

Deterritorialized Space of Contemporary Dystopia

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This paper provides a critique of the traditional understanding of dystopia -that which suggests dystopia is an imaginary representation of a possibly worse future community. It argues that such a conception fails to describe contemporary dystopia which is no longer an imaginary portrayal of a future society but an almost allegorical re-presentation of the present society. This shift in the conception of dystopia could be argued to result from the shift in the sociopolitical structure of the societies from disciplinary nation-states into global/corporatist societies of control. This shift inevitably necessitates a new configuration of dystopian space on the grounds that the striated space of disciplinary societies is now deterritorialized and replaced by the smooth spaces of control in contemporary societies of control. Unlike striated space characterized by discipline, regulation and molar striations, smooth space of contemporary dystopia is defined by the constant acts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. This, despite its major contribution to the workings of capitalist social machine, suggests a possibility of affirmative resistance. Considering these changing dynamics in the nature of societies and their reflection in dystopian narratives, this paper aims to conceptually elaborate this reconfiguration of space in contemporary dystopia and its relation to the idea of resistance from a Deleuzian perspective.

Keywords: Deleuze and Guattari, Deterritorialization, Dystopia, Smooth space

Lords and “Negros” in the “harmonious future”. Slavery and Retrotopia in the Historical Thought of José Ferrer de Couto (1859-1877)

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It is the year 1900. The United States have expanded their rule over Canada, Mexico, South America, and the Caribbean Islands. After destroying the respectable social order of their own Southern states, the Anglo-Saxon ‘hordes’ are now occupying the continent, and imposing the abolition of Slavery and the adoption of a “depraved system” of political and social democracy. However, this sinister “democratic world” was merely an illusion: the feared dystopia prognosticated in 1859 by the Spanish military, publicist and historian José Ferrer de Couto. Inspired by the trepidations that these prophecies provoked him, this neo-catholic liberal conservative, would propose his own alternative geopolitical Utopia: an alliance between the slavery-based societies of the Americas that could curb the advancement of social revolution and philanthropy. This imagined concurrence between Brazilian, Cuban and Southern elites would give birth, in the mind of Ferrer, to a restoration and regeneration of an aristocratic, corporative and religious social order, which would conserve and improve the institution of Slavery, recreating a feudal relationship between the “Negros” and their Lords.

For this paper we propose an analysis of the historicist metaphors, narratives and theories that were employed by Ferrer de Couto in the definition of his utopia, stressing the importance of his organicist tropes. We will focus the analysis on the ideas of “racial harmony” and hierarchical order that he put at the centre of his representations. We will also inquire about his intellectual networks and references to other pro-slavery Atlantic thinkers as Thomas Carlyle or Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen. Our hypothesis is that the works of Ferrer de Couto were fully implied in the development of a conservative historical imagination that, in a context of accelerating advancement of liberalism and democracy, proposed new “retrotopias” that had an enormous influence of on the political cultures of the period, as they offered alternative a horizon of expectations that favoured the projects of slave-owner elites.

Keywords: History, Slavery, Racial harmony.

Harmony and Utopia in Ecocriticism

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Robert Owen, the founder of the New Harmony Society, believes that human's will and actions are shaped only by environment; thus, if we change the environment, we change the human. However, the present paper argues that our will and actions are formed by our relationship with the environment; thus, if we change our desires and actions, we can change the environment. During the last decades, the environment has tremendously threatened both human society and the earth. The fossil fuels are fast reducing, the forests are cut down, ecological disaster is frequent, and climate change is inevitable. Under these conditions, ecocriticism came into existence as a reaction to human's anthropocentric desire of dominating nature. Ecocriticism attempts to decentralize this anthropocentric metanarrative by representing itself as being anti-anthropocentric. Ecocriticism criticizes human's tragic flaw and his anthropocentric vision as opposed to biocentric attitude. Anthropocentric considers the dominance of humans over the environment. On the other side, biocentrism decentralizes human's importance and explores the interrelationships between human and the environment. In addition to the jeremiad side of ecocriticism, though, the tendency to criticize our species for its destructive impacts on the planet, there is also a utopian dimension to the field, which leads scholars to identify and comment on idealistic texts that imagine how to improve our species and our civilization. This study examines some selected ecofiction and attempts to argue that a harmony between the living and the non-living can lead to a healthy utopian ecosystem for the benevolence of both human and the earth. The modern ecological consciousness is seeking the balance between human and the natural world. In fact, a utopian ecology is one in which humans, plants, animals live in such harmony that none destroys or dominates the other. Thus, living in harmony is a way out to achieve a utopian ecology free of human-constructed hierarchy.

Keywords: Ecofiction, Ecocriticism, the Anthropocene, Biocentrism, Harmony, Utopia