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(Re)creating possible futures or alternative presents through the arts

(...)

[1] Considering the new paths which artistic and literary movements have been opening that have been pedagogical regarding our abilities to imagine possible futures or alternative presents – as evidenced with Afrofuturism, Sertãopunk, critical dystopianism, neodystopianism, queertopias, environmental utopianism and dystopianism (for an overview on this theme within utopian works, see Anne Melano’s [2022] “Environment”), among others –, this thematic issue of the journal *Ilha do Desterro* brings together articles and book reviews, in English and in Portuguese, that engage with literature and the arts as a means to create future scenarios to (re)construct presents, the arts as spaces of resilience, resistance and confrontation, the construction of anticipatory systems through the arts, among other tendencies that we will explore below, with a focus on recurring themes that allow us to probe into a variety of cultural genres as a means of imagining possible futures and/or alternative presents. By bringing together these diverse voices and theoretical perspectives, we aim to create alternative avenues of discussion concerning themes as race, ethnicity, sex, gender, class, identity, temporalities, utopias and dystopias, (post)humanism, (eco)feminism, climate change, considering the myriad ways in which these are intertwined in culture and trying to move away from rigid structures and binary thoughts. We urgently need different epistemologies, as Linda Alcoff (2011) reminds us, which can decolonize purportedly universal knowledge systems that make the claim for a master epistemology, to use her term. Moving in such directions, we open space for critical discussions which might map strategies of resistance and confrontation based on anti-racist, classless, non-normative, non-binary, non-Eurocentric, and non-patriarchal conceptual frameworks and references.

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[2] Contemporary critical dystopias as well as neodystopian fiction appear to be the most popular genre or mode in our scholarly realm when one comes to the subject of speculations regarding possible futures or alternative presents in the initial decades of this century. Since the 1980s, critical dystopianism has been a pervasive trend in this type of futuristic fiction deploying dark futures (cf. Baccolini’s “Gender and Genre” [2000], Moylan’s *Scraps* [2000], Moylan’s and Baccolini’s *Dark Horizons* [2003], and Cavalcanti’s “Critical Dystopia” [2022]. On the neodystopic as a fictional mode which has been predominant in the initial decades of the 21st century, see Benicio, forthcoming).

[3] Margaret Atwood’s work features prominently in the discussions presented in this special issue. Her post-apocalyptic narratives are discussed in three articles. Suênio Stevenson focuses on the last novel of Atwood’s trilogy, *MaddAddam* (2013) in “*Contação de histórias e aliança multiespécie pela sobrevivência em MaddAddam, de Margaret Atwood*”, where, he argues, storytelling and an alliance between human and nonhuman beings are the survival strategy of species within a post-apocalyptic world. Atwood’s storytelling, together with Ursula K. Le Guin’s and Janette Winterson’s, is also at the center of Melissa de Sá’s article, “New Humanities in Twenty-First-Century Dystopian Novels by Women”. In these novels, storytelling, used to push the boundaries between what is human and what is not, becomes the human common ground used to explore the manifold ways humanity can present itself. Marta Korbel, on the other hand, investigates the first one, *Oryx and Crake* (2003) vis-à-vis Dmitry Glukhovsky’s *Metro 2033* (2005) in “‘What a splendid world we ruined’: The precarious presents and

posthuman futures of Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and Dmitry Glukhovsky's *Metro 2033*". Both texts are seen as critiques of late-modern neoliberal capitalism, highlighting the post-human alternative they present to the social order.

[4] Environmental destruction is also at the center of two other contributions. If Chiara Xausa's looks at Young Adult climate fiction, Ana Tejero-Marín discusses the notion of the "good Anthropocene" in Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Ministry for the Future* (2020). Both authors find that hope is present in these narratives. While the presence of hope at the end of Saci Lloyd's *The Carbon Diaries 2015* (2008) and *The Carbon Diaries 2017* (2010) helps readers come to terms with an imperfect world and suggests traces of resistance, Robinson's hopeful narrative proposes concrete actions to work towards more sustainable societies and can thus inspire change in the real world.

[5] Perhaps, in this ominous "age of nuclear weapons", as Suvin writes, you would like to start with a spice of hope in the horizon, which would make you begin where we end, maybe with "Staying with the trouble: other ways of inhabiting the world" or "*Permanecer com o problema: outros modos de habitar o mundo em 'Salmo para um robô peregrino', de Becky Chambers*". Marina Pereira Penteado and Jade Bueno Arbo examine how Chambers's novel, and science fiction as a genre, propose different manners of inhabiting the planet, more harmonic, inclusive, and caring, and also alternative ways of living and dying in a world torn by crises. Tom Moylan, in "Cognitive (Re)Mapping: Superseding Utopian and Dystopian Space in Notes from a Coma", sees Mike McCormack's novel as an example of "stubborn hope" that challenges Irish complacency through both its form and content and opens the way to a new sense of possibility. Finally, Darko Suvin elaborates on a long hope by proposing a transhistorical discussion of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, and of the reinterpretations of the myth of Prometheus by Karl Marx and Percy Shelley, amongst others, as a way to counter tyrannical violence; a cataclysm which happened throughout our past, and still continues to ravage our present.

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[6] We feel it is important to mention that these - genre-focused and thematic - structuring of our selected texts are by no means the only possible ways. Other groupings are encouraged, as more than fixity we prefer fluidity, and instead of giving directions we would rather saunter together through these paths, hoping readers will challenge us regarding our blind spots and make up for them. As we have shown, the present issue encompasses articles and reviews which discuss literature and the arts as literacy tools for possible futures or alternative presents. It is our hope that, just like the characters and readers of dystopias move from "apparent contentment into an experience of alienation and resistance", readers of this issue will also experience what Moylan, in *Becoming Utopian*, has recently called a "break" or "gestalt shift" that will move them toward utopian agency (Baccolini and Moylan 5; Moylan 7). The critical interpretations of literary (novelistic, graphic, memorialistic), theatrical, cinematographic works we have brought together share a deep concern with major problems still to be overcome if we are to move towards a more harmonious, just and ecologically balanced world. Under a generative perspective, we hope the studies collected here will trigger readers' response-ability and foment intercultural work so that new networks may be built in scholarship and beyond. Finally, we would also like to stress the relevance of reading these pieces in their potential functions as denunciation and annunciation, to borrow Moylan's apt metaphor in his contribution to this issue: both as critiques of a capitalistic, patriarchal, neo-colonial nexus which we still witness as hegemonic, and as utopian projections of better futures to be. We are witnessing extreme events which threaten our very existence, environmentally speaking, but also in terms of geopolitics. Therefore, new possibilities and alternative futures will not come easily, as we need systemic and structural changes. But if we accept our intertwined existence with the planet as a whole, its environments, living organisms, rich diversity, and complexities, as well as our intertwined existence between ourselves, me we, to borrow a line from Muhammad Ali, we can reconfigure our presents to project better tomorrows. Our climate is changing, and so must we. Through the publication of this issue, we hope to mobilize our readers, so that they own the discomfort of dystopian literature, its critique of the societies we live in, and embrace hope for change.

RESPONDA ÀS PERGUNTAS DE 1 A 5 EM PORTUGUÊS, DE ACORDO COM AS INFORMAÇÕES VEICULADAS NO TEXTO.

- 1) **Considere o Parágrafo [1].** Que tipo de artigos e resenhas este número temático da revista Ilha do Desterro traz? (2,5 pontos)

Artigos e resenhas que se engajam à literatura e às artes como um meio de criar futuros cenários e (re)construir presentes, as artes como espaços de resiliência, resistência e confronto, a construção de sistemas antecipatórios por meio das artes, entre outras tendências, com enfoque em temas recorrentes que permitem explorar uma variedade de gêneros culturais como meio de imaginar futuros possíveis e/ou presentes alternativos.

- 2) Marque a alternativa correta (1,5 pontos).

Considere o Parágrafo [1]. O termo usado no texto, atribuído à Linda Alcoff é: a) (eco)feminismo. b) epistemologia. c) distopianismo.	Considere o Parágrafo [1]. Os temas que NÃO são tratados nesse número temático da revista são: a) eurocentrismo e patriarcalismo. b) raça e etnicidade. c) utopias e distopias.	Considere o Parágrafo [2]. A ficção neodistopiana figura entre os gêneros mais populares quando se trata de especulações a respeito de: a) modo ficcional. b) futuros possíveis. c) tendências dominantes.
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- 3) **Considere o Parágrafo [3].** Os autores apresentam três artigos que analisam obras de Margaret Atwood. Relacione o nome ao autor à ideia apresentada no artigo (1,5 pontos)

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|---------------------|---|
| a) Suênio Stevenson | (c) Analisa obras que criticam o capitalismo neoliberal do modernismo tardio. |
| b) Melissa de Sá | (a) Apresenta a contação de histórias como uma das estratégias de sobrevivência em um mundo pós-apocalíptico. |
| c) Marta Korbel | (b) Argumenta que a contação de histórias amplia os limites entre o que é humano e o que não é. |

- 4) **Considere o Parágrafo [4].** Qual o propósito da obra “The Ministry for the Future”, de Kim Stanley Robinson? (1,0 pontos)

Propor ações concretas para trabalhar na direção de sociedades mais sustentáveis e inspirar mudanças no mundo real.

- 5) **Considere o Parágrafo [5].** Qual o propósito da obra “Salmo para um robô peregrino”, de Becky Chambers? (1,0 pontos)

Propõe diferentes modos de habitar o planeta, mais harmônico, inclusivo e cuidadoso/afetuoso, e formas alternativas de viver e morrer em um mundo dividido pela crise.

6) Marque VERDADEIRO ou FALSO ao lado de cada sentença. (2,5 pontos)

	VERDADEIRO	FALSO
a) Considere o Parágrafo [1] . O número temático que trata o presente artigo recebeu apenas trabalhos escritos em inglês.	()	(x)
b) Considere o Parágrafo [3] . <i>MaddAddam</i> é o último romance da trilogia de Margaret Atwood.	(x)	()
c) Considere o Parágrafo [5] . O artigo de Darko Suvin analisa a reinterpretação do mito de Prometeu por Karl Marx e Percy Shelley.	(x)	()
d) Considere o Parágrafo [6] . Moylan recentemente falou de uma quebra ou mudança que move em direção a uma agência distópica.	()	(x)
e) Considere o Parágrafo [6] . Os autores usam no texto a expressão “eu nós”, emprestada de Muhammad Ali.	(x)	()