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Archipelagic Thought and Comparativism: a critical approach to common problems

The recent growth of fields such as Island and Archipelagic Studies can have, I will argue, an impactful role in the practice of Comparativism. Part of that being that their theoretical contributions have introduced an understanding of contemporaneity that works at vaster, wider, more interdependent and yet more ill-definable scales of difference. Some of its epistemic vocabulary, composed by “complex geo-aquatic metaphors” (DeLOUGHREY 2001, 40), has helped with repositioning, and, perhaps more substantially, redefining the scales at which bodies interact and coexist in the midst of our geosocial continuums (CLARK & YUSOFF 2017).

At the same time, this unveils a series of (old) new questions, as is evidenced in Jonathan Pugh’s critical approach to the intra-disciplinary tensions in Archipelagic Studies between Frantz Fanon’s neo-materialist problematics of knowledge and Timothy Morton’s “affirmational-turn”, defined as “explicitly about affirming the humbling powers of morethan-human relations in the Anthropocene” (PUGH 2020, 65). These seem to be problems, in some way or another, shared with scholars of literary comparativism, particularly in the moment of the discipline’s most dynamic turn since the advent of contemporary WorldLiterature.

Conceptually inspired by Carlo A. Cubero’s 2017 analyses of the social impact of plantations in the creation of a trans-Caribbean identity, we will be considering the implications of applying Pugh’s criticism and Yousoff’s appeal for a geosocial conscience to the problematization of the Archipelagographies (DeLOUGHREY 2001, 40) of the North-eastern Atlantic, in particular the macro-archipelago of Macaronesia. I hope to do so by devoting some attention to cross-reading early Twentieth-Century landscape photography from the archipelago of Madeira, compiled by Lourdes Castro (1930-2022), the 1994 poetry book *Canções da Terra Distante* (Songs of the Distant Land) by the Madeiran poet José Agostinho Baptista and, thirdly, the 2003 poem *Maroiço* by the Azorean Manuel Tomás.