para si e para as suas relações, aí erguendo também um local de resistência e de sobrevivência.

Palavras-Chave

Linda Hogan; casa; poder das palavras; natureza; inter-relações

# Worlding America?: Homelands and Geopolitical Cartographies in Post 9/11 Fiction

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# Worlding America?: Homelands and Geopolitical Cartographies in post 9/11 Fiction

## Homelands and maps of topophilia

The concept of Homeland, defined by cultural geography in terms of "social territoriality," that is, of a relationship of an ethnic or national group with a place with which it holds a long historical and emotional bond, suggests, in Simon Schama's words, that landscape and people are "morphologically akin (…) constituting in some primal sense the nature of each other" (11).

Anthropologists trace these intimate connections to place back to earlier peoples for whom the landscape was the "fundamental reference system in which individual consciousness of the world and social identities are anchored" (Tilley 40). In its most benevolent and self-fulfilling form, love of place, or topophilia, to use the term popularized by human geographer Yi-fu Tuan to designate "the affective bond between people and place or setting" (4), may assume a plurality of intensity and forms and be deeply satisfying emotionally. Even if, as James Gibson points out, the link has "mostly been destroyed in the modern world," its resilience can be attested by the re-emergence of positive and creative localism trends of various types (88). But when this attachment to an imagined ancestral place is associated with myths of origin, historical destiny and cultural particularity, and becomes the foundation for perceptions of exclusivity that effectively create conceptual walls that self-define groups and keep others out, the concept of homeland frequently becomes problematic, entangled with the ambiguous projects of group sameness, enforced unity or ethnic "purity." This speaking of distinctiveness, of the character of a whole culture through a "topographical inventory" (Schama *ibid*.), has historically prefigured many shades of nationalist discourse, from the Romantic German Fatherland, invoked and later disfigured by the Third Reich, to

the post-revolutionary Russian Motherland and more recent iterations in the Balkan conflicts in the 1990s,[1] not to speak of contemporary recurrences in anti-immigrant political discourses on both sides of the Atlantic.[2]

In the United States, this particular type of exclusionary nationalist topophilia always had a diminished resonance, with its potential complicated by the obvious heterogeneity, not to mention the growing hybridity of its ethnic mapping. Some cultural geographers have, nonetheless, used the concept of micro-homelands to identify specific cultural nuclei in the vastness of America's continental territory, linked by their close relationship with space. This is the case, for example, of Nostrand and Estaville in their 2001 collective study of American homelands, which they define as "special kinds of cultural regions" (xiii). Recognizing that a country like the United States encompasses a degree of cultural pluralism that differentiates it from other nation-states to which the designator of homeland can possibly be applied, they make the point that its sense of national social territoriality is in fact an aggregate of many localized relationships. Using five criteria in their classification of homelands — a people, a place, bonding of people and place, control of place, and time (xviii) — and allowing for two distinct and not necessarily overlapping groundings for the definition of the bonds that define "a people" — ethnicity and "self-conscious difference" (xxi) — their collection identifies fourteen homelands, ranging from the historically ephemeral (the *Mormondom's Deseret Homeland* of 1849-1851[3]) to the more ethnically-based and stable *Kiowa Homeland* in Oklahoma or *La Tierra Tejana* in South Texas (in parallel with the *Anglo-Texan Homeland*), or the self-contained *Old Order Amish Homelands*. This variety of senses

[1] This could be seen in the opposing claims of both Serbians and Albanians to Kosovo as a mythical homeland (Daskalovsky 12). See also Paul Hockenos' *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars*.

[2] Political discourses grounded on the mythical link between land and cultural identity are also the basis for specific cases of defensive nationalism, especially in the case of cultural groups that have been deprived of control and sovereignty of what they see as their homeland.

[3] The never recognized Deseret Provisional US State was founded by Mormons around Salt Lake City in 1849 and was dissolved two years later. It was replaced by the Utah Territory, which would become the State of Utah in 1896.

of belonging to a place is clearly problematic since, while a case may be made for the historically grounded specificities of Native American homelands, others seem to me more dependent on ethnic nostalgia than on a specific and exclusive relation to space and appear intrinsically unstable (the *New England Yankee Homeland*, for example). As a dissenting chapter in the collection posits, "aside from the remnant homelands of Native Americans … most other subnational cultural groups occupy geographical spaces in ways better articulated by such concepts as ethnic islands" (Conzen 271) and even these seem to be in the process of being challenged by demographic movements, hybridity and cultural pluralism. On the other hand, the argument of aggregate micro-homelands mitigates any totalizing account of the sense of social territoriality invoked by the primal use of the term homeland.

This may explain the unease felt by many when, after 9/11, the new agency in charge of coordinating the efforts of disparate security organisms was designated as the Department of Homeland Security, an unprecedented gesture since as Naomi Wolf points out, American administrations before then "referred to the United States as 'the nation' or 'the republic' and to the nation's internal policies as domestic" (7). The rejection of the use of a term so "saturated with nationalist power" (*ibid*.) was not exclusive to academic or political liberal circles; the choice was also considered by some conservative quarters to be an aberration in the context of the American public discourse. Most vocal was conservative *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan,[4] who criticized the use of what "is not an American word," "not something we used to say or need to say," invoking a type of patriotism that is very different from the "felt and spoken love for and fidelity to ideas and ideals our country represents — freedom, equality, pluralism" (216-217).

It would be flippant to imagine that the politicians and administrators who decided to give the Department that name did it with a deep

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[4] Peggy Noonan, a former speechwriter for President Ronald Reagan, published her criticism of the designation of the newly created Department of Homeland Security in two articles published in *The Wall Street Journal*: "Rudy's Duty" (Friday, June 14, 2002) and "Failures of the Imagination" (Friday, June 21, 2002), later compiled in her book of chronicles *A Heart, a Cross, and a Flag* (2004).

awareness of the implications of the choice, or indeed to concentrate more on the signifier than on the signified, but it is difficult not to see an implied intention of enforced unity in the use of the term. Richard Crownshaw uses the term reterritorialization to describe this and other gestures of "demarcation of the American homeland against incursions" (759) after 9/11, which prefigure symbolic processes of homogenization that question the right of others cohabitants of the same space to be encompassed by the national construct.

## Fiction and the nation

This embrace of a parochially defined America rooted in an imaginary exclusive relation with a territory appears to clash with contemporary critical discourses which, while asserting a high degree of skepticism towards enforced national-based borders, are paying new attention to both the particularity of place and the global. Even if they find themselves now under attack by narrow populist anti-globalizing discourses, the realities of the political, economic and cultural interconnections of the new millennium have given new vigor to the critical impulse to reinstate literature "within the discourse of the world" and unleash "special perceptions and representations in a nomadic perspective" (Westphal xiii), freeing it from the conceptual geographies that organize not only nationhood but also maps of disconnected centers and peripheries. In parallel, critical discourses on spatiality such as geocriticism, which propose a renewed attention to the "literary cartography" by which writers map their worlds (Tally 1) and to the referentiality of fiction, are emerging as particularly productive in the study of the implications of overlapping geographies linked by mutual, if less visible, webs of influence that expose the limits of territorially-based sovereignty.

Questioning the porous border of national literatures is of course not particularly new, and academics have always found ways to navigate the dilemmas of authorial affiliation,[5] recognizing, as Wai Chee Dimock

[5] This navigation is frequently translated in decisions to incorporate fiction about America (by non-American authors) in our syllabi as a reflexive exercise, as there seems

points out, that while American literature (like all other national literatures) is not a sovereign, free-standing and self-sustaining domain "as a nameable and adducible unit," it is "taxonomically useful" as long as that usefulness does not "lure us into thinking that this entity is natural" (4). The ambiguity of "the natural" and the limitations of the national model against what has variously been called the transnational, the planetary or the worlding literary turn gained enhanced visibility after 9/11, an event which exposed like no other in recent times (with the possible exception of the present refugee crisis) the illusion of absolute territorial sovereignty as, to quote Dimock, "an epiphenomenon, a superficial construct, a set of erasable lines (...) no match for the grounded entity called the planet" (*ibid.* 1).

For many critics, the early post-9/11 fiction[6] seemed to appeal to a sense of reterritorializing of trauma, turning inwards, towards the private, the localized, the encircled, an impulse that Crownshaw sees as a type of self-protective gesture against "a threatening exteriority," an aesthetic impulse that clashed with the "deterritorializing ambitions of American studies" (*ibid.* 759). This tension may explain the intensity of critical scrutiny of the novels published between 2006 and 2008[7] and a quasi corrective insistence on a different path, on a turn towards the transnational, the liminal, the unknown other with whom all contemporary humans are linked by "a proliferating chain of borders" in a world where "familiar

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to be so much to gain from, for example, examining New York through the gaze of Teju Cole (*Open City*, 2012), aspects of the African American experience through the perspective of Chimamanda Adichie's (*Americanah*, 2014) or from revisiting the history of Blackface and minstrelsy with Caryl Phillips (*Dancing in the Dark: A Novel*, 2006).

[6] The term is used here to designate a body of fictional works that includes not only texts that are self-consciously concerned with the human landscapes directly touched by the historical event, but also those where it lurks in the margins, filtering through the texts in unexpected ways.

[7] This early American corpus includes Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006), Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children* (2006), John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) and Ken Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to this Country* (2006), Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), and Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* (2008).

oppositions are continually being challenged, dissolved and reconfigured" (Gray 135).

It may be argued that these calls for fictional deterritorialization, namely for what Michael Rothberg described as a "fiction of international relations and extraterritorial citizenship" (153), while cogent, implicitly accept two premises, neither of them clear cut. The first, addressed by critics like Rachel Greenwald Smith and Bimbisar Irom, is the absolute dichotomy between the domestic and the global that sees fictions of the private as an inevitable retreat from the political. Greenwald Smith rejects that premise, arguing that "remaining formally familiar" does not necessarily preclude a novel from reflecting "the post-9/11 nexus of trauma, policies and aesthetics" (155), while Irom calls attention to the "ambivalence" that some of the fiction focused on the domestic[8] can nevertheless sustain, "rendering fluid" and perhaps even overturning "conventional notions of the foreigner and the alien, the spaces of the interior and the exterior" (520).

The second equally problematic premise, as Catherine Morley argues, is the somewhat prescriptive overtone of the demand on individual writers that they show evidence of an all-encompassing view that might "do justice to the political, ideological and historical complexities" of a particular context. Outlining a "specific trajectory for American writers" suggestive of a vision of "literary fiction as an essentially political enterprise" (720) and asking them to quickly move away from the rawness of the experience of the domestic to encompass the world has, on the other hand, the perhaps unintended consequence of seemingly demanding of them totalizing narratives, ignoring the potential of a fertile transnational network of fictional voices speaking to and against each other rather than any one set of writers trying to speak for all. These multi-vocal conversations, grounded in particular spaces and experiences, but crossing national horizons, have in fact produced some of the more textured 9/11 fiction, such as Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, which moves from Pakistan to the United States and back, or *The Wasted Vigil* by the

[8] Ken Kalfus' *A Disorder Particular to this Country* (2006) is given as an example.

Pakistani-British writer Nadeem Aslam, entirely set in Afghanistan, but entangling its history with Russian and American presences, juxtaposing layers of different geographies that are revealed to be intimately connected.

Some more recent American post-9/11 texts seem to deliberately attempt to go beyond the boundaries of the national, tentatively moving in the direction of what Caren Irr has called the new geopolitical novel, a type of fiction that "shatters isolationist myths, updates national narratives, provides points of access for global identification" (4), in response to the impulse identified by David Shield's manifesto *Reality Hunger* for a literature that makes "people interested, empathetic, questioning or even antipathetic to what they are seeing" (48). Such is the case of Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2008) and of Amy Waldman's *The Submission* (2011), which open pathways to global identification through the problematization of national spaces and the invisible links between inside and outside.

## Writing with Multiple Maps

In *Once in a Promised Land* Laila Halaby, a Jordanian American author rewrites the exclusionary consequences of the homeland myths through the familiar tropes of the immigrant narrative, put under stress by 9/11. The novel teases the possibilities and consequences of "extraterritorial citizenship" by depicting the processes of social ostracization of insiders suddenly pushed outside the circle of national belonging. Her protagonists are a professional Jordanian couple, Dr. Jassim Haddad, a hydrologist, and his Palestinian-American wife Salwa, living a comfortable suburban life in Tucson, Arizona, when 9/11 shattered all their upper-middle class certainties.

The Haddad's are visibly constructed as transnational subjects. Interwoven analepses and scenes in juxtaposed geographies, when the narrative shifts between Tucson and Amman, accentuate the latent in-betweenness of the couple, and allow the reader to retrace the pulls that shape their subjectivities. Salwa, born in the United States almost by accident but raised in Amman, had felt in Jordan a naïve attachment for an America of the imagination that she never finds in the real country. For Jassim, a man of balance and pragmatism originally moved by the mission to save his country from drought and dependency, the landscape of the

Arizona desert provides a double function — a place like home as he sees it, and a promise of how it could one day be, if the technological promise that had inspired his doctoral studies on water harvesting could be as effectively enacted in Jordan as it was in the American landscape. For both, the price for "being at home" in America, measured in economic well-being and social standing, is a cultivated isolation that eschews the potential comforts of ethnic community, a state of suspension between the Amman of memories and phone calls and the suburban Tucson where they have acquaintances and work associates but no close friends. When 9/11 shatters the promise of America, clearly invoked by the title and its intertextual relationship with Mary Antin's founding immigration narrative, it exposes how different readings of cultural, political and physical geographies shape the response of the two Haddads, grounding their different preparedness for the hostility they will encounter. Salwa's revulsion against the attackers is mixed with an incomprehension that stems from cultural vicinity as she strains to accept that the violence was done "by men whose culture was a first cousin to her culture, whose religion was her religion" (11), by men she perceived as sharing with her, however indirectly, a similar cultural topography.

Her husband, on the other hand, works from a different type of mapping, one based on objective physical realities like distances, cities and nation states. When concerned relatives call from Jordan, already anticipating what might come, Jassim calms them down with reassurances grounded on this type of topography — America is a big country, he explains, New York is very far away, nothing will happen to Arabs living in Arizona. Besides, he adds, "people are not so ignorant as to take revenge on a Jordanian family for the act of a few extremist Saudis" (21).

As the narrative progresses, it becomes evident that Salwa's cultural map helps her anticipate aggressive gazes that will render her as "one of them," shaping her awareness that something may indeed happen to Jordanians living in Arizona, while Jassim, the man of science, trusting physical objective facts, is wholly unprepared for the exclusive "homeland" mental map that will crash into the couple's lives in the form of gestures of suspicion or open hostility, forcing the self-confident Haddads to see themselves, for the first time in their lives, as vulnerable, unwanted and powerless.

Two of the most revealing early gestures of rejection occur in the most American of public spaces — a shopping mall, where a sales clerk calls a security guard about Jassim, because he looks suspiciously quiet (he is waiting for his wife to finish her shopping), and in the bank where she works, when a client refuses to be served by Salwa, asking instead for someone who she would "understand better," a euphemism for "someone who will not steal my money and blow up my world" (113). Neither the apologies of the shopping mall manager nor the solidarity of Salwa's colleagues can disguise or attenuate the perception that they are no longer part of the American homeland map where they had thought they had a space bought by birth, qualifications and social status.

At the end of the novel no place welcomes them. Jassim loses all that defined his sense of selfhood: the love of his wife, the job he excelled in, and the trust of his clients, afraid of what "someone like him" might do to the local water supplies. Salwa is also symbolically erased from the Jordanian home she had planned to return to when her number is deleted from the cell phone of a former boyfriend who represented all her hopes of a welcome to the Amman of her youth. For them, there is no home either in Tucson or in Amman, no space that claims them or that they can claim.

If *Once in a Promised Land* can be read as a metaphor for loss of homelands (one which is abandoned and does not take back, another which initially accepts and then rejects), *The Submission* may be seen as a parable of the renewed authority of cultural maps. The novel is seemingly grounded on a self-contained territoriality, as Araújo stresses by discussing it under the heading of the "New 'New York Novel'" (19), but it travels far and wide, engaging a number of interrogations about the function of public spaces and memory, matrixes of cultural traffic, landscape and nationhood, while using the tropes of alternate history. It imagines a "what if" counterfactual scenario invested in the type of realism, panoramic scope and multi-perspective structure that David Shields had asked for in his *Reality Hunger* manifesto.

At its core this is a story of the cultural and political consequences of the choice made by a selection panel of artists, architects, critics and a representative of the 9/11 victims of a project out of 5,000 blind submissions for the Ground Zero memorial. The selected design, entitled *Garden of Remembrance and Healing*, is striking in its simplicity and harmony:

> (…) a walled rectangular garden guided by rigorous geometry. At the center would be a raised pavilion meant for contemplation. Two broad, perpendicular canals quartered the six-acre space (…). A white perimeter wall, twenty-seven feet high, enclosed the entire space. The victims would be listed on the wall's interior garden, their names patterned to mimic the geometric cladding of the destroyed buildings. (4)

Opposition by some members of the jury to the announced delights in the beautiful garden where, as Claire, who represents the victims´s relatives stresses, "widows, their children, anyone — can stumble of joy" (6), hinges on its strangeness, its foreignness, its un-American character. Gardens, one member of the jury asserts, are "fetishes of the European bourgeoisie, aping the aristocracy." Gardens are not America's vernacular: "We have parks. Formal gardens aren't our lineage" (5). Arguing that "we're coded to have certain emotions in certain kinds of places" (*ibid.*), the unfitness of the garden would, for this jury member, presumably be entangled with some form of unfamiliar emotion.

The elevation of the Arcadian park to a site of nationhood in opposition to the formality of the European garden has interesting implications. It appears to celebrate both the intensive technical achievement and hidden artifice mobilized to create an aesthetic of the imagined natural, meant for walking, meandering, discovering unexpected vistas and angles of sight, for action, in short, and its social function, in contrast with the geometrical plots of the formal garden meant for quiet contemplation and private enjoyment. This was the logic of the design of Prospect and Central Park. They were recreations of nature in the city imprinted with the utopian ambition of creating People's Parks[9] in contrast with the small gated city gardens like Gramercy Park, which could only be enjoyed by the wealthy residents who paid for their upkeep.[10]

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[9] The expression was introduced by their early advocate, Andrew Jackson Downing, the editor of the influential nineteenth-century journal *The Horticulturalist*.

[10] The new parks planned for New York were, in contrast, open to all, an experiment in class interaction where, it was hoped, besides breathing the fresh air sorely missed in their Lower Eastside tenements, the masses of newcomers could learn by example the virtues of proper social behavior in a democratized common space.

This discussion over the appropriateness of the memorial garden, which takes place very early on in the narrative, introduces the tropes that shape the rest of the novel, namely the issues of national and cultural ownership of spatial artistic formats, and creates the narrative matrix that turns the choice of the utopian garden into a dystopian political parable.

The strangeness of the garden, first suspected by virtue of its formal design, is amplified when the author of the blind submission is finally revealed, and the panel discovers that the author of the memorial they have just chosen is potentially problematic — his name is Mohammed Khan, an American architect of Muslim origin.

The mere naming of the architect transforms the alterity of the garden; what had seemed awkwardly European becomes something much more alien: for much of the increasingly frenzied public opinion that responds passionately to the choice, it is now an Islamic garden, a Martyrs' Paradise, a symbolic representative of the enemy.

As it happens, the garden's design is accidental, empty of intentional cultural implications. Mo, the aloof secular architect of Indian descent who had spent most of his adult life indifferent to the distant pull of historic memory, carefully dissociating himself from any connections with the remote religious affiliations his parents had left behind, had accidentally stumbled on a design he had found aesthetically stimulating without inscribing it in any specific cultural map. On a business trip to Afghanistan for his architecture firm, which was bidding to rebuild the US Embassy, he had wandered in Babur's Garden, designed in 1526 by the first Mogul emperor as his burial ground, and had found it pleasing, attracted by its seclusion and geometry, which, as he will later claim, "belongs to no single culture" (269). Had he been able to draw a cultural map of what he saw, he would have understood its links with the pre-Islamic Persian chahar-bagh, reinvented in Islamic gardens from Turkey to Andalusia, and might have been able to predict that, in post 9/11 America, the pure abstraction of a garden may become much more than lines on a plane when its shape is burdened with cultural and political implications. As it is, his proposal, a recognition of the nostalgia he felt for the Towers he had never liked, was shaped by nothing more than by the urgency "to fix their image, their worth, their place" (29), to heal the gap in the skyline and fill the void, balancing remembrance and recovery.

What the detached and self-confident Mo, who had always wanted to have no maps but his own, could not anticipate was that in the hallowed space of Ground Zero the ancient geometry he had proposed would be seen as a form of topographical aggression, an intrusion from an inimical outside into the imagined reterritorialized American inside.

Eventually, the beautiful garden of Remembrance and Healing will be built, not in New York, which needed but ultimately rejected it, but years later in India, where Mo had provisionally found a home, in a place where its pure lines were no longer surprising or considered alien or symbolically threatening, but where they had lost their original redemptive mission.

A discussion of the strategies of denaturalization of concepts of enclosed homeland, defined exclusively by territoriality, that is evident in the two novels, and of their capacity to establish more textured readings of the *other* and the fluidity of transnational webs of influence, will have to recognize that their projects of deterritorialization are actually grounded on specific appeals to cultural maps of the known, be it through an aesthetic of the domestic facing traumatic exclusion frequently tinged with nostalgic longing for an abandoned home in Halaby's text, or through a dependence on a localized and historicized urban landscape of recognizable political and social networks in Waldman's text. But in both texts the limits of both enclosed social territoriality and radical detachment are exposed in all their fragility and ambiguity. Being in the world without being of a place seems as problematic as letting a place you call your own restrict or constrain your emotional curiosity. Perhaps the best that literature engaged with worlding projects can do is to write the dilemmas of finding maps not of a single homeland, but of places linked by invisible ties that may at least temporarily be called home.

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## Abstract

The realities of the political, economic and cultural interconnections of the new millennium have given new vigor to the critical impulse to reinstate literature within the "discourse of the world" (Westphal, 2011), freeing it from the conceptual geographies that organize not only nationhood but also maps of disconnected centers and peripheries, while at the same time reconsidering the many dimensions of space and place. This attention to the spatial dimensions of literature highlights the implications of overlapping geographies linked by mutual, if less visible, webs of influence that expose the limits of cultural territorially-based sovereignty, putting concepts of national literatures (including that of a land- or homeland-based American literature) under considerable scrutiny. This paper discusses two American post-9/11 novels — Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2008) and Amy Waldman's *The Submission* (2011) — analyzing how they represent the effects of totalizing concepts of homeland and foreground the links between superimposed spaces (Amman and Tucson, New York and Kabul) to weave the narrative tensions that open pathways to reconsiderations of the transnational and the geopolitical.

Keywords

Homeland; Spatiality; Deterritorialization; 9/11 literature

## Resumo

As óbvias interconexões políticas, económicas e culturais do novo milénio têm dado um novo vigor ao impulso crítico de reintegração da literatura no "discurso do mundo" (Westphal, 2011), libertando-a das geografias conceptuais que organizam não só a nação mas também mapas de centro e periferias autónomos e separados. Esta atenção às dimensões espaciais da literatura enfatiza as implicações de geografias sobrepostas, ligadas por redes de influência mútua, frequentemente invisíveis, que expõem os limites da soberania cultural baseada na territorialidade, submetendo conceitos de literatura nacional (incluindo a visão de uma literatura

americana baseada no conceito de "terra-natal") a considerável escrutínio. Este artigo discute dois textos literários pós-11 de Setembro — *Once in a Promissed Land*, de Laila Halaby (2008) e *The Submission*, de Amy Waldman (2011) — analisando a forma como representam os efeitos de conceitos de "homeland" totalizantes e privilegiam associações entre espaços sobrepostos (Aman e Tucson, Nova Iorque e Cabul) criando tensões narrativas que abrem caminhos para a reconsideração do espaço transnacional e geopolítico.

Palavras-Chave

"Homeland"; Espacialidade; Desterritorialização; Literatura pós 11 de Setembro

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# ESSAYS
# ESTUDOS

# The Dehumanizing of Modern Life: Iris Barry on *Metropolis*

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# The dehumanizing of modern life: Iris Barry on *Metropolis*

*Metropolis* (1927), the dystopian film by the visionary German filmmaker Fritz Lang, is generally considered the first great sci-fi film. Although both its sets and the technological improvements were spectacular, the film's contemporary reception was heterogeneous. The general public was shocked and the critics, not always satisfied. The aim of this paper is to present and analyse the film review written by the first woman film critic in England, the modernist pioneer Iris Barry.

The text was published in *The Spectator* after the film's British premier and stands as one of the first film reviews ever written in a serious journal. It will be critically approached from different perspectives, that is, taking the social and cultural context into consideration, and also from a industrial point of view.

The social context at the beginning of the twentieth century involved radical technological, social and political changes. All of them were reflected thematically in painting, literature and art: the city, the apocalypse or the war were the protagonists of novels and works of art. From a formal point of view, new techniques of fragmentation, like collage or photomontage, were created to represent a new vision of a world in pieces. The whole image of the world was being transformed. Concentration camps or cities devastated by the bombs of the Great War were being drawn in contemporary minds (Lathan and Rogers 12). The city's own image was also transformed by the construction of skyscrapers, which affected the population density. And all this was also reflected in the cinematographic field. A good example is the case of Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis.*

Although cinema was still very young and starting to be considered an art in the second decade of the twentieth century, several avant-garde

movements prior to the Second World War, like expressionism, superrealism and Soviet constructivism, used cinematic experiments. German expressionism created for the cinema nightmares similar to that in Kafka's novel *Metamorfosis* (1916) in films like *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* (Wiene, 1919), *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922) and *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927). The main elements were the same: the character's point of view, the projected shadows, the melodramatic tone and the expression of the inner world.

Although some modernist female writers, such as Virginia Woolf, attempted to write about some of these films, like *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* in Woolf's case, it was Iris Barry who analysed most of these works in her film reviews from the 1920s. As Leslie Hankins has affirmed,

> Although scholars have shown some interest in Virginia Woolf's 1926 essay, "The Cinema," we are just beginning to realize the vital role of Iris Barry, who was born in Birmingham and came to London to become one of the most prolific and influential figures in film forums of her day. (491)

Also known as Frieda Crump (Edwards 8), Iris Barry was born in Birmingham in 1895, that is, when the cinema was born. In 1914, the arrival of the First World War prevented her from going to study to Oxford University, even if she had passed the entrance tests. Her family decided then to send her to France, where she worked at a flower shop and learned French. Back in Birmingham, she got a job at a post office. At the same time, she spent all her free time going to the pictures and published some poems in the *Poetry* magazine. In 1916, she began an epistolary exchange with poet Ezra Pound, which marked the beginning of a life dedicated to cinema and literature. Following his advice, she moved to London in 1917, where she met vorticist artist Wyndham Lewis, "the real leader of the London avant-garde" (Edwards 11). In 1919, they started a relationship living together until 1922. They had a son in 1919 and a daughter in 1920.

Iris studied cinema in a self-taught and compulsive way in London. Apparently, Lewis also pushed her to go to the movies so he could see other women (Sitton 58). Consequently, she spent hours and days watching films of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd, to the point that she could quote subtitles word for word, as she would recall later. In the mid-

1920s, Barry led a whole revolution in film culture in London, as she became the most widely read film critic and contributed to the creation of one of the most important cultural institutions for film, the London Film Society. In her book *Let's Go to the Pictures* (1926), published in the United States as *Let's Go to the Movi*es, she analysed the experience of going to the pictures, both as entertainment and as art. Throughout the second decade of the twentieth century, she wrote more than forty articles for *The Spectator* (1924-1927), at least five for the British *Vogue* (1924-1926), and more than sixty columns for the *Daily Mail* (1926-1930), where she also worked as a film editor. After she was fired by the *Daily Mail* for not promoting British films enough and supporting Hollywood films instead, she left for America. Her contribution to the study and conservation of film there was also immense, as she founded and curated the film archive at the Museum of Modern Art.

Among some of her most remarkable achievements as a film critic is her early defense of film as an emerging art form, the very first attempt to categorize films by genre, her prefiguration of much-later author theory or the development of the first program for Film Studies, when she was working as a film curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. As to the style of her writings for *The Spectator*, the magazine where her film review of *Metropolis* was once published,

> Iris began to develop an aesthetic for the emerging art of film. She did this at a time when motion pictures were finding a grammar and syntax to differentiate the medium from theater and the other arts […] Her writing and analysis is sophisticated, substantial, and surprising for a self-taught critic who seems to have derived great benefit from her informal contacts and conversations with the British modernists she knew. (Sitton 91)

The film had its premiere in Berlin on 10 January 1927, where the audience reacted to several of the film's most spectacular scenes with "spontaneous applause" including a critic from the Berliner Morgen post. However, others have suggested the premiere was met with muted applause with boos and hisses in between. The film's extensive running time and its Communist message were also criticized. At the time of its German premiere, *Metropolis* had a length of 4,189 meters (approximately 153

minutes at 24 fps). *Metropolis* was cut substantially after its German premiere, removing a large portion of Lang's original footage.

Was *Metropolis* "The silliest film" (4), as H.G Wells wrote in his review for *The New York Times Magazine* in April 1927, or "the most remarkable and unique spectacle ever shown on the screen" (22), as the *Bioscope*'s review proclaimed? *Metropolis* provoked extreme responses at the time. Unlike in the case of some of his other films, even Fritz Lang himself stated in retrospect that he found it "silly and stupid" and even "detested it after it was finished" (Bogdanovich 124).

As Bachman suggests in his book *Fritz Lang's Metropolis: Cinematic Visions of Technology and Fear*, it seems that *Metropolis* suffered the fate of many modern blockbusters: an enormous advertising effort created widespread interest and huge box office takings in the first few weeks, but as soon as news of the film's imperfections were spread by word of mouth, the audience's interest declined. The arrival of sound film in 1927 with *The Jazz Singer* gave another punch to *Metropolis* in the eyes of a public thrilled by the marvels of the new talkies. "As early as April 1927, Ufa realized that Metropolis, which was supposed to generate revenues of one million reichsmarks (the monetary unit in Germany from 1924-1948), would turn out to be a financial failure" (Bachman 3).

Barry attended *Metropolis*' London premiere, which took place in the Marble Arch Pavilion on March 21, 1927, which was located at the western end by Marble Arch, in number 531 of Oxford Street. The venue was first opened on 30th May 1914 and closed in 1956. It was soon demolished and replaced by a row of low-rise shops, which in the late-1980 had become a Virgin Megastore. From 2008, the building is a shopping center known as *Surprise, Surprise*.

Iris Barry's review on *Metropolis*' London premiere was published by *The Spectator* five days later, that is, on 26 March 1927. As soon as the beginning, the review already shows the spirit of a visionary woman, a pioneering mind. She seems to be anticipating that cinema, as a medium of expression, is going to change considerably with the passing of time. She knows that cinema is only at an early stage of its life as if she could predict its future. At the same time, she is aware of the possible negative reception of the film but justifies it by blaming the medium for not offering what a science fiction film demands.

> If Metropolis fails to be quite a great film, the fault lies not with its brilliant German producers, nor with its subject matter, nor with the actual treatment of this picture-parable of life next century. It fails because the cinema as yet fails to be quite adequate as a means of expression. (Barry 540)

She probably uses the term “television” for the first time. Far from the meaning we are familiar with, she seems to refer to the projection of an image on a screen. And she accepts this, as well as the making of an artificial human being, as miracles, stating the importance of suspension of disbelief. The imagination of Fritz Lang, the director, and of the studio-architects and designers who have brought this vision to ‘life’ proved adequate enough here. The film shows us the making of an artificial human being; shows us television. Barry can accept these miracles showing sympathy for the workers, who she can recognize. She can even feel identified with them and support the final rebellion: “We know and recognize and accept these manual workers with their weary backs, heavy hands and dull, hopeless eyes. We can feel with them and for them, when they rebel and destroy the machinery that enslaves them” (540).

Barry tries to imagine what the audience’s reaction might be after watching such a futuristic urban landscape depicted in front of their eyes for the very first time: “But I fear that the intelligent part of the audiences that see Metropolis will find it very difficult to admire the peacock-strewn pleasure gardens of the future” (540). She also refers to cinema as being still too young:

> The cinema, even here at its best, and full as it is of invention and thrill, is still only at the mental age of seventeen. It is still — quite rightly — far more concerned with its medium than with what its medium may most magnificently express. Yet Metropolis is by far the most nearly adult picture we have seen. (540)

Cinematography was indeed too young to even talk at the moment, although *Metropolis* did contain minimal elements of sound. Two years later, that is, in 1929, the silent film was going to face a new challenge with the arrival of talking pictures.

When she is not positive, Barry’s review also reveals that she did not see the original version but a cut variation, which led to a confusing plot.

In relation to this, Barlett wrote in his review on the same film:

> I have never seen a greater achievement of the editing art […] There are incidents that are almost hilariously amusing. In Metropolis there was originally a very beautiful statue of a woman's head, and on the base was her name — and that name was Hel. Now the German word for "hell" is "hoelle" so they were quite innocent of the fact that this name would create a guffaw in an English speaking audience. So it was necessary to cut this beautiful bit out of the picture. (Barlett qtd in Bachman 90)

Barry's review is largely positive, as the following fragment shows:

> There are moments when it touches real greatness: in its handling of crowds, not for the sake only of spectacle, but for what emotion the movement of the crowd can express. Its architecture is beautiful, its pictorial composition frequently superb. The clothing of a robot in human flesh provides as great a thrill as anyone could wish; […] The photography of Metropolis is absolutely brilliant. (Barry 540)

If there was a Communist message in Fritz Lang's film, there was in the same way in this review. The very last paragraph of the text seems to be a call for workers to watch the film: "I wonder how the audiences in cinemas in the South Wales mining districts and in Glasgow will regard this film. And whether the members of the Coal Owners' Association have been invited to see it" (Barry 540).

When Iris Barry became the head of the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art —which, together with the British Film Institute in London, the *Cinémathèque Française* and the *Cinémathèque Nationale*, the *Reichsfilmarchiv* in Berlin and the Scientific Research Institute in Moscow was a founding member of the Féderation Internationales des Archives du Film (FIAF), the international association of film archives-, she asked Ufa, a major German film company producing and distributing motion pictures from 1917 through the end of World War II, for a copy of the German version of the film. Unfortunately, that was not the first version, but the second. John Abbot, who travelled to Europe together with Iris in order to stock the Film Library, recalled this part of their trip like this:

> Yes. London has the film. Arriving there you find that a portion of the film has been deleted by the censors for some reason or other. Then you are off for Sweden, where the London attendant is quite certain you will find a print of the original film. That is just one illustration of what we had to go through to get one film. (Abbot qtd in Sitton 220)

In fact, the original film, shot by Fritz Lang in 1926, underwent so many changes. In an article called "The City of the Future. A film of ruins. On the work of the Munich Film Museum", included in *Fritz Lang's Metropolis: Cinematic Visions of Technology and Fear*, Enno Patalas, offers a detailed analysis of the evolution that the original film has suffered from the version, including its passage through the film censorship office before it was shown in Berlin on 10 January 1927, until our days. This is the introduction before the careful reconstruction of the original scene he does:

> If there was a representative survey asking for the best known title of a German silent film, Metropolis would undoubtedly make the running. But which film would people mean? The one shot by Fritz Lang in Berlin in 1926 and only ever shown there at the beginning of 1927? The one shortened, rearranged, newly titles for Hollywood by one Channing Pollock? The second German version, fashioned after the American model, which could be seen in Germany from the end of 1927? The same, shortened once more, with different English intertitles again, which the Museum of Modern Art in New York has made accessible to the cinephiles of many countries since before the war? The German sound version from the sixties, which goes back to the one mentioned before? The attempt at a reconstruction made around the same time by the film archive in the then GDR? Giorgio Moroder's postmodern interpretation with colour and music from 1984? The "Munich version" now always running at one or other of the Paris cinemas and available on VHS? Madonna's video clip "Express yourself"? (111)

Although the version Iris Barry wrote her review about was not the first, the film provoked a great impact on her, as a passage from her last days illustrates, told in the recent and only existing biography of her, from

which all biographical data mentioned in this article has been taken. Barry's life ended in a hospital in Marseilles, where she was operated on for cancer of the throat in October 1969. Near the end of her life, being already extremely ill and broke, she recalled *Metropolis* one last time,: "The hospital", she said, "was like a scene out of the once shattering film on the dehumanizing of Modern life, Metropolis." (Barry qtd in Sitton 401)

This paper considers her text to be historically relevant for many reasons. First, it can increase our understanding and appreciation of the role of this woman in film culture. Women have been a central presence in film culture for a long time, and many of them have been forgotten. As Fritz Lang, Barry was a visionary, a visionary lady in the dark who deserves to be in the light today. Her vision went beyond expressing points of view in her film reviews to the building of a world she was deeply committed to build. Secondly, in contrast with most contemporary reviews, she wrote with passion and a positive perspective about the misunderstood *Metropolis*, and also about so many other film productions from the 1920s. Barry's articles from this period were published in journals that artists and intellectuals looked up to, making a persuasive argument that film should be taken seriously. (Sitton 3) They are of particular interest because they represent pioneering attempts to give autonomy to film as an art form that at the time was slighted by critics and generally considered as entertainment for the working class.

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**Electronic Resources**

http://londonfilm.bbk.ac.uk/about/project/

http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/30900

**Abstract**

*Metropolis*, the dystopian epic by the visionary German filmmaker Fritz Lang, is generally considered the first great sci-fi film. But despite the spectacular sets and the technological advancements, its contemporary reception was mixed. The general public was puzzled and the critics, not often satisfied. The aim of this paper is to present and analyse the film review written by the first woman film critic in England, the Modernist and cultural pioneer Iris Barry, which was published in *The Spectator* after the film's British premier in 1927. The text will be critically approached from different perspectives, that is, taking the social context into consideration, and also from a cultural and industrial point of view.

Keywords

Film criticism; reception; silent art film; women's writing; 20th century

**Resumen**

*Metropolis*, la distopía cinematográfica de Fritz Lang, es generalmente considerada la primera gran película de ciencia ficción. Pero a pesar de los espectaculares escenarios y los avances tecnológicos, su recepción contemporánea fue mixta. El público en general lo desconcertaba a los críticos, no siempre los dejó satisfechos. El objetivo de este artículo es presentar y analizar la crítica de cine escrita por la primera mujer crítica de cine en Inglaterra, la pionera modernista Iris Barry, que fue publicado en *The Spectator* después de su estreno en Londres en 1927. El texto será abordado de manera crítica desde diferentes perspectivas, es decir, teniendo en cuenta el contexto socio-cultural, y también desde el punto de vista industrial.

Palabras Clave

Crítica de cine; recepción; cine mudo; literatura de mujeres; siglo XX

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