MARITIME LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Maritime Mobilities in Anglophone Literature and Culture

Edited by
Alexandra Ganser · Charne Lavery

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Maritime Literature and Culture

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Alexandra Ganser • Charne Lavery
Editors

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Maritime Im/Mobilities

Alexandra Ganser and Charne Lavery

The sea, as both site and symbol, has been associated with vast possibilities of expansion on the one hand and for limitation, even incarceration, on the other. In various contexts of historical empire-building and resistance, oceans have functioned as both bridge and boundary for coastal and island cultures. They represent spaces of the mobilities of colonization and conquest, including massive, violent displacements of enslaved and indigenous peoples, as well as immobilizations, such as carceral islands and prison ships. In the literary and cultural imagination, the sea has been figured as an ambivalent space between a frictionless, connecting pathway and an entrapping void. This ambivalence persists into the present, prompting various strands of research across the humanities. The maritime violence of colonialism across the sea is continued today by the large-scale

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exploitation of the sea as a resource itself. Thus, contrary to scholarly binaries of land and sea, and of human and natural history, "the sea is history," to quote Derek Walcott's famous poem (Walcott 2007; Birkle and Waller 2009).

With thousands of asylum seekers and refugees stuck for weeks at a time on the Mediterranean or dying in the Atlantic during desperate attempts to reach safety, oceanic pollution by recklessly exploitative industries (from overfishing and devastating oil spills to mass-tourist cruisers), rising sea levels due to climate change, and a global economics based on cargomobility, maritime im/mobilities have gained critical status for the development of viable futures—social, economic, environmental, political, as well as imaginative. As refugees, human smugglers, NGOs and Frontex patrols, environmental activists, modern "pirates," maritime laborers and tourists cross each other's paths in physically, legally, politically, and culturally fluid oceanic spaces, an arena of conflicting im/mobilities emerges. In Anglophone writing and other media, whose analysis is at the center of this volume, this arena has been articulated through oceanic representations for centuries, in ways that may offer possibilities for reimagining socio-cultural, environmental, and economic relations with and across the seas today.

There has been an increasing interest in representations of maritime im/mobilities in recent years, as part of what is now generally termed the "oceanic turn" in the humanities. With the Anglophone Atlantic prompting this turn more than three decades ago, scholars have conceptualized various versions of the Atlantic Ocean: the Black Atlantic (Gilroy 1993), the Red Atlantic (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000; Armitage 2001; Weaver 2014, referring to Native American presence), or most recently, the Green Atlantic (referring to the Irish Atlantic—O'Neill and Lloyd 2017; Gough 2018). Thus, the beginnings of the oceanic turn also reflect the North Atlantic triangle's claim to economic and political dominance throughout the Cold War. The Pacific has come into focus more recently, not coincidentally reflecting the post-Cold-War crumbling of North Atlantic claims to global leadership. In the same context, the Indian Ocean has recently been named as a central future site in the contest between Chinese and U.S.-American power (Kaplan 2010), raising critical interest also in early South-South globalization and alternative universalisms (Hofmeyr 2007; Gupta 2012; Anderson 2012). Last but not least, imaginaries concerning the largely nonhuman space of the Southern Ocean are now also receiving increasing attention in contemporary Anglophone cultural and

postcolonial studies (Hofmeyr 2007; Bystrom 2017; Lavery and Samuelson 2019; Lavery 2020).

Overarching labels such as "blue cultural studies," "oceanic humanities," or "wet globalization" (Blum 2015; Steinberg 2015; Mentz 2015, xxix) mark the onset of theorizing maritime studies in more general terms. In the following, we briefly discuss one of the first key shifts in oceanic studies—the shift away from area studies—using the field of American studies (from which many of the contributions to this book emerge), as an example. We then delineate a selection of recent critical perspectives in the maritime humanities that have extended, but also criticized, earlier assumptions: Eurocentric, anthropocentric, and class-, race-, and gender-based assumptions especially. They mark a shift toward (new) materialist, feminist, and ecological approaches that frequently hark back to postcolonial theories of relatedness and its critique of mechanistic dialectical models (e.g., Glissant 1981; Brathwaite's tidalectics, see Savory 2011). Finally, we outline some of the ways in which Anglophone maritime studies has been informed by mobility studies, which has evolved as an interdisciplinary field within the humanities since the 1990s—perhaps not a coincidental parallel to the beginnings of maritime cultural studies. Taking up cultural geography's revision of the field to acknowledge the centrality of im/mobilities in history and society and move beyond logistics-centered transportation studies, mobility studies focus on the production of mobilities and immobilities historically, socially, politically, and culturally (on the latter, see esp. Greenblatt et al. 2009). Ocean-based, culturally-represented im/mobilities are at the focus of the present volume, which sets out to explore how variously mediated manifestations of such im/mobilities have been framed and articulated in Anglophone literary and cultural imaginaries in different historical and geographical contexts.

Oceanic Revisions: From the Maritime Frontier to Archipelagic America

The recent focus on maritime themes and figurations in studies of Anglophone literature and culture has contributed to a critical revision of earlier, often essentialist, area studies approaches. Traditional container models, as frameworks of analysis and interpretation, have been increasingly replaced with much more fluid concepts that highlight transnational—and transoceanic—connections and entanglements. In what follows, we are

using a description of the ways in which the oceanic turn played out in the field of American studies as an instructive example.

One of the earliest projects in American oceanic studies was the "Oceans Connect: Culture, Capital, and Commodity Flows across Basins" (1999) research project based at Duke University, which responded to the political and theoretical crisis in area studies after the end of the Cold War, especially with regard to the essentialist assumptions underlying the area concept itself (Lewis and Wigen 1999). Reframing area studies around oceans and sea basins, the project proposed to supplant land-based areas with the Atlantic, Indian, Mediterranean, and Eurasian and Pacific Oceans and aimed at putting "maritime connections at the center, rather than the margins" of research (Lewis and Wigen 1999, 162). While the initiative set out to "bring to light a set of historical regions that have largely remained invisible on the conventional map of the world" (161), it received, in hindsight, criticism for its political, post-Cold-War agenda as it was seen as seeking to *relocate* U.S.-American areas of influence rather than providing a corrective to the use of academic disciplines for "further[ing] the strategic interests of the United States, making it intellectually as well as morally suspect" (164).

Maritime approaches nevertheless brought to the fore the sea as a lively zone of cultural contact and conflict in American studies and highlighted the role of littoral societies in cultural mobility and exchange (e.g., Ganser 2013). The Atlantic sub-group of the Oceans Connect network insisted, for instance, on the slave trade as fundamental for the emergence of the United States and modernity at large, taking cues from Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). In his seminal monograph, Gilroy conjures the "the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean" (1993, 4) to highlight transnational movement in the context of the black diaspora. For Gilroy, ships represent "the moving to and fro between nations, crossing borders" as well as "micro-systems of linguistic and political hybridity" (12) at sea. Along with forms of personal movement, Gilroy foregrounds "the circulation of ideas … as well as the movement of key cultural and political artefacts" in the context of Afrodiasporic cultural and political exchange throughout the Black Atlantic world (4). James Procter summarizes that "[c]irculation, movement, passage and journeying are Gilroy's preferred metaphors here, allowing him to move beyond what he takes to be the narrow, sclerotic confines of the nation" (2007, 152). Gilroy's study indeed calls attention to maritime mobilities as key in

processes of transnational cultural exchange as well as to the sea as a site of black agency and empowerment. Race-critical studies of the Black Atlantic proliferated in Gilroy's wake, offering new perspectives on maritime American fiction (e.g., Mackenthun 2004). A plethora of other works in this vein continued a trans-Atlantic focus, mostly leaving intact, however, the primacy of the North Atlantic area (or triangle) as a point of reference (see, e.g., Sharpe 2016).

With the turn to the Pacific, this hegemony has been challenged, as indigenous perspectives—e.g., from Hawai'i—came into view and contested Western conceptions of the ocean as a mere medium of transportation, a sublime metaphor, or a lawless, anarchic space to be regulated by international law (see Kempe 2010). Indigenous Pacific perspectives impacted on trans-Atlantic studies in turn: Jace Weaver's 2014 *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000–1927* demonstrates how, from the earliest moments of European-American contact, indigenous Americans played a pivotal role in trans-Atlantic processes of cultural exchange. Matoaka/Pocahontas or the Arawak that Christopher Columbus brought to Europe are perhaps the best-known examples, but even they have been relegated to the margins of historical accounts of the Atlantic. Weaver resists Eurocentric discourse by placing indigenous people/s at the center of the Atlantic world, focusing on both forced and voluntary transatlantic crossings of Natives as dignitaries, diplomats, slaves, laborers, soldiers, performers, and tourists. These travelers introduced Europe to a variety of foods and indigenous knowledges—from potatoes and chocolate to terrace farming and suspension bridges.

As a term, the Red Atlantic also relates to a second, class-based strand of discursive intervention in hegemonic, nation-bound accounts in oceanic American studies. In the field of history, David Armitage, Peter Linebaugh, and Marcus Rediker, among others, have written maritime "history from below." Their work demonstrates how a mass of sailors, plantation workers, indentured servants, and slaves became part of a fledgling Atlantic economy of accumulation in the seventeenth century: an Atlantic proto-proletariat (Armitage 2001, 479; Linebaugh and Rediker 2000, 61). American literary history from below deck is epitomized by Hester Blum's seminal study *The View from the Masthead: Maritime Imagination and Antebellum American Sea Narratives* (2008), which turns to sailors as a population of remarkable readers and writers in the Anglophone world. Exploring sailors' contributions to literary culture,

Blum examines first-person narratives which proposed methods for aligning labor and contemplation, but also investigates the representation of labor relations in canonical oceanic literature by James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, and Richard Henry Dana.

The most recent area-critical approach in American studies, epitomized by scholars such as Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Stephens (2017) and John Carlos Rowe (2014) re-reads American literature and culture from an archipelagic perspective. Reconceiving American studies as archipelagic studies, this perspective replaces conventional continental narratives with a view of America as "constituted by an assemblage of interconnected islands, archipelagoes, shorelines, continents, seas, and oceans" (Roberts and Stephens 2017, book cover). It draws on archipelagic criticism developed in the Caribbean (e.g., by Édouard Glissant) and Pacific (e.g., by Epeli Hau'ofa [2008]) and significantly coincides with archipelagic criticism of the Indian Ocean (see Clare Anderson [2012] on Foucault's "carceral archipelago" or Pamila Gupta's "monsoon archipelago" [2012]). The archipelagic approach signifies the most recent step in questioning problematically reductive, land-based concepts of areas, connecting American studies to the wider world and highlighting global concerns of exploitation, human and nonhuman (see also Helmreich 2009). This critique was arguably made possible only by a turn to the ocean which highlights connectivity and interrelatedness rather than exceptionality and singularity. In sum, the development we have delineated above demonstrates that each of these oceanic shifts in American studies also reflects larger transitions both in the field and occurring in a variety of other geographic and intellectual regions, just as new directions in oceanic studies, discussed in the next section, are reflected here too.

New Directions in Oceanic Studies

Oceanic studies has allowed for a much-needed move beyond the limits of area studies, as the case of American studies above demonstrates, inspired continually by the development of new directions in the maritime humanities—subaltern, new materialist, feminist, and ecocritical. The view of the ocean from the perspective of its laborers has become a productive direction in cultural studies well beyond the Anglophone literary realm. In cultural geography, this includes what scholars such as John Urry and Philip Steinberg have called "cargomobilities" (Steinberg 2015; Birtchnell,

Savitzky, and Urry 2015). Steinberg argues that "[u]nder capitalism, the sea is idealised as a denatured and seemingly immaterial surface of latitude-longitude coordinates across which work (the displacement of mass) can be exercised with minimal resistance so as to enable the annihilation of space (or distance) through time (or speed)." The ocean in this view is seen as "immune to social inscriptions or constructions of territory." Steinberg resists this construction, showing that the ocean is much more "a space of depths, vertical displacements, particle movements and hydrodynamic (as well as social) forces—… anything but a flat, stable surface" (2015, 36; see also Steinberg 2001; Cusack 2014). He calls for us to "reference how the ocean is idealised as immaterial distance as well as the ways in which the boundaries of the global maritime economy exceed the ocean's borders" (Steinberg 2015, 43)—an exhortation taken up, for instance, in the art of the late Allan Sekula (e.g., his *Okeanos* series).

The turn to the ocean has produced other perspectives "from below", for instance Clare Anderson's work on "subaltern lives" in the Indian Ocean (2012), which retrieves fragments of archival evidence that allow for the partial reconstruction of the histories of subaltern travelers around Indian Ocean coasts. A growing body of scholarship on lascars supplements this work, which has been taken up and deployed in literary fiction by the writer Amitav Ghosh (see his *Ibis* trilogy), among others. Khal Toorabully, a path-breaking thinker from Mauritius, deploys "coolitude" as a lens through which to read for experiences of indentured laborers in the Indian Ocean and beyond (see, e.g., Carter and Toorabully 2002).

We might perhaps view this history and geography from below as enmeshed in an older, Marxist materialism, yet what scholars like Steinberg are interested in is also the human interaction with the materiality of cargo and the sea itself, echoing recent developments in cultural studies that can be largely framed within a new materialism. This new materialism turns to the ocean's materiality and ecology in its interrelatedness and interaction with human agency, mostly in the form of oceanic devastation, from plastic islands in the Pacific to overfishing and the consequences of global warming for the world oceans. It is significant that one of the key figures in environmental thinking, American biologist Rachel Carson, concerned herself with the ocean in *The Sea Around Us* in 1951, a decade before she published the classic *Silent Spring* (1961). Starting from the fact that two thirds of our planet and about 90% of most species consist of water, Anglophone ecocritical and ecofeminist work has since then re-conceptualized thinking about the sea in terms of human-nonhuman

interaction, interspecies solidarity, and "The Tragedy of the Commons" (Patricia Yaeger, see Yaeger 2010). As Hester Blum points out in "Terraqueous Planet: The Case for Oceanic Studies," this insight

> is urgent in our current planetary moment: metaphorizing earth and sea, abstracting them from the effects of human actors, has severe consequences both environmentally and politically. Oceanic studies are predicated on a belief in the sea's imaginative and material resources. Both kinds are under constant threat, a contingency that helps account for the field's present emergence at our moment of climate change. (2010, 26)

Such and similar ecocritical perspectives on the sea, implicitly and sometimes explicitly, return to French historian Jules Michelet's *La Mer*, published in 1861. *La Mer* combined natural and human history in ways newly inspiring in the twenty-first century, as many oceanic ecosystems are on the verge of collapse. This bleak outlook is taken up by, among others, Teresa Shewry's *Hope at Sea: Possible Ecologies in Oceanic Literature* (2015) which presents literary visions that offer an alternative, hopeful imaginary. Similarly, Astrida Neimanis's eco-feminist intervention *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (2017) develops a hopeful "hydrofeminist" ethics in which human beings are tied to human and nonhuman others. Developing a feminist phenomenology that understands our bodies as being fundamentally part of the natural world rather than separate from or privileged to it, Neimanis builds on earlier work by Luce Irigaray, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Gilles Deleuze. In addition to Shewry's and Neimanis's work, Elizabeth DeLoughrey's discussion of the "heavy waters" of Atlantic waste (2010) and Donna Haraway's suggestive maritime neologism of the Chthulucene (2016), a tentacular age whose main task will be to repair the Anthropocene's devastations, mark the fundamental ecocritical dimension of the blue humanities. Decolonizing the ocean from human-only, romanticized, masculinist, and Western capitalist perspectives thus represents a common goal in the Anglophone oceanic humanities and connects them to the natural sciences, which also continually draw attention to the destruction of oceanic ecologies and its harmful consequences for our planet.

In our view, decolonizing the ocean is an ecological project itself, one that challenges hegemonic binary thinking and ideas of linear progress that are currently threatening a planetary ecosystem fundamentally reliant on functioning oceanic ecologies. Turning to indigenous, non-Western,

and diasporic knowledges not for their exotic appeal but for their potential to correct Eurocentric misconceptions is important in this respect. One concept that has been taken up repeatedly in the context of Anglophone literary and cultural studies is Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite's tidalectics, a cyclical rather than dialectical model of development based on water's characteristic mobility and on oceanic rhythms. The tidal back-and-forth of the ocean presents "a Caribbean cultural alter/native to Hegelian dialectic … based on the complex interaction of waves lapping on Caribbean beaches, coming together, opposing, dissolving, recreating themselves constantly" (Savory 2011, 14). This has been used as a model, e.g., in Elizabeth DeLoughrey's (2007) exploration of island literatures in order to articulate relations between routes and roots and destabilize essentialist national, ethnic, and regional frameworks still at work in our field of research.

Mobility Studies and Oceanic Cultural Studies

As these developments demonstrate, that which many scholars are now referring to as a "new thalassology," "blue cultural studies," or "blue humanities" (see Mentz 2009; Gillis 2013) speaks to a series of contemporary discourses such as globalization, postcolonialism, ecocriticism, feminism, and science and technology studies (see also the notions of an extraction-focused "techno-ocean" [TON 2017] or "cyborg ocean" [Yaeger 2010, 523]). Arguably, these recent developments also present an important corrective to the romanticized celebrations of fluidity and liquidity in Anglophone cultural studies and beyond through the 1990s and 2000s, showing how metaphors of a liquid modernity and fluid identities are in line with idealizations of neoliberal markets without borders. In blue cultural studies, liquidity, permeability, osmosis, and viscosity (e.g., in Neimanis 2017) are more than metaphors, but often tend to be kept as ideals for subjectivities beyond spatial fixations. The interdisciplinary field of mobility studies has drawn attention to the problematics of such idealizations in times when millions of global refugees long for spatial stabilization and the safety of a new home on the one hand and, on the other hand, has highlighted how the mobility of some has often been predicated on immobilizing others. In this volume on Anglophone representations of maritime mobilities, we discuss, rather than resolve, such tensions between oceanic mobilities and immobilities; while some of the contributors zoom in on nonhuman and ecological mobilities, the

majority highlights trans-oceanic journeys of people—their cultures, products, and ideas—traversing the sea or entrapped by it.

Mobility studies has been thriving in a trans-disciplinary manner similarly to the oceanic humanities, marked also by the founding of new journals (such as *Mobilities* or *Transit*) and book series. The field has addressed mobility (defined, e.g., by Tim Cresswell as "socially produced motion" [2006, 3]) in the context of the proclamation of a "new mobilities paradigm" (Sheller and Urry 2006) as a transformative physical-geographical, material, socio-economic, and cultural practice. Sociologists and cultural geographers like Cresswell, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry, who initiated the field, have called for a critique of the fetishizing of mobility over the many immobilities that contemporary mobility discourses both produce and obscure—while Europeans insist on their Schengen rights of free travel within the European Union, for instance, this mobility privilege has been linked in an ideological conjuncture with the need to close the European Union's borders to unwanted migrants, meanwhile dying by the thousands during Mediterranean crossings.

Our volume responds to this call by exploring the entanglements of mobilization and immobilization as they are articulated and problematized in Anglophone maritime literature and culture, with case studies reaching from the early modern period to the twenty-first century. Our contributors bring into dialogue traditional Eurocentric imaginations of the sea as metaphorical-romantic or material-economic resource with critical representations of maritime im/mobilities in which the ocean emerges as a deathbed for racialized and illegalized humans as well as for nonhuman inhabitants (due to overfishing, microplastics, climate change, etc.). Our collection critically explores the multi-faceted world of oceanic im/mobilities and the work of their cultural representations in the Anglophone world, asking in what ways maritime im/mobilities are articulated and negotiated, affirmed or contested, and to what effect. Located at the intersection of the two interdisciplinary fields of the maritime humanities and mobility studies, the volume takes up cultural geography's revision of mobility beyond mere transportation studies, to question the production of mobilities and immobilities in Anglophone literary and cultural forms in exemplary historical and geographical contexts. As case studies, rather than making universal claims, the contributions demonstrate how the combination of these approaches yield new insights in terms of both the aesthetics and the functions of representations of maritime im/mobilities in their specific socio-cultural and historical contexts.

The first section, “Shapes of Water,” looks at the fundamental question of how oceanic waters can be translated into literary writing and art. Opening the section, Gesa Mackenthun’s essay “Storied Waves: Maritime Connections and Subaltern Knowledge in Arctic and Mediterranean Literary Contact Zones” draws on postcolonial discourses to highlight how maritime mobilities are turned into stories that problematize knowledge and power. Showing how indigenous perspectives reconfigure the Western analytic, both transoceanically and transculturally, in a variety of oceanic contact zones—including the Mediterranean, the Central American Isthmus and the Northwest Passage, the article zooms in on the intersections between imperial scientific hubris and the brutal disciplining and silencing of colonized bodies and voices in these contact zones. Asking how these intersections impact on literature, the author starts with American perspectives that are broadened by examples beyond the Anglophone realm (e.g., Peter Høeg’s bestselling 1992 novel *Miss Smilla’s Feeling for Snow*). The second essay by Kylie Crane, entitled “Birds of the Plastic Pacific: Moving (the) Masses,” points us toward the new materialist approach in oceanic thinking by focusing on the material mass of the ocean itself in a Pacific context, including both written and visual culture. Noting that the “Great Pacific Garbage Patch” is a misnomer that erroneously suggests an easily visualizable and static mass of plastic, Crane explores how images such as that of the Layson albatross, laying prostate within plastic (in Chris Jordan’s “Midway Islands” series and Susan Middleton and David Liittschwager’s *Archipelago* volume) or the rubber duck (in Rick Smith and Bruce Lourie’s book *Slow Death by Rubber Duck* and Donovan Hohn’s *Moby-Duck*) can be mobilized ecocritically. She suggests that mobility refers not just to the moving material itself, but also to “being moved,” i.e., the different aesthetic measures employed to effect responses and responsibilities.

The next section of essays (“Colonial/Imperial Mobilities of the Sea”) explores the relationship between maritime mobilities, nation and empire more specifically and with a focus on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whether with regard to the historical depredations of European colonialism or projected futures of colonies in outer space that heavily draw on past rhetorics of annexation. The first two articles concentrate on the Atlantic. In his essay “Maritime Mobility and the Work of Susanna Rowson: Transatlantic Perspectives,” Leopold Lippert describes how playwright William Dunlap locates the beginnings of American theater on a ship, the *Charming Sally*, in 1752, identifying the origins of a national

American theater tradition as a transnational story of maritime mobility in the Atlantic world. Thomas Massnick's essay "Reading and Writing the Ship in 'Benito Cereno' and 'The Heroic Slave'" posits that slave ship narratives offer important critical insights into political thought on slavery and mobility. Its comparative reading of two canonical slave ship revolt narratives, Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno," and Frederick Douglass's "The Heroic Slave," reflects on the way people in contested maritime spaces are particularly subject to colonialist discourses with real legal consequences. The second pair of essays moves to the Pacific and draws out complex connections between past and present discourses about maritime colonization: in "South Seas Speculation in Finance and Fiction," Melissa Kennedy takes us to the Pacific on a wider historical scale, arguing that the largely imaginary space of the South Seas, as it was created in canonical eighteenth-century British literature (e.g., by Daniel Defoe) and is echoed in contemporary TV series (e.g., the BBC show *Taboo*), crucially informs the similarly imaginative financial speculations that continue to undergird the West's view of the Pacific. A similar projection is at work in the symbolic conflation of U.S.-led Mars exploration programs with nineteenth-century U.S.-American imperial discourse regarding the Pacific and particularly Hawai'i, as Jens Temmen's essay "From HI-SEAS to Outer Space: Discourses of Water and Territory in U.S. Pacific Imperialism and Representations of U.S. Mars Colonization" discusses, concluding the section with an outlook on how maritime cultural and legal frameworks are currently being translated to the cosmos.

The third section, entitled "The Aesthetics of Oceangoing," zooms in on the representational aspects of maritime im/mobility, exploring more closely the aesthetics and artistic strategies that have been used to represent trans-oceanic im/mobilities in literature and art between the turn to the twentieth century and today. The first case study by Sarah Sander, entitled "Precarious Passages: On Migrant Maritime Mobilities, ca. 1907," returns to the Atlantic. It takes contemporary visual discourse on precarious oceanic passages as a starting point for exploring the medial and material conditions and constitutions of migrant maritime mobilities around 1900. In particular, Sander explores how Alfred Stieglitz's famous cubist photograph "The Steerage" problematizes the distinctions between first class and steerage in the context of early twentieth-century maritime migration. Navigating to the era of World War II and its aftermath, Annegret Pelz's essay "High Sea and Sediment: Watermarks in Ilse Aichinger's Work," traces the significance of water and the sea in the work

of Jewish Austrian author Ilse Aichinger and her struggles with the question of literary language after Auschwitz in light of maritime passages to safety during the terror regime of National Socialism. The essay takes us beyond Anglophone literature but also discusses the influence of earlier maritime works in English on Aichinger's work.

In the context of contemporary literature, in which the final three essays are located, Nicole Poppenhagen explores the figuring of maritime mobility in Chinese American literature through Maxine Hong Kingston's 1980 family narrative *China Men*, Pam Chun's 2002 novel *The Money Dragon*, poetry from Angel Island, and Ginny Lim's 1991 play *Paper Angels*. In her article "'Ocean People': Pacific (Im)Mobilities in the Chinese American Imaginary," she reads literary renditions of Pacific crossings by Chinese migrants to the United States as fundamental for the development of Chinese American writing. Turning from migrants to refugees, Alexandra Ganser's contribution "Going Nowhere: Oceanic Im/Mobilities in North American Refugee Fiction" examines the theoretical implications of maritime im/mobilities by revising Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's idea of "lines of flight" and de/territorialization in light of the forced deterritorializations of asylum-seeking people across the globe. Reading Edwidge Danticat's 1991 short story "Children of the Sea" and the Canadian novel *Dogs at the Perimeter*, published in 2011, by Madeleine Thien, Ganser foregrounds maritime refugee literature as a site of negotiating immobilization and the materialities of shipwreck and death, also taking up Achille Mbembe's concept of a "necropolitics" of the ocean. Finally, Charne Lavery's article "'Spoken nowhere but on the water': Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* and Lost-and-found Languages of the Indian Ocean World" introduces maritime mobilities set in the Indian Ocean to the discussion through a reading of the representation of lascars and their mobile languages in Amitav Ghosh's 2008 novel *Sea of Poppies*, the first volume in his widely read *Ibis* trilogy. Coming full circle, the volume thus ends on the fundamental question of how language itself is affected by oceanic mobilities, with implications for both political and literary re-invention.

Though most of these exemplary critical readings are grounded in Anglophone literatures and cultures, the contributions resonate with the general claim that representations of maritime im/mobilities urge for a corrective logic beyond unsustainable binaries of land and sea, imperial order and wet wilderness (first to be crossed, then to be exploited): qua Kamau Brathwaite, a tidalectic hydro-logics based on the insight that mobilities are fundamental to oceanic, and thus planetary, life and death.

From microbes to microplastics and from sailing to cargo ships, our volume responds to such insights from various disciplinary and oceanic angles, showing how the sea has signified a fluid aesthetic as well as a critical potentiality that has inspired writers, artists, and critics to think about the past, present, and future of the oceanic paradox. Bringing the oceanic humanities into dialogue with mobility studies, we hope that this book will inspire scholarship in adjacent fields. In line with Paul Gilroy's recent notion of "offshore humanism" (Gilroy 2018) and Teresa Shewry's hopeful vision of possible oceanic ecologies (Shewry 2015), the focus of what follows is to explore how the oceanic imagination in the Anglophone realm has addressed questions of mobility and immobility, of social, political, and environmental justice, and of living with difference, among and between human and nonhuman beings directly or indirectly connected by the sea.

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PART I

Shapes of Water

CHAPTER 2

Storied Waves: Maritime Connections and Subaltern Knowledge in Arctic and Mediterranean Literary Contact Zones

Gesa Mackenthun

Before confessing his crimes against humanity in creating, and then deserting, an artificial man, Victor Frankenstein admonishes the Arctic explorer Robert Walton to heed his story: "'Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me—let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!'" (Shelley 2003, 29). Yet, after having finished his tale and already close to death, Frankenstein's hubris returns and he admonishes Walton's mutinous sailors to continue their "glorious expedition" even at the cost of death: as "brave men" and "more than men," they should show their masculine "courage" and "fortitude" instead of acting like "cowards" and returning with the "stigma of disgrace … on [their] brows" (217). Frankenstein enthralls the crew with his charismatic verbal art, while his cautionary remarks already seem to be forgotten. *Frankenstein* is a tale of "wasted lives" (Bauman 2004) as the consequence of an incapacity to control

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human hubris. The novel ends with Walton breaking the spell that the encounter with Frankenstein placed on him while his ship breaks free from the Arctic ice.

I begin with this glimpse of *Frankenstein* (1818) because Mary Shelley's novel condenses various aspects of the maritime texts I examine in this essay: with Peter Høeg's *Miss Smilla's Feeling of Snow* it shares the geographical desire for discovering the secrets of the Arctic, and like Merle Kröger's *Havarie* (Engl. *Collision*) it invites us to explore the human cost of the dream of global connectedness.[1] As John Bugg (2005) has shown, *Frankenstein* shares common concerns with Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, which Mary Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, had reviewed for the *Analytical Review* in 1789. Related through the revolutionary ideas circulating in the Atlantic contact zone between the late 1780s and the early 1800s (the period between the British Parliamentary Hearings about the slave trade and the radical writings of Robert Wedderburn; see Linebaugh and Rediker 2000, esp. ch. 9), Equiano's autobiography and Shelley's novel share a concern with the psychology of inequality and irresponsibility on which the Atlantic slave-based world rests, in spite of the Atlantic Enlightenment's propagation of cosmopolitan connectivity. They likewise share an emphasis on education as a necessary precondition of overcoming social subalternity, as John Bugg shows in his comparison of both texts' use of the trope of the talking book (2005, 657–661). Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* are appropriate geographical guides for this essay because both demonstrate an Enlightenment understanding of global connectedness—especially of the concurrence between the search for knowledge and the topic of human disposability—that this essay will address, with reference to contemporary texts and events relating to the contact zones of the Arctic and the Mediterranean. They invite us to view oceanic spaces and passages in a planetary way and to combine macro-geographical considerations of oceanic contact with reflections on the micro-level of human experience as expressed in fictional and non-fictional transcultural narratives. Inspired by Edward Said's plea for investigating "overlapping geographies" and

[1] The Spanish sociologist and critic of globalization César Rendueles seems to share my opinion about the political dimension of *Frankenstein*. The cover of his book *Capitalismo Canalla* (2015) shows a Leviathan-like Boris Karloff marching through a sea of workers, his grip on an imperial column. Rendueles reads the history of "scoundrel capitalism" through classic literary texts such as the classic sea tale of *Robinson Crusoe*.

"intertwined histories" (1993), as well as Kirsten Gruesz's foregrounding of the cultural complexity of maritime geopolitical regions—her reconsideration of the Mesoamerican isthmus as an "engine" of American empire that provided "the discursive constructs that would inform later visions of the 'natural' shape of the national body" (2006, 472)—I argue that new understandings of the global connections between these two levels may emerge from looking at discursive conjunctions, seams, and forms of "coastality" (Ganser 2013, referring to maritime contact and conflict zones where different landed and maritime epistemes meet, converge, and compete for hermeneutic hegemony). Writing at the beginning of globalization, Shelley and Equiano and, a few decades later, Herman Melville, found ways to evoke the complexity of these geographical, social, and epistemic connections beyond histories of nations and mainlands.

With these two powerful works of the transatlantic Enlightenment as a guide, I explore the significance of maritime passages and contact zones in more recent literary texts from both a geopolitical and a humanistic perspective. In doing so, I invoke the importance of ways of knowing that are extraterritorial to the main pathways of Western science and knowledge and that represent the perspectives of people inhabiting or crossing maritime spaces. For the two maritime regions in literary focus here—the Arctic and the Mediterranean—I investigate texts that evoke local or subaltern knowledge in direct contestation of hegemonic (economic, scientific, political) epistemologies.

Arctic Mysteries and Indigenous Knowledge

Like the journey of Robert Walton, Peter Høeg's *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* (orig. *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*, 1992) alerts us to the darker side of nationalist celebrations of Arctic "discovery"—i.e., economic greed coupled with political intransparency and cover-up. Høeg's novel shows how Indigenous people in Greenland suffer the consequences of Western corporations' resource extraction in the Arctic North. In fact, it deserves a second look from our own geo-historical perspective of global warming and competition for Arctic resources. Kirsten Thisted has placed Høeg's novel within a postcolonial analytical framework and argues that it shows the connection between the extension of economic and political control over the Arctic (by surveying the land, mining, and drilling) and psychological control over its Indigenous inhabitants—e.g., Smilla's Inuit mother, who is sexually exploited by her father, and the Inuit boy Isaiah

(Smilla's neighbor), whose body is turned into an object of medical investigation (Thisted 2002, 315). Employing the theoretical grid offered by Edward Said, Thisted speaks of the novel as a manifestation and critique of Arctic Orientalism (315): "manifestation" because she considers the novel's cultural discourse as residually exoticist in spite of its political lucidity (318–319). The stereotypical representation of the uprooted Inuit woman (Isaiah's mother) may be owing to the time and place of publication (in 1992 the reach of postcolonial discourse hardly went beyond the Anglophone world) and to the conventions of the political mystery and sci-fi genres the novel utilizes. This becomes most apparent in the fact that Høeg locates the origin of all evil in a meteor that, according to the novel's invented past, came down in the Arctic in 1859. It started the secret operations the text invites us to read as an allegory of the present hunt for precious materials in the Arctic, which neglects the rights and claims of the Indigenous inhabitants of Greenland, Nunavut, and other Arctic regions.[2] The meteor and the secret deals surrounding it represent human scientific hubris in the fields of nuclear and genetic engineering and biological warfare (Thisted 2002, 316).

The ecological aspect is not very strong in Høeg's thriller; the criminal action centers on an accident and its successive cover-up and on the continuous scientific subjugation of the little boy, Isaiah. The poisonous worm inhabiting his body is set free by the alien agency of the meteor, not by humans (as it would probably be in contemporary ecological thrillers thriving on political and corporate conspiracy). In spite of this fantastic device, a contemporary allegorical reading could focus on the novel's potential for reflecting on the entanglements of commercial interests, biopolitics, scientific knowledge formation, and the human and ecological hazards that often result from this combination. The final section of the novel, "The Sea," carries the protagonist on an adventurous trip to the Arctic as a passenger of the discovery vessel *Kronos*. Thisted sees two historical ships behind the novel's fictional one *Titanic* and the Danish ship

[2] It is interesting that Høeg dates the meteor incident to 1859—a period when the oil age started and when modern technologies of extraction were beginning to be developed (e.g., dynamite). Petroleum became a major industry following the discovery of oil at Oil Creek, Pennsylvania, in 1859. Dynamite was invented by the Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel and patented in 1867. As recent research by Vienna cultural anthropologist Gertrude Saxinger and her team shows, the access conditions to Arctic wealth have somewhat changed since the publication of the novel and since Nunavut's gaining of political autonomy, making it less easy for TNCs to mine and drill in Greenland.

Hans Hedtoft, whose sinking in 1959 symbolizes the failure of Danish colonial policy in Greenland (Thisted 317–318). But the clandestine cruise of the *Kronos* resonates with the memory of earlier Arctic expeditions in search of passages and resources, inspired by the desire to lift the veil of mystery from the icy regions of the Far North and failing because of their disregard of local knowledge—whose bearers, Høeg suggests, were women more often than not.

The sci-fi dimension of *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* points to the problem that the political conflict is not only about finding and controlling the passage to Asian markets but also about access to precious resources—oil, gas, rare earths, gold—and addressing the environmental hazards that may result from such uncontrolled extraction. In the figure of the postcolonial private eye Smilla, with her special knowledge of snow deriving from her childhood in Greenland, passed on to her by her Inuit mother, the novel introduces the topic of Indigenous local (geographical, meteorological) knowledge and the precariousness of cross-cultural identity formation under the conditions of colonial disavowal. This happens in contrapuntal tension with the political contestation of Arctic space. The novel combines geopolitical and human-centered strategies, emphasizing the biopolitical consequences of transnational actors' schemes.

Presenting the Arctic as a world of mystery, Høeg's novel feeds on the mythology produced by the European preoccupation with that geographical region since the earliest transatlantic forays into those icy regions. Equiano, too, was lured by it when he joined his friend Irving's expedition to the North Pole in 1773 to find "what our Creator never intended we should, a passage to India" (Equiano 1995, 172). The explorers went in two ships, the *Racehorse* and *Carcass*, and reached a latitude of almost 81 degrees north—"much farther, by all accounts, than any navigator had ever ventured before"—only to discover that the attempt to find a passage to India in that direction was impracticable because of the ice (177).[3] Like Shelley's fictional figure Walton and his crew, they became stuck in ice, and were lucky to make it back at all.

Equiano's comment uses the romantic trope of divine interdiction—the Northwest Passage holding a similar position as the Pillars of Hercules during antiquity. Seventy years after their unsuccessful journey, Sir John Franklin's lost expedition in search of a Northwest Passage became the

[3] See John Lodge's "Race-horse and Carcass inclosed in the ice" (1773): https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-110115 (last accessed Oct. 22, 2021).

beginning of one of Europe's and Canada's most persistent maritime myths. With global warming and the melting of the polar caps, the Northwest Passage has now become navigable and the Arctic ice gradually reveals its treasures. In 2014, a team of researchers found the wreck of the *Erebus*, one of John Franklin's ships, which had been lost since 1845; two years later, in September 2016, the *Terror* was located as well.[4] Not only has one of the great mysteries of maritime archaeology been solved, but the discovery of the *Erebus* also fired the national symbolic politics of Canada. As *The Guardian* and CBC report, the finding of these two ships, while of national importance, also reinforces the credibility of traditional Inuit knowledge (Hinchey); in addition, both that knowledge and the geographical location of the ships are significant for Canada's territorial claims in the Arctic region. According to *The Guardian* and CBC, the wreck was found after the exploring ship *Martin Bergmann* followed the lead of a story told by its Inuk crew member, Sammy Kogvik of Gjoa Haven, King William Island, Nunavut. Kogvik had told the crew that on a fishing trip six years before, he had noticed a large piece of wood sticking out of Terror Bay's sea ice which looked like a mast. As Paul Watson writes for the *Guardian*:

> In a phone interview, Kogvik said he stopped that day to get a few snapshots of himself hugging the wooden object, only to discover when he got home that the camera had fallen out his pocket. Kogvik resolved to keep the encounter secret, fearing the missing camera was an omen of bad spirits, which generations of Inuit have believed began to wander King William Island after Franklin and his men perished. When Schimnowski [the expedition's operations director] heard Kogvik's story, he didn't dismiss it, as Inuit testimony has been so often during the long search for Franklin's ships. (2016)

The *Erebus* had also been located with the help of Inuit oral history. In that earlier case, native historian Louis Kamookak helped researchers pinpoint the location of the wreck after passing on the story that one of the ships was crushed in ice northwest of King William Island, while another—later confirmed to be the *Erebus*—drifted farther south, where it was ultimately found. "Every time there's a finding, it's kind of a sad feeling," he said; "I think the mystery's more fun than the actual knowing" (Hinchey

[4] The following account closely follows the reconstruction of events in Ben Finney's documentary *The Hunt for the Arctic Ghost Ship* (Lion TV/PBS, 2015).

2016). A sign of the growing recognition of Indigenous knowledge is the fact that Parks Canada, the institution responsible for the salvage of the wreck, had to seek permission from Nunavut's director of heritage before divers could remove any HMS *Terror* artifacts (Hinchey 2016).

Without the Inuit oral tradition, then, the scientific expedition would not have been able to trace the wrecks. As the documentary *The Hunt for the Arctic Ghost Ship* on the finding of the *Erebus* in 2014 shows, locating the ship crucially depended on following the lead of the oral Inuit tradition. While numerous scientific teams had scanned the ocean floor in the area where the last cairn of the expedition had been found (north of King William Island), Inuit inhabitants time and again pointed much further south when asked about a sunken European ship. As so often before, the scientists did not listen to what they considered merely a folk tale. It took a new approach—unthinkable to former generations of scientists—that respected the Indigenous story as a reliable source of knowledge to finally track down the *Erebus*.

The new recognition of traditional Indigenous knowledge may be related to the fact that Ben Finney, director of the documentary, is an expert on Polynesian navigation. In 1980, he organized the voyage of the Hawai'ian outrigger canoe *Hokule'a* in order to demonstrate that Polynesian navigational knowledge was a sufficient technology for long-distance oceanic travel: critic Greg Dening knew Finney and shared his passion for furthering acceptance and recognition of Polynesian Indigenous epistemologies (2004, 27–28).[5] In his film on the discovery of the *Erebus*, Finney, now in his eighties, similarly recognizes the importance and reliability of traditional oral knowledge, this time of the Arctic Inuit. The native stories also confirmed the scientific conjecture that the *Erebus* had been *sailed* south toward its last anchorage by a few surviving sailors, rather than simply having *drifted* south with the ice.

The documentary makes a point of these unknown sailors having been the first Europeans to have found the entrance to the Northwest Passage even though they paid for their knowledge with their own destruction. What is remarkable about this "discovery" is the role that Indigenous

[5] Finney is one of several non-Indigenous scholars who created an awareness for the contributions of Indigenous seamen to the history of the Pacific and of oceans in general. See also Chappell 1997.

knowledge plays in producing Canadian pride.[6] As geographer Philip Steinberg reminds us, Indigenous knowledge and the Indigenous Arctic presence are relevant for Canadian claims to that area, its passage rights, and its resources.[7] The discovery of the *Erebus* at what is considered the entrance of the Northwest Passage strengthens Canada's territorial claim—but only on the provision that the Inuit, whose presence in the area precedes that of non-Indigenous people, are considered as being domestic to Canada even before Canada began to exist as a nation and England included the region in its Commonwealth. Although Canadian territorial claims crucially depend on Indigenous presence and knowledge, it is to be feared that the spoils from Arctic drilling and mining will be divided among large transnational corporations while local inhabitants will suffer the ecological consequences.

Mobile Maritime Packages

Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh's book *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000) encourages us to include the distinct histories of *all* people whose lives have been affected by the sea as being related and intertwined. With their examples of various political lives crisscrossing the "Red Atlantic" of the late 1700s, they suggest mending a rift that can still be observed between historical and literary narratives of the sea on the one hand and the largely abstract and unstoried existence of the sea as an uninhabited space in the discourses of geography and philosophy on the other. Such a view is generally based on the erroneous assumption that history takes place on land, not at sea, paving the way for geopolitical abstraction. Such a land-based macro-geographical ordering of the world has itself come under critical attack. In their book *The Myth of Continents* (1997) Martin Lewis and Kären Wigen refer to the arbitrariness of ordering and dividing land into meaningful entities called continents—therefore transporting the critique of nationalism to a larger geographical realm. They criticize

[6] In the legal conflict, it is the Indigenous presence which might consolidate the Canadian position because the "internal sea" concept requires historical presence and continuous occupation.

[7] In an essay published previously to the archaeological sensation in 2014, Steinberg discusses the legal dispute, especially between Canada and the U.S., about access to the Arctic, about whether the Northwest Passage belongs legally to Canada's "internal sea" or is an international strait. Each of these legal statuses would entail different rights of sovereignty and access (2014, 86–87).

traditional ways of subdividing continents within the discipline of geography and in geographical discourse more generally. Both the distribution of life forms and the geological order of the earth, they write, do not support the common geographical order of continents (Lewis and Wigen 1997, 33–34). Lewis and Wigen regard the current division of the world into continents as an arbitrary case of "metageography"[8] and counter the well-known Cold War division of the globe into First, Second, and Third Worlds with a culturally less hierarchical scheme of different geopolitical regions, including maritime zones. Steinberg confirms the fundamental error in geographical thought to regard land masses as the basic division and of devaluing oceans as historically less decisive places (2001, 10).

In other words, our geographical perspective has been lopsided; it has been trained to center on mainlands and continents, thus marginalizing islands and maritime spaces. One of the reasons for this terracentric perspective is the fact that it is difficult to conceptualize agency for a fluid matter like water; another is the romanticization of the sea as an empty space where history leaves no trace. In his essay "Of Other Seas: Metaphors and Materialities in Maritime Regions," Steinberg picks up Hester Blum's dictum that "[t]he sea is not a metaphor."[9] Both criticize the way in which "a raft of scholarship in cultural studies … [used] the fluvial nature of the ocean … to signal a world of mobilities, betweenness, instabilities, and becomings" (Steinberg 2013, 156). Steinberg counters this abstract and anti-humanistic notion of the sea with that of maritime regionalism, whose proponents emphasize the "cultural and economic interchange *between* societies" located in oceanic or maritime regions. While conceptions of the sea in historical-sociological scholarship tend to remain undertheorized in Steinberg's view (as in Braudel, Arif Dirlik, or Wallerstein), another group of oceanic region studies, in his opinion, over-theorizes the sea. Paul Gilroy, Steinberg contends, exploits the theoretical potential of the Black Atlantic as a critical metaphor but then mostly uses it as a trope for his own studies of contemporary popular culture; "[v]enturing into Gilroy's Atlantic," Steinberg teases, "one never gets wet" (158). An even greater danger lies with some of the theoretical models inspiring

[8] Lewis and Wigen define "metageography" as a "set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world: the often unconscious frameworks that organize studies of history, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, or even natural history" (ix).

[9] This repeats what Bernhard Klein and I argued in 2004 in *Sea Changes*.

postcolonial thinkers like Gilroy—Steinberg mentions Deleuze and Guattari's reduction of the sea to a "'smooth space *par excellence*'"—i.e., a space beyond landed hierarchies (158; see Ganser in this volume). This can be seen as another version of the romantic trope that regards the sea as a space of freedom outside the reach of power. What Steinberg finds especially troubling is Foucault's famous allegorization of the sea in his essay "Of Other Spaces" ("Des Espaces Autres," 1967) as a "heterotopia *par excellence*":

> the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens. … In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates. (1986, 27; qtd. in Steinberg 2013, 158)[10]

As so many others, Bernhard Klein and I were at first enchanted with Foucault's beautiful language and used this passage quite uncritically in *Sea Changes* (2004). But of course Foucault here transports a number of well-known clichés, not only about ships and oceans but also about ideas of order: between associations of pirates, treasure hunts in the colonies, and pleasure trips to Oriental gardens, he imagines Puritan colonies in North America as heterotope because they were "absolutely regulated" so that "human perfection was effectively achieved" there (27). In *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, David Harvey criticizes Foucault's boat example as reducing the concept of heterotopia to the theme of escape. The pleasure ship, Harvey writes, is as "banal" in its sense of the heterotopic as a "commercialized cruise ship": without any recognizable critical, liberatory, or emancipatory aspect to it (2009, 160–161). In the passage, the ocean is "reduced to a metaphor: a spatial … signifier

[10] In Foucault's defense, it should be added that he rejected the publication of "Des Espaces Autres" (1967) throughout his life and, more importantly, that he had indeed provided a more challenging and innovative description of "heterotopia" one year earlier, in *Order of Things* (1966). Here, he emphasizes the "disturbing" aspects of heterotopic sites which, he writes, "secretly undermine language, they make it impossible to name this *and* that, they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax'" by which he means the "syntax which causes words and things … to 'hold together'" (Foucault 1973, xviii). It is indicative of criticism's negligence and/or conservatism that it generally privileges the more romantic text over the theoretically challenging one.

for a world of shifting, fragmented identities, mobilities, and connections. … Thus, the overtheorization of ocean space by poststructuralist scholars of maritime regions is as problematic as its undertheorization by political economy-inspired scholars" (Steinberg 2013, 158). In contrast, Steinberg argues that the "physical geography of the ocean *does* matter" (159):

> How we interact with, utilize the resources of, and regulate the oceans that bind our ocean regions is intimately connected with how we understand those oceans as physical entities; as wet, mobile, dynamic, deep, dark spaces that are characterized by complex movements and interdependencies of water molecules, minerals, and non-human biota as well as humans and their ships. The oceans that unify our ocean regions are much more than surfaces for the movement of ships (or for the movement of ideas, commodities, money, or people) and they are much more than spaces in which we hunt for resources. (159)

Steinberg suggests reconstructing the physicality of the ocean by employing the approach of the mathematician Joseph-Louis Lagrange (1736–1813), who, rather than privileging matter over movement, regards movement as the essence of geography rather than its result.[11] Lagrangians define movement with the help of "mobile packages": "The world is constituted by mobility without reference to any stable grid of places or coordinates. From this perspective, movement is the foundation of geography" (160). The Lagrangian method is perhaps not the best basis for writing the history of maritime regions, but it offers a productive way of thinking beyond prevalent "landed" epistemologies in terms of the agency of the water itself: "we need … to bring the ocean itself into the picture, not just as an experienced space but as a dynamic field that … produces difference even as it unifies" (161). Rather than continuing along this new materialist line of thought, Steinberg suggests an ocean-region-based perspective and to look at the world from the perspectives of coasts, swamps, estuaries, islands, wetlands, ships, and ice floes (163; the perspective he suggests in my view bears some similarity with Alexandra Ganser's concept of

[11] Lagrangians "trace the paths of 'floaters' that travel in three-dimensional space, with each floater representing a particle, the fundamental unit in Lagrangian fluid dynamics. Movement is defined by the displacement across space of material characteristics within mobile packages, not abstract forces, and these characteristics are known only through their mobility" (Steinberg 2013, 160).

"coastality," 2013). Such a perspective adds a *blue* Atlantic to the black one and the various red ones (in reference to the Indigenous presence and labor history). The ocean-region-based perspective is post- or non-humanist, or, as Steinberg writes, "more-than-human": a "force that *impacts* humans but as part of a marine assemblage in which humans are just one component" (164). From this new materialist ocean-region-based perspective, the ocean is seen not just a "space that *facilitates* movement—the space across which things move—but … a space that is *constituted by* and *constitutive of* movement" (165).

Although Steinberg does not give any specific examples, one can easily imagine how the critical perspective he suggests helps us address the more-than-human consequences of, say, oceanic pollution: it invites us to reflect on the complex interrelations between human waste production in the world's urban centers and the microplastics floating in gigantic oceanic waste zones and in the bodies of marine animals—far away from the centers of human consumption (see DeLoughrey 2010). It expands the scope of cultural theory by allowing us to integrate the physicality of melting Arctic ice, a process which changes the aggregate conditions of the marine world, with social and cultural consequences around the world. Avoiding the pitfalls of object-ontologist aestheticizations of such processes (esp. their inability to speak of the sustained responsibility of human activity), an ocean-region perspective re-centers the critical perspective on maritime spaces as ecotopes where human lives and activities intersect with those of non-human agencies, including the uncontrollable agency of winds and currents.

The "Black" Mediterranean

Today, the Mediterranean as a major maritime contact zone is increasingly connotated as a sea of death. In her novel *Havarie* (2015; Engl. *Collision*, 2017), Merle Kröger explores the Mediterranean as what Wilson Harris calls a "schizophrenic sea" (1983, 99)—"schizophrenic" in the ways pleasure and luxury meets suffering and death by water. The novel reminds us of the painful complexity, or "Black Atlanticity," of the contemporary Mediterranean, emphasizing the contemporaneity of luxury tourism and mass migration from Africa, occasioned by persecution, poverty, and the denial of equal access to the benefits of globalization (while receiving large shares of global junk; Bauman 2004). Kröger wrote her novel under the impression of mass drownings in the Mediterranean. Her novel seems to be inspired by Zygmunt Bauman's bleak analysis of the unequal exchange between the Global North and the Global South. As Iain Chambers writes in *Mediterranean Crossings*:

> What is left out of global calculation and lives on as residue, refuse, and remnant, the world's poor—the living dead seeking to survive on less than a $ a day—is what comes to be socially, culturally, and racially classified in the abject pathologies of the subaltern. Whether it is the migrant and refugee blotching the global imminence of Occidental whiteness, or, contra the noise of progress, the unfathomable echo of a silent South, the consistent fear and terror that yesterday constituted the colonial space today infiltrates and haunts the modern metropolis. In the insistence of what is considered a dead matter (the world of the colonized) but is very much alive, metropolitan space is increasingly zoned, categorized, cut up, and controlled by surveillance and policing. (2008, 6–7)

Stories of this "silent South," this "black" Mediterranean, have of course haunted us for many years,[12] while being still able to ignore the daily horrors that the coastal inhabitants of Greece and Sicily had to deal with. The situation is not new, as a photo by Javier Baulutz, included in Peter Hulme's essay in *Sea Changes*, of a sunbathing couple with the body of a dead refugee in the background suggests (2004, 197).

Kröger's contemporary sea novel establishes a dialectical configuration between different kinds of ships whose routes cross near the coast of Spain: the rubber boat of a group of refugees running out of fuel near Cartagena; a gigantic pleasure cruiser forced, by the law of the sea, to stay close to the refugee boat until the arrival of the Spanish coast guard; the coast guard itself; and an Irish container ship on its way back from Algeria. Told from various perspectives, the novel unfolds a contemporary world full of vicious contradictions by contrasting of elitist passengers of the pleasure cruiser and refugees struggling for survival. Rather than posing a heterotopia in itself—a "floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself," driven by desire "from port to port" and "from brothel to brothel" (Foucault), the pleasure cruiser in *Havarie* is part of a tidalectic constellation,[13] an archipelagic scenario it

[12] See Fritz Baumann's film *Anansi* (2003).

[13] "Tidalectics" was coined by Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite as a counter-concept to dialectics (Reckin 2003, 1). His maritime metaphor emphasizes non-human agency and non-progressiveness, resembling Édouard Glissant's concept of a "poétique de la relation" ("poetics of relation"). In Anna Reckin's words, the term evokes the "recursive movement-in-stasis that … contains within it specific vectors: the westward, northward movements of the slave trade, the westward push of the harmattan" (2). Brathwaite's critique of dialectics, as a Hegelian and Marxist concept, is misleading, however, as dialectics is not necessarily limited to just *two* entangled and interacting phenomena or agencies—the term referring to "dialogue" rather than "twoness" ("dia-," not "di-").

shares with the three other vessels. *Pace* Foucault, the cruiser does not exist "by itself"; rather, it is a multidimensional space reiterating within its own gigantic corpus the asymmetrical power relations that shape the world outside. The liner is, in Gilroy's words, "a micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion" (1993, 4). The history of involuntary migration across the Mediterranean not only takes place outside its confines but forms an aspect of its work force: invisible to the wealthy passengers, the Syrian refugee Marwan Farouki works illegally in the cruiser's laundry—on a ship ambivalently named *Spirit of Europe*. Marwan suffers a severe head injury during an accident, but instead of treating him, the crew take him to the disabled refugee boat lying alongside the steamer and leave him there, together with a full fuel tank, which rids them of their legal duty to stay by the boat until the arrival of the coast guard. Marwan does not survive the trip and at the end of the novel Karim, an Algerian refugee in the boat, takes his passport and assumes his identity in order to be reunited with his wife in France.

The novel introduces multiple voices reminiscent of Fanon's "wretched of the earth" in search of a decent living, expatriates from the Ukraine and from India working as officers and underlings on the various ships, but also the Spanish coast guard member Diego Martínez, who cannot get used to his sad duty of taking the bodies of dead refugees on board. Diego's own community, a little fishing village near Cartagena, has experienced devastating socio-economic change due to the conflagrations of the refinery of the Spanish oil corporation Repsol at Repesas, Escombreras, Cartagena, in 1969, which has destroyed the livelihood of the villagers and caused disease and death in a whole region.[14] The novel's important cultural work consists also in including such glimpses of local and subaltern knowledge from the peripheries of the extractive globalized world—of accidents that most of us are not aware of but that have shaped collective identities and continue to do so.[15] It dialectically connects the two

[14] For a reconstructed documentary of this disaster, see "Incendio." The German original of *Collision*, *Havarie*, has an appendix with photographic references to this and other events mentioned in the novel. This documentary part is unfortunately missing in the English translation.

[15] Another recent literary example is Indra Sinha's novel *Animal's People* (2007) about the aftermath and continued catastrophe of the accident at the Union Carbide chemical factory in Bhopal, India.

disasters ("Havarie" in German)—that of the oil factory and that of the refugee boat—implying a connection between industrially caused ecocide and various forms of social death. It thereby suggests that human "waste" is not only produced outside of Europe's borders but also within. The reader is invited to reflect on the connections between the oil-drenched fields around Diego's home village and the oil-drenched banks of the Niger Delta in Africa that Helon Habila writes about in his novel *Oil on Water* (2010/ 2011).

A consequence of these social and environmental disasters is the psychological deracination and dysfunctionality of most characters. The following passage shows the daily hopelessness with which Diego—and by extension all members of the Spanish, Italian, and Greek coast guards—is confronted:

> Cartagena Bay lies silently underneath the almost full moon. Where are the men they spent the day looking for? Where are the other people he has searched for in vain? There have to be hundreds of them by this point.
>
> The travelers on the *pateras* pass along to each other the number for the sea rescue service in Cartagena. "If you're in trouble, call them." Floating in the middle of the sea, they stumble across some cell network or another and then call up to the switchboard.
>
> Do you understand? They can call, but they might still be lost if we can't find them fast enough. They could still die of dehydration. They could still drown. They could still be plowed down by a freighter. They have to cross two shipping channels between Algeria and the Spanish coast, at night, without lights. Invisible to every radar. All of these lost people are silhouettes, like the graffiti on the harbor wall. (Kröger 2017, 203)[16]

[16] "Die Bucht von Cartagena liegt still unter dem fast vollen Mond. Wo sind die Männer, nach denen sie heute gesucht haben? Wo sind all die Leute, nach denen er je vergeblich gesucht hat? Es müssen Hunderte sein, mittlerweile.

Auf den *pateras* verteilen sie die Nummer der Seenotrettung von Cartagena. 'Wenn ihr in Schwierigkeiten seid, ruft da an.' Dann treiben die mitten auf dem Meer, finden irgendein Mobilfunknetz und rufen oben in der Zentrale an. Verstehst du? Die können telefonieren, aber sie sind trotzdem verloren, wenn wir sie nicht rechtzeitig orten. Die können trotzdem verdursten. Die können trotzdem ertrinken. Die können trotzdem von einem Frachter überfahren werden. Zwei Fahrrinnen müssen sie überqueren auf dem Weg von Algerien an die spanische Küste. Nachts. Ohne Licht. Unsichtbar für jeden Radar. … Sie sind Schemen, all diese Verlorenen, wie die Graffiti auf der Hafenmauer" (2015, 210).

Like Javier Baulutz's photograph mentioned above, Kröger uses the maritime setting to expose the brutal dialectics of the contemporary world. Her novel also has a disenchanting effect for anyone who still believes, as Foucault did, that the cruise ship was an ideal place—what in German is called a "Traumschiff," literally a "ship of dreams"—outside of the quotidian social sphere. Here, the cruise ship is a ship of lost souls of expatriate migrants and of degenerate fools whose pleasure is ensured by an underpaid global workforce; it encapsulates the hypocrisy of a world order kept up by the fiction of private happiness while reducing the larger part of humanity to economic dependency and despair. In Kröger's novel, the cruise ship is not the "other" of transnational extraction but is itself a form of extraction: with its make-belief splendor, it sucks morality from people's minds. As a drifting pleasure machine, it is part of a larger heterotopian formation that defies easy semantic identification, that tangles and shatters familiar beliefs (as in Foucault's less exoticist description of heterotopia in *The Order of Things*, 1973, xviii) and calls for a more complex assessment of the present global condition than that offered by Foucault's 1967 essay.

In Conclusion: Rescuing "Wasted Lives"

Merle Kröger uses the subaltern knowledge and personal memories of her figures as a literary characterization device to explain what brought them to the Mediterranean. Such memory narratives give the reader access to characters' minds and personalities. Høeg uses a similar figural focalization, e.g., when Smilla remembers her encounters with the boy Isaiah during her dangerous investigation of his death. With the help of this intimacy-producing device, both writers utilize the aesthetic potential of literature to create empathy and a sense of responsibility in their readers—the responsibility of the living to remember those who have died as a result of capitalist greed and economic malfunction.

Death is the end of all memories and all knowledge. Drowning is the most common cause of death for refugees and migrants coming across the Mediterranean, reminiscent of the millions who drowned in the Black Atlantic during the first era of globalization. With oblique allusions to the thousands of slaves dying during the Middle Passage, Herman Melville, in *Moby-Dick*, has the *Pequod*'s black cabin boy Pip return from his plunge

into the ocean possessed with the special gift of seeing beyond the narrow intellectual frame of his shipmates. He identifies the doubloon, which Ahab had nailed on the main mast as a reward for finding the elusive white whale, as the ship's, and by extension American society's, "navel":

> Here's the ship's navel, this doubloon here, and they are all on fire to unscrew it. … And so they'll say in the resurrection, when they come to fish up this old mast, and find a doubloon lodged in it, with bedded oysters for the shaggy bark. Oh, the gold! the precious, precious, gold! the green miser'll hoard ye soon! Hish! hish! God goes 'mong the worlds blackberrying. (1967, 363)

Pip drowns at long last when Moby Dick sinks the *Pequod*, but before his physical death, he walks the deck like a prophet of impending doom, adopting the Pentecostal gift of "speaking in tongues" and visionary historical knowledge. He "remembers" the fates of slaves in the Antilles, never having been there himself. In other words, he possesses an extraterritorial epistemic gift unavailable to his shipmates. Through his "crazy-witty" talk we hear fragments of a story that has never really been told—that is beginning to be told only now, e.g., by postcolonial and African American writers, and to be heard within scholarly discourse.

Zygmunt Bauman's concept of human disposability, for which he coined the phrase "wasted lives," helps us connect the human dimensions of transoceanic history. While during the time of the transatlantic slave trade human lives were wasted in order to keep the capitalist machine running, technological improvements, of which digitalization is but the latest version, make human lives more and more redundant and disposable—a massive denial of the human need and right to work (Bauman 2004, 39–45 et passim). Climate change and land-grabbing on an unprecedented scale aggravate the present crisis. It is their shared dispossession and disposability that unites the angry white men of the American Midwest (and other economically undeveloping regions in the Western world) with those they oppose, refugees and migrants seeking economic security by coming across desert and maritime borders. Both of these phenomena—the dehumanization of large sections of the lower middle class and the fates of those "illegal" border-crossers—Bauman suggests, are by-products of what he calls "liquid modernity," a term that invokes the memory of the watery spaces whose crossings set into motion the modern exploitation-based system.

Young Olaudah Equiano, Melville's Pip, Høeg's Isaiah, the dead refugee boy Aylan Kurdi: the ultimate victims of interconnected global maritime violence are children. Their fates connect different geographies and intercultural conflicts. The waters are "heavy" with their stories, which is not least an effect of the "unloitering vigilance" and monomaniacal resolve of global greed that Melville allegorized in Captain Ahab (see *Moby-Dick*, "The Chart"). A critical approach from the humanities requires that the stories of the many unnamed maritime workers, slaves, and migrants be told contrapuntally with those of discoverers and conquerors—both from the center and from the margins of the global engine. As we are moving toward more relational approaches, analyzing the entanglements of racial capitalism, territorial dispossession, the nexus between predatory capitalism and social austerity, as well as the "intimacies" of it all,[17] the dialectics and tidalectics of maritime mobilities will remain a central concern.[18]

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[17] For those new developments, see Byrd et al. 2018; for "intimacies," Lowe 2015.

[18] I dedicate this essay to the Turkish rescue worker who brought Aylan Kurdi's body onto land.

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CHAPTER 3

Birds of the Plastic Pacific: Moving (the) Masses

Kylie Crane

One of the many presents my beautiful, privileged son received on the occasion of his birth was a rubber ducky. Not content with a simple rubber duck, the person who gave him this opted for a rubber ducky encased in a plastic ball, with a fluid in it, and, swimming in this fluid, tiny straw-like pieces of colored plastic. The giver of this present certainly must have been unaware of the abject joy with which this present would provide me (my child possibly less abject, more joy). Nothing could encapsulate the arguments I wish to make in this contribution more completely: a plastic bird, encased in further plastic, with nurdles in soft " "baby colors" "decorating" the water. So much swimming plastic.

The doubling of the subtitle to this contribution—"Moving (the) Masses"—picks up the mobility focus of this volume in two specific ways. "Moving Masses" refers to the representations I examine in what follows: the pelagic plastic, specifically, pelagic Pacific plastic, which coalesce around images of birds. "Moving the Masses," in turn, suggests the ways in which we relate to these representations, or, how discourses (visual and

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written) operate to elicit responses. The rubber ducky floating on water, accompanied by tiny colorful plastic pieces and encased in a plastic ball, is symbol and symptom: the bird is mobile on the fluid, and yet at the same time trapped by the plastic; the ball itself is mobile, and yet connected to flows of plastic as commodity and waste.

The moniker "Great Pacific Garbage Patch" is one of the many phrases used to denote the problems of plastic in the Pacific. Others include the "Gyre," the "North Pacific Gyre," or the "Pacific Trash Vortex." The "Patch" of the most well-established moniker is problematic.[1] As Andrew Blackwell observes, "it isn't a visual problem, and this conflict between the reality of the problem and its nonvisual nature is at the root of the plastic island misconception. A metaphor is needed, a compelling image to suggest the scale and the mass of the problem" (2013, 148). Blackwell proposes "ecosystem" (2013, 119) and "galaxy" (148) as more appropriate terms.

A related problem is not explicitly recognized in the text and has to do with the genre of his book: *Visiting Sunny Chernobyl: Adventures in the World's Most Polluted Places*. The book's genre is travel writing, and as such requires a site that indeed can be visited in order that he might write about his "adventures" there, even if the sites ascribe to a darker, dirtier aesthetics than most travel writing (the "polluted" of the subtitle suggests as much, cf. also Sullivan 2014). Of all the sites Blackwell tours,[2] the concentration of plastic in the Pacific is the trickiest to actually visit. As Blackwell asserts, the mass of plastic in the Pacific is not an island. He makes this point with some insistence, repeating the negation twice ("Let's nip this in the bud," he writes. "It is not an island. / I'd like to say that again. It's not. An island" [Blackwell 2013, 118]). The emphatic negative relation to islands raises questions with respect to Island Studies and archipelagic thought[3] which, given the specific site of the Pacific, warrant some

[1] The popularity of the phrase "Great Pacific Garbage Patch" is perhaps best expressed through its use as the title of the respective wiki page on wikipedia.org (at the time of writing, March 2018). The talk page of the wiki, a great resource for delving into the debates behind the actual entries, even starts with a discussion of "Does it even exist?", which, through the contributions of several users, then emerges as a discussion of the suitability of the phrase, and, crucially, the problems of visualization of the waste accumulated there (cf. "Great Pacific Garbage Patch: Talk").

[2] Blackwell goes to Chernobyl in the Ukraine, the Alberta tar sands in Canada, the Amazon forest in the Brazilian northwestern state of Pará, and the recycling facilities of Shanxi province in China, amongst others.

[3] Cf. Stratford et al. (2011), as well as the notion of the anti-anti-insularity in Roberts and Stephens (2013).

critical attention. The term island suggests a containable space, a discrete object, a stable entity (at least on human time-scales, and most of the time). This, rather obviously, belies the problem of pelagic plastic in the Pacific. Neither the pieces of plastic, nor the effects of the plastic, including the bio-accumulation by virtue of plastic's lipophilic capacity to bind fatty substances, are discrete phenomena.

Further, as Susan Freinkel suggests in *Plastic: A Toxic Love Story*, "[a] floating trash island would be a far easier problem to take care of" (2011, 130). Or, as Stacy Alaimo has argued: "The persistent (and convenient) conception of the ocean as so vast and powerful that anything dumped into it will be dispersed into oblivion makes it particularly difficult to capture, map, and publicize the flow of toxins across terrestrial, oceanic, and human habitats" (2012, 447). The plastic shifts, floats, and sinks. It entangles and mangles. And it degrades, exuding lethal toxins into and through the oceans. It moves through the oceans and through biota, humans, and non-humans alike.

Representation with the "Plastic Pacific" faces a considerable conceptual problem as pertaining to representation: For the "Plastic Pacific" is more a shifting accretion of material than a static (accumulation of) object(s). The calls articulated by Blackwell, Freinkel, and Alaimo suggest the extent to which the issue lacks a cohesive imagery. The production, reproduction, and coalescence of representations—images, icons, metaphors—emerge as crucial for assembling responses. In the following, I show how images of birds have become iconic for this issue, in particular the images of two, quite different, kinds of aquatic birds: albatrosses and ducks. Specifically, the images of the Laysan albatross, lying prostrate with plastic, and the rubber duck (the former made famous, for instance, by Chris Jordan's "Midway Islands" series and the image from Susan Middleton and David Liittschwager's *Archipelago* volume;[4] the latter

[4] These images have been included in the chapter, and a content note is in order as these images depict dead animals. Just prior to publishing (early 2022, some four years after submitting the piece, see also fn 1), I read Max Liboiron's *Pollution Is Colonialism*. Importantly, Liboiron notes that the albatross might die *with* plastic but not necessarily *from* plastics (cf. Liboiron 2021, 104–105); and, crucially, that to include the images whilst claiming kinship with animals is rude (cf. ibid., 106). I humbly ask my readers to keep these points in mind as you proceed through this chapter, and fully recommend you read Liboiron's work (if you got this far into my footnote, you will rejoice in theirs). This footnote hence traces my own learning experience as well as the difficulties of negotiating obligations: in this case, to albatrosses as well as to colleagues, editors, funding agencies, and freelancer photographers. I really might have gotten this wrong.

rendered both homely and *unheimlich* in several books [*Slow Death by Rubber Duck* by Rick Smith and Bruce Lourie, and *Moby-Duck* by Donovan Hohn, to cite two examples])".

Birds

The choice of birds is both accidental and productive, compelling and auspicious. The accidental, here, emerges from a body of texts that address the "Plastic Pacific." The argument is based on a coalescing of discourses, both visual and written, around the bird as a symbol of environmental maritime waste. This has emerged from analyses of texts concerned with plastic pelagic waste (in the Pacific)—and not the other way around (i.e., looking for birds in such texts). There are some crucial precursors, which, in retrospect, suggest that this is no accidental confluence of discourses.

Other bird species—or their absence—occupy a pivotal role in discourses of extinctions. The dodo, *Raphus cucullatus*, acts as a symbol of extinction in various cultural texts, including Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and David Quammen's *The Song of the Dodo*. The passenger pigeon, *Ectopistes migratorius*, similarly figures in (particularly U.S. American) accounts of "recent extinction" (cf. e.g., Price 1999, also Garrard 2004, 123; or in the numerous accounts in an online search for "Martha Passenger Pigeon" returns). *Aepyornis maximus* (the 'elephant bird') or *Pinguinis impennis* (the great auk) might also be included in such a survey, indeed, wikipedia.org includes a page titled "List of recently extinct bird species," a rather long list. These species are examples of anthropogenic extinction, as their (cultural) histories are "[s]tories of flagship species [that] function synecdochically by pointing to broader crises in humans' interactions with nature" (Heise 2010, 61).

Birds figure prominently in what is broadly considered a central text about environmental damage:[5] Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. The eponymous silence of this treaty on pollutants is a silence of birds: "There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example—where had they gone? … It was a spring without voices …; only silence lay over the fields and woods and

[5] Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism*, as one example of a text addressing environmental challenges, starts with Carson's book, going so far as to state, as his first sentence, "[i]t is generally agreed that modern environmentalism begins with 'A Fable for Tomorrow' in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962)" (2004).

marsh" (Carson 1962, 14). Carson asks, "What has already silenced the voices of spring in countless towns in America?" (15). Here, silence transforms from a noun (a lack of sound) to a verb (an action, resulting in a lack of sound). The verb "silence" shifts from passive construction to active construction in the question: "the voices were silenced" in its question form almost shifts to an active construction: "what has silenced the voices?" Crucially, then, Carson's is a silence not only of the birds (and other fauna); it is a silence of human response. As symbols of the (disastrous) effects of human interventions into the environment, birds have an impressive career.

Albatross

The symbolism of the albatross as a harbinger, or indeed portent, of human interaction with the creaturely world reaches back (at least) to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798), where the killing of the albatross is associated with calamitous events. John Livingston Lowe notes that the poem's intertexts include James Cook's *A Voyage towards the South Pole and Round the World* (1777) and George Shelvocke's *A Voyage Round the World by Way of the Great South Sea* (1726). Lowe thus places the "Rime" "against a broad background of the circumnavigation of the world" (1955, 138); more specifically, the Pacific. James Vigus goes further, suggesting the "Rime" entails a context of disease, slavery, and colonial expansion. Accordingly, the albatross as a symbol and portent of self-inflicted damage has a long history in the (English-language, European-based) literary imagination of the Pacific. The examples I turn to in this contribution also have dead albatrosses; however, the consequences of the human actions that have led to such deaths, like the plasticity of the material that effects these deaths, shift in form and symbolism, effect and affect. As Charles Moore notes:

> artifacts recovered from dead [albatross] chicks have included vintage plastic from a World War II fighter plane (the oldest identifiable pelagic plastic), toothbrushes, combs, beads, plastic buttons, checkers, golf tees, dishwashing gloves, and Magic Markers. And the most common debris object of all: plastic bottle caps, made of durable polypropylene, rarely recycled, likely to outlast us all. (2012, 220)

The images of such accumulated plastic are sufficiently graphic to make the viewers' stomachs churn, devoid of plastic chunks as they may be.[6]

Chris Jordan's series "Midway: Message from the Gyre" comprises a series of photographs of dead birds taken on the Midway Atoll. Taken from 2009 onward, these photographs reveal the stomach contents of the dead birds: a mosaic of color; a collection of plastic. Rubbish is figured as ruinous, and the externalized waste is rendered internalized in most explicit fashion. Subdued remnants of bird share the frames with lurid pieces of plastic, exuding from their guts. The juxtaposition is startling. Feathers, bones, beaks, upon a bed of sand, all earthy tones, shades of grey and brown; these are superimposed with the greens, blues, reds, oranges, and yellows of manufactured plastic. Sometimes, the pieces of plastic are readily identifiable as objects; often enough, they are only identifiable in terms of their material, that is, as plastic (Fig. 3.1).

Each photo captures individual devastation; together, they speak to a larger, systematic concern. Images from the "Midway: Message from the Gyre" have been used in advertising campaigns from Romania (e.g. Greenpeace in 2010), South Africa (e.g. Endangered Wildlife Trust in 2009), and also on the cover of the *Fluter*'s issue on plastic (the youth magazine published by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education [*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*] in September 2014). The use of the image in these publications is suggestive of metaphors that echo the movement of the gyre itself: dispersal, circulation, even flow. Its geographical spread further suggests the capacity of the image to affect, or to move those who look at it.

Islands of meaning coagulate around the images, visual or written. Mark Jackson suggests:

[6] Most of the images are shot against near-monochromatic backgrounds. Some of the backgrounds are distinguishable as sand, some as dirt with brown remnants of flora or shell-grit or algae (only occasionally with green grass), and some images appear to have been shot against a background of bitumen or path of some sort. The arrangement of many photos is such that the distinguishing features of the birds are still readily recognizable: beaks, bones, and feathers, for the most part, and the frames of the images are such that these features are included within the square shapes of the shot. Further, the shots are taken from a position situated directly above the carcasses of the birds: a "birds-eye-view" if you like, pertaining to discourses of knowledge through all-encompassing sight, in a vein following Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* (1992).

Fig. 3.1 Chris Jordan's "CF000313" (2009) from "Midway: Message from the Gyre" (http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/midway/#CF000313%2018x24), © Chris Jordan

> It is not that the plastics are inert (far from it—they killed the bird and present an ongoing problem to all kinds of sea-life), nor that plastics themselves are necessarily bad (again far from it—our modern lives are immeasurably better, more diverse, and manifestly abled because of them), but that as litter, their interactions pose material, and thus political and cultural, questions and demands for us. (2012, 209)

The photographs work to render the plight of the Laysan albatrosses (*Phoebastria immutabilis*) less isolated, both by depicting the plastic ingested in their bodies, broaching the thousands of kilometers that separate the Midway Island atoll from the nearest continent (and, ostensibly, the source of much of the matter in their guts) and through their presence in the exemplary texts (advertising, etc.) cited above. The toxic effects of plastic circulate through these photographs of birds.

Fig. 3.2 "Shed Bird" (Liittschwager and Middleton 2005, 210–211); photograph by Susan Middleton and David Liittschwager © 2005

Chris Jordan's photography has a famous precursor: the Shed Bird image (which is often displayed as a singular image comprising two photographs, as below) (Fig. 3.2).

The text that accompanies the famous photographs of Laysan albatross chicks in the volume, aptly entitled *Archipelago*, is composed by Liittschwager. He argues that the photographic findings fly in the face of a study which concluded, as Liittschwager quotes, "that 'ingested plastic probably does not cause significant direct mortality in Laysan albatross chicks'" (Liittschwager and Middleton 2005, 212). Susan Freinkel writes: "Every carcass seems a mockery of the natural order: a crumbling bird-shaped basket of bleached bones and feathers filled with a mound of gaily colored lighters and straws and bottle caps. The birds are dissolving back into the ground; the plastics promise to endure for centuries" (2011, 118).

The central image comprises two photographs. One half depicts a deceased Laysan albatross with an incision from the top of its breast through its belly and toward the legs. The contents are visibly dominated by plastic stuff (although still covered in brown slime, possibly residue from stomach acids and other fluids). Some of this plastic is readily identifiable; an orange cigarette lighter and a red bottle-cap remain discernible, for example. The image comprises a second photograph to the right, depicting the contents of the stomach, cleaned of the brown residue and

carefully arranged in an almost perfect circle. Several items distinguishable as objects work to link the two parts of the image: the orange cigarette lighter, for instance, is a prominent example of an object that does this work. Further objects become recognizable through the cleaning that has taken place,[7] others, in particular the vibrant green residua, work to link the two parts of the image without being readily recognizable as particular objects. Almost all of the pieces displayed here are recognizable as plastic fragments.[8] The aesthetics—the white background in particular—suggest an almost clinical setting, and in fact the circle of objects carries the caption "mosaic of death."[9]

The "death" obviously references the death of the young albatross, the "Shed Bird" specimen; however, the lack of qualifier or pronoun suggests not just this individual death, but death on a broader scale. The image of the contents of the young albatross' stomach thus proffers a metonymical reading, underscored by the caption's indefinite death. This is death *both* of a specific organism (whose representational impact is key to this chapter) and of biotic life in general (human and otherwise). Laid against a white background—clinical white, evoking hospitals and by extension the morgue—the plastic, in pieces, testifies to a pathology, of both consumption and toxicity.

Gillian Whitlock, in her work on testimonial transactions in postcolonial life narratives, draws attention to the metaphor of bearing witness: the dialogic and rhetoric of testimony pulls the addressee into the account, transferring a weight of responsibility and affect (2015, 8). Note, specifically, the verbs I use to articulate her argument—"draw," "pull into," "transferring weight"—all verbs of movement. Linguistically, and conceptually, "bearing witness" entails shifts of burdens as items that have volume and weight, as well as shifts in sensitivities and affects. The linguistic

[7] For example, another cigarette lighter, purple in color, some red bottle tops.

[8] Charles Moore: "artifacts recovered from dead [albatross] chicks have included vintage plastic from a World War II fighter plane (the oldest identifiable pelagic plastic), toothbrushes, combs, beads, plastic buttons, checkers, golf tees, dishwashing gloves, and Magic Markers. And the most common debris object of all: plastic bottle caps, made of durable polypropylene, rarely recycled, likely to outlast us all" (2012, 220).

[9] The image spreads across pages 210–211, with the caption on page 212 (Liittschwager and Middleton 2005). This denomination is suggestive. A mosaic is a pattern or image produced by the arrangement of small colored pieces: when constructed of broken tiles, for instance, the status of the tile as an object of its own accord, potentially itself depicting an image, recedes to give way to the tile as material (baked clay, stone, even concrete), or at least occupies an ambivalent state between object and material.

and conceptual blurriness works to foreground movement and moving, the double sense of the "Moving (the) Masses" of the subtitle to this contribution. Viewing these images, bearing witness is complicated by the non-visual nature of the subject matter, that is, the difficulties of representing the "Plastic Pacific." It can only be "captured" by symbols and icons. Regarding Chris Jordan's photographs, Stacy Alaimo observes:

> Since we cannot see mercury or other chemicals within sea mammals, these photographs stand as vivid recognition of transcorporeality—animal bodies invaded by terrestrial, human consumerism, revealing the swirling natural–cultural agencies, the connection between ordinary terrestrial life and ocean ecologies, and the uneven distribution of harm. (2012, 488)

The evocative capacity of the photographs is perhaps what makes them so powerful: the blurring boundaries of transcorporeality, the shifting interaction of bird and plastic, reach beyond that which is documented to evoke connections across the Plastic Pacific.

Rubber Duck

In written accounts, it is more often another "species" of bird that is mobilized to represent plastic waste: the rubber duck. The rubber duck does not pull the same high-literary weight as the albatross, with its literary and travel-writing associations, although it does figure more prominently in popular culture, particularly well known as a main character in a *Sesame Street* episode with Ernie's ballad of bath-time fun.

Donovan Hohn suggests that the emergence of the rubber duck in its particular form with its particular associations, that is, as a lurid yellow plastic creature for use as a bath-time toy, is a coincidence of material culture and practices: specifically, the "invention" of celluloid in 1871, the introduction of Pekin ducks to the U.S.A. in 1873, and, following the 1880s, the increasing incorporation of bathtubs and indoor plumbing in middle-class households in the U.S.A. The rubber duck, Hohn's brief narrative suggests, was inserted into bath-time in order to distract small children from playing with their genitals, in a story that intertwines physical health and cleanliness with mental hygiene (Hohn 2012, 224–226). The cultural symbolism of the rubber duck is rather more innocuous than that of the albatross. It is this very imagined naiveté which is mobilized in the written accounts to great effect.

Curtis Ebbesmeyer and Eric Scigliano's *Flotsametrics and the Floating World* references the rubber duck as part of a "flotilla" or "mini-menagerie" (2009, 78) of toys arriving at Sitka, Alaska. A photograph, included on page 80 of the hardcover edition, shows Ebbesmeyer together with Jim Ingraham smiling as they sit in a pool of toys recovered from the container: the ducks are, by virtue of their light color, the most obvious of the toys depicted in the black-and-white photograph. Their smiles speak perhaps more to the enjoyment of bath-time toys than to the problems of pelagic waste outlined in this account. As Ebbesmeyer and Scigliano note, the "bath toys inspired even more public enthusiasm than the shoes" (2009, 80; in reference to a lost contingent of Nike shoes that washed up on North America's Pacific shores), which they suggest is due to the yellow ducky's status as an "icon of whimsy, nostalgia, childhood innocence, and pop-cultural kitsch" (80). Another book, a 2010 boardbook by artist Eric Carle of *The Hungry Little Caterpillar* fame, manages to narrate the story of ten lost rubber duckies as a tale of home-coming, rather than as problematic waste, which consolidates the duck's iconic status.[10]

In Donovan Hohn's *Moby Duck: The True Story of 28,800 Bath Toys Lost at Sea*, the rubber duck figures as a central symbol and index of pelagic plastic waste. In his prologue, Hohn notes:

> I'd never heard of the Great North Pacific Garbage Patch. … I just wanted to learn what had really happened, where the toys had drifted and why. I loved the part about containers falling off a ship, the part about the oceanographers tracking the castaways with the help of far-flung beachcombers. (2012, 3)

His book-long account of his search for one of the 7200 rubber ducks (which, along with the same number of red beavers, green frogs, and blue turtles were lost off a ship in the Pacific in January 1992) draws heavily on its obvious precursor in Herman Melville, as the title already indicates. Hohn offers a cogent account of oceanography and Pacific waste clean-up projects, but never finds a duck: the rubber duck, in this account, remains

[10] After nine rubber duckies are met by aquatic animals, the tenth joins a family of ducks. The rubber duck thus meets with kin of a different kind, as the rubber duck's "squeak" features as a response with a difference, contrasting with the biotic ducks' "quacks." The rubber duck *almost* belongs in the family of ducks, but not quite.

omnipresent as a function yet simultaneously absent as a material object or form. Its movement through the Pacific not only acts as a marker for the movements of the Gyre, but also as a reminder of the links between bath-time water (and toys) and the global movements of goods.

Rick Smith and Bruce Lourie's book also mobilizes the rubber duck as an "innocuous household icon[ ]" (2009, xvi) along with baby bottles and other quotidian items. Called *Slow Death by Rubber Duck: The Secret Danger of Everyday Things*, the authors undertake a project of self-exposure to harm similar to that popularized in Morgan Spurlock's film *Supersize Me* or in Michael Moore's works (see Smith and Lourie 2009, 2). The rubber duck figures as an image around which debates about the harm of phthalates coalesce.

The cover of their book shows a plastic rubber duck that has been incorporated into a minimalistic diagram, with labels showing the presence of heavy metals—chromium and lead—and other toxic elements such as bromine and chlorine, as well as phthalates, that is, the component of plastic that originally made it soft and plasticky. The effect of the cover, foreshadowing the findings of the experimental exposure depicted in the text, is to remind the reader of the dangers of everyday exposure to substances present (and seeping out of) seemingly innocent objects.

Referencing the "Rubber Duck Wars" between consumer groups and lobbyists in California, then on the U.S. national stage, the second chapter title emphasizes the rubber duck "[a]s one of the most charismatic phthalates sources around, the yellow icon, beloved by Sesame Street alumni everywhere, [which] took centre stage in the ongoing U.S. phthalates debate" (Smith and Lourie 2009, 57). Two photographs are included from the protests that comprised the "Rubber Duck Wars": both display rubber ducks. One shows a hand-drawn sign with "No Yucky in my [picture of rubber duck]," the other a button with the slogan "Save the Rubber Duckies" (58).

The rubber duck of the title and cover page image, as well as images evoked in the chapter on phthalates, are mobilized to specific effect: the rubber duck stands not for the gyre, as it does in Hohn's (and other) accounts, but for toxicity. In conjunction with the other images of the rubber duck in the Pacific (and beyond), the "Birds of the Plastic Pacific" are rendered not *im*mobile as the plastic of the duck might suggest, but rather insidiously mobile, refusing to be contained.

Birds Again: Motif, Motivation, Mobilization

The Plastic Pacific, my rendering of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, its waste, toxins, and floating, seeping plastic, poses a significant challenge to representations *because* it assembles issues so disparate: pollution, toxins, species threats, flotsam and jetsam, marine waste, tsunami debris, nuclear fallout,[11] etc. I find it telling, nevertheless, that many of the representations that try to come to terms with the Plastic Pacific—whether as pollution, toxin, or jetsam—coagulate around images of birds, particularly aquatic ones. As Patricia Yaeger, in a 2010 "Editor's Column" of the *PLMA*, suggests: "It is impossible to find a seabird without a little product inside or a square foot of ocean without debris" (2010, 528). We might ask ourselves, then, what these images, these motifs, entail.

Motif, or leitmotif, has visual implications, in the sense of a pattern or design, but it is also used in music, for a succession of notes or a brief melodic or rhythmic pattern. Motif, like motive, derives from the late Latin *motivus* from the verb *movere*, "to move." It is also etymologically related to "motivation." Specific motifs of the texts, including those that do not readily fall into the category of "image," thus move and motivate: the double meaning of the title of this contribution comes into play again.

By harnessing the "moving" of the etymology of the term "motif," three aspects in particular emerge: first, the way in which these motifs shift through scales (of space, time, and other dimensions), and how mobility is central to such shifts. Birds, particularly birds of flight, are imagined to connect disparate sites through their flight patterns and migratory journeys. They forge relations. In a terrestrially biased world,[12] these birds constitute a flight of fancy that connects land, water, and sky.

Second, "moving," together with "motivation," stresses the capacity of motifs to effect responses. This is in line with the activist or "concerned cultural agent" component of many of the texts I have analyzed here, but also recollects the particular way certain motifs gain traction in conjunction with certain issues, and the ways they might affect readers. Where the Laysan albatross of Chris Jordan's series and David Liittschwager and

[11] Cf. in particular Elizabeth DeLoughrey's rendering of the "Nuclear Pacific" (2013).

[12] Maps of the world, those depictions that shape our understanding of the planet we inhabit, inevitably privilege the terrestrial sphere. As Charne Lavery points out, the floors of the ocean are by no means conclusively mapped, mostly because satellites cannot penetrate the surface of the water (Lavery, Charne. 2015, 26). The depths of our comprehensions of (our entanglements in) the world are, in some spheres, rather shallow.

Susan Middleton's iconic image have been mobilized to elicit responses of compassion, for a site on the Midway Islands, far away from most of us,[13] the rubber ducky, in conjunction, brings the Plastic Pacific much closer to home. In my case: quite literally, a rubber ducky swimming in a sea of colored nurdles, encased in a plastic ball.

Third, a motif might not reference a particular word or visual impression evoked by a dyadic semiotics of referentiality, but a patterning. This might be a material patterning (e.g., birds might be evoked by synecdoche, i.e., feathers or beaks, or by metonymy, allegory or other rhetorical figures), or a patterning of materiality. To the extent that birds are contained as bodies of matter, they are also linked through objects that materialize through flows of consumption and desire. To the extent that they are discrete biota, materialized for a lifetime in a particular form, they are linked through the unknown toxins that seep from plastic and the dangers that manifest in rigid, object forms. The Birds of the Plastic Pacific thus "move (the) masses" by forging new relations through their dimensional and conceptual mobility, in their forms and through the ways they form discourses. The birds move *as* plastic, are moved *by* plastic, all the while exhibiting plasticity.

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[13] The nearest inhabited islands, Hawai'i to the east-south-east and Wake Island to the west-south-west, are each around 2000 km away. The Marshall Islands, site of nuclear testing, are around 2500 km away, to the south-west. Access to the Midway Islands is currently restricted.

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PART II

Colonial/Imperial Mobilities of the Sea

CHAPTER 4

Maritime Mobility and the Work of Susanna Rowson: Transatlantic Perspectives

Leopold Lippert

A Tale of Shipwreck

What was to become an exemplary transatlantic literary career started with a ship wrecked in Boston Harbor. In 1767, at age five, Susanna Haswell Rowson had just crossed the Atlantic for the first time, when the vessel she was on struck on a reef of rocks near Lovells Island, on a stormy January night. English-born Rowson was accompanied by her father William Haswell, a Royal Navy officer stationed in Massachusetts, who brought his daughter to live with him in the North American colonies. The voyage already had been delayed considerably by strong winds in the North Atlantic, and the ship's passengers and crew had almost starved to death as the food rations had run out. As the waves washed over the wrecked vessel, Rowson and her fellow travelers grew increasingly fearful, but as luck would have it, they could be evacuated the next morning. In the process, five-year-old Rowson herself, who was unable to climb down an icy ladder, was even tied to a rope and lowered down the side of the ship.

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This episode of suspended maritime movement is remarkable for a number of reasons: first, the only historical evidence about it comes through a fictionalized account included in Rowson's novel *Rebecca, or the Fille de Chambre*. In the 1814 Boston edition of the text (the novel was first published in 1792), said to be "corrected and revised by the author" (Rowson 1814, n.p.), Rowson included an introductory chapter in which she reveals the autobiographical nature of the narrative summarized above. "[T]he distress at sea, the subsequent shipwreck," she points out, "are events which really took place …, though the persons here mentioned as the sufferers are fictitious" (iv). While it might seem doubtful that Rowson had detailed memories of an incident she witnessed as a five-year-old, the passage in *Rebecca* still provides a gripping tale of catastrophe at sea: in highly dramatic fashion, Rowson describes how "the wind suddenly changed, rising almost to a hurricane" (135), and how the passengers were left "nearly exhausted" (136) and "disheartened" (137) by the prolonged voyage. The narrative reaches a climax when the ship enters Boston Harbor: even though the travelers could already see land, "snow and sleet [that] froze as it fell" (140) prevented the safe completion of the journey. "Their situation now was imminently dangerous," Rowson writes, "driving before the wind, among a multitude of rocks and breakers, without the least chance of avoiding them; to be shipwrecked in the very sight of home, was a painful trial indeed" (140). This dramatic portrayal of Atlantic crossing establishes an ambivalent relationship between the facts of Rowson's life and her literary work (in addition to Rowson's insistence that the shipwreck "really took place" [iv], the passage features two further truth claims in footnotes). As she imagines her five-year-old self "tossing about" (136) between two continents, Rowson thus exploits her own biography in order to gratify her readers' (likely) fascination with the arduous maritime voyages undertaken in the shifting imperial geographies of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world.

Second, the shipwreck episode (and its fictionalization in *Rebecca*) is remarkable as it represents an inaugural moment of a literary career (as a novelist, playwright, actress, and teacher) that would span both sides of the Atlantic. "[T]he facts of Rowson's biography," Melissa J. Homestead and Camryn Hansen argue, "make a transatlantic approach nearly inevitable" (2010, 620). Susanna Rowson's first Atlantic crossing of 1767 was followed by several others, and her works were published and read in England as well as in the United States. She also appeared as a stage actress in London, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston and enjoyed a successful

theatrical career that made her, according to theater historian Jeffrey H. Richards, "the space or hyphen between the two English-speaking cultures" (2005, 22).[1] Moreover, the recent scholarly interest in the global entanglements of early American literature and culture[2] has also directed increased attention to the transatlantic themes of Rowson's writing itself. Critics have remarked, for instance, on the "trope of an Atlantic crossing correlat[ing] with … a swoon moment" (Doyle 2008, 6) in her best-selling novel *Charlotte Temple*, or on the use of "an alternative transatlantic space, namely Africa, as a key location for understanding [American] early national gender and politics" (Dillon 2004, 410) in the play *Slaves in Algiers*. The autobiographical childhood tale in *Rebecca*, then, seems to be part of a more overarching concern in Rowson's work with the—voluntary or forced, commercial or military—exchange of persons, goods, information, and affect across the Atlantic, as well as with the structures of connectivity (sailing ships, ports, and diverse laboring bodies) that made such exchange possible.

Culturally speaking, Rowson's autobiographical engagement with seafaring in the North Atlantic is indicative of a prominent and pervasive European imperial fantasy: that of a coherent and self-evident "Atlantic world" in which all sorts of extraction, encounter, exchange, and cross-fertilization might take place—all enabled by established routines of maritime mobility. It was against and/or alongside this imperial fantasy that (Rowson's) early American national identity needed to be articulated and enforced.

The third reason the episode is significant is because it more specifically tells the story of maritime travel as a story of catastrophe, or at least, of severe distress. Rowson's narrative of mobility in the North Atlantic is not one of seamless transmission and uninterrupted flow, but one of setback, accident, and deferral. Anne Baker, who is concerned with the episode

[1] For a detailed record of Rowson's transatlantic stage career, see Richards's essay, "Susanna and the Stage; or, Rowson Family Theatre" (2011).

[2] For programmatic works that address these larger contexts, see for instance, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996), Gesa Mackenthun's *Fictions of the Black Atlantic in American Foundational Literature* (2004), Laura Doyle's *Freedom's Empire: Race and the Rise of the Novel in Atlantic Modernity, 1640–1940* (2008), Ralph Bauer's "Early American Literature and American Literary History at the 'Hemispheric Turn'" (2010), Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649–1849* (2014), or Lisa Lowe's *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015).

from *Rebecca* as well, suggests that these "tempestuous passages" (2011, 205) must be understood metaphorically, as they constitute "an appealing trope for a writer obsessed with women's increasingly limited opportunities for achieving agency in their own lives in the 1780s and 90s" (206). However, Rowson's tale of shipwreck also has more literal significance, as it points to the highly imperfect and error-prone *material conditions* on which the imperial fantasy of the Atlantic world ultimately depended. In the context of pre-industrial maritime traffic, the "established routines" for transportation across the Atlantic were not so routine after all. Essentially, the episode—alongside many other narratives of "shipwreck's global modernity" (Mentz 2016, ix), most famously perhaps Daniel Defoe's 1719 novel *Robinson Crusoe*—shows that the idea of seamless transatlantic correspondence relied on a precarious material network: bad weather, solid rocks, leaky vessels, unknown waterways, pirates, or a mutinous crew could all, at least temporarily, destabilize the circulation of bodies, goods, ideas, and affect between Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

Imagining Transatlantic Mobility

In this essay, I pick up on these deliberations in order to examine how the work of Susanna Rowson employs ships and sea travel as a site of the cultural articulation and negotiation of mobility:[3] through her writings on seafaring, I will argue, Rowson examines the tensions between imperial fantasies of Atlantic coherence and the typically flawed material and infrastructural conditions that enabled/foreclosed that coherence. Apart from *Rebecca*, this essay looks at the articulation of these tensions in three different texts (in three different textual genres): Rowson's didactic treatise "Rise and Progress of Navigation" (1811), her two-part novel *Reuben and Rachel* (1798), as well as her play *Slaves in Algiers; or, A Struggle for Freedom* (1794). By examining the tensions between imperial fantasy and the materiality of maritime travel in these texts, I do not make an attempt at historical scholarship in the sense of tracking the comings and goings of specific ships, the operations of actual ports, or the lives and livelihoods of people involved in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century seafaring,

[3] I rely here on Tim Cresswell's differentiation of movement and mobility, which posits *movement* as the mere "general fact of displacement" (2006, 3) and *mobility* as "socially produced motion" (3), that is, as the process by which social and cultural meaning and significance gets attached to movement.

including Rowson herself;[4] instead, I analyze the ways in which Rowson *fictionalized* maritime mobility in order to deliberate how the materiality of transatlantic travel made possible and at the same time interfered with imperial fantasies of seamless correspondence in the Atlantic world. I do not necessarily intend to generate a literary topology of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century seafaring (shipwrecks, storms, delays, encounter, etc.); rather, I put forward an analysis of the *cultural functions* Rowson assigns to maritime travel as she represents the shifting imperial geographies of the Atlantic world. In particular, I will show that Rowson uses ships and seafaring as a prominent site at which she can relate early U.S. national identities (such as her own) to larger questions concerning Atlantic imperialism around 1800.

By focusing on the ways in which Rowson mediates the relationship between cultural fantasies of the Atlantic world and the materiality of transatlantic mobility, this essay takes inspiration from Stephen Greenblatt's insistence that "mobility must be taken in a highly literal sense" (2010, 250). A proper grasp of the significance of metaphorical movement (and the imaginative realms established by such movement), Greenblatt argues, depends to a considerable extent on an understanding of "the physical, infrastructural, and institutional conditions of movement" (250). Hence, for Greenblatt, "[b]oarding a plane, venturing on a ship, climbing onto the back of a wagon, crowding into a coach, mounting on horseback, or simply setting one foot in front of the other and walking … are indispensable keys to understanding the fate of cultures" (250). Sociologist John Urry issues a similar call for paying attention to the "physical or material infrastructures that orchestrate and underlie … economic, political and social patterns" (2007, 19). For Urry, it is vital to recognize that mobilities are organized into specific "mobility-systems" (13) (such as the pedestrian system, the horse system, the rail-system, the car-system, etc.) that each requires "different embodied performances" (37) on the part of travelers. Accordingly, moving by ship produces fundamentally different cultural meanings of mobility than moving by car, or by plane.

While Urry focuses on the reliability—and thus, on the "systematicity"—of functioning systems (which "permit predictable and relatively

[4] For a recent project that highlights the material conditions of seafaring in the (early) modern Atlantic world, see Stephen R. Berry's *A Path in the Mighty Waters: Shipboard Life and Atlantic Crossings to the New World* (2015). Berry even posits the "elision of the oceanic experience from the history of America" (2015, 2).

risk-free repetition of the movement in question" [13]), my own interest lies in a more ambivalent dynamic: the incongruity between the predictability implied by the system and the typically more disruptive, at times even failing, practices of actual mobility. Hence I find Rowson's fictionalized childhood story insightful for the way it negotiates the relationship between the fantasy of uninterrupted travel within a coherent British imperial realm (her father was a loyalist officer stationed in North America) and the mundane facts of bad weather and eventual shipwreck. In her seminal study of print culture and early U.S. nation-building, *The Republic in Print* (2007), Trish Loughran pursues a similar project, as she points to the discrepancy between the imagined correspondence and simultaneity of a national print public sphere, and the *actual* dissemination and circulation of the printed letter in the United States via pre-industrial printing presses, bad roads, and a malfunctioning postal system. "[T]he foundational project of American nation building," Loughran argues, "was, quite literally, an issue of *building*" (2007, xvii, original emphasis). However, while Loughran is primarily concerned with the mobility of people, artifacts, and information *on land*, and with the fantasy of U.S. *continental* coherence, my reading of Rowson's work focuses on the maritime and transatlantic dimensions of the mobilities that facilitated/obstructed (post-) revolutionary U.S. nation-building.

Considering the uncertain sailing time between England and the North American colonies, it perhaps comes as no surprise that the late colonial and early national archive is full of stories of strange coincidences, lingering doubts, and even tragedy connected with the transatlantic time lag. Loughran, for instance, offers a curious explanation for the instant popularity of Thomas Paine's best-selling revolutionary pamphlet *Common Sense*—an explanation directly related to the materiality of transatlantic maritime mobility. Clarifying the original publication context of the pamphlet in Philadelphia in early January 1776, she points out that

> Paine's antimonarchical tirade fortuitously arrived in bookstalls, coffeehouses, and taverns on the same day that a long-awaited anticolonial speech by King George III also arrived from London. This coincidence lent the pamphlet's arguments a surreal sense of timeliness at a time when few printed artifacts could boast such newslike quality. (2007, 45)

Of course, one can only speculate about the particular impact of this "surreal" coincidence on the progress and outcome of the American Revolution

(Paine's *Common Sense* would eventually play a crucial role in mobilizing public opinion for the independence of the American colonies); still, the anecdote reveals the complicated relationship between the fantasy of a coherent, "commonsensical" transatlantic realm (in which conflict between the imperial center and the colonies could be negotiated) and the material reality of delayed, yet uncannily timely, information delivered by a ship from London.

Numerous stories of delayed letters (lucky or tragic), while obviously anecdotal, also indicate that early Americans were routinely affected by the incongruity between the imperial fantasy of a coherent Atlantic world (in which it made more sense to travel to southern Europe than to the southern United States in order to live in a warmer climate, for instance) and the precarious material movement on which this fantasy depended. My reading of processes of maritime mobility in the work of Susanna Rowson not only highlights this incongruity, but also shows how the writer functionalized it for a deliberation of the relationship between early American national identity and more encompassing transatlantic cultural contexts. This analysis may thus serve as a transatlantic complement to Loughran's continental argument about early American nation-building: Rowson's maritime mobilities, I suggest, show how the early United States could imagine its role as a nation by ambivalently deliberating the movements of its citizens in a larger Atlantic world.

Imperial Fantasies in "Rise and Progress of Navigation"

Susanna Rowson published "Rise and Progress of Navigation" in 1811 in Boston, as part of the didactic volume *A Present for Young Ladies*. The short treatise, which represents a combination of history and geography lessons, must be understood as a consequence of the pedagogical practice that occupied Rowson during the later years of her life: in 1797, she had founded the Academy for Young Ladies, a boarding school in Boston, and had participated somewhat fervently during the following decade in the promotion of "proper" republican womanhood central to the early national period. As Gay Gibson Cima points out, "Rowson's academy and others like it were designed to stage the significance of educating wealthy white girls: in holiday and graduation ceremonies open at first only to families and later to the wider public (for a fee), the girls ... perform[ed] ...

their adoption of the implicitly white 'cultured American' body. They modeled obedient, partial citizenship" (2006, 157). The concern for an explicitly nationalized white femininity that informed Rowson's pedagogical work on the whole is complemented in "Rise and Progress of Navigation" by a keen attention to geographical matters—a focus which carried larger significance in early America: in his *The Geographic Revolution in Early America*, Martin Brückner observes a "rapid rise of geography" (2006, 3) in the course of the eighteenth century, "from a scarce and symbolic text that symbolized privileged lives inside an imperial culture, to a form of everyday discourse widely used by a socially diverse population of English-speakers living in colonial British America and the early United States" (3–4). This popularization and "democratization" of geographical discourse (through such texts and textbooks as Rowson's), Brückner argues, was, like postal infrastructure, crucial to the nation-building process of the United States, as it both "fostered a sense of national identity at home" and "paved the way for imperialism abroad" (8).

How exactly is Rowson's "Rise and Progress of Navigation" involved in such imperial nation-building? In what ways does the text construct American national identity by recourse to seafaring and navigation? And how does the treatise, despite its pretensions to factuality, fictionalize various practices of maritime travel? For Rowson, the history of seafaring up to the early nineteenth century constitutes a development that leads European navigators out of the Mediterranean into the Atlantic. Hence, she associates the beginnings of maritime travel with ancient Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, but devotes the main part of her historical narrative to the (Eurocentric) exploration of the Atlantic world. Despite the odd mention of the Marco Polo's "voyage on the Indian ocean" (1811, 125–126), or of Ferdinand Magellan's first circumnavigation of the globe (145), Rowson's treatise is primarily concerned with Spanish and English conquest and settlement in the Americas; the text thus proposes a historical arc that reaches from Columbus's first 1492 Atlantic crossing to the newly independent United States of Rowson's own 1811 present.

Rowson adopts an ambivalent stance toward Spanish "voyage[s] of discovery" (130). Initially, she offers a veritable hagiography of Christopher Columbus (which is in line with a rekindled interest in the Genovese

explorer in the American early national period),[5] who is described not only as "naturally of an inquisitive turn and capable of deep reflection" (130), but also as "one of the most expert navigators in Europe." Columbus's transatlantic voyages of the 1490s are then chronicled as the brave overcoming of financial and natural obstacles. Crucially, though, Columbus is portrayed as a friendly explorer, not a violent usurper. Upon contact with indigenous populations, Columbus and his associates exhibited "friendly demeanor" (133) and soon "became familiar" (133) with the locals, who sympathetically "brought them provisions" (134). Later however, Columbus's benevolence is sharply contrasted with the violence of subsequent Spanish imperial expeditions, which are characterized by treachery, terror, and cold-blooded massacres of indigenous peoples. "The laudable spirit of enterprize which first instigated the Spaniards," Rowson writes in a typical rendering of the Black Legend, "was now degenerated into avarice and cruelty" (136).

Whereas Rowson spends considerable time detailing "contact" between (either benevolent or atrocious) Spanish seafarers and indigenous populations, the British colonial project is presented in much more abstract terms, as an effortless and seemingly self-evident development toward U.S. nationhood. After brief allusions to the British settlements in Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, Rowson announces, "in a few years thirteen flourishing colonies were established" (147). She further explains—in a sweeping historical generalization—that these colonies "in the process of time [were] feeling their own consequence," and naturally desired independence from the British crown. Without indicating the battles of the Revolutionary War, Rowson's treatise ends with the founding and international recognition of the United States, which "are at present acknowledged by all the powers of Europe" (148). There is no mention of indigenous populations in North America at all.

Importantly, Rowson constructs this fantasy of effortless U.S. American nation-building by gradually eliding the material conditions and

[5] See, for instance, Heil 2012, 626, or Carrere 2013, 184. For Heike Paul, the rediscovery of Columbus in the U.S. during the early national period is a central part of the retrospective invention of an "American" origin story. "Many public figures and writers," she points out, "gathered around Columbus as a historical persona to affirm North American independence, and they represented him as a figure of national consensus exemplifying American national virtues and an American national character *avant la lettre* (2014, 53). Importantly, Paul suggests, "the notion of Columbus as a Founding Father establishes a non-English patrimony for the United States" (57).

consequences of maritime travel. While her narrative of Spanish explorers is full of "ill appointed squadron[s]," (132) "dreadful engagements" (141) with indigenous peoples, or questions concerning "fresh suppl[ies] of provisions" (132), her account of British imperialism takes the Atlantic world already for granted as a common realm, and thus shifts to an abstracted depiction of maritime mobility: seafaring on the Atlantic ocean is no longer explained in material terms, but rather in terms of the transatlantic cultural imaginations and political structures it enables. Hence, Rowson's "Rise and Progress of Navigation" does not really *mediate* the incongruity between the highly precarious movement (and clashes) of material bodies and the fantasy of a coherent imperial realm, but rather assigns different historical temporalities to each dimension. The "progress" her treatise suggests is a historical shift away from a (Spanish) past of "actual" material movement and cross-racial encounter to a (British-) American present characterized by abstracted, disembodied, and seamless imperial mobilities. Importantly, this narrative effacement of the materiality of seafaring is accompanied by a historiographical corollary: it completely erases the contemporary indigenous presence in North America and at the same time posits the implicit whiteness of early U.S. citizenship. By gradually eliding the materiality of maritime mobility, Rowson also elides issues of encounter, conquest, or even co-existence with Native American peoples; in her "imperial pedagogy" (Heil 2012, 623), indigenous populations are figured as a thing of the past, of no immediate concern for the formation of early U.S. national identity. As it constructs a historical fantasy of how the "Atlantic world" becomes culturally self-evident, then, "Rise and Progress of Navigation" also turns the cross-racial encounter of actual bodies into an anachronism, a cultural practice that has become increasingly obsolete.

Becoming-American in *Reuben and Rachel*

Rowson had already told a similar yet much more complexly fictionalized story of the emergence of the Atlantic world, as well as an attendant American origin myth, in her 1798 novel *Reuben and Rachel; or, Tales of Old Times*. However, whereas "Rise and Progress of Navigation" offers a neat separation of Spanish and British colonization projects in the Americas, *Reuben and Rachel* presents them as inextricably entwined, through fictional genealogy. As an elaborate literary complement to "Rise and Progress of Navigation," the two-volume novel presents a

centuries-long, multigenerational family history that reaches from the first landing of Christopher Columbus in the Americas (a later 1498 landing is mysteriously relocated to Peru)[6] to a melodramatic renunciation of European titles in eighteenth-century Philadelphia ("distinctions nothing worth" in a "young country, where the only distinction between man and man should be made by virtue, genius and education," Rowson [1798] 2009, 368).

As part of a recent rediscovery of Rowson's novels beyond her bestselling *Charlotte Temple*, *Reuben and Rachel* has been lauded by critics in particular for its espousal of interracial and interreligious connection and exchange—even marriage—for its transatlantic *and* hemispheric perspectives on early America, as well as for its positive depiction of female agency and women's political empowerment. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, for instance, claims that the novel "constitutes a matriarchal origin myth" (1993, 496) and "presents an American subject constituted through fusion, not confusion" (497). In a similar manner, Jennifer Desiderio suggests that in *Reuben and Rachel*, Rowson "challenges the notion of a fixed and pure American identity by changing the major players in the country's founding and settlement to include women and people of color" (2011, 77). And indeed, the family history that leads up to the eponymous twin siblings Reuben and Rachel includes the interracial marriages between Columbus's son Ferdinando and the Peruvian princess Orrabella at the turn of the sixteenth century as well as that between the New Hampshire boy William Dudley, who is abducted by Native Americans and grows up with the Narragansett tribe, and the daughter of the tribe's sachem, Oberea, in the seventeenth century.[7] Moreover, the novel (in particular its early parts) features an array of strong-willed and independent-minded

[6] Jenny Heil argues that this relocation from the Atlantic to the Pacific must be read in light of debates about U.S. continental westward expansion at the time of Rowson's writing *Reuben and Rachel*. Heil claims that the fictional journey to Peru "would have been possible then by sailing through a nonexistent canal" (2012, 629), and suggests that "Rowson exchanges land for water to naturalize as Anglo-American territories that would be more accessible via a Northwest Passage or Central American canal" (629).

[7] Both Smith-Rosenberg and Christopher Castiglia see the plot line concerning William and Oberea, which is set in the context of King Philip's War (1675–1678), as a rewriting of Mary Rowlandson's 1682 captivity narrative. Smith-Rosenberg in particular claims that *Reuben and Rachel* "transforms Rowlandson's captivity narrative into a love story" (1993, 500) and effectively "inverts, reverses, and undoes Rowlandson's racism" (499).

women, from the Spanish queen Isabella to Columbus's great-granddaughter Columbia to the heroic Algonquian Oberea.

Importantly, though, much of the progressive racial and gender politics of *Reuben and Rachel* is restricted to the first volume of the novel, and is for the most part undone in the course of the second. Part two, which focuses on the lives of the last offspring of the multiracial Columbian family tree, the twins Reuben and Rachel, changes from a narrative of adventure and cross-cultural encounter or fusion to one concerned with domestic and sentimental matters—a "middle-class romance" (Smith-Rosenberg 1993, 500) that shifts from a transatlantic/transhemispheric past to the more sedentary prospect of "purchasing land, building a house, and putting the whole in … a state of cultivation" (Rowson [1798] 2009, 201) in Philadelphia.

While Rowson explains this shift toward the domestic in terms of a personal career move,[8] critics have repeatedly pointed out (and lamented) its broader political significance in the increasingly socially conservative context of the early Republic. Still, if volume two of *Reuben and Rachel* reflects the larger cultural atmosphere of the early Republic, it remains an open question to what extent the politics of the entire novel is determined by the plot developments of its second part. Does the transnational heritage of the first nine generations still affect the newly found patriotic Americanness of Reuben and Rachel? Or do the multiracial "branches of our several families … sink into oblivion" (Rowson [1798] 2009, 369), as Reuben claims in the final pages of the novel? Joseph F. Bartolomeo and Melissa Carrere both stress the centrality of genealogy to *Reuben and Rachel*'s overall import, but arrive at significantly different conclusions. Bartolomeo suggests that Rowson did not discard or rewrite the first part after all, and despite her reservations included it in the novel. "[T]o

[8] In the preface, Rowson offers a biographical rationale for the curious shift in tone and topicality. Apparently, she had written the first part before she "entered on the arduous (though inexpressibly delightful) task of cultivating the minds and expanding the ideas of the female part of the rising generation" (Rowson [1798] 2009, 38)—that is, before she opened the Academy for Young Ladies in 1797. In her new role as pedagogue, Rowson seemed to have embraced wholeheartedly the ideological conflation of femininity, sentimentality, and nationhood in the early Republic, and actively promoted female domestic virtue and what Linda Kerber calls "Republican Motherhood" (1980, 11): "If I was before [in volume one] careful to avoid every expression or sentiment that might mislead the judgment, or corrupt the heart," Rowson writes, "what was then inclination became now an indispensable duty" (Rowson [1798] 2009, 38).

whatever extent she qualified and diluted the first volume," Bartolomeo writes, "she did not abandon it. The second volume is as unthinkable without it as Reuben and Rachel are without their family tree" (2009, 32). Carrere, on the other hand, takes issue with the second part's numerous strategies of disclaiming native kinship and "whitewash[ing]" (191), and shows in detail how volume two only selectively remembers the racial complexities of volume one. For Carrere, "oblivion" is indeed a crucial notion for understanding *Reuben and Rachel*, and she argues that "Rowson's novel works against itself, as the second volume actively forgets the first's formal structure of generational continuity and the memories of an inclusive American history passed down through those generations" (2013, 191–192).

My own reading of the novel concurs with Carrere's assessment, but I want to suggest that Rowson not only "actively forgets" the progressive politics of the first part, but also adopts a strategy of performative rewriting, as she repeats particular plot sequences with different, more culturally conservative, outcomes. Perhaps the most conspicuous of these repetitions revolves around the captivity narrative already alluded to. In volume two, Reuben—like his grandfather William—is captured by Native Americans, and is supposed to "be bound to the stake, and suffer those inhuman tortures which none but savages could inflict" (Rowson [1798] 2009, 353). Fortunately, Reuben is clandestinely set free by the chief's daughter Eumea, who has fallen in love with him and who follows him to Philadelphia after his escape. Unlike his ancestor, however, Reuben does not choose to marry the Native princess, but rather employs her as a servant, until she drowns herself in Schuylkill River because of a broken heart. By differentially repeating a plot sequence from volume one, Rowson spectacularly rewrites the mixed-race marriage between a white man and a Native American woman that was still a viable possibility in the early parts of *Reuben and Rachel*; as Reuben (in volume two) eventually marries the Englishwoman Jessy Oliver, he not only forgets, but also performatively obscures the more inclusive notion of American identity his ancestors have embodied.

While a number of critics have remarked upon the above doubling (see Carrere 2013, 190–191, Castiglia 1996, 150, Smith-Rosenberg 1993, 501), there is another set of rewritings in the novel related to maritime mobility which has not been critically examined so far. As will become evident, these rewritings are specifically concerned with the larger geopolitical framework of the Atlantic world, which *Reuben and Rachel*

constructs and at the same time relies on. In the course of the novel, Rowson repeats twice a plot sequence concerned with ships in distress in coastal waters, in the liminal zone that connects continental territoriality with the open sea. For Alexandra Ganser, the coast carries enormous cultural significance, as it is "spatially structured by acts of departure and arrival and by cultural encounter" (2013, 116), and thus, metaphorically, "refers to the point where semiotic systems become unstable and difference is negotiated anew, given that territorial orders are in suspension" (116). By differentially repeating a coastal distress sequence, Rowson partakes in this negotiation: she not only highlights the precarious materiality of pre-industrial seafaring, but also uses the sequence to subtly shift the significance of the Atlantic world for the process of "becoming-American" of her characters.

The first version of the sequence takes place early in the novel, during Columbus's stay in Peru (which mysteriously becomes part of the Atlantic world in Rowson's fictitious geography of exploration). On a particularly hot day, Rowson's protagonists are surprised by "[t]wo hours of such tremendous threatenings from gleaning meteors, bursts of thunder, and contortions of the earth" (Rowson [1798] 2009, 90)—an earthquake that destroys the Peruvian royal palace and kills innumerable people. During the incident, Columbus is on board of his ship, which is anchored in port. As there is also a "hurricane, attendant on the earthquake" (91), everyone supposes Columbus drowned. However, it turns out that the Atlantic Ocean constitutes a refuge for the Spanish navigator, who decides that being at the mercy of the waves is in fact safer than being anchored to the shaking ground. Columbus, Rowson writes, "cut the cables of his ship, and ordering the sails to be loosed [sic!], prepared to put before it, whichever way it should drive, as the only hope of saving his vessel" (91–92). Upon realizing that the arrival of the hurricane is imminent, Columbus trusts that maritime movement, even if it is completely random, will be the means for survival. Those who stayed put were not so lucky: "Those who caught the first moment to put to sea, were saved," Rowson explains, "three ships remained in port, and were swallowed in the general ruin" (92).

By telling a story of ships wrecked and ships saved in the context of natural disaster, Rowson participates in the narrative construction of what Steve Mentz calls "shipwreck modernity" (2016). Mentz suggests that we understand the early modern period through the trope of the shipwreck—an "ecological parable" (2016, xix) that epitomizes the disruptions and

changes brought about by the intersecting practices of modernity and globalization. For Mentz, early modern shipwreck narratives "elaborate a thoroughly antipastoral view of the human relationship with its environment" (xxxi) and constitute "opportunities to explore changing ideas about the natural environment" (xxxi). Curiously, however, Rowson's first shipwreck narrative is not only a story of ecological catastrophe, but also one of survival on the sea. In this first instance of coastal distress, the Atlantic Ocean is framed in positive terms as a site of adventure and risk rewarded, and more particularly as a site of refuge and relief. While continental territoriality is literally shaken in this episode, it is paradoxically the material volatility of movement on the waters and the Atlantic framework they imply that offer a safe haven and that eventually guarantee individual, familial, and cultural survival. As Columbus takes to the ocean, his ship is prevented from wreckage, and his transatlantic, mixed-race family line can persevere.

Whereas people routinely go back and forth between Europe and the Americas in volume one of *Reuben and Rachel*, volume two opens by introducing the Atlantic Ocean as a site of catastrophe. In this reiteration of the original scene of coastal distress, Reuben and Rachel's father (also named Reuben) returns to England from the North American colonies. Having purchased land for the family in Philadelphia, he writes to his children in advance that he will return soon to pick them up and bring them to Pennsylvania to live with him (their mother Cassiah Penn had died in childbirth at the end of part one). The letter announcing the imminent arrival of their father by ship, paired with uncertainty about his exact arrival date, puts Reuben and Rachel in a prolonged state of excitement. This excitement, however, turns to anxiety as they hear about a ship in distress in coastal waters. "[T]hey were informed," Rowson writes, "that a ship had been seen in the offing, before dark, as it was supposed, endeavoring to make the port of Liverpool; but that she appeared much disabled in her masts, yards, and rigging, and it was imagined she was now on shore, or in imminent danger" (Rowson [1798] 2009, 218).

As it turns out, the vessel is the very ship that carried Reuben and Rachel's father across the Atlantic; unfortunately, however, after a couple of days of apprehension, the twins get "the melancholy intelligence" (221) that the ship sunk in sight of land and Reuben senior died in the waves. In

this passage, Rowson not only rewrites her personal memories,[9] but also challenges the more positive function she had assigned to the Atlantic Ocean in the first part of *Reuben and Rachel*. By wrecking a ship with a central protagonist on it at the beginning of volume two, Rowson deploys the precarious materiality of eighteenth-century seafaring in existential terms, as ships were not only delayed or suffered from rough weather, but frequently sank and destroyed many lives in the process. Through this different take on coastal distress, Rowson reconfigures the significance of circulation in the Atlantic world more generally, as she repositions the Atlantic Ocean as a site of anxiety and trauma. No longer a place where the Columbian family members can find refuge from harm, the Atlantic Ocean is turned into a grave, a fearful reminder for the two orphaned siblings of their father's untimely death.

Toward the end of volume two, however, Rowson rewrites this sequence of maritime mobility for yet another time. After the death of Reuben senior, a substantial part of the narrative is concerned with Reuben junior retracing the steps of his father in Philadelphia—a work of mourning that is at the same time a struggle for economic survival. At last, Rachel plans to join him in the American colonies and boards a ship that carries her across the Atlantic. Due to the flawed materiality of eighteenth-century transatlantic communication, Reuben, although he "made every inquiry at the post-office" (360), is left in the dark about the particulars of his sister's journey. One day, while visiting a friend at the New Jersey seaside, a storm comes up, which soon "was increased to a tremendous degree, not blowing steadily, but in gusts, that threw the ocean into horrible convulsions, heaping up vast mountainous waves that seemed to threaten heaven" (361). Yet another time, Rowson introduces a ship in distress close to the shore; with great attention to material detail, she describes how Reuben recognizes a vessel "dreadfully shattered, endeavouring to make the harbour. Her foremast and maintopmast were gone; some of her sails, torn in atoms, were fluttering in the wind, and the few she could expand were scarcely manageable" (361). The ship eventually runs aground, and "[a]ll the aim of those on shore was now to save, if possible, the lives of some, who, borne by the foaming surge, seemed almost to reach the land, when

[9] While Rowson does not make this explicit in *Reuben and Rachel* (she does in *Rebecca*, see above), there is an autobiographical dimension to this plot sequence, as Rowson's father had also returned to England from Massachusetts in 1767, picked up his daughter, and brought her to live with him in Nantasket (Rowson's mother had died in childbirth, too).

the receding wave would dash them back into the dread abyss of waters" (362). Unbeknownst to Reuben, but clear to the reader at that point, the ship carries Rachel, who is luckily "snatched from a watery grave" (362) and reunited with her brother in a tearful recognition scene.

The meticulous reiteration of the coastal distress sequence with a happy ending not only rewrites the traumatic memory of the dead father, who perished in similar circumstances, but also once more shifts the significance of the Atlantic world in the novel. This time, the transatlantic crossing is hazardous, but eventually successful; it positions the Atlantic Ocean neither as a site of refuge nor as a site of death, but instead as merely an unpleasant obstacle to be overcome in order to be able to settle down on the shore. Crucially, Rachel's final crossing is not about opening up the Atlantic world for circulation again, but rather about the unidirectional progression of settler colonialism, in which the ultimate objective is continental sedentariness. Hence, *Reuben and Rachel*'s pathos-ridden final affirmation of early national identity, in which they profess to raise "true-born Americans" (368), must also be understood as a renunciation of transatlantic exchange. As they abandon their European property as well as their titles, they also abandon the Atlantic world as a site of maritime travel, and with it, their doubly rewritten, multiracial and transatlantically mobile family history.

A "Happy" Ending: *Slaves in Algiers*

The Atlantic framework put forward in Rowson's 1794 play, "[i]nterspersed with Songs" ([1794] 1995, 55), *Slaves in Algiers; or, A Struggle for Freedom*, differs somewhat from the frameworks she uses in "Rise and Progress of Navigation" and *Reuben and Rachel*. The play, which depicts the captivity of (Christian) American citizens in (Muslim) North Africa, is not about exploration or cultural exchange, but about the changing conditions of imperial capitalism in the Atlantic world. As numerous critics have observed, *Slaves in Algiers* can be considered part of the Barbary captivity genre, which is concerned with the (actual) seizure of European and American trade ships and the imprisonment of their passengers by pirates and privateers along the North African coast, and which fascinated readers since the sixteenth century (see Baepler 1995, Gross 2014, or Sorensen 2012). For the newly independent United States, more specifically, Barbary captivity soon turned into a significant foreign policy and foreign trade problem, as the country had lost the naval protection of the

British crown, and was soon confronted with an increasing number of its citizens held captive in North African countries. A theatrical production that was performed in Philadelphia in 1794 and (in abbreviated form) in Baltimore in 1795, *Slaves in Algiers* clearly capitalized on these current political developments;[10] however, the play also intervened in a larger, ongoing political debate about the commercial and military role of the early United States in the Atlantic world. As Martha Elena Rojas points out, "[b]ecause of their popularity and their affective power, accounts of Barbary captivity were vital to the development of U.S. diplomatic practice and foreign policy" (2003, 159).[11]

In recent years, *Slaves in Algiers* has been subject to much critical scrutiny, mostly owing to its complex depiction of the intersections between race, gender, and empire (see Dillon 2004, Gould 2003, or Schueller 1998). By conjoining questions of sexual freedom with questions of racial, religious, and national freedom, the play quite ingeniously negotiates various, and often conflicting, meanings of the idea of "liberty"—proto-feminist, liberal capitalist, or early national. In particular, Rowson opens up an imaginative space for the articulation of female political subjectivity and offers "a surprisingly bold representation of the moral, ideological, social, and sexual being of women" (Schueller 1998, 64). *Slaves*' opening scene can be read as emblematic of the audacity that characterizes large parts of the play. The scene introduces Fetnah, the "favorite of the Dey" (Rowson [1794] 1995, 59), who is complaining about her sexual enslavement in Algiers. While Fetnah's racial and religious identity is ambiguous (she was born in England to a Jewish father, who then converted to Islam and had his daughter "educated in the Moorish religion" [60]), her opinions are unabashedly liberal: Fetnah yearns for freedom and self-determination, and explains that an American friend has "taught [her] woman was never formed to be the abject slave of man. Nature made us equal with them and gave us the power to render ourselves superior"

[10] Jeffrey H. Richards claims that "*Slaves* typifies Rowson's general approach to stage writing. Take a topical issue, like captivity; graft it to well-worn dramatic forms or previously popular plays; provide significant focus on female characters, particularly those who sacrifice for the public good; add songs; and stir. This is not to say that Rowson's work is frivolous—only to note the reality of the conditions under which she wrote" (2011, 12).

[11] Philip Gould even offers a more specific context for *Slaves*' political intervention: "the play's appearance," he points out, "coincided with the beginning of John Jay's diplomatic mission to Britain—making it seem that political theater and American diplomatic politics are performing parallel mission" (2003, 98).

(60–61). Importantly, however, Fetnah's lofty feminist rhetoric is always already complemented by overt sexualized language: even though she dreads him, Fetnah makes fun of the Dey's "huge scimitar" (59) and declares that his lovemaking is so stiff that she actually "should burst out a-laughing in his face" (59).

Arguably, Fetnah's performance of sexual and political confidence in this and other scenes is facilitated by various dynamics of alterity and distance: as Malini Johar Schueller points out, Rowson's subversive femininities "are to a large extent made possible because she uses the Oriental setting to break free of conventions at home" (65). Because *Slaves in Algiers* represents an Orientalist fantasy set at the other end of the Atlantic world, the play is able to negotiate gender politics in ways that would be impossible in more "domestic" surroundings. Hence, Rowson figures the Atlantic Ocean as a barrier that creates a safe distance between the proto-feminist liberal rhetoric, complete with sexual innuendo, of characters held captive in faraway Algiers, and the (perhaps) more sexually and socially conservative here and now of audiences in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Because of this distance, Marion Rust suggests, playgoers "get to try on, albeit temporarily, sexualities denied the white Anglo-American Christians without suffering cruel fates in response" (2008, 202). Through Orientalist projection, Rust claims, American theater audiences can deliberate and indulge safely the possibility of female political subjectivity and bodily integrity, as they are "invited to try on [the characters'] sensations, if only within the temporal and spatial bounds of the theater and if only in the realm of fantasy" (202).

It is important to realize that this fantasy of transatlantic distancing depends on the paradoxical *absence* of maritime mobility in the Atlantic world. Even though ships, sailors, or Barbary "pirates" would certainly have had a spectacular presence on stage, *Slaves in Algiers* does not make explicit the maritime Atlantic context of the Barbary captivity narrative at all; even though the play negotiates early American identity "in a global-transatlantic context rather than a solely national one" (Dillon 2004, 408), it does not perform in any way the materiality of movement across the Atlantic. Instead, Rowson establishes Algiers as a remote setting, so isolated from global circulation that when the "slave" Rebecca asks her captor (and the play's villain) Ben Hassan, "[i]f I am trouble to you, … why do you not send me away?" (Rowson [1794] 1995, 82), he matter-of-factly, yet tellingly, retorts, "[t]here be no ships here for you to go in" (82). In *Slaves in Algiers*, Algiers is characterized by a temporality of delay

in which ransom for the captives (and thus reintegration into the commercial network of the Atlantic world) is always expected but never arrives (when it finally does, it is withheld by Ben Hassan). While this seclusion is obviously detrimental to the Christian captives, it opens up a space of possibility for the play's audiences, as Algiers's imaginative distance allows for an "experiment with the performativity of race, religion, and nation in the transatlantic world of capitalism" (Cima 2006, 185).

This experiment comes to a close in *Slaves in Algiers*'s final scene, which not only grafts a generic "happy" ending (i.e., conventional in terms of race, gender, and sexuality) onto an initially much more daring dramatic constellation, but also reinstalls a functioning system of transatlantic mobility. As the Christian captives are set free in the course of a slave revolt and celebrate an exclusively white, British-American family reunion, they also reassert the liberal capitalist order of the Atlantic world and the maritime circulation on which it depends. "Tomorrow," the former captive Henry announces proudly, "we shall leave your capital and return to our native land, where liberty has established her court" (Rowson [1794] 1995, 93). Even though Rowson still does not employ ships or other naval objects as props, she references transatlantic mobility in order to point to the (future) restoration of imperial "normalcy," in which white Christians are liberated and taken home, and non-white Muslims (such as Fetnah) are left behind. As she finally introduces *actual* maritime mobility to a play that has pondered the political stakes of (un/impeded) transatlantic movement throughout, Rowson also "reinstate[s] the barriers of race, nationality, and religion" (Cima 2006, 153), and thus ultimately forecloses the more pluralistic political subjectivities she has showcased in the course of *Slaves in Algiers*.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have examined the intricate ways in which Susanna Rowson uses the materiality of seafaring in order to interrogate cultural and political imaginaries of the Atlantic world as a realm of (imperial) connectivity and exchange. While all of the texts analyzed seem to functionalize maritime mobility for a reflection of how early American national identity is established vis-à-vis larger, transatlantic contexts, each text offers a different explanatory framework: "Rise and Progress of Navigation" gradually effaces the materiality of seafaring and cross-racial encounter in order to mark a historical development in which the Atlantic world becomes a

self-evident realm, and the North American colonies politically viable; *Reuben and Rachel*, like *Rebecca*, uses various scenarios of coastal distress and shipwreck in order to rearticulate the significance of the Atlantic ocean from a site of circulation to a site of the unidirectional movement of American settlers; and *Slaves in Algiers* deploys the curious absence of transatlantic maritime mobility in order to establish an isolated location where alternative political subjectivities can be performed. Moreover, whereas both "Rise and Progress of Navigation" and *Reuben and Rachel* look back on Eurocentric Atlantic exploration from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, and thus historically legitimize early American identity and nationhood, *Slaves in Algiers* presciently gestures toward "tomorrow," toward the future of nineteenth-century U.S. imperial expansion and globalized commerce. Whether it engages a historical trajectory or charts what lies ahead, Rowson's writing ultimately posits the Atlantic world as a contested and contradictory space—a space in which various fantasies of seamless correspondence and circulation had to be reconciled with the often flawed material conditions of maritime travel; and a space, crucially, in which seafaring turned out to be a key practice through which early Americans could negotiate their national sense of self.

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CHAPTER 5

Reading and Writing the Ship in "Benito Cereno" and "The Heroic Slave"

Thomas Massnick

On the second day of the New England Colored Citizens Convention of 1858 in New Bedford, Massachusetts, a committee composed of prominent African American men passed a resolution stating "Resolved, That though some colored Americans have been induced, from various promptings, to increase their fortunes by leaving their homes for other climes, the majority are now, as ever, determined to remain in the Unites States until, at least, the last fetter falls from the last American slave" ("Anniversary" 1858). Only one member opposed the resolution, Mr. Henson of Canada, who "did not think the Convention had a right to dictate what action colored people in other states should adopt."[1] The conversation among African American leaders in the North, as this example makes clear, took

[1] Josiah Henson (1789–1883) is known for his proximity to the character "Uncle Tom" in Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. For more information on Henson's iconic role in Canada, see Paul (2012).

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seriously the complexity of the politics of mobility. Though the Fugitive Slave Law had made the north into a more dangerous space for formerly enslaved people, and even for freeborn African Americans, there was still an impetus to remain in this contested space in order to create a critical mass that would not be intimidated by its fraught legal position. Some eight years earlier at the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law Convention in Cazenovia, New York, where Frederick Douglass presided, the focus was also on the politics of mobility, but its emphasis differed. Its minutes, an open letter, and the convention's 17 resolutions were published in Douglass's newspaper, *The North Star*. The open letter emphasizes that free African Americans of the north commit an act tantamount to treason when they attend a church with segregated pews. In addition, the second resolution of the convention states, "every man who is in [slavery] is bound to get out of it, if he can" ("A Letter" 1850). Douglass and the others make it an ethical duty for the enslaved person to turn his or her motility, potential for spatial movement, into mobility, even at great personal risk.

These two positions, the duty to stay and fight versus the duty to escape, present a tension. The former suggests that abolition can and will occur within the borders of the United States, and the latter suggests that freedom may only be possible through mobility, and particularly mobility outside of the borders of the United States, since the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 had made northern states as dangerous for formerly enslaved people as southern states. As Douglass puts it in his famous speech, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July," by the signing of the Fugitive Slave Law "Mason & Dixon's line has been obliterated; New York has become as Virginia" (Douglass [1852] 1996b, 121). The law compelled northerners to assist in the recapture of formerly enslaved people, so after the law's passage, no security could be found within the jurisdiction of the United States.

Revolts at sea by enslaved people in the literary imagination provide a distillation of the two contrasting positions present in the discussion at the 1850 and 1858 conventions—escape and revolt on ships, as opposed to on land, are complementary rather than contradictory elements of enfranchisement. On the one hand, a revolt by enslaved people resembles abolition through violent revolution, but on a small scale. In that sense, a revolt follows the ethical duty to fight against the institution of slavery to help others. Yet ships used to transport enslaved people necessarily exist within a transnational context, and the only permanently successful ship revolts end in expatriation. With this initial tension between intra and

international struggle in mind, this essay will explore the ways in which two novellas about self-emancipations at sea, Herman Melville’s “Benito Cereno” and Frederick Douglass’s “The Heroic Slave,” contend with the complex politics of mobility.

The two stories emerge from similar political backgrounds. Events such as the Haitian Revolution, Nat Turner’s rebellion, and the *Amistad* revolt give the stories their urgency and psychic resonance. This essay breaks into two main parts and grapples with three interrelated topics. First, the essay considers the ship’s role in the context of mobility studies, arguing that the simultaneous presence of fluidity and sedentarism makes the ship an ideal focal point for contestations of mobility. Second, the essay considers the way ships themselves function in the two novellas as textual entities in themselves—as things characters must read, decode, and decipher. I ultimately suggest that ships used in the transportation of enslaved people present a screen onto which varying and opposing ideologies can be projected. Imprisonment and liberation, nationalism and transnationalism, and order and chaos all find their articulation in these narratives. These two novellas, as I will argue, make reading, deciphering, and controlling the ship into a political act.

The Ship as Contested Space

In his 2007 book *Mobilities*, John Urry describes a tendency in mobility theory that he calls “sedentarism,” a concept based in large part on Martin Heidegger’s notions of “dwelling,” meaning to “be content or at home within a place,” and on the imprinting of landscapes with paths of various kinds (Urry 2007, 31–32). Sedentarism considers the dynamic relationship between dwelling and landscape in which the mode of dwelling modifies the nature of the landscape and vice versa. On the other end of the spectrum one finds fluidity and nomadism. Rather than focus on place as stasis, or even landscape as an amalgamation of nature and human action, theorists of fluidity and nomadism consider movement to be central to being. The nomad exists without a state and wanders across spaces claimed by others, thus potentially challenging historically durable conceptions of place or nation.

The ship is at once sedentary and nomadic. Its architectural construction encapsulates the passenger in a highly localized area, yet this cramped, ordered space moves through expansive environments while changing

them only minutely and temporarily.[2] Unlike a railroad or a highway, the bulk of the places through which a ship travels remain largely unchanged to the naked eye.[3] In his 2007 book *The Slave Ship*, Marcus Rediker finds in the slave ship itself a place where three systems of power developed to accommodate the necessities of the transatlantic slave trade. The slave ship serves as a warship, a factory, and a prison. The product of this "factory" is the enslaved people on board who were stored within the ship using methods that would later be implemented in the construction of prisons. The disciplinary control over the enslaved people was meant to produce them as goods for sale. Exercise, forced dancing, etc., were techniques to keep human cargo healthy and serviceable (Rediker 2007, 7). In short, the slave ship contains within it extraordinary motility for its proprietors, an ability of movement largely unconstrained by law or national sovereignty, but highly delimited and spatialized mechanisms of control for the enslaved.

These systems of power, given the limited size of a ship and the large number of enslaved people aboard, represent both the maintenance of control and the specter of its flip side, the self-emancipation of enslaved people, in which the very structural characteristics that make the ship a prison, factory, and warship hold out the possibility of empowering a revolting group. In short, the efficient tools of domination found on slave ships could, in the event of a revolt, give birth to a kind of rogue nation of enslaved people, complete with military power and an accompanying prison. The threat of revolt, then, resembles a threat of national revolution on a small scale. Literary representation of self-emancipation thus operates on multiple scales, both as representations of real or possible events, and as microcosms of national and transnational tensions.

[2] There are some ways in which even maritime mobility leaves its mark and interacts with traversed spaces. For example, as Marcus Rediker (2007) points out, slave ships were frequently followed by sharks that awaited the chance to feast on the bodies of enslaved people or crewmembers who died in large numbers and were subsequently thrown overboard. This kind of interaction between the oceanic ecosystem and the deck of a slave ship did exist, but in the imagination of many writers about the sea, there is a clear delineation between the inside and the outside, between the ship and the sea itself.

[3] Industrialization and mechanization have certainly made the interactions between boats and the ocean more consequential in the years since these novellas were written, but for the purpose of this essay, what matters is the way ships are imagined vis-à-vis oceanic spaces rather than material interactions between them.

Melville and the Machinery of Enslavement

Melville's "Benito Cereno" thematizes all three of Rediker's aforementioned functions. Based on a true event, the 1805 revolt aboard the *Tryal*, the story begins when a strange and ragged ship arrives at St. María Island, near Concepción, Chile. The ship, it seems, was on its way from Buenos Aires to Lima but hit heavy gales off Cape Horn. The voyage thus begins in the Atlantic and ends in the Pacific.[4] The protagonist, Amasa Delano, spends the bulk of the narrative wondering why the captain of this ship is acting so strangely and why he is always followed by a mysterious African sailor named Babo. If the story is a mystery, then Delano is a poor detective; he continually overlooks evidence that a revolt has taken place on the ship, a fact that is eventually exposed to Delano and to the reader. Benito Cereno, the deposed captain of the vessel, spends much of the text acting as a puppet, controlled by Babo, the revolt's leader. Once the prior action aboard the ship is revealed, a battle ensues and captain Amasa Delano's men take the ship; the revolting enslaved people are imprisoned or killed, and the survivors are tried in court. The next section of the story takes the form of a court deposition recorded from the testimony of Benito Cereno. The deposition is presented as the true story of the revolt—and though the narrator finds the contents of the deposition hard to believe, they appear to be the final story of what happened aboard the *San Dominick*, as the surviving Africans testify to the truth of what Benito Cereno has said. The text ends with a coda in which Babo is executed, and Benito Cereno confines himself to a monastery and dies shortly thereafter.

Much scholarship on "Benito Cereno" focuses on Amasa Delano's misreading of the events aboard the *San Dominick*. Indeed, the narrative arc depends on Delano's inability to see what is right in front of him. Peter Coviello claims that Delano is a sentimental reader and, like one among the throngs of fans of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, he is blinded not only by racism, but also by his "winning 'benevolence of heart'" (2002, 159). Moreover, what Delano is tasked with reading is, according to Coviello, a scene full of gothic tropes: from the monastery-like appearance of the ship as it arrives in the distance, to the skeleton attached to the mast-head. Delano compares Benito Cereno to a "hypochondriac abbot," describes him as "rather tall, but seemed never to have been robust, and now with nervous suffering was almost worn to a

[4] For a reading of the implications of this geographic mobility, see Ganser (2018).

skeleton" (Melville 1987, 52). And the ship itself enters the harbor "wimpled by […] low, creeping clouds, showed not unlike a Lima intriguante's one sinister eye peering across the Plaza from the Indian loophole of her dusk say-y-manta." (47) This confluence of southern-European gothic tropes with Orientalism produces in both Delano and the reader a sense of intrigue and mysterious dread, but also gives the story a feeling of unreality. Coviello takes this setting and characterization to indicate that Melville is mocking not only Delano's imperceptive reading, but the reader's as well. Delano feels overwhelmed with clues, or as Greg Grandin puts it, "trapped by the superficialities of [his] own perception of the world" (Grandin 2013, 234).

Toni Morrison associates Delano's lack of perception with his social position: "What he sees is what he is socialized to see: docile if disorderly blacks […] The American captain spends the day on board the *San Dominick*, happily observing, inquiring, chatting and arranging relief […] Any mild uneasiness he feels is quickly obliterated by his supreme confidence in his assessment of the order of things" (Morrison 1997, ix). This aspect of the text has been explored less thoroughly—the focus on what he *can* read properly: the ship's characteristics, its physical flaws, mislaid ropes, and general lack of precision; when Delano tries to calm his unease by assessing the "order of things," in fact he finds disorder. Bill Brown's "thing theory" suggests "we begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested" (Brown 2001, 4). The logic of "Benito Cereno" functions in just this way. Captain Delano experiences the "thingness" of many items on the ship as he apprehends their deviation from the standard order.

Delano trains his focus on the many things missing from the ship: its flag, guns, and lifeboats. First to catch his eye is the ship's missing flag: "[t]o Captain Delano's surprise, the stranger, viewed through the glass, showed no colors" (Melville 1987, 46). The lack of lifeboats, additionally, causes Delano to question Don Benito:

> "Had you three or four boats now, Don Benito," said Captain Delano, "I think that, by tugging at the oars, your negroes here might help along matters some. Did you sail from port without boats, Don Benito?" "They were stove in the gales, Señor." "That was bad. Many men, too, you lost then.

> Boats and men. Those must have been hard gales, Don Benito." "Past all speech," cringed the Spaniard. (81)

In addition to the ship's lack of a flag and lifeboats, its martial capacity appears diminished to Delano: "in the business in which she was engaged, the ship's general model and rig appeared to have undergone no material change from their original warlike and Froissart pattern. However, no guns were seen" (81). Ships used in the transatlantic slave trade were not merely modified merchant ships but functioned also as military vessels. As such, the lack of visible guns strikes Delano as odd. Delano proves to be capable of spotting the crucial elements missing from the ship, yet he lacks the ability to contextualize his reading.

In addition to the missing items, Delano notices the many aspects of the ship that have fallen into disrepair. The ship's "spars, ropes, and great part of the bulwarks looked woolly from long unacquaintance with the scraper, tar, and the brush" (48). The description continues:

> The tops were large, and were railed about with what had once been octagonal network, all now in sad disrepair [...] battered and moldy, the castellated forecastle seemed some ancient turret long ago taken by assault [...] toward the stern, two high-raised quarter galleries–the balustrades here and there covered with dry tindery sea moss–opening out from the unoccupied state-cabin, whose dead lights, for all the mild weather, were hermetically closed and caulked–these tenantless balconies hung over the sea as if it were the grand Venetian canal. (48–49)

More than simply taking note of these issues, Delano slips into fanciful descriptions. Dry observations of rigging, sails, and forecastles turn into imaginings of an "ancient turret" and a "Venetian canal." It is in these passages that Delano's romantic imagination intersects with his technical observations. Throughout the story, Delano comments on the major and minor flaws in both the ship's condition and the lack of discipline of its sailors, many of whom he still perceives to be enslaved. There is a subtle humor to the way he wanders the deck like a drill sergeant, pointing out the many flaws in the rigging while the people whom he takes for enslaved Africans sit polishing their knives. Delano takes on a role as a part of the ship's power structure through the practice of his care for technical proficiency. In pointing out and questioning the ship's physical inadequacies,

Delano seeks to reestablish an ordered state which would guarantee the ship's ability to carry out its goal of transporting enslaved people.

In these descriptions of a ship in disrepair, it is not entirely clear whether the narrator or Delano himself is making the observation, though Delano's fixation on the "thingness" of the ship's attributes continues beyond narration and into dialogue, thus suggesting that it is Delano whose attention is drawn by the disorder. The narrator shifts the lens to expose the uncanny nature of the ship's disorder; a space normally governed by precise command and discipline appears gothic when it slips into disrepair. As the narrator intrudes on Delano's interpretation, the metaphorical conception of the ship turns from that of a gothic novel to an Orientalist landscape marked by desert, forest, and jungle. The one remaining boat aboard is an

> unseaworthy old hulk of [a] longboat, which, warped as a camel's skeleton in the desert and almost as bleached, lay pot-wise inverted amidships, one side a little tipped, furnishing a subterraneous sort of den for family groups of the blacks, mostly women and children, who, squatting on old mats below, or perched above in the dark dome on the elevated seats, were descried, some distance within, like a social circle of bats sheltering in some friendly cave. (81)

This image is a bit tortured. The incongruous mixture of a camel's skeleton in the desert with a bat cave, dry and bright mixed with damp and dark, suggests that the narrator is at a loss to describe the scene, but again his imagination has left the immediate surroundings. Read as free indirect discourse, this scene reflects Delano's wild associations and ornate Orientalist tendencies. Another such image follows from a description of the mangled rope and rigging:

> Groves of rigging were about the chains; and there, peering from behind a great stay, like an Indian from behind a hemlock, a Spanish sailor, a marlingspike in his hand, was seen, who made what seemed an imperfect gesture towards the balcony, but immediately, as if alarmed by some advancing step along the deck within, vanished into the recesses of the hempen forest like a poacher. (74)

Again, the narrative voice begins from an image of disorder in the materiality of the ship and then shifts to fancy, casting the Spanish sailor in the role of a poacher, his marlingspike transformed into a gun. The narrative voice then indicates that the above indeed is Delano's own fancy "What meant this? Something the man had sought to communicate, unbeknown

to any one, even the captain. [...] Were those previous misgivings of Captain Delano's about to be verified? Or, in his haunted mood at the moment, had some random, unintentional motion of the man, while busy with the stay as if repairing it, been mistaken for a significant beckoning?" (74–75). Melville uses the narrator's ambiguity to place the reader somewhere near yet outside of Delano's consciousness.

We find ourselves taking free indirect discourse for omniscient voice, and vice versa, until the separation between simple description and fanciful interpretation becomes blurred. The knowledge Amasa Delano relies on is akin to linguistic and grammatical structure. His vision is disrupted by the way the ship is stripped of its standard social order, made strange, disturbing, and finally illegible. Delano's "reading" of the ship ironically both blinds him to the larger story and alerts him to the way power, as it is written into the physicality of the ship, has begun to come undone. Melville's story, I have been arguing, is ultimately a meditation on order and the way objects and things are mediated by narrative and language. More importantly, though, when read against the grain, the story exposes the ways in which slavery, violence, and the governance of oceanic spaces are enforced by legal systems that afford rights to some and not to others, and by technocratic captains, whose devotion to orderliness on ship allows for the perpetuation of oppression.[5] I agree with Greg Grandin's assessment that Delano "represents a [...] common form of modern authority. His power is based not on the demagogic pull of charisma but on the everyday pressures involved in controlling labor and converting diminishing natural resources into marketable items" (Grandin 2013, 235). Delano's good-natured support of the global slave trade is a banal evil.

If we, as readers, have been duped along with Delano, and the text perpetuates a conspiracy of sorts, then should we view the final description of the events, mediated through abridged legal documents, as legitimate? Marta Puxan-Oliva suggests that two parts of the authority of the legal documents at the end of the story should be called into question: first because there is little physical evidence to corroborate the story, and second, the testimony of enslaved witnesses is not heard, aside from "probably distorted hearsay" (Puxan-Oliva 2018, 435).[6] Though the narrative treats

[5] Melville's story has often been read against the grain; that is, its logic or symbolic sequences can be understood to point to a second-order truth. For an excellent and influential example, see Karcher (1992).

[6] Puxan-Oliva cited Douglas Coulson regarding the latter point.

the legal document as conclusive, it too is the product of a necessarily distorted system, distorted at least by its lack of universal inclusion of witnesses, but also by its status as a partial and translated text. The story's turn toward "official" legal description of the events aboard the ship ought also to be understood in the context of Delano's reading and misreading.[7]

Madison Washington's Nautical Literacy

Frederick Douglass's novella "The Heroic Slave," like Melville's text, dramatizes a slave revolt at sea, and similarly focuses on the material conditions of the ship to establish its metaphorical conception of power. The factual events that Douglass uses as the source material for the novella occur nearly a decade before the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, but when Douglass publishes the novella in 1852, the law certainly must have been on the minds of his readers, and the connection between law and geography had become, more than ever, a matter of life and death for formerly enslaved people. "The Heroic Slave" is a fictionalization of the life of Madison Washington, the leader of a revolt aboard the *Creole* in which 19 of the ship's 135 enslaved people revolt, take control of the ship, and force the crew to sail to Nassau, the capital of the British-owned Bahamas. There the British authorities quickly free the individuals who had not participated in the mutiny, and after a few months, the mutineers themselves are also freed (Levine et al. 2015, ix). The revolt, with just three deaths and well over one hundred emancipations of enslaved people, was "one of the most successful slave revolts in North America" (ix). Douglass's fictionalized version of the event focuses on the life of its leader. The revolt itself is related in an after-the-fact dialogue between two white sailors.

In addition to making use of tropes and techniques common to nineteenth-century sentimental fiction, such as quotations from poetry, biblical allusion, and pathos-laden soliloquies, the narrative prose that comprises most of the text shifts at times to drama. In addition, the focalization of the narrator shifts from section to section. The effect of these experimental elements is that the text appears decentered. It is not the tale of just one person or just one narrator; it is stitched together from fact and

[7] For a thorough reading of the role of legal texts both fictive and actual in Melville's story and in Amasa Delano's *Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres*, see DeLombard (2009).

from fiction.[8] The novella begins with a pointed description of the state of Virginia's long history of producing great heroes and statesmen (such as the enslaver Thomas Jefferson) next to whom the reader is led to place Madison Washington.[9] The story follows Madison Washington as he escapes from slavery after several attempts, navigating his way through hardships from Virginia to Canada with the help of the North Star and the white Ohioan Mr. Listwell. It ends with a dialogue between two sailors about the revolt aboard the *Creole*; one sailor boasts of how he would have handled the revolt, and the other, who was present, testifies to Madison Washington's greatness, mercy, and benevolence. The third-person narrator centers on the perspective of Listwell, a northern abolitionist stock figure who "listens well" and is quick to "enlist" in the cause of abolitionism, as his name doubly suggests.[10]

The commentaries on "The Heroic Slave" have long focused on the role of spatial organization through state, national, and oceanic boundaries.[11] Though the story indeed highlights the sea as a space in which nature and human determination conspire to liberate the enslaved people on the ship, it is nevertheless true that their freedom would be only temporary. In order to gain lasting freedom, the enslaved people of the *Creole* must continue on to Nassau and secure protection by the English government. The Atlantic may not be so free after all, and Douglass, writing in the wake of the Fugitive Slave Law's passage, must have been acutely aware that, as Ivy Wilson puts it, "[a]lthough oceans are liminal spaces among nations and

[8] William L. Andrews has argued that "The Heroic Slave," along with four other narratives by African Americans in the 1850s, did important cultural and political work by moving from the factual or "natural" narration of the slave narrative into fictive writing, thus affording African American writers the ability to "supplement (that is subvert) 'history'" (1990, 30).

[9] I read this section as slightly ironic, as does Carrie Hyde, though some commentators have taken it literally, and thus have argued that Douglass is guilty of participating uncritically in nationalist discourse (see e.g., Walter 2000).

[10] Many commentators have discussed the meanings of Listwell's name. The first to do so was Robert Stepto: "In many ways, [Listwell's] name is his story and his story is his name. He is indeed a "Listwell" in that he *enlists* as an abolitionist and does *well* by the cause… He is also a "Listwell" in that he *listens* well." I would like to suggest tentatively a third possible meaning for Listwell's name, as yet unremarked upon in the literature; namely, the nautical sense of the verb "to list," to lean over to one side because of a lack or balance or a leak. Madison Washington's story forces Listwell to see the imbalance between North and South and thus to lean in one direction and try, in his modest way, to right the ship (Stepto 1982, 365).

[11] Stepto comments on the way Douglass represents various states and landscapes. See also Wilson (2006).

seem to have no state jurisdiction, they are far from neutral territories" (2006, 464).

The narrative grapples most thoroughly with the complexity of practical and legal mobility during the conversation between the two white sailors. The men argue about whether enslaved people hold more power in maritime spaces than they do on land where "the whole physical force of the government, State and National [is] at your command" (Douglass 2015, 43). Madison Washington exclaims after he takes the helm of the ship, "you cannot write the bloody laws of slavery on those restless billows. The ocean, if not the land, is free" (50). Yet, as Carrie Hyde points out, "on the juridical level, ships are essentially mobile extensions of the nation" despite the fact that the ship is "the quintessential icon of transatlantic unboundedness" (2013, 478). Liberation at sea thus only translates into permanent liberation if it leads to the jurisdiction of a country in which slavery is illegal.

Despite the fact that the sea cannot be understood as a locus of pure freedom, "The Heroic Slave," like other texts in Douglass's oeuvre, celebrates the ship and maritime life. Like Melville, Douglass is no stranger to nautical life and its complex vocabularies. As an enslaved teenager, he worked as a caulker in Baltimore. The ships in the Chesapeake Bay left a strong impression on him, as is made clear in the following passage:

> I have often, in the deep stillness of a summer's Sabbath, stood all alone upon the lofty banks of that noble bay, and traced, with saddened heart and tearful eye, the countless number of sails moving off to the mighty ocean. The sight of these always affected me powerfully. My thoughts would compel utterance; and there, with no audience but the Almighty, I would pour out my soul's complaint, in my rude way, with an apostrophe to the moving multitude of ships:—'You are loosed from your moorings, and are free; I am fast in my chains, and am a slave! You move merrily before the gentle gale, and I sadly before the bloody whip! You are freedom's swift-winged angels, that fly round the world; I am confined in bands of iron! O that I were free! O, that I were on one of your gallant decks, and under your protecting wing!' (Douglass [1845] 1996a, 64)

This passage, with its alliteration, apostrophe, and parallelism, is as lofty as any of Douglass's speeches. His notion of the ships as objects of beauty as well as sites of freedom also appears in "The Heroic Slave." "Soon the broad fore topsail, the royal and top gallant sail were spread to the breeze. Round went the heavy windlass, clank, clank went the fall-bit,–the anchors

weighed,–jibs, mainsails, and topsails hauled to the wind, and the long, low, slack slaver, with her cargo of human flesh, careened and moved forward to the sea" (Douglass 2015, 40). Though the purpose of the ship in the above description is to transport enslaved people in order to steal their labor, Douglass nevertheless imbues it with a sense of beauty, or at least an aesthetic dimension. The logic and precision of the sails, anchors, and rigging testify to the value of technical efficiency and elegant design. Like Delano, Douglass blends specific and practical knowledge of a ship's materiality with external ideas and fancies which remain separate from a ship's actual purpose.

During the mutiny, in Douglass's rendering, the space of the ship takes on a terrestrial quality. An ironic mirror image of an earlier scene in which Madison Washington evades potential capture by sitting in the branches of a tree occurs when the crew of the *Creole* hides up in the rigging of the ship, clinging "like so many frightened monkeys" (49). This image completes the reversal of position implicit in the revolt. Madison Washington, once forced to hide in a tree, now becomes the hunter, forcing his former captors to hide. The white sailors "like so many frightened monkeys" become associated with animals. The ship becomes a piece of land—the rigging becomes tree branches. These terrestrial images work to transform the ship into a clear inversion of the situation on land, and thus for that moment at least, the revolution is complete.

To the surprise of the captain, as well as the reader, Madison Washington has the ability to navigate and sail the ship expertly. The only knowledge the reader has of any nautical experience in Washington's past is his trip across Lake Erie to Canada, and that was on a steamer, not a sailboat. Nevertheless, he exhibits mastery of sailing: "During the storm, Madison stood firmly at the helm,—his keen eye fixed upon the binnacle. He was not indifferent to the dreadful hurricane; yet he met it with the equanimity of an old sailor" (50). Like Washington's eloquence, "his words were well chosen, and his pronunciation equal to that of any schoolmaster," the origin of his prowess as a seaman is not to be found in the text (47). He is heroic and exceptional. This aspect of Douglass's story, the superhuman, hyper-masculine heroism of Madison Washington, has been criticized gently by Richard Yarborough (1990, 166–188) and more forcefully by Krista Walter (2000, 233–245). Carrie Hyde sidesteps this critique by pointing out the way in which Washington's movements through the geographical spaces of the plot are often determined by nature: a fire, a rainstorm, a squall, and not solely by his own talent. Nevertheless, Washington

literally speaks the language of the oppressor, and is therefore a poor model of resistance for some critics. But for Douglass, language is a skill like piloting a ship. His first autobiography thematizes the close connection between literacy and freedom, and Madison Washington's story is much the same, though his acquisition of skills, such as seamanship and rhetoric, do not occur within the text, they mirror Douglass's own coming of age and achievement of freedom. In a sense, then, "The Heroic Slave" is a literacy narrative, but rather than learning to read texts, as Douglass does in his own life, the protagonist reads stars, telltales, and binnacles.

Conclusions: New Mobilities and Life After Social Death

Gesa Mackenthun's observation that "Benito Cereno" employs a "particular juxtaposition of different times and geographical spaces [that] violates and subverts the normal order of history and narrative" (2004, 143) can also be applied to "The Heroic Slave." Both texts redraw the boundaries connecting narration to geography, and use the ship, with its literal as well as metaphorical mobilities, not to romanticize mobility as such, but to challenge nationalistic ideology either by exposing it or by rewriting it.

In a reading of "Benito Cereno," Christopher Freeburg applies Bill Brown's "thing theory" to the apparently enslaved Africans aboard the ship. Freeburg points out "when the slave [...] stops working as the slave, as merely an extension of his master's wishes, and rejects this condition only to perform it as an act, the slave shifts from a thing of property [...] to a thing of contingency to the master" (2012, 110). Freeburg's line of argumentation seeks to complicate Orlando Patterson's notion of "social death," the condition of total powerlessness for the enslaved that results from a "master/slave" relationship (see Patterson 1982). From Freeburg's perspective, Delano's blindness to the events aboard the ship stems from his inability to imagine life after social death (100). Madison Washington's nautical literacy similarly stands as a counterpoint to social death, and the sailors surprised by it in the narrative, like Delano, are incapable of imaging an enslaved person as anything other than completely dominated. Freeburg emphasizes that "one can never eliminate the possibility of another Nat Turner, Toussaint Overture, Frederick Douglass, or Harriet Jacobs [...] because humans cannot permanently master social life" (2012, 129). Babo and Madison Washington, despite their drastically different ends, could both be added to this list.

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CHAPTER 6

South Seas Speculation in Finance and Fiction

Melissa Kennedy

David Attenborough boasts on BBC's *Blue Planet II* nature documentary series that the ocean is "the largest habitat on earth" (2017), but points out that it is also the least known. The discoveries made during the *Blue Planet II* expeditions, of new underwater landscapes and species, and the impact of climate change and pollution, continue a 500-year discourse of Western discovery of the world's oceans. "Discovered" in the context of Western European colonial exploration, speculation about the Pacific has predominantly consisted of estimations of its content and value within a Western logic of capitalist market economy. While colonial-era seafaring first sparked the "ineluctable pursuit of an unknowable enigma," a race for resources represented most famously in Ahab's single-minded hunt for the great white whale in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*,[1] Attenborough's quest is to capture on film fantastic images of exotic creatures and places. More than their actual discoveries, both historical and contemporary seafaring

[1] On Roberto Bolaño's *2666* and *Moby-Dick*, see Deckard 2012, 363.

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feats celebrate Western exceptionalism, an adventuring spirit, and extraordinary technology that uncovers these various hidden riches for reading or viewing pleasure back home. At the same time as the voyages reveal extraordinary bounties, their narrative of awe suggests that much lies outside human knowledge, waiting, it would seem, to be found. At least when it comes to the ocean, the imaginary of the age of discovery is by no means over.

The combination of partial knowledge and heightened speculation figures the Pacific almost exclusively in the realm of the imaginary, an imprecision perhaps best captured in the term "south seas."[2] From the beginning of the modern era of globalization under colonial capitalism to today's neoliberal era, the Pacific exists as a disembodied, virtual, speculative space rather than as a real, living, and lived-in place intimately connected with the rest of the world. Both historical and, as indicated in Attenborough's discourse, modern representations of an invisible, unknowable south seas ignore the role of the real Pacific. Despite covering over 30% of the earth's surface, generating nearly half the planet's oxygen, and playing a crucial role in balancing the global ecosystem, the familiar terms of geopolitics such as "trans-Pacific," "Asia-Pacific," and "Australasia" pass over the Pacific as if it were, as Epeli Hau'ofa jokes, "the hole in the doughnut" (2008, 37). Unlike the colonized spaces that border the great ocean, and which were absorbed into key financial production and consumption nodes in the flows of globalization, particularly the Americas, Australia, South-East and East Asia,[3] the speculative function of the Pacific Ocean and its islands has never given way to more embodied, realistic modes of engagement. The absence of the Pacific in global discourse underlines the land-centric biases of cultural representation, which tend to relegate all maritime regions to blank spaces on the map, an emptiness only to be traversed—a gap that this essay collection endeavors to fill.

Despite increasing knowledge of Pacific precarity, such as issues of pollution and climate change foregrounded in *Blue Planet II* and the significant

[2] Vasco Núñez de Balboa was the first European to name the Pacific as the South Sea in 1513. Throughout this paper I write "south seas" without capital letters to emphasize that it is not a proper noun, as it references an imaginary rather than a real geographical or geopolitical location.

[3] Japanese colonization of Manchuria, the Sakhalin Islands, Korea, and Taiwan, and later attempts to control territories in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific are also important in this geo-political history. It is, however, beyond the scope of this essay to discuss China and Japan's relationship with the Pacific and global capitalism.

body of Pacific cultural output and environmental activism,[4] the colonial-era origins of the south seas as virtual space on which to project desires of fantastic(al) wealth reveal foundations of capitalist values that remain entrenched today. The disembodied "neverwhere"[5] of the south seas is not an oversight but a central conceit integral to capitalist growth and profit. From the 1711 founding of the South Seas Company to today's island Offshore Financial Centers and tax havens, the imprecise elsewhere generates speculation and profit-seeking of money that nonetheless only circulates within elites in developed-world centers such as London and New York.

Taboo, the 2017 BBC television drama about trade and settlement during the British Empire, is a useful lens through which to analyze both past and present representations of the south seas. Set in London in 1814, the story centers on political wrangling between the Crown, the East India Company, and a renegade sailor, James Delaney, who owns the title for Nootka Sound, a small island off the Pacific coast between the U.S. and Canada. The island is of strategic importance to both Crown and Company as a potential trans-Pacific trading port for Canadian furs and Chinese tea, and Delaney's refusal to hand over his claim invokes underhand, violent, and corrupt practices by both powers to force his acquiescence. The narrative harks back to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century founding of the British stock market, insurance trade, and mercantile colonialism, including slavery and land conquest. As a modern-day representation of the past, the period drama can also be read from a contemporary understanding of the south seas.[6] In particular, the revelations of the Panama

[4] Across writing commonly labeled postcolonial and ecocritical for its activism and indigenous viewpoint, see, for example, Albert Wendt (Samoa), Epeli Hau'ofa (Tonga), Teresia Teaiwa (I-Kiribati), Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner (Marshall Islands), and Hawai'ian Maoli Haunani Kay Trask, Jamaica Osorio, and Kiana Davenport. On non-European philosophies of global connectivity, see, from the Pacific, Epeli Hau'ofa on the ocean as the highway that links and binds Pasifika peoples in "our sea of islands" (1999). From the Caribbean, see Barbadian poet Edward Kamau Brathwaite on "geo-psyche" (1990, 27) and Martinican Édouard Glissant on relational poetics (1981, 311).

[5] *Neverwhere* is the title of a BBC television series and novel by British fantasy writer, Neil Gaiman. The neat conflation of nowhere and never creates in the fiction an unseen underworld in London, bringing to life the forgotten narratives and buried pasts of the medieval and colonial city (Gaiman 1996).

[6] The period drama is a feature of British television, promoted first by public broadcasters BBC and ITV (including, since 2015 *Gunpowder*, *Home Fires*, *Poldark*, *Taboo*, *The Last Kingdom*, *Wolf Hall*) and lately online streaming services (*Britannia* [Sky], *The Crown* [Netflix]). A similar recuperative gesture in American cinema may be the recent revisiting of the slavery era, in *12 Years a Slave* (2013) and *Lincoln* (2012).

Papers (2015) and Paradise Papers (2017) provide a fitting context within which to interpret *Taboo*'s layers of wealth and hidden interest, the unpacking of which drives the plot.

While Delaney may be interpreted as an ambivalent kind of returned Robinson Crusoe, *Taboo* is in no way an exotic adventure story. Neither is the show interested in the material imports with which the era was preoccupied. As with the slavery that is hinted at but never engaged, the trade goods from which Delaney's, the Crown's, and the East India Company's power and wealth are derived are relegated to background presences and decorative screen sets. Opulent rooms and offices, filled with *chinoiserie* porcelain, silver pots of tea and coffee, oranges, ivory trinkets, exotic skins, and silk, stand in for the south seas as metonymies of presence, but they are silent and inactive: where they come from and how they arrived there are never mentioned. Rather, the show's resolute focus on exposing the financial posturing of profit-seeking colonial interests of the East India Company, the Crown, and private speculators, including Delaney, reveals the financial incentives of Empire. Exposing greed, excessive risk-taking, gambling with other people's money, false advertising of corporate interests, political and corporate corruption, and multiple amoral and illegal acts in the name of wealth accumulation, *Taboo* enacts a historical version of the same kind of rapacious business practices that have, since the 2008 financial crisis, gained mainstream popularity in visual media.[7] Ultimately, the "taboo" of the series' title enacts and re-enacts the invisibility of finance, of the perpetual failure to link London's extraordinary wealth with the inequality, illegality, and injustice—both at home and abroad, past and present—on which it is based. Like the City of London's banking industry's illegal, predatory practices that significantly contributed to the 2008 global financial crisis, and the hidden wealth that continues to circulate despite the revelations of the Panama and Paradise Papers, all exposure attempts have been silently buried. *Taboo* thus exemplifies the south seas as a metaphor for invisible finance, contributing to an enduring Western understanding of the Pacific as a blank surface on the map on which to project desires for personal adventure and financial venture, against which no postcolonial, indigenous, environmental, or alternative activism, policy, or law has yet made significant inroads.

[7] Visual media examples include the films *The Big Short* (2015), *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), and television series *Billions* (2016), and *Follow the Money* (2016).

In 1711, when the South Sea Company was founded, the most recent map of the world, by Heinrich Scherer (1703), fills the northern hemisphere with detailed coastlines, lakes, rivers, and mountain chains, leaving little surface of the map unadorned. The entire bottom half of the globe, however, between the continents of America and Africa, is a void. Lacking landmasses, Scherer fills the space with figures of sailing ships, dolphins, and sea monsters. The early joint-stock company that invented debt financing and caused the nation's first stock bubble was thus founded on an anticipated market that was not yet even on the map. This notable cartographical absence is only one of the venture's many layers of speculation lacking in any material grounding. Certainly, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British exploration, conquest, and settlement of the Atlantic and Pacific took place in a physical environment of restricted mobility and communication. It is therefore understandable that early references to the south seas feature more metaphorically than literally, such as in the discourse surrounding the South Sea Company and stock market bubble (1711–1721). In both its newness and imaginative flair, the novelty of the South Sea investment scheme captured the public imagination, almost as if the lack of material basis was compensated by an excess in the realm of the imaginary. The scheme appealed to investors buoyed by the optimism of the burgeoning age of Empire and excited by an emerging new concept of economics based on the imagined values of debt and fiat money.

The reduction of the Pacific to the imagery of the south seas construes the great southern ocean as an abstract Other to the continents on which concepts of the West are grounded. The slipperiness of the geographical space referred to by the term is here symptomatic. For the eighteenth-century South Sea Company, the south seas referenced trans-Atlantic trade with the Caribbean and South America. Today the term generally refers spatially to the Southern hemisphere area of Oceania, or sometimes to the entire Pacific, in order to include Hawai'i. In a similar dynamic to Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, the south seas connotes an exoticized space of Romantic Other, a myth perpetuated in early European narratives, such as James Cook's journals of Hawai'i, Robert Louis Stevenson's letters from Samoa (see Stevenson [1908] 2009 and [1899] 1995), and Paul Gauguin's paintings of Tahiti, a discourse that, since the twentieth century, has been taken up by Western mass tourism to the islands.[8]

[8] On marketing the Other for Western tourism, see e.g., Huggan 2001; Carrigan 2011.

Symptomatic of these confusing conflations between past and present, real and imaginary, Atlantic and Pacific, colonial and tourist, in 1966 Chile renamed a small island off its Pacific coast Robinson Crusoe Island. Although Defoe's south-seas adventure is, like the South Sea Company's slave route to Central America, one of trans-Atlantic voyaging, the real-life shipwreck of Scottish privateer Alexander Selkirk, on which Defoe is said to have based his tale, takes place on this Pacific Island (Richetti 2005, 175). Chile's renaming in order to attract more tourism to the area suggests the power of the fiction of the south seas to such an extent as to shift Defoe's fictional Atlantic to the Pacific, thereby subordinating the real for the imaginary by replacing the historical Selkirk with the fictional Crusoe. Failure to differentiate between these two great bodies of water illustrates the longevity of the historical conflation, despite the fact that the oceans and their islands are now thoroughly mapped, unlike in Scherer's time.

As predominantly imaginary and new, the concept of financial speculation was very much shaped by its representations in print media. The South Sea Company, and the colonial enterprise more broadly, in the words of Carl Wennerlind, "relied on the public's favourable assessment of a world very few had experienced or witnessed in person" (2011, 205). Thus propaganda writers such as Treasury pamphleteers Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift "had to offer partly fictional accounts that allowed people to imagine the conditions and opportunities" (206). The south seas, then, was explicitly imagined into existence long before it was explored, charted, and mapped. In Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), and John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) and *Polly* (1729), the notion of the south seas adventure quickly entered into literary circulation (Defoe 1719; Gay [1729] 1922; Swift [1726] 2003). These early novels and dramas were written in direct response to the South Sea Bubble, which is referenced in the fiction's harnessing of the term "adventurer," which in the eighteenth-century referred to a stock-market speculator (Balen 2002, 16), to seafaring adventure figures of Crusoe, Gulliver, and Gay's Caribbean pirates. In their literary texts, Defoe, Swift, and Gay all allude to the changing terrain of economic, political, and social concepts of finance revealed by the South Sea Company, often in satire that exposes the fiction of speculative finance and thus voices early critique of the emergent capitalist world-system. Writing in the new literary form of the novel, both Defoe's and Swift's speculative fictions also demonstrate the

concomitant and related birth of the modern economy and literary fiction, two discourses that had not yet crystallized into separate spheres.[9]

Defoe, Swift, and Gay write for an English readership and audience, with the south seas settings functioning in each text as little more than a catalyst for distanced reflection on English society. Having themselves never traveled beyond England, and in Swift's case also Ireland, the writers' own involvement in the Atlantic trade were akin to that of their intended readers: upper- and emerging middle-class men who were also investors in the speculative adventures proliferating in the rapidly growing stock market. Indeed, Swift and Gay both lost significant fortunes in the South Sea Bubble. Defoe, in *Robinson Crusoe*, asks readers to identify with the narrator and thus to imagine themselves at sea and in exotic places, gambling with significant risk to their lives and livelihoods. Like investors who—both then and now—closely follow stock data and market mechanics with little interest in the concrete business and location of their investments, Defoe dedicates more space to explaining financial concepts, such as returns on sugarcane investment (1719, 24; 178–179) and the legal process of making long-distance transfer of funds (180–181), than he does on describing Crusoe's voyage and location, revealed at the end of the adventure as somewhere between Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago (138).

Defoe's novel, published before the 1721 South Sea stock crash, remains positive about the financial innovations inspired by growing colonial interests. By contrast, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* invents a ridiculous fantasy mode as a way of condemning through satire British economic beliefs and values as similarly far-fetched fictions. The speculative terrain of Swift's south seas covers the entire surface area of the Pacific, as the writer locates Lilliput in Melanesia, between Sumatra and Australia, maps Brobdingnag as a peninsula on the U.S. Northwest coast, and the coordinates he gives for Laputa situate it somewhere in the North Pacific near the Aleut Islands ([1726] 1993, 285, n. 4). The non-specific maritime everywhere of the colonial enterprise, typically represented by the ocean-going ship, is in *Gulliver's Travels* taken to its furthest extreme in the floating island of Laputa. An allegorical heart of Empire, the floating island of

[9] For an overview of the emerging discourses of finance and fiction, see Woodmansee and Osteen (1999, 5–7). On the interdependence of the nation-state and the novel, see Anderson (1983). On the interdependence of imperialism and the novel, see Said (1993). On the argument that capitalism and colonialism are part of the same dynamic, see Meiksins Wood (2003).

Laputa, a dysphemism standing for England, is literally untethered from place, and thus able to cast its shadow anywhere.

The allegory of Laputa as critique of colonial dominion might be expected to have ended with the dismantling of Empire; however, decolonization did not untether the south seas from its colonial masters. The 1960s invention of offshore finance centers and tax-haven jurisdictions allowed floating finance to take Empire's place, in what Anthony van Fossen calls "a sort of invisible empire of tax havens in present and past British territories" (van Fossen 2015, 161). Set up during decolonization by Britain's global administrative networks, including London lawyers and the Bank of England (161–162), offshore tax havens are the modern-day Laputa that enable the wealthy West to continue to profit from postcolonial sovereign states. Just like the vague neverwhere of the South Seas trading company and Defoe's and Swift's adventures, it is today almost impossible to locate money hidden offshore. Of course the tax haven islands themselves do exist on the map, but there are no records of financial ownership and transactions. Nested in nameless shell corporations that do not name the company owners or directors, funds move around the world seeking maximum profit, for example, using Swiss Francs in a company listed in Turks and Caicos to invest in a Cook Island-based online gambling company (van Fossen 2003, 10). Movement is, in the digital age, virtual, and sometimes even fictional, in the way that multiple companies registered on different islands can trade with each other as if in a free-market without revealing that they all actually belong to one beneficial owner. Just as in the eighteenth-century fiction, maritime metaphors abound in contemporary nonfictional portrayals of finance imagined as transactions between an onshore center, usually London or New York, and an offshore destination in the Atlantic or Pacific, money "flowing ceaselessly": "waves of liquid capital" that "wash away" laws and regulations (Bullough 2018, 29). For example, in his post-Paradise Papers treatise in favor of greater financial regulation, *Moneyland*, Oliver Bullough works with an extended metaphor of global finance as an oil tanker, in which the liquid wealth of oil can "slosh backwards and forwards in ever greater waves" (28), leaking, pooling, floating, and polluting the real-world ecosystem with impunity.

The speculative finance industry today accounts for a significant and growing portion of the global economy (Greenwood and Scharfstein 2013, 3–28), yet remains as mysterious in its working as it did to many investors in the eighteenth century. Indeed, the non-location of the South

Sea Company's purported source of wealth finds its most recent iteration in the 2017 Paradise Papers' revelation of the "CV" corporate model by which major corporations are no longer even registered in the offshore tax havens that have been a source of wealth since colonial occupation, but are not resident in *any* country at all. Today's global finance acts with a disregard for the specificities of place similar to the South Sea investment scheme and its non-existent business on which investors gambled without ever leaving London. Bullough, in his study of "moneyland," redraws the world map according to the places where the global elite earn (or steal) their wealth, where they hide it, and where they spend it. Following the money in effect effaces the geography and national borders that usually define maps: "These countries are different in language, culture, religion and almost everything else, but if you look at them from the perspective of money, such distinctions vanish" (23). The fictional space of the south seas is again suggested, as the offshores of Jersey, the Caribbean, and the Pacific all function by the same logic.[10]

It is striking that in the 300 years from the earliest form of financial market capitalism to that of twenty-first-century late-capitalism, the south seas continue to figure so prominently in the virtual movement of money in financial trading. The offshore tax havens and their even further disembodied CV variants are the south seas of today: conveniently vague, largely undefined virtual spaces that represent the ideals of global flows and networks as a mask for usefully obfuscating the way money actually only circulates within elite circles, predominantly earning profit for its owners by doing nothing: virtual money invested in virtual shares. As Defoe, Swift, and Gay argued in relation to the South Sea Company, such finance is nothing but fiction. Eighteenth-century literary representations of the south seas encoded the term as a metonymy for both any unknown maritime space and for undefined financial speculations. Each in their own way, the Paradise Papers, *Blue Planet II*, and *Taboo*, which all came out of the UK in 2017, offer multi-modal confirmation of the power of the metaphoric, symbolic, and unimaginable fantasy of the south seas, that remains steadfastly unattached to any specific place, or to its local inhabitants and cultures, which do not feature in any of them.

[10] Although the Pacific is not as well known as the Caribbean as a tax haven, the Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Samoa, Niue, Cook Island, and Nauru offer offshore financial services.

A reading of the *Taboo* series' title reveals a set of imagery that, like that of the south seas, is confusing and stylized rather than specifically located. The word "taboo," common to most Polynesian languages meaning "sacred" or "forbidden," forges an imaginative link between London and the Pacific: between British Delaney and Pacific peoples. The concept of taboo, which was brought into the English language by Captain James Cook from his Pacific voyages for the British Crown, gestures toward a trans-Pacific drama. However, the only indication of Polynesia is an actor with a Maori facial *moko* tattoo, who plays a character referred to as "the heathen" in the dialogue and as "the Hawaiian" in the transcript (episode 3). In the opening credits, the main characters—all white Britons who live in London—are suspended in clear blue water, as if drowning, along with the title in solid black letters in which the final two letters "o—o" are held apart by a bar that could be stylized stocks or shackles. The body of water here suggested is perhaps not the Pacific but rather the Atlantic of the slave-trading era, a collapsing of signifiers reminiscent of eighteenth-century constructions of the south seas as indeterminate. The meaning of the water imagery and choice of title are never clarified in the course of the eight episodes. The only water that features in the storyline is the filthy Thames, particularly its mudflats, riverbanks, and jetties, where much of the action takes place. Although Delaney is often portrayed washing himself in the river, he never wades out of his depth, thereby failing to connect with the imagery of floating, swimming, or sinking that the opening credits suggest are of thematic and symbolic importance.

The symbolic as well as real fluidity of *Taboo*'s water imagery make sense when read within historical constructions of finance and Empire. Imperial trade applied hierarchical power dynamics to the globally interconnected bodies of water, imagining the Thames as the heart of Empire to which both Atlantic and Pacific are annexed by mercantilism and colonialism. Defoe's oft-cited Treasury pamphlet of 1710, which expounds the newly invented concept of finance credit, is an early expression of this representation of multiple forms of fluid connectivity: "[credit] gives Being to the Branches and Moisture to the Root; 'tis the Oil of the Wheel, the Marrow in the Bones, the Blood in the Veins, and the Spirits in the Heart of all the Negoce, Trade, Cash, and Commerce in the World."[11] Today's global finance, while more abstracted, shares these dynamics of

[11] Daniel Defoe, "An Essay Upon Publick Credit" (1710), qtd. in Wennerlind (2011, 29).

power radiating out from the City of London, which controls the largest single share of the global financial market (37% in 2017; "Key Facts" 2017).

If the story's taboo is not Polynesian, it may still be of Pacific origin in that Delaney's mother was a Native American woman whom his father "bought for beads" and a treaty for ownership of her tribal land of Nootka Island (episode 5).[12] The storyline of the "civilized savage" on show in London is familiar from the early-seventeenth century, when the Native American Pocahontas died at Gravesend, opposite the Tilbury Docks where *Taboo* is set. Delaney's mother dies in Bedlam Insane Asylum, committed by her husband after she is unable or unwilling to pass as a Spanish noblewoman. The mother figure appears to Delaney only in menacing and haunting dreams and visions that suggest a mystical connection with the spirit world. This representation of indigeneity as spiritual Other is fully inscribed in a desultory Eurocentric mode that, in the best case exoticizes the inhabitants of the south seas and in the worst case utterly subsumes them to their use-value in capitalist terms—here for her inheritance.

It is, indeed, another kind of haunting that alludes to the final possible connection with the south seas, in Delaney's traumatic memories of a sinking slave ship. A child cadet in the East India Company army, Delaney as a sick young man is conscripted to a slaver which is deliberately sunk in order to recuperate the insurance money. The haunting legacy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade resonates economically with the South Sea Company's founding premise on an anticipated share in the Spanish slave trade. In its recurring visual imagery of black hands grasping toward Delaney as the ship sinks, it is also reminiscent of J.M.W. Turner's famous maritime painting "The Slave Ship" (1840), which Marina Warner analyzes as "suggest[ing] a crime and cannot bring himself to name it" (Warner 1994, 2). The painting's full title, "Slavers throwing overboard the dead and dying—Typhon [*sic.*] coming on" and its epigraph, "Hope, hope, fallacious hope, where is thy market now?" construct the viewer as in collusion with the British, empathizing and sympathizing with the unfortunate slavers who not only risk losing their lives in the oncoming storm but must also abandon their profit overboard. This uncomfortable complicity is re-created in these scenes in *Taboo*, shot through Delaney's point of view. Significant modern scholarship works to recall to public memory the lives lost in the slave trade, culturally in work such as by Paul

[12] The island's fictional history in *Taboo* loosely parallels its real history as point of contention in trade and territory disputes between Britain, the U.S., and Canada.

Gilroy, and economically in the "Legacies of British Slave-ownership" project.[13] By contrast, this 2017 period drama engages with slavery in a way that recalls the emptiness of Turner's sea, full only with European ships and sea monsters, which in turn recalls the blank southern space of Scherer's 1703 map.

Taboo thus mixes up colonial-era atrocities so that colonial wealth from the North American Pacific island and those from trans-Atlantic mercantilism occupy the same story line, with no clear distinction made between the conquest of indigenous peoples and the African slave trade. Certainly, the plot which follows Delaney's uncovering of both his father's stolen land and the East India Company's atrocities in the name of profit may be read as breaking taboos surrounding colonial capitalism. However, as none of the potential south seas storylines are fleshed out, the title, finally, carries less weight than expected, merely suggesting that what is taboo is the outright naming and shaming of the rapacious practices that underpin colonialism, which dispossessed indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans, and used and dispensed with an untold number of lower-class British subjects, including Delaney the former ship-boy and the children, seamen, boat builders, and dock workers on whose labor the movement of goods in and out of London relied. In its vague, visually absent portrayal of maritime spaces and non-European peoples, the series collapses together multiple forms of British exploitation on which the wealth of the nation is today founded.

Taboo does not only recall colonial capitalist practices of wealth creation and its incriminatory impact on the people it used and abused. The series explores multiple forms of hidden and stolen wealth that, in the wake of the Panama and Paradise Papers, draw attention to today's forms of wealth circulating through and between offshore havens and onshore centers. As Bullough enumerates in *Moneyland*, cash, commodities, jewelry, ethnographic and fine art, boats, property, citizenship, trust funds, and even diplomatic immunity are all traded in the ceaseless cycling of wealth. In *Taboo,* London, the central hub of Empire, and more particularly its

[13] This project, which traces the flow of money from the Crown's 1833 pay-outs to slave-owners for the loss of their "property" following the abolition of slavery, does much to shed light on the invisibility of colonial finance and to expose the materiality of trans-Atlantic trade. Its longue-durée scope further offers insight into the wealth held by modern British companies and people, by showing genealogies of British investment and inherited wealth. See Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slave-ownership, University College, London.

maritime conduit, the Thames, connects to Africa, the Caribbean, and Pacific Northwest America. Delaney funds his London life with uncut diamonds the audience assumes come from his time in Africa.[14] He offers no explanation of their provenance, and no buyer asks—a problem of relevance today in the blood diamond trade. Ownership disputed between Delaney, the Crown, the East India Company, and American Republicans over Nootka Island centers on their own projected benefits from its strategic importance, access to trans-Pacific trade with China, and natural resources, without any mention of the civilizing mission veneer usually invoked as excuse for colonial exploitation. Despite what the audience might assume as an affective connection with his mother's Indigenous kin, Delaney's only ambition for Nootka is expressed in cold negotiation for the best business deal possible: "I will cede sovereignty of Nootka Sound to whichever nation offers me their monopoly on the trade of furs for tea from Fort George to Canton. A monopoly. That's what I want" (episode 3). For this purpose, he registers in London the Delaney Nootka Trading Company, thereby asserting a property right to the island from which he cannot be legally excluded by any government—even though he has never been there. This strategy of citizenship by investment, often in absentia and potentially using illegally gained funds,[15] is much contested today in allowing super-rich individuals, particularly from ex-Soviet, Middle Eastern, and African nations, to buy a residency passport in countries such as Britain,[16] Ireland, and Australia, and direct citizenship in most island tax havens, the majority of which are Commonwealth nations with direct access to the UK.

[14] In episode seven, a character hypothesizes that Delaney stole the diamonds from a slave trader at a coastal African slave-trading port. This second-hand thievery makes Delaney appear less culpable than the aspersion that he earned the diamonds himself, selling slaves or overseeing mines.

[15] "Golden visa" countries periodically come under investigation for their lack of scrutiny of the providence of funds (usually in the range of US$1–10 million direct investment). In 2018 these include suspected money-laundering Russians in Britain and Kim Dotcom's impending extradition for internet fraud from New Zealand (Osborne and Garside 2018; Oppenheim 2018).

[16] In the UK, the "Tier 1 investor visa" residency scheme was introduced in 2011 by The Secretary of State for the Home Department, Theresa May, who advocated radically reducing the overall number of immigrants while simultaneously encouraging "the most economically beneficial migrants … to attract more investors, entrepreneurs and … wealth creators who can come to Britain" (May qtd. in Parliament 2010).

The colonial trading ship is the most concrete example of global transactions with multiple embedded and concealed interests that today take place only as a paper trail or as electronic transactions among offshore investors, owners, and traders. Although by the nineteenth century the East India Company no longer traded in slaves, *Taboo*'s narrative insists on continuing multi-stage trading routes that involve chartering a Company ship to North African subcontractors who trade slaves under a different ship name through Spanish privateers, who sell them on to British Caribbean sugar plantations, such as the East India Company director's family plantation in Antigua (episode 2). As the Abolitionist character, Chichester, claims in the later investigation of the willful sinking of the ship holding slaves, that was registered as leaving Angola empty, "these slaves were loaded by East India Company directors anyway. As part of a thriving illicit network. It was done for personal profit" (episode 6). The convoluted chain of command that makes it hard to ascertain the invested stakeholders eventually leads to the East India Company director himself. Such obfuscation of the beneficial owners is familiar in the embedded structure of today's shell companies, in which an owner can hide their identity behind multiple company names each headed by different nominated directors and registered across several offshore jurisdictions. Just as the Crown in *Taboo* is frustrated at not being able to pin on the East India Company the crimes, double dealing and embezzlement it is sure is practiced, modern government, and law, is in most cases powerless to uncover illegal financial practices because of offshore secrecy.[17] *Taboo*'s portrayal of boat subcontracting and renaming is also a modern phenomenon, with flags of convenience generating significant revenue for offshore tax havens. This enables pleasure crafts of the super-rich and commercial fishing vessels to travel the world, like Laputa, floating jurisdictions beholden only to the lower labor, safety, and environmental laws of their country of registration. Van Fossen's examples of labor abuse and illegal fishing on an American-owned, Vanuatu-registered fishing boat crewed by Ecuadorians hired by a labor contractor in Panama, or malnutrition and non-payment of Filipino workers aboard a Japanese-owned, Vanuatu-registered

[17] Estimates of the amount of money hidden offshore and therefore not paying tax range from US$7–30 trillion (Bullough 2018, 46–47). The difficulty of proving the stolen provenance of money, finding where it is hidden, and returning it to its rightful owners results in World Bank estimates that only between 0.5 cents per stolen $1 and 0.5 cents per stolen $1,000 is repatriated (Bullough 2018, 185).

transporter illustrate cases of modern-day slavery that echo their historical precedents (2015, 175–176).

In *Taboo*, the director's rejoinder that slavery is, in 1814, of itself not illegal (episode 6), is not only ethically hollow but also masks the other, illegal aspects of the trade exposed in the series. Similarly, today's official legality of offshores and tax havens euphemizes real crimes happening within the structure, such as tax evasion, embezzlement, fraud, the purchase of arms and drugs, and money laundering. When Delaney chastises his lawyer for failing to take a stance against the manipulating monopoly of the East India Company, Thoyt replies:

> the East India was a trading company. Now it is God Almighty. The Prince Regent fears it. No Government in the world dare stand up to it. It owns the land, the ocean, the fucking sky above our heads. … You think all who submit are evil? No. We are submitting to the way the world has become. (Episode 2)

Nature, commerce, and the Crown are here subsumed to the dictates of the Company. As economic historian Nick Robins argues, with the clarity of hindsight post-2008 financial crisis, the East India Company was the forerunner of the modern multinational and the original "too big to fail" corporation (Robins 2013). Thoyt's perceived sense of powerlessness in the face of commerce expresses belief in the supremacy of global capitalism that, although a little hasty in the early 1800s, is certainly widely held today. While the Crown progressively revoked the East India Company's powers throughout the nineteenth century, finally nationalizing it in 1858, neoliberal-era scandals, most notably the 2008 financial crisis but also the Panama and Paradise Papers, were met with generally tepid governmental responses. The inability, to date, for international cooperation against tax havens from which each nation simultaneously loses (in lost taxes) and wins (many politicians themselves own offshore accounts, as the Papers reveal), demonstrates conflicting attitudes to free-market globalization that struggles to encompass capitalism's contradictions. *Taboo*'s dramatization of the illegal and unethical practices of big business and government in the colonial era are mirrored by the Paradise Papers' revelations of tax evasion, including by the Queen of England, and by British state pension funds. That the Queen safeguards the fortune she inherited from the state is defended as legal and therefore financial common sense. The varied responses to the perceived injustice of south seas profit, in

Gay's satirical plays, *Taboo*'s foppish Prince Regent, and the current lack of media debate about the ethics of, for example, the Queen's offshore funds, indicate the unclear legality that vacillates between celebrating, tolerating, or outlawing offshore wealth.

The East India Company, Britain's first joint-stock company and model for later public-trading companies, including the South Sea Company one century later, dominated politics and finance for 250 years. And yet it is barely remembered in popular British history. No landmarks or residues of its power are visible today, with its wealth, assets, and properties absorbed into later British corporations and personal empires. Again, the South Sea Bubble provides a useful historical precedent. Despite flagging the constellation of political, economic, and social changes that mark the beginning of modern capitalism,[18] the role of the South Sea Company and its crash in shaping national identity is today all but forgotten. Its cultural impact in the writings of Defoe, Swift, and Gay has also been relegated to the obscurity of footnotes, even though *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and to a lesser extent *The Beggar's Opera* are foundational to the English literary canon. Such invisibility speaks to the place of finance in public memory, willfully ignored or forgotten to such an extent that the cyclical economic booms and busts are each time experienced and represented anew, with shock and incredulity. For Robins, forgetting the instrumental role of the East India Company in the development of the modern economy fosters an erroneous "sense that the current era of business dominance is somehow unique" (2006, 79). Contemporary concern over the wealth of the global elite, known as "the 1%," the predatory, monopolistic practices of some multinational companies, and the offshore possibilities still located in the south seas that enable them to consolidate their power, suggests more continuity than change.

As a period drama about the East India Company, a forgotten historical British pillar of power, *Taboo* is inscribed in current postcolonial efforts to rectify the historical lacunae, elisions, and omissions of Britain's economic history. Setting *Taboo* between the coffee houses and East India House in the nascent financial district, the City of London, and the East India Docks

[18] These changes include the rise of insurance, such as Lloyd's (established 1688) life and shipping insurance, the Deregulation of Trading Companies Act (1694) that theoretically opened up competitive private colonial trading ventures rather than state monopolies, and the founding of Barclays (1690) and the Bank of England (1694), which paved the way for the issuing of banknotes (1695) and centralized credit.

of Canary Wharf, accurately locates the site of wealth and power of both the colonial Empire and today's neoliberal British economy, which still spans both locations, since the 1980s transformation of Docklands into financial service hub for banking and stock trading. It might, indeed, be most accurate to locate the imagined south seas in the streets of London itself: Leadenhall Street, site of East India House, Lloyd's Insurance, and the Royal Exchange; and the many alleyways around Docklands which still bear the names of their trade: New Brunswick Quay, Jamestown Way, Saffron Ave, Manilla Street, Calcutta Road.

Taboo offers the impression of confronting uncomfortable truths about the exploitation on which modern British wealth and power is based. Purportedly about one man's and one nation's relationship with the world, *Taboo*, like the eighteenth-century fiction and drama analyzed above, is uninterested in entering into dialogue with or exploring its dependence on the maritime space on which its various plots depend. All fictions analyzed in this paper lack any sense of the connective currents that join all bodies of water, including the Thames as a conduit to the rest of the world. The construction of the south seas as an invisible elsewhere reveals a necessary condition of capitalism: as long as an ineluctable wide-open space remains, there is still room for expansion. As a non-space, it remains a rich site for speculative investment and concealment based on the imaginary, which projects further growth through untapped natural resources and virtual fortunes that circumnavigate the world in currency and stock trading, residing out of sight in unlisted bank accounts. The way cultural narratives allow Western viewers and readers to ignore their own connectivity to the Pacific reveals a deeper contradiction underpinning the Western relationship to the material world at large, one that renders the global powers unwilling and/or incapable of reacting to the need to change the global economy from growth to sustainability, and from a focus on abstract financial to material natural resources as the foundation for a global common wealth. Looking back to the past and showing just how tenacious the myth of the south seas remains today indicates just how hard it will be to change the mindset.

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CHAPTER 7

From HI-SEAS to Outer Space: Discourses of Water and Territory in U.S. Pacific Imperialism and Representations of U.S. Mars Colonization

Jens Temmen

Introduction: Hawai'i as "sMars"

In October 2015, an international crew of six women and men donning space suits vital to endure thin atmospheres and to withstand the effects of increased exposure to space radiation arrived at the shiny white, dome-like NASA habitat nested into the reddish, sandy slope of a nearby mountain-side (Fig. 7.1).

In the habitat, which became the crew's home and workplace for the coming twelve-month mission, the twelve women and men were virtually on their own. Cut off from the rest of human civilization and with communication between the habitat and mission control delayed by about twenty minutes, the success of the so-called HI-SEAS mission rested solely

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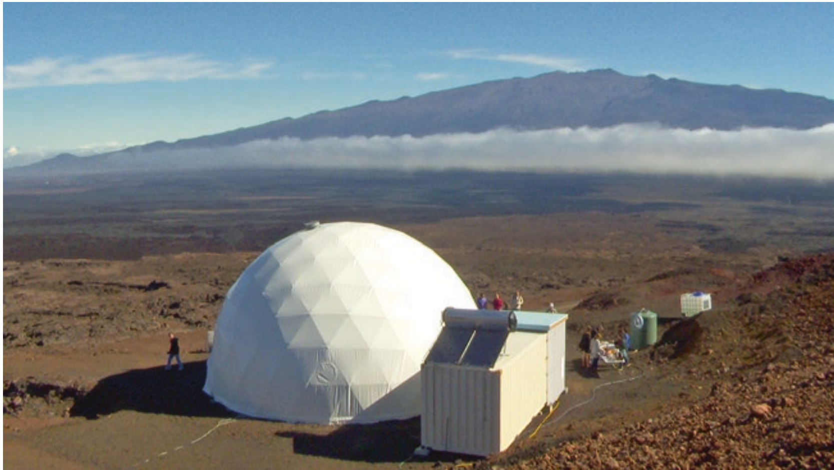

Fig. 7.1 The HI-SEAS (Hawai'i Space Exploration Analog and Simulation) habitat on Mauna Loa on the island of Hawai'i. Photograph by University of Hawai'i News. Available at https://flic.kr/p/QpWyq1. Creative Commons License (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0), https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/

on the crew's ability to endure the psychological and emotional stress of the long isolation of NASA's mission to Mars (see Kizzia 2015, 3, 11, 13; Stuster 1996, xii–xiv). Twelve eventful months later, the mission came to a successful end: the twelve Martian colonists proved that human beings were capable of enduring long periods of isolation on the red planet.

What sounds like the vision of humankind's first steps into permanent extra-terrestrial settlement is actually a simulation of such an endeavor on U.S. soil—on Mauna Loa mountain on the island of Hawai'i. Such simulations—and NASA's HI-SEAS (Hawaii Space Exploration Analog and Simulation) mission series is no exception—are designed to be social experiments, primarily focusing on the interactions between the crew members in conditions of isolation, and thus provide crucial data for the long durations of NASA's Mars missions. While the mission's primary objective is to project the behavior and actions of an isolated crew on Earth onto future NASA missions on planet Mars, the representation of the HI-SEAS mission, I want to argue, is founded on a discourse that casually emphasizes the virtual interchangeability of the two spaces of

Hawai'i and Mars. Moving beyond the similarities in the reddish palette of both the soil on Mars and Mauna Loa, these representations emphasize Hawai'i's ostensibly remote and isolated location in the Pacific Ocean—in relation to U.S. continental mainland—which makes it a perfect simulation of Mars on Earth; so perfect, in fact, that the crewmembers tended to refer to their Hawaiian habitat as "sMars," or "simulation Mars" (see Kizzia 2015, 13).

In the discourse that the article frames, the notion of Hawai'i as an isolated space locates the islands in a list of other terrestrial spaces that allegedly provide a proving ground or blueprint for Mars colonization. Hawai'i, the argument goes, perfectly re-creates the environment of isolation found both in Arctic/Antarctic exploration, and long-distance maritime travel in the nineteenth century, and thus allows for projecting Mars on Earth (see Kizzia 2015, 1–3; Stuster 1996; Markley 2005, 8). As Tom Kizzia states in his 2015 article "Moving to Mars" for the *New Yorker*: "The volunteers perched in the lava fields of Mauna Loa are as close as earthlings will get to Mars in the foreseeable future" (5).

This contribution explores how the discourses of isolation and mobility of sea and space travel are all conflated in the space of Hawai'i in order to turn the islands into a stepping stone to Mars colonization. To be able to disentangle and analyze this conflation, my article discusses discourses of ambiguous territories and the imperial strategies to manage them. I argue that the ways in which Hawai'i's territorial configuration is framed to accommodate the characteristics of maritime travel, polar exploration, as well as future Mars colonization, is based on an underlying U.S. imperial discourse of territoriality, which perceives polar and island spaces as existing in a liminal position between water and land, and attempts to manage water and territory alike (see van der Marel 2014; Shell 2014). In other words, since the oceans, the Arctic and Antarctic, and Mars are spaces that escape traditional discourses of territorial colonization—due to what is perceived to be their territorial ambiguity in western colonial thought—the past imperial incorporation and continuously flexible management of the Hawaiian Islands' territory by the United States provides a blueprint for the negotiation of this extra-terrestrial territorial ambiguity (see van der Marel 2014).

The discussion of the territorial ambiguity of islands and their liminality clearly builds on what scholars like Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Stephens, and Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen have respectively described as an imperial privileging of continentality and continental

nations over islands and by extension also island nations (see Roberts and Stephens 2017; Lewis and Wigen 1997). This hierarchy, Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues, has been an integral device in literary representations of islands, which justify imperial campaigns on island spaces like Hawai'i by imaging the islands and the oceans surrounding them as isolated and passive spaces and their indigenous populations as flotsam at best (see DeLoughrey 2007, 2, 8, 12, 15). Imagining Hawai'i as an isolated island in the Pacific in relation to the continental USA, and therefore as a perfect stepping stone between terrestrial Mars simulation and actual Mars colonization, the representations of the HI-SEAS project clearly taps into the very same imperial discourse, connecting U.S. imperialisms in island and maritime spaces to that in outer space.

To resist these territorial hierarchies and to (re)claim indigenous claims to sovereignty in the region, Pacific Islanders have put particular emphasis on traditional means of wayfinding navigation, called *etak*, that counter western models of "passive and empty space such as *terra* and *aqua nullius*, which were used to justify territorial expansion" (DeLoughrey 2007, 3; see also 98, 104). Instead, DeLoughrey argues, this form of navigation emphasizes the simultaneous rootedness and mobility of the traveling subject, who is not "physically or culturally circumscribed by the terrestrial boundaries of island space" (3). Alternate conceptions of the territorialities of water and land are essential for this understanding of navigation: *etak*, which DeLoughrey translates as "moving island," perceives the ship to be stable in its journey, while the islands and the whole cosmos travel closer to the ship (see Shell 2014; DeLoughrey 2007, 99). I want to argue that Pacific Islander navigation does not only transcend the boundaries of mobility and rootedness, but also connects sovereignty and mobility to a fluidity of conceptions of territory, and a muddied distinction between (is)land and water.

Imperial mappings of the Pacific responding to this notion of navigation and sovereignty are therefore oftentimes based on nullifying and erasing Pacific Islander navigational traditions (see DeLoughrey 2007, 99–100). Lyons and Tengan identify this strategy as a "radical new territorialism of the seas," embodied by an increase of policing of maritime borders, the militarization of the world's oceans, and the cutting-up of the sea by contesting areas of jurisdiction (Lyons and Tengan 2015, 562; DeLoughrey 2007, 26). The 2017 conflict between the United States and North Korea exemplifies, however, that beyond merely inhibiting Pacific Islander navigational traditions, U.S. militarism straightforwardly replaces

and replicates a fluid understanding of territoriality to the end of strengthening its own grip on the Pacific: observing how the geographies of Pacific islands like Guam and the Hawaiian Islands are dominated by U.S. military installations as a means of allowing the U.S. military to strike from there against about one-fourth of the globe has led scholars and activists from the Pacific to compare the islands to airplane carriers and military vessels (see Perez 2015; and "Rather than keep us safe"). One could argue then that the way that this situation has put Hawaiʻi and Guam into the crosshairs of imperial global conflicts is an example of how the notion of the "moving island" can be forcefully beaten into an imperial shape. In my article I argue that this fluidity of territoriality, and the conceptions of mobility that accompany it, travels to Mars in order to make sense of a planet that is legally ambiguous and thus escapes nation-state logic of territoriality.

With this, my article ties in with a wider field of research concerned with discourses of territoriality in U.S. imperialism as well as anti-, post-, and decolonial projects. The article draws attention to the ways in which recent representations of U.S.-led Mars colonization negotiate the tension between an allegedly transnationalized outer space, the legal and geographic ambiguity of Mars, and the discourses of imperialism and colonization traditionally employed in projects of territorial acquisition and control. My article explores these representations of Mars exploration and their entanglements with discourses of imperialism, colonization, territoriality, militourism, transnationalism, and nationalism. The line of connection that this article draws between contemporary imperial discourses of territoriality, and their uses in envisioning a future of outer space colonization, contributes to an understanding of the connections and differences between the various phases of U.S. imperialism. As Craig Santos Perez, John Carlos Rowe, and Camille van der Marel have all pointed out, such a project has to necessarily pay close attention to the ways in which discourses of territoriality in U.S. imperialism flexibly adapt to the context of their application to also include spaces apparently at odds with imperial notions of territorial control, such as ice floes and bodies of water, and, I would add, the reddish waste of Mars (see Rowe 2000; Perez 2015; van der Marel 2014).

With this in mind and using the HI-SEAS project as a point of departure, I critically relate literary texts and state documents, as well as visual representations of both Hawaiʻi and Mars, to one another. This comparative analysis of texts like Mark Twain's *Letters from Hawaiʻi* and Andy

Weir's *The Martian*, of visualizations such as the "Visions of the Future" poster series, and of documents like the "Outer Space Treaty" explores the ways in which all of these genres and formats contribute to an imperial mapping and incorporation of both terrestrial and extra-terrestrial territorialities. More specifically, it analyzes the relationship between the Hawaiian Islands and U.S. national territory, and how this negotiation provides a discursive blueprint for extra-terrestrial colonization in general and Mars colonization in particular—thus highlighting a continuity of imperial management of water-as-territory in U.S. imperialisms. In other words, my article argues that if stepping on the shores of Hawai'i means simulating the first tentative steps toward Mars colonization, it also means treading in the well-beaten track of U.S. imperial discourse in the Pacific.

Water as Territory in U.S. Imperialisms

In his 2010 speech at the John F. Kennedy Space Center in front of NASA personnel, then-President Barack Obama framed U.S. space exploration as the epitome of western modernity. Describing NASA's work as "reaching for new heights, stretching beyond what previously did not seem possible [and thus an] essential part of what it means to be American," Obama's speech claims the progressiveness and innovation embodied by space travel for U.S. national identity (Obama 2010). Evoking John F. Kennedy's famous moon declaration and linking it to his own administration's plans to send Americans to Mars by 2030, Obama's speech has revitalized space exploration as a project of national identity and serves as a point of departure for a number of cultural and literary imaginings of the future of U.S.-led space exploration in general and Mars exploration and colonization in particular.[1]

In the wake of the speech and as part of this revitalization, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory published the "Visions of the Future" poster series,

[1] A detailed discussion of all available cultural productions would be beyond the scope of this contribution. Relevant examples for this argument include Andy Weir's novel *Mars*, its cinematic version, directed by Ridley Scott, Ron Howard's mini-series *Mars*, as well as the discussion of Mars colonization in a number of U.S.-based and international news outlets. An expanded argument building on these representations would necessarily need to include other textual and cultural avenues and the ways in which these are part of a discourse of space colonization and exploration—such as legal texts and proceedings (e.g., UN space treaties), as well as scientific texts and, for example, representations of NASA's and other space agencies' reoccurring unmanned Mars missions (Mars rovers, orbital probes, etc.).

which imagines the future of a colonized solar system as well as commercial travel to other planets, such as Venus, Titan, Kepler 186f, and Mars. In spite of its agenda to promote the future of interstellar colonization and tourism, the posters are clearly indebted to the aesthetics of the Work Projects Administration (WPA) travel poster ads of the 1930s and 1940s, as well as the U.S. travel agency and airline ads of the 1950s to the 1970s. Both the WPA posters and the travel ads carry the weight of an intimate discursive relationship between U.S. imperial expansion, U.S. national identity, and neo-imperial tourism (see Dux 1939). The WPA posters, particularly those which were designed to promote national parks and national historic sites as tourist destinations, load particular spaces with imagined national characteristics and in the process capture and map them as milestones toward U.S. national identity and national space. In a similar sense, the travel agency ads of these decades and their depiction of exotic destinations awaiting U.S.-American visitors, both projected U.S. imperial imaginaries onto locations such as Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Hawai'i, and simultaneously claimed and incorporated these spaces into a U.S. national imaginary (see Fojas 2014, 6). Camilla Fojas argues in *Islands of Empire* (99–101) that, in the particular context of Hawai'i, this entanglement of tourism and imperialism became tangible in the Hawaiian statehood campaign of the 1950s, which tried to change the perception of the islands "from a foreign and distant land to a 'domestic paradise'" so as to attract tourists and spur Hawaiian statehood (102).

The NASA posters pick up on both of these related discourses of neocolonial tourism by representing Mars as a future national historic site, which is exoticized yet within easy reach, and thus at the heart of a U.S. imperial imaginary. This seemingly paradoxical move of reaching back in time aesthetically to represent the future of Mars colonization is thus not accidental, but instead gestures toward a continuity of imperial discourses of territorial incorporation. In this sense, U.S. conceptions of territoriality in Pacific imperialism offer a blueprint for extra-terrestrial colonization. I want to argue that the negotiation of Hawai'i in a U.S. imperial imaginary is particularly crucial for the coming to terms with Martian territory—which in turn escapes traditional terrestrial conceptions of territory (Fig. 7.2).

Consequently, this article is indebted to current discussions in the study of U.S. imperialism that strive to highlight the complex and problematic continuities between U.S. continental imperialism, nineteenth-century Pacific imperialism, and twentieth- and twenty-first-century U.S.

Fig. 7.2 The Visions of the Future Poster Series. According to the website, the poster "imagines a future where tourists on Mars will visit the historic landing sites of the today's space missions." Design by NASA/Jet Propulsion Laboratory-Caltech. Available at https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/resources/927/explore-mars-visions-of-the-future-poster/. Courtesy NASA/JPLCaltech

economic and political neo-imperialism all over the globe and even in outer space, while still acknowledging historical and discursive specificities of each of these phases (Rowe 2000, 11; Kaplan 2005; Fojas 2014). The stakes in approaching U.S. imperial discourses in this manner are high: an emphasis on the continuities of U.S. imperialism in all its historical formations runs the danger of glossing over and effectively erasing the specific strategies of managing both territory and peoples, as well as the specific responses and resistance to these strategies articulated by groups, communities, and nations impacted by U.S. imperialism. Approaching U.S. imperialism as a series of unrelated and distinct phases, in turn, could be considered a perpetuation of a narrative of exceptional U.S. imperialism, which in turn legitimizes both continental colonization in the nineteenth century and Pacific and global expansion in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (see Rowe 2000). In *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism*, John Carlos Rowe suggests that looking at the ways that strategies of imperial dominion were adapted according to the context of application might offer a way to map and track U.S.-imperial continuities *and* specificities:

> Even as it pursued traditional imperial ends of territorial acquisition, however, the United States developed non-territorial forms of colonial domination, ultimately systematized in an "imperial" system that in the nineteenth century complemented American nationalism and in the twentieth century grew to encompass "spheres of influence" ranging from the Western Hemisphere to the farthest corners of the earth and by the last three decades of this century to include outer-space travel routes, especially those traversed by satellites for communications and military defense, and scientific research with technological applications. (11)

According to Rowe then, changing conceptions of territory as well as changing strategies of their management are key in understanding the connections between nineteenth- and twentieth-century U.S. expansion on the North American continent and into the Pacific, and twenty-first-century U.S. neo-imperialism around the globe and into outer space:

> There is, then, an imperial heritage—a repertoire of methods for domination—on which the United States drew in the nineteenth century as it expanded westward; considered publicly and secretly specific extraterritorial ventures in the Caribbean, Central America, the South Pacific, and Asia; and formulated influential foreign policies, such as the Monroe Doctrine and

> Open Door Policy, that are still invoked today. Yet the United States added new means of displacing people, defining "territory," and pursuing its "national interests" that anticipate the more commercial, technological, and cultural systems of control characteristic of twentieth-century imperialisms, especially those that emerged in the course of overt decolonization following World War II. (11)

Rowe's focus on changing conceptions of territory is particularly compelling considering that U.S. imperial expansion into the Pacific at the end of the nineteenth century—including the annexation of Hawai'i—struggled with the discursive leap necessary to negotiate the shift from a United States that was self-contained and continental to one that could incorporate the Pacific's islands, oceans, and archipelagic spaces—which escape traditional western conceptions of territory—into its imaginary of a U.S. national territory (Rowe 2000; Kaplan 2005; Roberts and Stephens 2017, 1).

In the introduction to their anthology *Archipelagic American Studies*, Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Stephens suggest that this negotiation is marked by a privileging of continentality as central to U.S. historiography and self-perception, which "eclipsed islands and island-continent relations"(1).[2] With this, Roberts and Stephens stand on the shoulders of scholars like Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen who argue in *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* that continental structures have been a basic unit for understanding world geography and a guide in our assumptions about the natural world (1997, 2). This line of thinking often translated into what Lewis and Wigen have called the "nation state myth," which "replicates at a smaller scale many of the errors found in continental thinking," such as the notion that "cultural identities (nations) coincide with politically sovereign entities (states) to create a series of internally unified and essentially equal units" (9). Elizabeth DeLoughrey

[2] By pointing out that "as an upshot of this anti-imperialist and postcolonial tack, transnational American studies has increasingly tended to highlight a view of the United States as imbricated with insular and archipelagic spaces" (Pease qtd. in Roberts and Stephens 2017, 3), Roberts's and Stephens's work is, much like this contribution, clearly indebted to scholars like Epeli Hau'ofa, Keith Camacho, and Elizabeth DeLoughrey (to name but a few) and their important research on oceanic discourses in the Pacific and the Atlantic. Their work points out the multidirectionality of oceanic spaces: they remain an essential point of departure for the decolonization efforts of peoples living under the continuous duress of imperialism both in the Atlantic and the Pacific, as well as a crucial space of transit and object of colonial management for U.S. and other imperialisms.

reminds us that continental thinking is not only based on foregrounding and privileging the continent as a geographic unit and nation-state structures as cultural-political entities, but that it is also predicated on offering a hierarchy of spatial configurations, which contrast the continent with island spaces, and privilege the former (see DeLoughrey 2007, 2).

This hierarchy, DeLoughrey argues, is particularly relevant in imperial campaigns, which stereotypically render islands as exotic, outlying outposts of civilization, as isolated from imperial centers and thus legitimate prey for colonial expansion (2, 8). The alleged island isolation became an almost iconic mode of representation in Euro-American literature. Terming this system of representation "islandism"—a nod to Orientalism—DeLoughrey highlights how Euro-American literary representations of islands were an integral part of a system of legitimization that normalized Euro-American colonial campaigns on island nations and in oceanic regions (12, 15). Historical representations of Hawai'i as an isolated island in the Pacific when viewed from the perspective of the continental USA are clearly indebted to this trope (see Osborne 1981). By rendering Hawai'i as a perfect stepping stone between terrestrial Mars simulation and actual Mars colonization, the representations of the HI-SEAS project clearly tap into the very same imperial discourse, connecting U.S. imperialisms in the Pacific and in outer space. In terms of Rowe's argument to pay attention to changing conceptions of territory in U.S. imperialism, however, reading the relationship between Hawai'i and the United States as merely that of isolated island and overpowering continent, for all its currency, does not do justice to the complexity of the relationship between island and ocean in this case. Neither does it reflect the intricate strategies U.S. imperialism employs in managing and incorporating these islands as part of their national territory. As Marc Shell points out in *Islandology*, "islandness … resides in a shifting tension between the definition of island as 'land as opposed to water' and the countervailing definition as 'land as identical with water,'" and thus prompts a closer scrutiny of the ways in which the sea surrounding those islands figures in imperial conceptions of territory (2014, 1).

While the notion of continent vs. island runs the danger of privileging land, and thus rendering the oceans connecting/dividing the two as absent, a number of scholars have pointed out that the past and present policing of maritime borders, the militarization of the world's oceans, and the cutting-up of the sea by contesting areas of jurisdiction, hints at an increasingly imperial and nationalistic "maritime territorialism" (see

DeLoughrey 2007, 30, 26; Lyons and Tengan, "Introduction: Pacific Currents," 562; Dudziak and Volpp 2005, 1). In "Transterritorial Currents and the Imperial Terripelago," Craig Santos Perez translates this notion to a U.S.-American context. Describing how, from a Pacific islander's perspective, the United States maintains its continental identity precisely because of its overseas island possessions and military bases, Perez proposes the notion of America as an "imperial archipelago" (2015, 619). At the heart of this redefinition of the American empire lies a renegotiation of territoriality: Perez underscores that although the notion of exclusive territory remains an organizing principle of modern sovereign nation-state structures, the concept of territory itself has been in constant flux (see Raustiala qtd. in Perez 2015, 620). Coining the terminology of "American *terripelago*" (combining of territory and pélago, signifying sea), Perez argues that in the context of Pacific imperialism, territory as a concept includes a conjoining of land and sea, island and continents (Perez 2015, 619–620). Likening the fluidity of territoriality to the structure of marine currents, Perez draws attention to how the multitude of territorial regimes within the U.S. empire—among them maritime borders and the management of the sea—are a strategic pattern within the logic of U.S. imperialism:

> The structure of marine currents (surface currents, crosscurrents, undercurrents, rip currents, ebb currents, flood currents) has the power to move the ocean and transform global and local climate patterns. Similarly, the currents of territoriality (or transterritorial currents) possess the power to move (and remove) populations and resources, thus transforming global and local political patterns. (620)

In the specific case of Hawai'i, the mobility and fluidity that Perez identifies in the fluctuation of territorial concepts translate into a flexible imperial mapping and remapping of islands and the Pacific that surrounds them. In "The Trans-Americanization of Hawai'i," Rob Wilson elaborates how Hawai'i was reimagined flexibly to provide a backdrop for the dominant currents within U.S. imperial discourse: in the logic of U.S. capitalist imperialism, Hawai'i was framed as a U.S. outpost and bulwark against imperial incursions to and from "the East," an Edenic appendage of the United States, a "mediating space" for the transmission of cheap labor and goods between Asia and the U.S., and particularly as a strategic military outpost in the Spanish-American War of 1898. According to Wilson, this

framework stresses Hawai'i's key role in the formation of a "peripheralized 'American Pacific' linked to a Euro-American core" (Wilson 2000a, 521–523; cf. Wilson 2000b). Wilson's discussion of Mark Twain's *Letters from Hawai'i* is an example of this discourse: not only does it reveal that Hawai'i itself was reimagined with each imperial projection, but it also demonstrates that the Hawai'ian Islands were flexibly moved around on the imperial map to reflect the relationship between the islands, the United States, and the rest of the Pacific world according to what the currently dominant imperial discourse advocated (526).

This remapping was built on a reimagining of the islands themselves as well as on a manipulation of the Pacific Ocean between the islands and the U.S. mainland (Twain 1975, 12, 31). In what Yunte Huang calls "compressing of Pacific time-space," Twain advocates the colonization of Hawai'i by way of reducing the time of travel from California to the islands with the help of faster steam ships (2008, 19). Twain reasons that this will bring the islands closer to the United States, loosen the mounting grip of other colonial powers, and will allow the United States to gain a foothold for future imperial campaigns in the Pacific region (Twain 1975, 12). His tongue-in-cheek description of Hawai'i as "the loveliest fleet of islands that lie anchored in any ocean" clearly presents us with an imperial appropriation of the concept of the "moving island"—it is after all, the Hawaiian Islands that travel closer to the United States. In using a combination of terms signifying rootedness (anchored, islands) and mobility (fleet, any ocean) to describe the Hawaiian Islands, Twain's mapping of Hawai'i is thus linked to what Marc Shell described as the island's curious position in between water and territory: for Twain's imperial agenda in the Pacific and Asia, the Hawaiian islands offer both the stable foothold of territory and the flexible mobility of the oceans (2014, 31). In line with Rowe's proposition, Wilson's and my reading of Twain's text offers a point of departure for tracing an imperial history of the strategic management of water and territory in the Pacific, and particularly Hawai'i. A detailed overview of this history would of course be beyond the scope of this contribution. It is, however, important to note that the strategy resurfaces in twentieth-century U.S. neo-imperial tourism discourse(s), impacting the tourist industry's representation of Hawai'i, which, in turn, clearly inspired NASA's "Vision of the Future" poster series.

As touched upon above, Fojas argues in *Islands of Empire* that the U.S. tourism industry in the 1950s relied heavily on a representation of Hawai'i as a "domestic paradise" rather than a "foreign and distant land,"

to bolster the Hawaiian statehood campaign, which would, if realized, by extension make the islands more readily accessible for U.S.-American tourists (2014, 99–101, 102). Actual Hawaiian statehood was thus preceded by a projection of Hawai'i as part of a U.S. national imaginary and as part of the continental nation—even if a peripheral part. The notion of imagining the Hawaiian islands to be closer to the United States and therefore bringing them into the fold of the nation, I would argue, repeats the strategy—first apparent in Twain's text—of moving the islands around flexibly on the U.S. imperial map. A brochure cited by Fojas, which advocates Hawaiian statehood, perfectly visualizes how this strategy involves the management of both water and territory. In the brochure, Hawai'i and the North American continent are rescaled to make Hawai'i appear larger and also much closer to the United States. At the same time, the ships and planes and their travel routes appear like a thread linking the continent and the islands, with the Pacific Ocean disappearing completely as the seam is sewn together.

Nevertheless, a more recent event exemplifies a reversal of this proximity between the United States and Hawai'i. Voicing his discontent with the decision of a federal judge in Hawai'i to block the travel ban signed by President Donald Trump, General Attorney Jeff Sessions issued the following statement on 18 April 2017, on the radio show "The Mark Levin Show": "I really am amazed that a judge sitting on an island in the Pacific can issue an order that stops the president of the United States from what appears to be clearly his statutory and constitutional power" (Shalby 2017). Achieving notoriety as the "Island in the Pacific" statement, Sessions's interview primarily attempts to undermine the legal authority of a federal judge in Hawai'i with regard to federal law through what could be described as an exact reversal of the discourse found in the aforementioned brochure: it discursively creates distance between Hawai'i and the U.S. mainland—by positioning Hawai'i as an insignificant and isolated space somewhere in the vast Pacific Ocean—and severing the ties of jurisdiction that hold the islands and the U.S. mainland together. Simultaneously, Hawai'i retains its position of exoticism and isolation that justified U.S. imperial intervention in Hawai'i in the first place.[3]

By rendering Hawai'i as a perfect stepping stone between terrestrial Mars simulation and actual Mars colonization, the representations of the

[3] For a more detailed discussion of the discourses at work in the Hawaiian annexation, see Temmen (2017).

HI-SEAS project clearly taps into the very same imperial discourse exemplified above. Hawaiʻi is moved around the U.S. imperial map to connect U.S. continental territory with the imaginary future Martian territory. As such, Hawaiʻi's position in this mapping is reminiscent of its role in the imaginary of U.S. imperialism in the Pacific and Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the islands are exotic, uncivilized, and isolated enough to simulate Mars, yet close enough to the nation to safely perform a simulation of colonizing and incorporating "exotic" Martian territory (see Kizzia 2015, 3, 11, 13; Stuster 1996, xii–xiv). Unlike in earlier cases, Hawaiʻi as a simulation of Mars is also aligned with and connected to other terrestrial spaces that allegedly present a proving ground—albeit less perfect than Hawaiʻi—for Mars colonization. In his article on the HI-SEAS project for the *New Yorker*, Tom Kizzia opens with a rendition of the 1898 Antarctic mission of the ship *Belgica*, which nearly failed due to the crew's unfamiliarity with the Arctic terrain, and their lack of training for enduring long periods of isolation (see 2015, 1–2). Citing Jack Stuster's *Bold Endeavors* (1996)—the go-to textbook on modern space travel—Kizzia connects Antarctic and Arctic exploration in the nineteenth century with oceanic journeys of discovery starting with Columbus and describes them as blueprints for modern space travel (2–3). Hawaiʻi, the article argues, is the next logical step from these terrestrial spaces on our way to Mars colonization. The series *Mars*, directed by Ron Howard (2016), seems to make a similar point. By placing an imagined future Mars mission side by side with documentary material on contemporary efforts toward such a mission, Howard's *Mars* repeats the projection of Mars on Earth and vice-versa exemplified by the HI-SEAS project. In the episode "Power," the dangers of creating a colony on Mars are represented in the science-fiction portion of the episode by a storm threatening to destroy the habitat of the colony. This imaginary is placed next to documentary material of a contemporary Mars colony simulation in Antarctica, suggesting that the simulation in the ice and cold of Antarctica specifically prepares a crew for the environmental dangers that a potential Mars colony would face (see *Mars*, Season 1, Episode 4).

While the comparability of these spaces—Arctic, Antarctic, the open sea, and Hawaiʻi—is rather limited or even illogical at first glance, they do fall into a pattern if considered through the lens of U.S. imperial discourses of territory. From this perspective, both the Arctic and Antarctic—like the space of the island—exist in a liminal position between water and land, and in their territorial ambiguity, resist regular regimes of

territoriality and discourses of settler colonial territorial colonization, which favor land over water (see Shell 2014).

Discussing Canada's attempt to strengthen its sovereignty over its Arctic territories, van der Marel describes what she calls the "agricultural-cum-epistemological limits of settler practices for colonial (dis)possession" (2014, 15). These epistemological limits place certain spaces—like deserts, shorelines, and polar "wastes"—outside colonial discourses of territorial incorporation and as a challenge to colonial systems of possession based on agricultural productivity and improvement (16, 10–21). I argue that the way in which the Arctic/Antarctica and Mars are represented as equally threatening to the success of a project of colonization is based on an allegedly comparable territorial ambiguity. The inclusion of oceanic spaces in this list of comparable territorial configurations follows the same logic. As a space of transit and fluidity, in which both "hegemonic and anti-hegemonic mobilities take effect," the sea has been read as a productive point of departure for criticizing imperial configurations of territory and sovereignty, imperial projects in general, and the nation-state as the allegedly ultimate cultural-political entity, while simultaneously being the subject of imperial regimes and policing (Ganser 2012, 34). In their multidirectionality and layeredness, oceans seem to escape the exclusive logic of territorial control (see DeLoughrey 2007, 20, 21, 96). As scholars from oceanic and polar contexts have demonstrated, then, both Arctic/Antarctic and oceanic spaces are indeed useful in articulating a critique of imperial discourses of territorial incorporation and control.

It is important to underline again, however, that polar spaces as well as oceans do not escape imperial mappings completely, but that they rather challenge imperial strategies of territorial control—which are traditionally fixated onto notions of land, agricultural cultivation, and permanent settlement. Van der Marel writes accordingly that, in the case of Canada's Arctic North, literary expedition narratives "asserted ownership over contested territories that could not be possessed through agricultural means" (2014, 22). This "literary harvest" of lands deemed barren forces the Arctic North into Canada's settler-colonial narrative (22). In the introduction to their seminal anthology *Legal Borderlands*, Mary Dudziak and Leti Volpp similarly point out that oceanic spaces have equally been the subject of imperial border regimes and discourses of possession (see 2005, 1–3; Ganser 2012, 37–38). Here the text of the law replaces plow and spear as tools to mark territorial control: "The boundaries around U.S. territorial waters are not outlined by physical structures; they exist on the

shelves of law libraries, their dimensions defined in treaties. Instead of a metal edge, there are words on a page" (Dudziak and Volpp 2005, 1).

The work of van der Marel, as well as Dudziak and Volpp, underlines the flexibility of imperial discourses in adapting their strategies to exact control over spaces deemed territorially ambiguous. My contention is that the flexible mapping of Hawaiian territory in U.S. imperial discourse is a template case for dealing with such territorially ambiguous spaces—like the island, located somewhere between water and territory—and incorporating them into the U.S. national territory and (the U.S. national) imaginary. Presenting Hawai'i as a perfect stepping stone to the colonization of Mars reveals the territorial ambiguity of Mars itself and also underlines the usefulness of Hawai'i as a blueprint for coming to terms with the territory of the red planet.

Surf or Turf? Negotiating the Territory of Mars in Andy Weir's *The Martian*

During the continuously accelerating space race between the Western and Eastern Blocs during the Cold War in the 1960s, locating celestial bodies like Mars within the territorial regime of nation-states became increasingly relevant. Like much of the international law-making of the time, the United Nations' "Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies" or "Outer Space Treaty" in 1967 was designed to delineate and somehow direct the Cold War conflict to a number of controllable sites of proxy war, and, in this case, keep the conflict from spreading into outer space. In that sense, the treaty's original clarification of the status of other planets as governed by international law, but outside the limits of terrestrial conflict, should always be understood as originating in context of the Cold War. Its negotiation of sovereignty, jurisdiction, and territory, however, clearly impacts the representations of outer space colonization and discourses of territoriality in the context of this contribution beyond the treaty's historical context. In spite of several amendments to the original treaty, and an effort to revise some of the original provisions through the "Moon Treaty" of 1979 (which was never ratified by any of the major spacefaring nations), the status of outer space territories is still governed by the original 1967 treaty (see "Agreement" 1979).

In its main provisions, the "Outer Space Treaty" nullifies the sovereignty of any one nation over any extra-terrestrial territory, and instead allows all nations an equally sovereign use of all celestial bodies (see "Treaty" 1967). Thanks to these provisions, Mars and other planets are clearly outside of and at odds with regular regimes of nation-state sovereignty and its core notion of "exclusive jurisdiction within a territorially delimited space" (Griffiths qtd. in Loukacheva 2009, 84). In this, the treaty is comparable to two other UN agreements: the United Nations' "Convention on the Law of the Sea" (UNCLOS, 1982) and the "The Antarctic Treaty" (1959). Both of these treaties, like the Outer Space Treaty, create a framework of clear rules and regulations that delineate a space outside of the regular regime of nation-state territoriality: international waters and the Antarctic. The form which was chosen in all three cases—a United Nations treaty, embedded in international law—highlights the liminality of all three spaces negotiated in the treaties: international waters, Antarctica, and other planets are all governed by international law, but not subject to its regular regime and, thus, pose a challenge to the traditional narrative of imperial territorial control. Reading these treaties through the lens of territoriality and comparing them to similar treaties governing the status of polar spaces and international waters on Earth shed light on the notion of "territorial ambiguity" at work in the classification of these spaces through traditional imperial discourses of territoriality. In the particular case of Mars colonization, this ambiguity is taken up and negotiated by contemporary representations of future U.S. missions to Mars. These cultural products (films, novels, legal texts, scientific publications) attempt to borrow the term from van der Marel, to literarily harvest a Martian territory that cannot be incorporated through traditional means. The yield, to stay with the metaphor, is a vision of a colonized Mars as part of a narrative of U.S. national expansion and identity.

In my reading of Andy Weir's popular novel *The Martian*, this conundrum of coming to terms with the liminal territoriality of Mars in relation to the United States (specifically), is a prevalent trope driving much of the plot. Weir's fictional account tells the story of the U.S. astronaut Mark Watney, who was exiled on Mars after an accident that left him stranded and pronounced dead by the rest of his crew. Much of the story revolves around Watney's strategies of survival and his attempts to get back in touch with NASA. Praised for its scientific accuracy and its enticing writing style, Weir's novel has been read as re-invigorating the interest of the wider public in space travel in general and NASA's missions to Mars in

particular. In spite of promoting the future of Mars colonization as an internationalized effort—the book specifically underlines the collaborative efforts of the United States and China in saving Watney—*The Martian* clearly attempts to locate Mars colonization within the narrative of U.S. national identity. At the core of this trope lies the text's and the protagonist's engagement with Martian territory with the help of traditional U.S. imperial discourses of territoriality.

As mentioned above, much of the plot is driven by Watney's attempts to engage with and survive in the hostile environment of Mars. Through Watney's constant pondering of the amount of resources ferried along with astronauts on the mission and how long they will sustain him, the novel clarifies that Watney—a botanist by training—needs to harvest food from barren and hostile Mars itself in order to survive until a rescue mission finds him. Watney's breakthrough in planting and growing potatoes in Mars's soil, and thus of introducing agriculture to a territory resisting cultivation, does not only have implications for his survival on the red planet, but also carries with it a traditional U.S. discourse of colonization. As Watney reports his success back to NASA on Earth, he is informed that "once you grow crops somewhere, you have officially colonized it." He concludes that "technically, I colonized Mars. In your face, Neil Armstrong!" (Weir 2015, 172). By translating Watney's success of cultivating Mars into the logic of a colonial discourse of territorial incorporation that privileges the agricultural improvement of land—particularly prevalent during U.S. westward expansion in the nineteenth century—the quote underlines that Watney's ability to harvest food from Mars is intimately connected with locating Mars within a traditional U.S. imperial discourse of territoriality. In other words, the success of Watney's mission is measured by his own survival and a simultaneous inclusion of Mars within the regime of U.S. imperial territoriality. In spite of initial success, Watney's attempt at cultivating-cum-colonizing Mars fails utterly as his habitat blows up and his harvest is destroyed (182). Read through the lens of territoriality, this event plays up the red planet's resistance to colonization by traditional means: Mars continues to be a territorially liminal space. As a result, Watney finds himself in a Robinson Crusoe-like position: he struggles at the brink of starvation and remains confined to the space of his damaged habitat, which is under constant threat of being torn apart by Mars's hostile environment (184–186). With the loss of the safety of the NASA habitat and the potato harvest, Watney is unable to come to terms with, let alone safely travel in, the landscape he encounters on Mars. His

mission is turned into an instance of mock-colonization. This only changes as Watney begins to conceptualize Mars as a maritime territory:

> LOG ENTRY: SOL 381 I've been thinking about laws on Mars. … There's an international treaty saying no country can lay claim to anything that's not on Earth. And by another treaty, if you're not in any country's territory, maritime law applies. So Mars is "international waters." NASA is an American nonmilitary organization, and it owns the Hab. So while I'm in the Hab, American law applies. As soon as I step outside, I'm in international waters. Then when I get in the rover, I'm back to American law. Here's the cool part: I will eventually go to Schiaparelli and commandeer the Ares 4 lander. Nobody explicitly gave me permission to do this, and they can't until I'm aboard Ares 4 and operating the comm system. After I board Ares 4, before talking to NASA, I will take control of a craft in international waters without permission. That makes me a pirate! A space pirate! Mark Watney: Space Pirate. (2015, 304–305)

Watney's conceptualization of Mars as international waters is clearly based on the aforementioned "Outer Space Treaty," which, I argue, illustrates the territorial ambiguity of Mars. The conceptual leap of therefore interpreting Mars as international waters changes Watney's position on the planet entirely, and allows for an inclusion of the planet into an imperial territorial regime. In contrast to the barren and hostile environment that threatened Watney's life and the success of his mission, Mars becomes a maritime territory, sprinkled with islands of U.S. jurisdiction. The notion of Mars as international waters also comes across as an ironic pun on contemporary scientists' feverish search for water on the red planet. Considering that this search tries to establish the possibility of life on Mars in the past, and to explore the possibility of a future of human colonization on Mars, the book's invention of a maritime red planet again deliberately connects Watney's survival and a successful colonization with a negotiation of Martian territory. Watney's reading of Mars as an oceanic space is contrasted here to his unsuccessful agricultural experiment: initially, Watney's mobility was arrested by him being limited to his habitat and occasional aimless wanderings in its vicinity. After reading Mars as an oceanic space, Watney turns into a highly mobile subject, who purposefully transgresses spaces, configurations of territory, and jurisdictions—a notion embodied in his celebratory identification as a space pirate (see Ganser 2012, 39). In its rendition of Mars, Weir's novel echoes the discourses of territoriality embodied by the telling acronym of the HI-SEAS

mission on Hawai'i: by conceptualizing Mars as a liminal space between the maritime and land—an ocean peppered with islands—the red planet becomes controllable and incorporable into U.S. territorial discourses. In this sense then, Hawai'i serves both as a stepping stone and a blueprint for this incorporation.

Coming to terms with Martian territoriality as existing between water and land clearly has its limitations and loopholes—starting with Watney's core assumption that the status of Mars in international law is exactly that of international waters on Earth. The point is not that narratives like *The Martian* imply that the negotiation of Martian territoriality is key to any attempt to envision a future in which Mars is part of a U.S. national narrative. Instead, an analysis of the ways in which discourses of water-as-territory developed in U.S. imperialism campaigns in the Pacific are interrelated with such a negotiation deepens an understanding of all variations of U.S. imperialisms. In this sense, my contribution argues, Hawaiian territorial incorporation is a crucial precedent for conceptualizing a discourse of Mars colonization and an incorporation of Martian territory into U.S. national territory and identity. The "Visions of the Future" Mars poster, discussed above, makes this connection in visual form.

Conclusions: Mars in the U.S. National Imaginary

While novels like *The Martian* or Ron Howard's mini-series *Mars* present us with a vision of the first steps of Martian colonization, the "Visions of the Future" poster series instead imagines Mars in hindsight as already successfully colonized. The caption of the poster accordingly reads:

> NASA's Mars Exploration Program seeks to understand whether Mars was, is, or can be a habitable world. Missions like Mars Pathfinder, Mars Exploration Rovers, Mars Science Laboratory and Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, among many others, have provided important information in understanding of [sic] the habitability of Mars. This poster imagines a future day when we have achieved our vision of human exploration of Mars and takes a nostalgic look back at the great imagined milestones of Mars exploration that will someday be celebrated as "historic sites."

While the poster revisits the question of Martian territoriality, it skips the complicated moment of colonization entirely by imagining Mars as a habitable planet, rich in both land and water, and as such also cultivatable and

exploitable for tourism. The terminology of “historic sites,” which mark the road to Martian colonization, is clearly reminiscent of “national historic sites,” which in a United States context mark important spaces and sites that map the path toward the fulfillment of U.S. national identity. Having thus claimed Martian colonization as a uniquely U.S.-American project, the poster presents us with a number of those key sites. One of them, on the right hand side of the poster, is a small observatory. Although not further identified, it could be read as a representation of the Keck Observatory, which was central to estimating the size of Mars’s past oceans and the amount of water that may have existed on the red planet, and for creating a visual projection of a Mars of oceans and continents (see Jefferson 2017). Considering that the Keck Observatory’s location is on Mauna Kea, Hawai‘i, and is included in the list of “historic sites,” it seems that in NASA’s visualization, the Hawaiian Islands have already fulfilled their role as stepping stones toward a future of U.S. Mars colonization.

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PART III

The Aesthetics of Oceangoing

CHAPTER 8

Precarious Passages: On Migrant Maritime Mobilities, ca. 1907

Sarah Sander

The recording of the sea by modernity begins with the rupture between the age of sail and that of steam.
Allan Sekula, Fish Story

Maritime Modernity, Part 1

Early in June 1907, a photograph was taken on board the transatlantic liner *Kaiser Wilhelm II* on its way from New York to Bremen, which would become one of the most important images of early American modernism: Alfred Stieglitz's *The Steerage*. The American Pictorialist photographer and proprietor of the *Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession* was on his way from New York to Paris, when he took the picture on board the fashionable North German Lloyd's flagship (see Stieglitz [1942] 2000b, 197).

Translated from German by Eléonore Tarla.

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The photograph shows a particular view of the ship. It depicts men, women and children, framed by the ship's architecture, on the overcrowded weather deck of the steamship. *The Steerage* is considered a visual founding document of modernist photography, because it combines new formal parameters with a clear focus on daily life.[1] As a document of the time, it chronicles social life while representing a proto-cubist photographic perspective (see Solomon-Godeau 2003, 53–74). When Stieglitz first publicly presented the picture in 1911, it was exhibited together with works by Pablo Picasso. This association not only established *The Steerage*'s fame as Stieglitz's first 'modernist photograph,' but also highlights the transatlantic exchange, which was characteristic of a maritime modernity around 1900.

Based on the existence of a new dispositive of mobility—which transformed the visible and the articulable forms of transatlantic traffic around 1900—my contribution focuses on the medial and material conditions of the precarious passages between the 'Old' and the 'New' Worlds.[2] While the vast majority of migrants crossed the Atlantic under unbearable conditions in the ocean liners' dark and stuffy steerages, these ships' first- and second-class decks turned into swimming hotels, guaranteeing its passengers increasingly luxurious and comfortable crossings. The new types of transatlantic steamships were foundational for the modern experience of the transatlantic passage in the course of the so-called second wave of mass immigration from Europe to the United States between the 1880s and 1920s. Additionally, regular transatlantic crossings were the basis for the circulation of people, goods and ideas, which can be considered essential for globalization as well as for migrant mobilities.[3]

[1] The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which owns one of the photograph's few original prints, notes in its digital gallery: "*The Steerage* is considered Stieglitz's signature work, and was proclaimed by the artist and illustrated in histories of the medium as his first 'modernist' photograph. It marks Stieglitz's transition away from painterly prints of Symbolist subjects to a more straightforward depiction of quotidian life."

[2] On the conception of a "dispositive of mobility," see Manderscheid (2014). On "the Visible and the Articulable" as the two sides of the formation of knowledge and the functioning of power, see (Deleuze 2006, 47–69).

[3] By the end of the nineteenth century, maritime mobility had become the key component of an integrated economy, based on commerce, speculation, industry, and standardized means of transportation. The steamship and its regular transportation service were the conditions of possibility underlying the liberal-capitalist world economy that depended on capital flows as well as on the mobility of migrants and labor (see Klose 2015, 5–6, 155–198).

The new character of maritime mobility had emerged with the establishment of steamship crossings according to a regular transatlantic schedule in the later nineteenth century. The dispositive was based on the increasing mechanization, industrialization, and capitalization of means of production and transportation, and aimed at mitigating the ocean's danger and unpredictability by building 'floating cities' (Wolf 2013, 257–292). These 'floating palaces'—as the grand ocean liners of the early twentieth century also were referred to—led to a 'landing of the sea' that sought to approximate the nomos of the land through the comforts of ocean liner crossings (see Siegert 2005, 39–56). This new character of maritime mobility—in line with Steve Mentz and Allan Sekula, I call it maritime modernity—not only showed itself in transportation-related ways, but was also expressed in art.[4]

Following American photographer, critic, and art theorist Sekula, maritime modernity denotes a period characterized by the transition from the sail boat to the steamship as well as by a changed conception of the sea (see Sekula 1995, 107): The advent of steam power displaced the idea of the high seas as an adventurous, existential, and free space due to the troubling experience of the ocean as an overloaded traffic area—in particular in the arts.[5] While on an economic level, maritime modernity found its expression in the capitalist principle of accelerating circulation, in the arts, the mechanization resulted in the replacement of picturesque sea panoramas with images that focused on the conditions of modern seafaring—on steam and smoke as signifiers of a new propulsive force (for instance, in William Turner's paintings), on overcrowded industrialized ports (as in Oskar Kokoschka's harbor scenes), or on the precarious spaces of maritime migrants—depicted in *The Steerage*. As Sekula writes, the panoramic view of the ocean was replaced by a detailed view in modernity.[6] Following his analysis of Western modernity, a disenchantment with the

[4] I borrow the term "maritime modernity" from Steve Mentz, who uses it to characterize Western modernity, albeit with a wider historical scope (2015, IX–XXIII). Although Sekula does not use the term, his essayistic and documentary works, tracing the paradigms of Western modernity in art, technology, politics, economy, and theory, entails an understanding of maritime modernity.

[5] Sekula, "Dismal Science: Part 1" and "Dismal Science: Part 2" in *Fish Story* (1995, 41–55, 103–137).

[6] "Modernity entails a maritime victory of the detail over the panorama: these details circulate within the generalized stream of consumption," (Sekula 1995, 107).

sea can consequently be understood by examining the interplay of art, technology, and economy.

The Steerage is a good example of this new encoding of the modern maritime world. With its focus on industrial details and the confusing action on deck, it escapes established orders of representation: the photograph provides no overview, and, as a result, no longer adheres to the logic of sovereign representation (see Siegert 2005, 40–42). Rather, it is a symbol of modernity, shaped by transformation and transition. However, the photograph not only provides information about the visual codes of maritime modernity, but is also a good example of the social structures of the ship and the material paradigms of the passage. In what follows, the image will thus be the starting point for my reconstruction of the media and material conditions of maritime im/mobility around 1900. By way of a reconstruction of the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*'s hold, I examine the construction of social realities on the passage.

The class structure of the grand ocean liners was threefold, and the passengers' social prospects were determined by the ship's architecture and interiors to a large extent. Notably, the productive function of the ship's architecture corresponds to a paradigmatic figure of the modern transatlantic passage: the 'birds of passage' on board the ships. 'Bird of passage' was a contemporary term used to refer to labor migrants who regularly traveled between Europe and the United States (see Brandenburg 1904, 198–201). The knowledge they gained from these frequent travels turn the 'birds of passage' into a representative of the social and geographical mobility of workers and emigrants. More precisely, the 'birds of passage' are specific figures of maritime modernity associated with a certain set of knowledge and tricks. A figure that directs our attention to the circulation of knowledge and the strategies of agency employed by precarious passengers, and hence will be at the center of my analysis.

In the chapter "The Ship" of her acclaimed book *In the Wake*, American art and literature scholar Christina Sharpe shows how the Middle Passage was not only central to the history of enslavement and of slave transport, but also for the economic growth of the United States. She criticizes that Allan Sekula's focus on the transportation of goods as a basic condition of modernity completely disregards the history of slave trade and transportation, which was a fundamental component of the globalization that occurred in the wake of colonization (Sharpe 2016, 25–67). It could be argued that Sekula also largely ignored the history of precarious passengers—the shipment of migrants—in his history of modernization and

globalization. Within the scope of this argument, the 'birds of passage' as self-made (wo)men of the steerage passage could reenact the legacy of the enslaved without only victimizing them again.[7] Therefore, this essay focuses on the constitutive role of migrant maritime mobilities in the development of globalization.

From a media and cultural studies perspective, questions arise about the mediated manifestations of emerging maritime mobilities as well as about the modern subjects produced by the new dispositive of the steamship: How exactly did people become modern subjects during the crossing? In which way did the transfer and transition of humans and knowledge take place on the transatlantic liners? How were these transfers handled? How were they lived? And how (or in which way) was this encoded by the medium of the ship? The clever techniques of pretense employed by the 'birds of passage,' who took on new identities with the help of false names and papers, different clothes, or the rehearsal of predetermined roles, direct our attention to the agency shared by humans, rules, laws, and infrastructures.[8] In this assemblage, human actors are not viewed as autonomous, sovereign subjects standing above events, but are instead involved, 'semi-sovereign' subjects, constituted through and moving in the given conditions.[9] This points to a constitution of the subject as an effect of both governmental structures and practices of subjection and assimilation.[10]

By focusing on the productive role of precarious passengers in the transatlantic transportation business between Europe and the United States around 1900, I aim at sketching an account of maritime modernity that considers both sides of history: the side of modernity typically

[7] My focus on the agency of the precarious passengers in both the history of maritime mobility and the history of subjectivation represents exactly this: the attempt to find a point that shows the complex structures of normalization, standardization, and self-authorization in this particular period of maritime mobility.

[8] In this context, media are not viewed as *a priori* an action or knowledge, but rather as situated in a reciprocal relationship of humans, things, and uses/knowledge. This is the approach described by the Actor-Network Theory, but can also be viewed as a question about cultural techniques. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (2005); Bernhard Siegert, *Cultural Techniques. Grids, Filters, Doors, and Other Articulations of the Real* (2015); Tristan Thielmann and Erhard Schüttpelz, eds., *Akteur-Medien-Theorie* (2014).

[9] See Friedrich et al. (2018); also my own contribution "Subjectivation Against a Backlight. Scenes of Evidence Production, Ellis Island 1908," 99–124.

[10] I follow Foucault's concept of subject constitution here as it has been taken up and further developed by Judith Butler in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997); see also Foucault, "The Life of Infamous Men" (1979).

associated with progress, steam power, the avant-garde, and abstraction, as well as the other, 'darker side of modernity,' based on work, exploitation, trade, inequality, migration, and silenced historical voices. This 'dark side of globalization' is the hidden basis for the history conventionally remembered.[11] As the following contextual reconstruction reveals, Alfred Stieglitz's *The Steerage* is characterized by this ambiguous complexity of maritime modernity.

The Steerage: Points of View

In an open letter, which was published in 1942 in *Twice A Year*, a journal edited by Dorothy Norman, Alfred Stieglitz describes "How *The Steerage* Happened" in an anecdote: in June 1907, he and his small family—his wife, his daughter and her governess—were on their way to Europe to visit friends, relatives, and galleries (Stieglitz [1942] 2000a, 194–197).[12] His wife had insisted on traveling on the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, one of the most prestigious passenger steamships of their time, since it guaranteed passengers of the first class the most comfort and luxury.[13] Reading Stieglitz's anecdote, the photograph's media and social dispositive can be reconstructed:

> How I hated the atmosphere of the first class on that ship. One couldn't escape the *nouveaux riches.* I sat much in my steamer chair the first days out—sat with closed eyes. … On the third day out I finally couldn't stand it any longer. I tried to get away from that company. I went as far forward on deck as I could. …
>
> As I came to the end of the deck I stood alone, looking down. There were men and women and children on the lower deck of the steerage. … On the upper deck, looking over the railing, there was a young man in a straw hat. The shape of the hat was round. He was watching the men and women and children on the lower steerage deck. (Stieglitz 2000a, 194)

In this depiction of events—more parable than anecdote—Stieglitz's point of view mirrors the division structuring his famous photograph. The photographic composition of *The Steerage* divides the image into two deck

[11] I use the phrase 'dark side of globalization' following Walter D. Mignolo's "darker side of modernity." See, e.g., Mignolo (2011, xiv).

[12] See the bibliography compiled by Sarah Greenough in Whelan (2000, 268).

[13] As the heir of a brewing fortune, Emmy Obermeyer had brought her family's wealth into the marriage, which most likely afforded her some autonomy in making these decisions. See Hoffman (2004, 55–65, 122–140).

levels: an upper outer deck, where primarily men in dark suits are standing tightly packed behind a rail, and a lower outer deck, where mostly women and children in light-colored dresses and scarves are visible (see Fig. 8.1).[14] The passengers are surrounded by the ship's architecture: the upper deck's rail groups those standing behind it in a row, a bright white deck bridge cuts through the image diagonally, a chimney tilts to the left, a ladder leaning right directs outside the picture frame. The ship's architecture not only separates the passengers, but also positions them. In this way, the composition of the photograph contributes significantly to the image's connotative meanings.

Due to the vertical division of the photograph, *The Steerage* has often been interpreted as the representation of a society segregated by class and gender. But on closer inspection, the space represented in the photograph is not representative of the strict separation of decks typical of the transatlantic steamships of this period. The ladder on the right of the photograph indicates that the two decks were connected (which was certainly not the case for the first-class deck and the steerage); a girl leaning on the lower steps of the ladder also points to the lack of a social or architectural barrier separating both spaces. As it happens, both the upper and the lower sections of the decks visible in the photograph were parts of the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*'s steerage class (Wheeler 2007, 1342).[15] Additionally, on closer inspection, a few women become visible on the upper deck, and, on the lower deck, a bowler hat and a man's back can be identified amidst the women, children, and laundry (see Stieglitz [1942] 2000b, 197). The photograph's vertical division thus can be said signify the different 'worlds' of the steamships' distinct passenger classes without, however, representing them photographically (see Barthes 2001, 135–138).[16] In other words, the photograph makes use of a visual metonymy.[17]

[14] In his introduction to Stieglitz's collected writings, Richard Whelan writes that Stieglitz's retrospective memories should not be trusted due to his self-stylization and didacticism: "When it came to telling the story of his life, Stieglitz was not one to allow the specifics of mere circumstance to interfere with his vision of how things should have been. By the time he began dictating his reminiscences, they had undergone not only the inevitable unconscious distortions due to the passage of time but also many minor conscious and self-serving distortions. Stieglitz was constantly telling and retelling his stories, changing them and elaborating them both to gratify himself and to illustrate moral lessons. His anecdotes became parables. Adherence to fact was far less important than making a point" (see Whelan 2000, XXI–XXII).

[15] See also (Greenough 2000, 135; Sekula 1995, 112–116).

[16] In his writings on semiotics, Barthes emphasizes how an image's connotation is constructed. See also Barthes's *Mythologies* (1991, 107–145).

[17] A photograph's denotative and connotative level are not necessarily congruous; see Barthes (2001).

Fig. 8.1 Alfred Stieglitz, *The Steerage* (1907). Los Angeles County Museum of Art, https://collections.lacma.org/node/195304

In this interpretation, *The Steerage* no longer stands for a strict twofold class separation—as was often claimed—but instead exemplifies the increasing interconnection of Europe and the United States. After all, at the beginning of the new century, it was not only poor emigrants who crossed the Atlantic for the New World, but also increasingly wealthy

immigrants who returned to visit the Old World (see Kludas 1987, 147–198). Even if the steerage was still the cheapest and therefore most popular Atlantic passage, the internationally competitive, large shipping lines simultaneously promoted their ocean liners as 'floating palaces' in the style of *grand hotels* to attract well-paying cabin passengers like the Stieglitz family.[18]

In the early twentieth century, steamships transported an average of 300.000 passengers from Europe to the United States every year, and, for the first time, also made the return to Europe with an occupancy rate of almost 20% (see Kludas 1988, 80).[19] While these steamships became constantly faster and more comfortable, increasingly restrictive US-American immigration laws and border controls additionally produced a previously nonexistent return migration. On average, the United States was receiving 5,000 immigrants every day, and with a 2% rejection rate, steamships transported 700 returnees back to Europe every week—without counting first-class passengers and voluntary returnees.[20] In fact, on their way to Europe, the ocean liners were not only occupied by those who had been rejected by immigration officials, but also held established immigrants visiting their countries of origin, labor migrants as well as those returning home for good.[21]

The steerage passengers Stieglitz portrayed in his modernist photograph were thus rejected migrants and returnees, as well as 'birds of passage.' Skilled workers who were employed in the booming construction sector in American metropolises traveled back and forth regularly on the steamships between Europe and the United States, between family to work, in irregular two-year cycles with special work visas (Sassen [1988] 2011, 26–54). And, as Arthur Holitscher (the inspiration for Franz Kafka's novel *Amerika*) wrote about the 'migrant birds' in 1912, "one notices right away about those below, whether he has already been 'over there' or not" ("[m]an merkt das einem von denen dort unten gleich an, ob er

[18] See HAPAG's on-ship newspaper *Augusta Victoria Zeitung* 1, January 22, 1891, in Kludas (2001, 21–25).

[19] In November 1907, the HAPAG ship *President Grant* made its journey from New York to Europe with 3,342 passengers, on a ship with a total capacity of 3,800. For a long time, it set the record for occupancy rate of the US–Europe route.

[20] On the constitution of return migration, see (Wulf 2012, 150).

[21] Due to a continuing economic crisis the return migration quota in 1907—the year with the highest number of incoming immigrants—was unusually high (about 50% higher than the previous year). See (Kludas 1988, 80).

schon 'drüben' gewesen ist oder nicht"): "it's noticeable already from the way he looks up to us on the promenade deck" ("Schon an der Art, wie er zu uns auf dem Promenadendeck hinaufschaut, merkt man's," 12).

The male figure with the white straw hat at the center of the photograph, gazing down at the lower deck from behind the rails, is an iconic representation of this class dynamic. This observer in the photograph has often been interpreted as Stieglitz's stand-in, or the 'man of the crowd,' a middle-class man.[22] But most likely, he seems to have been a 'bird of passage': a labor migrant who had perhaps made money in the United States and now returned to Europe to visit friends or family—or to return for good. This kind of work migration was a new phenomenon of the accelerated transatlantic crossings. It is thus only at first sight that the observer duplicates Stieglitz's class-based point of view of looking down. The young man on the upper outer deck, who through the direction of his gaze establishes a connection between the two spaces on the ship, is ultimately an iconic stand-in for the ship's 'birds of passage,' a representative of the social circulation and upward mobility possible in the United States.

By 1900, what had begun as one-way immigration became increasingly circular. The new media of this circulation—steamships, but also the international press, postal service, and photography—transported more than just passengers, cargo, and information across the ocean; they also carried knowledge about this circulation, which manifested itself in schedules, laws, and border controls, as well as in art. The emergence of steamship travel and transatlantic regular service thereby not only led to constantly increasing numbers of passengers, but also to the internationalization of art—evident in the mobility of artists, discourses, and works of art (see Lévy and Derouet 2003). Alfred Stieglitz is representative of this development. His photograph *The Steerage* was itself a product of the exchange of images and ideas across oceans and national borders. Stieglitz developed the photograph while he was still in Paris; he first exhibited and published it after having been introduced to abstract modernism by the European avant-garde (see Stieglitz 2000, 198; also Bochner 2005, 117–159). The transatlantic steamship is thus the media-technological base for this maritime image of the modern, interconnected world.

[22] "The spectator, distinguished from the surrounding crowd by the middle-class character of his clothing, was remembered by Stieglitz as the key to the picture" (Sekula 1995, 114). Seen as Stieglitz's stand-in, the observer reminds us that it was the photographer, Stieglitz himself, who looked down from the first-class promenade deck.

Migrant Maritime Im/Mobility and the Grand Ocean Liner

At the turn of the twentieth century, transatlantic modernity was characterized by competition and superlatives: advertising strategies emphasized that the ships were ever bigger, faster, and more luxurious. The *Kaiser Wilhelm II* met the luxury standards of the ocean liners circling the world's oceans at the time: luxury suites and spacious cabins for first-class passengers, salons, lounges, winter gardens, music rooms, libraries and cafés, sporting halls and swimming pools, covered promenade decks, and spacious first-class dining halls made this prestigious transatlantic steamship into a 'floating city.'[23] The North German Lloyd had been a leading transatlantic shipping line since the mid-1800s (Kludas 1987, 147–198),[24] and the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, which was almost 20,000 GRT (gross register tonnage) large and reached a speed of 23 knots between Bremerhaven and New York, was the Lloyd's flagship since her launch in 1902.

The *Kaiser Wilhelm II* was 215 meters long and 22 meters wide. The seven decks amounted to almost 55,000 cubic meters and could hold up to 2,216 people (Kludas 1987, 183). The steerage was designed for 798 people, the second deck class for 260 and the first deck class for 508. Generally, the *nouveaux riches* and the European aristocracy crossed the Atlantic in the first class, while the second class accommodated social climbers who had come into money, and the steerage deck was available to the poor, emigrants, and returnees (see Moreno 2004, 264). The leftover passenger space was reserved for a crew of 650 people. The hierarchy in the passenger classes was replicated in crew accommodations: The first officers were given comfortable cabins on the sundeck, while the heaters

[23] See the advertising brochure of the *Hamburg-Amerika Line*'s 'literary bureau': *Die neuen Riesendampfer 'Amerika' und 'Kaiserin Auguste Victoria'* (1906), 2. See also Siegert (2013, 117–138).

[24] Around 1900, transported 55,000 passengers to New York every year, which corresponded to more than a sixth of the passengers transported by the thirteen largest European ocean carriers (231). The British predominance in the passenger liner business—with the *Cunard Line* and the *White Star Line*—gave way to the "decade of the Germans," which began with the advent of four funnel liners, as Arnold Kludas, chronicler of German passenger ships, wrote. In the following decade, Lloyd's four funnel steamships repeatedly set successful speed records on the North Atlantic (Kludas 1987, 143–198).

and coal trimmers were housed in mass quarters with dirty bunks on the berth deck near the machines (Kludas 1987, 186).[25]

The spatial division of the separate deck classes as well as the different deck facilities hence reflected the social position of passengers and crew members, but also (re-)produced it: As Kludas's color-coded illustration of the decks of the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* indicates (1987, 184–185, 188–189), not only the upper and lower promenade decks with their stately rooms and halls were exclusively available to the 508 first-class passengers, but also the lifeboats,[26] sport halls, smoking rooms, and 'Viennese' cafés, as well as an expansive first-class dining hall.[27] The passengers of the first cabin thus had time and space for ennui and idleness crossing the Atlantic. The North German Lloyd's house architect Johann G. Poppe designed the dining hall, which seated 560 people, in the style of a *grand hotel*'s: The hall spanned four decks at its highest point and was decorated with intricate balcony balustrades and richly ornamented elements in Rococo, Baroque, and German Renaissance style. Critics called the pompous interior architecture of the Lloyd's steamships "Bremener Baroque" (122).

The name reveals a paradox of maritime modernity: While the mechanical transatlantic modernity of steamships, with their countless steerage passengers, seemed to steer toward a *Metropolis* not unlike that created by Fritz Lang (1927) in his eponymous film after he had visited New York by ship (see Schönemann 1992), the aesthetic anachronism of "Bremener Baroque" translated the codes of an outdated European nobility to a relatively new North American bourgeoisie, and thereby stimulated the

[25] In contrast to the steerage passengers, who spent only four to seven days on board, the life of the lower echelons of the crew in the stuffy hold of the ships represented their permanent living and work situation. The high suicide rate of heaters on transatlantic liners is a silent testimony to the conditions that are also depicted in Franz Kafka's novel fragment *The Stoker*; see Kafka, *Amerika* ([1927] 2002, 9–44).

[26] After the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912, the world was shocked not only at the fact that only 1,178 lifeboat seats had been available for 3,503 potential passengers, but that these available seats had almost only been provided for first-class passengers; Kludas (2008, 159).

[27] See the longitudinal section and the deck sketch of the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* in Kludas (1987, 185, 189).

mobility of affluent ‘cosmopolitans.’[28] Maritime mobility thus not only relied on steam power and mass migration, but also on the aesthetic anachronism of these floating *grand hotels*. That is a given paradox of maritime modernity:. While the ladies’ and gentlemen’s salons, in their neo-Baroque pomp, reproduced the class relations of the Old World, the ‘New America’ was traveling on the steerage. The functional aesthetic of unclad steel walls as well as the steerage passengers, who would travel second class on their return journey if they had found fortune in the United States, embodied the ‘dream’ of the United States.

The second class was, in that sense, the deck of social climbers and a new middle class. Private cabins, social salons, smoking rooms, and a dining hall also existed in the second class (see Kludas 1987, 15–34). These conveniences were available to all precarious passengers who could afford the additional charge.[29] The facilities of the second class were advertised in terms of the comfort provided by an upscale guest house (see Kludas 1987, 54–87). The transatlantic steamships, however, presented not a two-tiered, but a three-tiered world; an ‘American’ model of society in which upward social mobility into a higher passenger class was not impossible—it was dependent only on the fare, that is, on a passenger’s economic power. But those who could afford a second-class ticket ultimately enjoyed more than the conveniences of an upscale boarding house: They could avoid the border controls on Ellis Island.[30] This was a welcome

[28] Reminiscent of Karl Marx’s class critique, Lang’s *Metropolis* shows a rigidly segregated two-tier society where the prosperity and well-being of one class is based on the work and exploitation of the other. At the beginning of the film, intertitles inform: “Deep underground lay the city of the workers. / As deep as the worker’s city lay underground, so high above it towered the complex known as the Club of the Sons, with its lecture-rooms, libraries, theatres and stadiums.” We are also shown two worlds, one of which, due to its steely and steam-driven constitution, is reminiscent of the machine rooms on transatlantic steamships. The other, with its spectacular theaters, auditoriums and stadiums, could almost be an advertising brochure for a ‘pleasure cruise.’

[29] In 1905, the journey from Europe to New York cost between 320 and 470 German Mark in the first, 210 to 240 in the second class, and 140 to 180 Mark in the steerage (see Kludas 1987, Appendix 4, “Fahrpreise in den Jahren 1901–1941 in Mark,” 231).

[30] Whereas the steerage passengers collectively underwent strict border controls in immigration stations such as Ellis Island, first- and second-class passengers were examined on board ship by a boarding division of entry inspectors. This examination was considerably faster and more cursory than the series of medical-psychiatric-criminological tests people were subjected to on Ellis Island (see Moreno 2004, XIII, 10).

prospect, especially for steerage passengers who were unwanted by the restrictive immigration laws.

The steerage passengers, after all, did not have their own dining hall, not to mention private cabins or lounges. The *Kaiser Wilhelm II*'s steerage passengers were housed in seven mass dormitories, each holding 52 to 146 bunks, which was approximately equal in terms of area to the first-class dining hall. Eating, sleeping, and all other activities had to take place in these mass quarters. Arnold Kludas compares the level of comfort on the steerage to that of a prison (Kludas 1988, 186). In most cases, the rooms of the steerage were windowless, unpaneled and undecorated. The contrast with the décor and facilities of upper decks is striking:[31] The steerage had neither the luxury and elegance of the first class, nor the comfort of the second class; there were no spacious winter gardens, ballrooms or libraries, no wide, carpeted stairways, no ladies' rooms or Viennese cafés. Steerage passengers could not access the promenade decks for strolls, much less the sundeck. The only outdoor space available to steerage passengers was the unstructured lower part of the bow, which offered neither seating space nor protection from the wind. In contrast to first- and second-class spaces, no comfortable recliner seats or small verandas invited them to linger. If the steerage passengers wanted to escape the confines of the mass dormitories, they had to find space among steely planks, chimneys, ropes, and loading cranes, as depicted in *The Steerage*—and as Charlie Chaplin demonstrates pointedly in *The Immigrant* (1917). Ultimately, however, ascending to a higher-deck class on a return trip to Europe remained a present possibility. The steerage was correspondingly not only characterized by constrictions and misery, but also by ambition.

Transatlantic Transfers: Subject Constitution at Sea

> The unchanging traveller is pigeonholed, numbered, and regulated in the grid of the railway car, which is a perfect actualization of the rational utopia.
> (de Certeau, 1984, 111)

After merchant seafaring had developed the passenger 'cargo' into a lucrative emigration business in the mid-1800s, circular travel flows between the 'Old' and the 'New World' emerged (see Kludas 1986). Until the 1880s, however, passengers traveled only in small numbers as

[31] See the illustrations in Kludas (1988, 54–86).

well-paying guests of the captain in the first and second cabins. The majority of migrants still made their journey to North America in provisional bunks in the empty hold of transatlantic sailboats that imported goods from the Americas to Europe, and which, therefore, had room to spare on their way back. In the course of so-called mass migration mass quarters were established on the tween and cargo decks of the emigrant ships.[32] And it was only around the turn of the century, that both steerage passage and upscale steamship travel were established as circular travel options for all kinds of emigrants and immigrants. The birth of the common passenger out of the logics of cargo was thereby opposed to the structural assurance that the first-class passengers were still guests of the captain (Wolf 2013, 263, 229), as on the same ships the precarious passengers traveled with, first- and second-class facilities were built on the upper decks.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the transatlantic liners had finally become a "world in miniature," to borrow a phrase from Walter Benjamin (1982, 45–60, 1041–1060). A 'miniature world' not only because everything necessary for life and entertainment was assembled on the prestigious passenger ships like in the Parisian passages, but also in terms of social stratification: The ship's division into different classes corresponds to the social segregation between the working class, the middle class, the bourgeoisie, and the *nouveaux riches.* But rather than simply reflecting dominant relations, the fundamental differences in the decks' equipment and infrastructure created a new social order by producing different patterns of subjectivation: whereas days spent doing nothing on a steamer chair on the first-class sun deck produced men and women of leisure—*flâneurs,* or '(wo)men with a camera,' as Alfred Stieglitz was one—, the confinement, illness, boredom, and dirt of the steerage created a lower class—depicted not only in *Metropolis*, but to be found in the New York tenements.[33] Figured as proletariat or as potential social climbers, at the same time this lower class stands for the power and potential associated with America as a 'promised land.' Correspondingly, the second-deck class was the place for the new American middle class. Those crossing the ocean

[32] For a critical reflection on the 'crowd' as a discursive term and historical concept, see Gamper (2007).

[33] See the photographs of the American police and social reporters Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine from the 1890s and 1900s. These depict the newly arrived immigrants in the poor neighborhoods of the United States as the New World's 'lumpenproletariat,' similar to the workers in *Metropolis*. See Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* ([1890] 2010; Smith-Shank 2003; Sturberger 2007).

in the comfort of the second class could consider themselves as cosmopolitan: the ship interiors offered sufficient amenities and space to do so.

But what were the medial and material conditions of subject constitution at sea (see Coulmas 1990; also Girshovich 2015)? In contrast to the luxurious lodgings of the first-class, the steerage passengers' accommodation in overcrowded mass dormitories referenced a dark chapter in the transportation of humans across the Atlantic Ocean: the Middle Passage of enslaved Africans to the United States—perhaps *the* central factor in the transatlantic economy of globalization in the wake of colonization (Sharpe 2016, 25–67). Even though there is of course a significant difference between voluntary and involuntary migration, the spatial distribution of the mass quarters in the steerage decks of the so-called emigrant ships allows for this comparison: in ground plans of the ships, the striking similarity in the organizing principle of most efficient use of space to accommodate precarized passengers becomes evident. However, while the enslaved people had neither beds nor bedding during the transport, the tween decks of the transatlantic liners were gradually equipped with bunk beds and straw mattresses since the mid-nineteenth century. And in the course of the century, additional laws and regulations were passed, which gradually assured the precarious passengers a minimum of space, air, and comfort during the passage, so that even some steerage passengers became frequent travelers between the worlds.

The differences in deck equipment ultimately not only formed the passengers by way of its aesthetic trappings, but also shaped the passengers' health. After all, those who lived in functionally separate, properly ventilated rooms with recently made beds and clean cutlery were generally healthier than passengers who stayed in the so-called mass accommodations, where illnesses could spread more easily. The 'floating cities' brought forth not only different corporeal choreographies and countenances, but also engendered an entire set of concrete techniques and procedures of modern subject constitutions in the different deck classes. Under the premise that architecture and furnishing was involved in the construction of the self, those who crossed the ocean in luxury in 'floating palaces' must have emerged differently from the experience of the passage than those who were subjected to the adventurous trials of week-long sail ship crossings, or those who braved the journey in the steerage's 'mass quarters' without first- or second-class conveniences. And the class structure of the transatlantic liners was perpetuated in the 'New World.' This can be seen

in the immigration and border controls, which were central for the passengers' futures in the United States: While the first- and second-class passengers could settle entry formalities on board the ships, steerage passengers had to undergo lengthy immigration inspections in transit stations like Ellis Island (Cannato 2009, 19–30).

The precarized people who had been transported to the promised land in airless steerages and dark mass dormitories were subjected to a laborious process of juridical questioning and medical tests, in accordance with early twentieth-century immigration laws.[34] The crowded, stuffy rooms of the steerage's mass quarters thereby did more than just leave a social mark on the migrants. Due to the bad hygienic conditions and the spread of diseases in the steerage, many precarious passengers were denied entry to the United States (Fairchild 2003; Lüthi 2009). The biopolitical-governmental inspections carried out in immigration stations—as well as on the ships—were aimed at the future population.[35] Such examinations can be understood as procedures of normalization or standardization (see Foucault 2008, 27–51), or, in this context, 'Americanization.' In general, however, this kind of state-structured subject constitution is paradigmatic of every migration regime (see Arendt 1943; Seghers 1944; Tsianos and Kuster 2016, 235–249). Identification papers, which formed the basis of the state's acceptance of immigrants, were at the core of these border controls—and, according to Arthur Holitscher, they already played a major role during the passage:

[34] On their arrival in a US-American harbor, steerage passengers were not only examined with regards to country of origin, health, and state of mind, but had to participate in a series of examinations and tests in functional immigration stations like Ellis Island. Ever since the frontier had been declared closed at the end of the 1890s, all immigrants who were suspected of carrying infectious diseases, who were poor or unable to work (or who had been classified as 'criminals,' 'prostitutes,' 'polygamists,' 'Chinese,' or 'anarchists') were either interned in a border transit station for a short time or were sent back to their home ports at the expense of ship companies. In the immigration stations, questionable passengers were not only separated socially through examinations and tests, but also constituted as future Americans through the elaborate architectural setup of immigration stations. Steamships and transit stations thus frequently represented a passenger's first encounter with the logics and conditions of industrial modernity. The series of medical-criminological examinations followed the logic of the production line. The steamship passage, with its concentrated, vertical structure, anticipated the US-American metropolis. See Sander (2016).

[35] For the interrelation of biopolitics and population formation, see (Foucault 2008, 1–26).

> Down on the steerage order has now come into the crowd, quiet, yes, I am feeling something like apprehensiveness from down there. The people have moved to the side, and from a door below me, below the promenade deck on which I am standing, men, women, old people, and children are stepping out one by one, a card in hand that they hold out to the ship's officer. They don't present them as if they wanted to say: But sure! Do read! Instead there is something in their gesture that moves me, something timid, pleading for forgiveness, we would never hold out a card like that, like these people there below me. (Holitscher 1912, 12)[36]

In his book *Imported Americans* (1904), American writer and journalist Broughton Brandenburg describes a scene that, once again, shines a different light on subjectivation at sea. The undercover journalist describes a scene which he observed on a North German Lloyd's steamship that he and his wife had embarked on in Italy and, after twelve days at sea, slowly entered the New York harbor: "I saw more than one man with a little slip of notes in his hand carefully rehearsing his group in all that they were to say when the time came for examination, and by listening here and there I found that hundreds of lies were in preparation" (1904, 200).

In contrast to first-class travelers like Stieglitz and Holitscher, Brandenburg, who traveled with steerage passengers, describes how experienced 'birds of passage' prepared newcomers for the questions and inspections they could expect on Ellis Island while they were still on the ship: They dictated answers, gave advice as to how people should behave and appear, as well as directions regarding the information contained in identification papers and health records so that their narratives would not deviate on Ellis Island (Brandenburg 1904, 198–200). The quote emphasizes that subjectivation and the constitution of the self during the transatlantic passage were determined not only by standardization and normalization, but also by migrant knowledge. Consequently, the subjectivation of passengers during the passage took place through

[36] "Unten auf dem Zwischendeck ist jetzt Ordnung in die Menge gekommen, Ruhe, ja ich spüre hierher herauf so etwas wie Beklommenheit. Die Leute sind zur Seite gewichen, und aus einer Tür unter mir, unter dem Promenadendeck, auf dem ich stehe, treten Männer, Frauen, Alte und Kinder, einzeln heraus, eine Karte in der Hand, die sie dem Schiffsoffizier hinhalten. Sie halten sie nicht hin, als wollten sie sagen: Aber gerne! Lesen Sie doch! sondern es ist etwas in ihrer Gebärde, was mich rührt, etwas Zaghaftes, um Verzeihung Bittendes, so hält unsereiner keine Karte hin, wie diese Menschen da unter mir" in the German original; translated by Alexandra Ganser.

normalization and numbering, as well as through cunning, performance, family ties, self-organization, and informal networks.[37]

Transatlantic liners thus marked the first point of contact between Europe and the New World and hinted at a constitution of the self 'between two worlds.' It was 'between the worlds' that steerage passengers came into contact with processes of the modern industrialized world during the crossing (sometimes for the first time), but also where the 'birds of passage' acquired new identities, using foreign papers and tricks.[38] An analytical focus on the transatlantic steamships therefore enables a dual perspective: The cargo and passenger steamships moving between the continents around 1900 were mobile spaces that—as much as they prescribed the movement of people in their holds—also produced and represented the contact between both Worlds. The transatlantic steamships thus direct our attention to a specifically modern spatial constitution whose expression and medium they represent. This spatial constitution is often referred to in terms of keywords like progress, industrialization, interconnection, and modernity, which conceal exploitation, work, inequality, dirt, and stench. Yet what is also concealed is the constitution of maritime modernity, expressed in the slyness and tricks of steerage passengers.

Maritime Modernity, Part 2

As mobile spaces of modernity and media of circulation, transatlantic steamships were not only the simple precondition for the precarious passages between 'Old' and 'New World.' As the medial and material conditions that made the circulation of humans, knowledge, images, and ideas possible, it also shows the productive logic of maritime mobility around 1900: The hierarchical class structure of the decks reveals the Janus-faced

[37] For a more detailed analysis of the procedures and conditions of subjectivation at the immigration stations, see my essay "Subjektivation Against a Backlight. Scenes of Evidence Production, Ellis Island 1908" (2019).

[38] The passenger lists can be seen as central media of modern subject constitution in that they function between personal identification papers and entry registers. In the act of transcribing names from one register to the other, poor emigrants were transformed into new immigrants as well as potential Americans. Additionally, the ocean liners' fundamentally different deck infrastructures seem to establish a placement of the self that is highly stratified, as described in Sadie Frowne's reports on transatlantic passages; yet the possibility of returning in a higher class, as described by Holitscher, points to a more open system of social stratification.

character of the transatlantic transportation business in general. However, it is the steerage passengers, who as 'birds of passage' embody the potentiality of the 'American Dream,' that encapsulate modern maritime mobility, using informal knowledge. In this way, 'birds of passage' opened the US-American space of possibility for other passengers. Those who knew how to play the immigration game of numbering, normalization, and standardization not only had good chances of entering the country, but were also already in the process of acquiring an 'American' identity, since the idea of 'American' was closely linked to the myth of the self-made man (Paul 2014, 367–420). The migrants' act of passing on their knowledge can be seen as a form of collectivization that does not position itself in opposition to sovereign power—in contrast to mutinies or uprisings, for example.[39] Rather than positioning themselves outside of power, migrants played with the mechanisms of power, in order to better their position within power structures. The 'birds of passage' are thus specific figures pointing to a new ordering of society, which was increasingly marked by economic structures and logics of production of the industrialized and capitalized world. My focus on the agency of the 'birds of passage' does not mean that examinations and identification procedures were less important in the 'making of Americans' at the borders of the United States than the self-subjectivation of the migrants. On the contrary: the operating principle of the 'New World' was based on a general logic of circulation in which 'good elements' were strengthened and circulated, while 'bad elements' were detected and filtered out.[40] The US-American border regime was after all characterized by porosity as well as strict security controls, disciplinary exclusion, confinement, and procedures of regulation.

Steam ships were hence simultaneously places of existential experiences and spaces of a capitalized culture. As contact zones between the Old and the New World, they represented the placeless places in which—mostly unseen—new subjectivities could be prepared and constituted.

[39] This loose collective form can be described as an assemblage that follows the principle of a 'mob' (in contrast to the 'crowd' as well as the mutiny); see Deleuze and Guattari 2002, 52–53; also Braidotti's chapter "Complexity Against Methodological Nationalism" (in Braidotti 2011, 209–238).

[40] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78* (2007, 19): "It [the idea of security and security dispositives] is simply a matter of maximizing the positive elements, for which one provides the best possible circulation, and of minimizing what is risky and inconvenient, like theft and disease, while knowing that they will never be completely suppressed."

Michel Foucault's description of the ship as "the heterotopia *par excellence*" (1986, 27) summarizes how existential a place the ship was, which is especially true in the context of mass migration. The ship here figures not only as a 'real' utopia/dystopia, in which the order of society is condensed, turned, and reflected, but as a machine that in fact created a new social order—through a transatlantic service that became the motor of maritime modernity (as an interconnected world) and through the experiences and conditions of the passage itself (as switching points for a new constitution of subjects).[41] The cultural analysis of grand ocean liners shows that the passengers—regardless of which deck they traveled on—can be considered as products of the international transportation business (which consisted of facilities, ships, schedules, maps, humans, laws, inspections, railways, and transit stations) because the means of subjectivation depended heavily on existing conditions and surrounding structures. Yet my focus on semi-sovereign subjects goes beyond showing the interplay of humans, ships, and infrastructures connected to transatlantic regular service. Rather, it indicates a merging of humans, technology, regulations, actions, and structures; each component producing and influencing each other reciprocally and, taken together, constitutive of maritime mobility around 1900 (see Sekula 2013; Latour 2005; Law 1987).

The horizonless, detailed view of a quotidian scene on the overcrowded steerage on the North German Lloyd's flagship after all corresponds with the maritime paradigms of its time in a twofold way: On the one hand, the photograph expresses the class structure that dominated migrant maritime mobilities around 1900; on the other hand, the image itself formally correlates the European avant-garde and American modernism. As a high-profile photograph, *The Steerage* reveals the structures of maritime modernity.[42] If we understand "art as a mode of human communication,

[41] Whereas the sailing ship—with its clearly defined space, its captain as sovereign, and its diverse crew—could still be used as a model and metaphor for the state and its forms of governance (as, e.g., in Joseph Conrad or Herman Melville), the ships Stieglitz, Holitscher, and Brandenburg wrote about had morphed into machines that could no longer be interpreted as metaphors for the state. The class structures on steamships were too defined, suitable as a mirror of society rather than as images of the state. See Wolf (2013, 180–213, 267–290).

[42] Considering the contemporary industrial working and living conditions—on land as well as at sea—, it is not surprising that a shift in emphasis can also be detected in art. As Sekula writes in *Fish Story*: "Modernity entails a maritime victory of the detail over the panorama: these details circulate within the generalized stream of consumption, can be activated in any context" (1995, 107).

as a discourse anchored in concrete social relations, rather than as a mystified, vaporous, and ahistorical realm of purely affective expression and experience," then, "art, like speech, is both symbolic exchange and material practice, involving the production of both meaning and physical presence," as Allan Sekula writes in "Dismantling Modernism": "Meaning, as an understanding of that presence, emerges from an interpretive act" (1978, 859). Following Sekula's reflections, I have traced the question of media and material conditions of migrant maritime mobilities.

Different elements came together in the creation of *The Steerage* in June 1907:[43] Stieglitz's view from the first-class sun deck onto the steerage, the photo camera in the cabin, as well as his knowledge about the codes of aesthetic modernism and the different possibilities that existed in developing, exhibiting, and circulating photography. This arrangement already shows how hierarchically structured our images of early twentieth-century migrant maritime mobilities are. The architecture of the ship was a decisive detail in this context, because of the underlying lines of sight and the visual structures they enabled, but also because of the different subject positions that existed due to the different class experiences during the transatlantic crossing: As Stieglitz describes in his notes, those who traveled first class might have been trapped in their privileged positions, yet they had more than time and space for contemplation and leisure during the crossing. They could look down onto the lower decks. On the other hand, those who crossed the ocean on the steerage symbolized the dangers and the possibilities of the 'New World.' De facto, however, the journey in the steerage was also characterized by grueling boredom, confinement, fear, motion sickness, and worse. Therefore, these crossing did not bring forth many men and women of leisure, *flâneurs* or '(wo)men with cameras' from the steerage. But the 'birds of passage' as well as the middle-class men and women on the second-class decks, are paradigmatic for a maritime modernity produced on and by way of passenger ships. They emerge as central figures of a modern, interconnected world.

[43] "And as I was deciding, should I try to put down this seemingly new vision that held me—people, the common people, the feeling of ship and ocean and sky and the feeling of release that I was away from the mob called the rich. … Spontaneously I raced to the main stairway of the steamer, chased down to my cabin, got my Graflex, raced back again all out of breath, wondering whether the man with the straw hat had moved or not. If he had, the picture I had seen would no longer be. The relationship of shapes as I wanted them would have been disturbed and the picture was lost. But there was the man with the straw hat. He hadn't moved. The man with the crossed white suspenders showing his back, he too, talking to a man, hadn't moved, and the woman with the child on her lap, sitting on the floor, hadn't moved. Seemingly no one had changed position" (Stieglitz 2000a, 195).

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CHAPTER 9

High Sea and Sediment: Watermarks in Ilse Aichinger's Work

Annegret Pelz

The work of Ilse Aichinger (1921–2016), one of the great German-language authors of the twentieth century, is characterized by a commitment to the perception of a different reality—as experienced during the time of National Socialism and repressed after 1945. Aichinger's first and only novel, *Die größere Hoffnung* (1948, Engl. *The Greater Hope*, 2016)[1] centers on the fears and hopes of Viennese Jewish children before their

Translated from German by Alexandra Ganser and Leopold Lippert. This essay is based on its German original, "Hochsee und Sediment: Wasserzeichen im Werk Ilse Aichingers," published in: Klaus Kastberger, ed. 2006. *Wassersprachen: Flüssigtexte aus Österreich*, 58-69. Linz: StifterHaus – Zentrum für Literatur und Sprache.

[1] In the following, quotes from the novel are reproduced from Geoff Wilkes's translation, *The Greater Hope* (2016). Quotes from all other works by Aichinger are the translators', as none of them have been published in English.

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deportation. Her short story “Spiegelgeschichte” (1951, Engl. “Life Story in Retrospect”)[2] received one of the first awards by the *Gruppe 47*, and her contemporaries compared the precision of her texts, which were reality-shattering and coolly saturated by reality at the same time, with Beckett’s later plays and Harold Pinter’s radio plays. Biographically speaking, Aichinger always expressed a “mad” (“wahnsinnige”) passion for seafaring “from the very beginning” (“von Anfang an,” 2005, 184). The sea represented salvation for her twin sister Helga who reached exile in England by crossing the channel. Perhaps as a result, the motif of the sea pervades Aichinger’s texts as the possibility of escape to England and the United States. In Ilse Aichinger’s poetic topography, the sea represents the origin and end point of all writing. All hopes for linguistic renewal and redemption from the “dried-up tracks” (“eingetrockneten Fahrspuren,” Aichinger 1991, 120) of narration are directed at this permanently moving element.

Already in *The Greater Hope*, the sea, having risen to produce a flood, appears as both a destructive and saving force in relation to cultural knowledge. In her early poetological essay “Das Erzählen in dieser Zeit” (1952, literally “Narration in This Time”), she takes the movement of water as a metaphor for short prose forms, which, after 1945, can no longer build a long narrative stream. Though Aichinger attests that the metaphor of the ‘narrative stream’ is still viable (“noch immer richtig,” [1952] 1991, 9), she also claims that contemporary narration has reached an impasse in that one can no longer speak of meandering and peacefully flowing waters. If the metaphor is to be retained, one has “to think of more torrential rivers, with steeper and rockier banks, to which no one who once dared the jump can easily return” (“an reißendere Flüsse denken, mit steileren und steinigeren Ufern, an die keiner, der einmal den Sprung gewagt hat, so leicht wieder zurückkommt,” Aichinger [1952] 1991, 9). First and foremost, all questions regarding contemporary narrative are to be directed at the open sea: Narrative streams enter into it, and it is in its shapelessness where they begin.

Ever since, Aichinger’s language has remained “always close to the sea” (“immer in Meeresnähe”), in constant flux (Aichinger [1978] 1991, 199)—except if it appears, as in *Bad Words* (2018, orig. *Schlechte Wörter*, 1976), in the form of dehydrated “stains” (“Flecken”). Aichinger’s increasingly shorter prose pieces no longer provide space for an epic stream; rather, the water levels swerve between two extremes: the dried-up stain and the sea-turned-flood. Instead of forming narrative streams, water

[2] Literally, the title means “Mirror Story”; an English translation has been published as “Life Story in Retrospect.”

changes its condition; it rises and falls like the sea, coming up and withdrawing again with the tide (Aichinger 2005, 78).

Thus in Aichinger's prose, water levels indicate the liquidness of language. In early twentieth-century literature, textual movement along a vertical axis characterizes the manifestos of the avant-garde, whose protagonists (Majakovskij, Chlebnikov) enjoyed looking down from "skyscraper heights" ("Höhe von Wolkenkratzern," Burljuk et al. 1912, 28) on the older generation (Pushkin, Dostojevski, Tolstoi, Gorki) in their "dacha on the river" ("Datscha am Fluß"). Yet Aichinger's texts, in which water is rising and falling, crystallizing and turning into snow, are searching for a selective, interrupted liquid perspectivation. The author, who has always professed an infatuation with disappearance, and who connects this passion for nonexistence with that for seafaring (Aichinger 2005, 184), searches for forms in which water and language are left to themselves. Time and again, Aichinger's prose pieces question anew in what ways, from the infinite open sea of linguistic possibility, a text can be literally brought to dry land—without lapsing into dried-out linguistic patterns.

Flood and Memory

In the opening scenario of *The Greater Hope*, the sea—in the form of a flood—presents a historical caesura. A hypothetical point of origin, from which language has distanced itself in the course of its history, the sea returns as a mighty flood:

> All around the Cape of Good Hope, the sea was turning dark. The shipping routes blazed with light one more time, and died out. The aerial routes disappeared, as if they were out of place. The groups of islands drew together anxiously. The sea overflowed all the lines of longitude and latitude. It laughed at the world's knowledge, and nestled itself like heavy silk against the bright land so that the southern tip of Africa could be no more than sensed in the twilight. The sea smoothed out the shredded-looking coastlines and deprived them of their purpose. (7)[3]

[3] "Rund um das Kap der Guten Hoffnung wurde das Meer dunkel. Die Schiffahrtslinien leuchteten noch einmal auf und erloschen. Die Fluglinien sanken wie eine Vermessenheit. Ängstlich sammelten sich die Inselgruppen. Das Meer überflutete alle Längen- und Breitengrade. Es verlachte das Wissen der Welt, schmiegte sich wie schwere Seide gegen das helle Land und ließ die Südspitze von Afrika nur wie eine Ahnung im Dämmern. Es nahm den Küstenlinien die Begründung und milderte ihre Zerrissenheit" (Aichinger [1948] 1991, 9).

The cataclysm captures all connecting lines and structures. Culture and knowledge sink into an increasingly dark, world-encompassing ocean, but the flood does not only destroy: it also brings hope for linguistic renewal. The opening of Aichinger's famous novel, dedicated to the fates of Viennese Jewish children threatened by deportation (Pelz 2005), has been read as a parallel to Ernst Wiechert's novel *Das einfache Leben* (literally "The Simple Life," see Karnick 1986). Published in 1939, this cult book-to-be of early postwar Germany likewise starts with a global darkening. In Wiechert, too, the focus is on an increasingly shadowy globe, coastlines become blurred, and valleys turn dark. But in this novel, which also searches for a new beginning of civilization, the protagonist retreats to the loneliness of a watery island out of an aversion to the world.

In Aichinger's novel there can be no idyllic way out; the rupture of civilization runs across language itself, what in German is called *Zivilisationskritik* (cultural critique) appears as work on language itself here. In contrast to Robert Neumann's (1929) and Stefan Andres's (1949–1959) *Zeitromanen* (a specifically German tradition of the historical novel, focusing on the portrayal of a specific period), which similarly cast the breaking point of civilizational order during the World Wars in the image of the Old Testament flood, Aichinger connects the motif of the great flood on the plot level with the historical trauma of National Socialism, and on the level of language, she urges to counter the threat of a catastrophic oblivion with new, sustainable forms (see Mulsow and Assmann 2006, 131–132).

In *The Greater Hope*'s fourth chapter, titled "In the Service of a Foreign Power" ("Im Dienst einer fremden Macht"), the demand for a postdiluvian language renewal is rendered in concrete images. In the garret of their former school, whose lower floors are already occupied by the *Wehrmacht*, the Jewish children secretly study English, the language of their desired countries of emigration. On their way to school, a *Hitlerjunge* (a male member of the Hitler Youth) in uniform finds the vocabulary book that little Herbert has lost through a hole in his bag:

> In the middle of the street, a school exercise book was lying open on the grey roadway, an English vocabulary book. A child must have lost it, the wind from the approaching storm was turning the pages. When the first raindrop fell, it fell on the red line. And the red line in the middle of the page overflowed the banks. Horrified, the meaning fled from the words to both sides and called out for a ferryman: Transl… Transport me!

> But the red line swelled and it became clear that it was the colour of blood. The meaning had always been in danger, but now it was threatened with drowning, and the words remained like little abandoned houses standing straight and stiff and meaningless on both sides of the red river. The rain fell in streams, but still the meaning wandered on the banks, calling out, and already the flood had risen to half its height. Transl… Transport me![4]

In this quote, the menacing flood reaches the level of the single word. Like in the biblical flood, the question here, too, is that of rescue from the rising waters and of the concomitant danger that meaning gets lost. Aichinger's productive critique of language through translation (Ratmann 2001, 51) is represented in the novel by the efforts of the little boy who has lost his book, learning English in order to "unlearn German," or "to learn it anew" (75; i.o. "das Deutsche [zu] verlernen" and "es neu zu erlernen, wie ein Fremder eine fremde Sprache lernt," Aichinger [1948] 1991, 90).

Narrative Riverbed, Run Dry

Aichinger's poetological writings from the 1950s to the 1970s directly connect to the novel's scenarios of flooding, but increasingly turn from the imagery of flowing language to dried, crystalline stains—from the narrative flow of the long novel form to single, isolatable, and autonomous prose miniatures. The short prose text "Das Erzählen in dieser Zeit" (1952, literally "Narrative in This Time") reflects on the conditions under which meaning, 'stiffened' during the National Socialist era (cf. the preceding quote), could return to narration. Even after Auschwitz, Aichinger insists, there has to be narrative, but such narrative is only thinkable in the form of a stream dashing to its own end in the sea; thus, paradoxically, all narrative begins at sea, at the point of death, at the end: "All rivers urge

[4] "In der Mitte der Gasse lag auf dem grauen Pflaster ein offenes Schulheft, ein Vokabelheft für Englisch. Ein Kind mußte es verloren haben, Sturm blätterte es auf. Als der erste Tropfen fiel, fiel er auf den roten Strich. Und der rote Strich in der Mitte des Blattes trat über die Ufer. Entsetzt floh der Sinn aus den Worten zu seinen beiden Seiten und rief nach seinem Fährmann: Übersetz mich, übersetz mich! Doch der rote Strich schwoll und schwoll und es wurde klar, daß er die Farbe des Blutes hatte. Der Sinn war immer schon in Gefahr gewesen, nun aber drohte er zu ertrinken, und die Worte blieben wie kleine verlassene Häuser steil und steif und sinnlos zu beiden Seiten des roten Flusses. Es regnete in Strömen, und noch immer irrte der Sinn rufend an den Ufern. Schon stieg die Flut bis zu seiner Mitte. Übersetz mich, übersetz mich!" i.o. (Aichinger [1948] 1991, 67).

toward the sea … . Form has never developed from a feeling of safety, but always in the face of the end" ("Alle Flüsse drängen zum Meer … . Form ist nie aus dem Gefühl der Sicherheit entstanden, sondern immer im Angesicht des Endes," Aichinger [1952] 1991, 10).

The short prose piece "Meine Sprache und ich" (1968, literally "my language and I") revolves around a dispute between an "I" and her*his language, between the concrete message and the system of signification. The I, the individual part of human discourse, aims at encouraging language into concrete articulations, but as a system, language does not make any statements. Language remains calm, prefers to stay close to the sea, and rivets its gaze on it, "always on the same spot" ("immer auf dieselbe Stelle"), which seems to be "the opposite of certain images" ("das Gegenteil gewisser Bilder," Aichinger [1978] 1991, 200). From the original chaos in *Genesis,* the sea, at which Aichinger's work directs its hope for language renewal, has emerged as well-arrayed water, but at the same time remains an untameable element, deprived of sublime emotions, entirely imageless and not to be contained by language.[5]

The Sea: A Radio Play

Joseph Conrad "did not coincidentally come from familiarity with the sea to familiarity with words" ("nicht umsonst vom Umgang mit der See zum Umgang mit den Wörtern gekommen ist," Aichinger 2005, 183), Aichinger writes in the short text "'Nur zusehen—ohne ein Laut.' Joseph Conrad" (1978) about how Conrad has taught her to "leave herself out of the game" ("selbst aus dem Spiel [zu] lassen") when writing, to "demand silence from the narrative world" ("Erzählwelt Schweigen ab[zu]fordern," Aichinger [1978] 1991a, 91). Here, the sea semantically drains language and puts it into a condition without paradigm or sign, which eventually signifies silence: "With Joseph Conrad in one's luggage" ("Mit Joseph Conrad im Reisegepäck"), Aichinger concludes in *Unglaubwürdige Reisen* (literally "Incredible Journeys"), "it would have been easily possible to cross the Indian Ocean" ("wäre es leicht möglich gewesen, auch den indischen Ozean zu überqueren," 2005, 89). For Ernst Schnabel,[6] who in

[5] On this cultural history of the sea, see the essay collections edited by Böhme (1988) and by Brandstädter and Jeorgakopulos (2004).

[6] The then-director general of the *Nordwestdeutsche Rundfunk* in Hamburg went "to sea at age seventeen" ("mit siebzehn Jahren zur See," Aichinger 2001, 53).

his autobiographical novel *Schiffe und Sterne* (1943, literally "Ships and Stars") likewise renders the sea the starting point of new narratives, every passing ship is in itself a place out of time ("außer der Zeit," Schnabel 1943, 188), and jumping from coast to coast results in an endless series of always new, isolated encounters. What is remarkable about Schnabel's writing style, however—as Aichinger puts it in her essay "Die Sicht der Entfremdung. Über Berichte und Geschichten von Ernst Schnabel" (1954; literally "The View of Alienation. On Reports and Stories by Ernst Schnabel")—is that it discards old models of description and speaks in a new voice that requires listening ("Horchen," 2001, 51).

Aichinger's own radio plays of the 1960s and 1970s require attentive listening to the words' sounds, particularly when the words spoken from the mainland toward the sea break with everyday habits and begin to become unfamiliar. The radio play *Gare maritime*, directed by Gert Westphal (ORF/Austrian Broadcasting Corporation) in 1974 and by Ilse Aichinger herself in 1977 (SWF/WDR) is set in a big, empty "maritime station," in which the striated network of routes coming from the mainland ends and the passengers gather to leave a territorially occupied space, and continue the journey on the open, hard-to-occupy surface of the sea (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987):

> Gare Maritime means sea station, actually a paradoxical word and at the same time an exact technical term for train stations that receive those passengers who are coming from the sea or want to embark on the sea, connect to the sea actually, if one could say this: change for/connect to the sea.[7]

In the connecting station, only the voices of three characters can be heard, and in the beginning it sounds as if one had to listen in on "parts of a stranger's conversation" ("Teile eines fremden Gesprächs," Aichinger [1974] 1991, 263). The preface states that this kind of irritation will not disappear completely during the play, as much will remain unclear—the passengers, after all, would like to "change for the sea" (263), to a space of sound and fantasy that extends beyond habitual language. The few comprehensible elements of the play can be compared with the first pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that one cannot yet connect. Only while listening, an

[7] "Gare Maritime heißt Seebahnhof, eigentlich ein paradoxes Wort und zugleich eine exakte technische Bezeichnung für Bahnhöfe, die diejenigen Passagiere aufnehmen, die von der See kommen oder auf See wollen, umsteigen wollen eigentlich, wenn man das sagen könnte: auf die See umsteigen" i.o. (Aichinger 1991, 263).

image of heretic seafarers is gradually assembled: They yearn to depart, try everything to become useless and unrecognizable in their prior contexts, and renounce all prior allegiances for a chance at renewal.

The experimental radio play *Nachmittag in Ostende* of 1969 (NDR/SWF) likewise brings together characters and events on the coast, which is said to be "famous for situation briefings" ("für Lagebesprechungen berühmt," Aichinger [1969] 1991, 131).[8] Nothing in this radio play, however, clarifies the situation. The character names—Jason, Simplizius, Beatrice and Louisa—constitute single pieces in an intertextual puzzle, in which "paper places" ("papierene Orte," Aichinger 1991, 131) such as the sea resorts Kolberg, Torquay, and Ostend blur with film titles and images. Ostend references both the Belgian city and the painting *Namiddag in Oostende* (1881) by Belgian expressionist James Ensor.[9] Torquay refers to a coastal town in the South of England, an important site for the preparation of the allied invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944. The Baltic sea resort Kolberg (Kołobrzeg), destroyed in 1945, is introduced as a place of encounter and simultaneously references the autobiographical place of memory of Joachim Nettelbeck (1821/1823), author-sailor and adversary to Napoleon, Joachim, as well as the title of a National Socialist perseverance propaganda film of 1945, directed by Veit Harlan.

All names and references are thus imaginatively entered into a strategy of blurring: In the passages presenting dialogue, manifold suggestions for interpreting names, places, and genres are constantly called into play and produce a veritable flooding of meaning. The plurality of possibilities and the thus resulting non-sense make it impossible to allocate a "permanent spot" ("ständige Stelle," Aichinger [1969] 1991, 119) to the spoken word at any point in the dialogue. Even Simplizius, a character "like pencil dust" ("bleistiftstaubige"), who is associated with the mainland and originally had nothing to do "with waves, nothing at all with the sea" ("nichts mit Wellengang, gar nichts mit der See," 113), increasingly appears in this area when the sea is rough; he tries to pull Jason, the mariner, toward him; he tries to take a boat, and, like him, to become involved in ship

[8] On the use of the word "Lagebesprechung" (situation briefing): seven years before the first broadcast of the radio play in 1962, the Deutsche Verlagsanstalt Stuttgart published the 970-page edition of *Hitlers Lagebesprechungen: Die Protokollfragmente seiner militärischen Konferenzen 1942–1945*, ed. Helmut Heiber.

[9] James Ensor, "Namiddag in Oostende" (lit. "Afternoon in Ostend"), 1881. Oil on canvas, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerpen, Belgium, IN 1852.

departures and arrivals, as even for the likes of him it is "easier to move on water than in … dried-up tracks" ("leichter, sich auf Wasser zu bewegen als auf … eingetrockneten Fahrspuren," 120). Thus taking a boat and pushing oneself off the mainland becomes a marker for a poetic method of the blurring and flooding of meaning, which can be described, with Roland Barthes, as "annulation-by-addition" (1989, 76). Barthes proceeds from the insight that "[s]peech is irreversible … . What has been said cannot be unsaid, *except by adding to it* … . In speaking, I can never erase, annul; all I can do is … speak some more" (76). Historical burdens of signification of language cannot be deleted or corrected other than in this very "bizarre form of addition" (76).

The radio play for eight voices *Auckland*, directed by Heinz Hostnik and first aired in 1970 (NDR), vocalizes the signs of linguistic dysfunctionality. Sailors returning from the sea are trying, through "helpless, stammering monologues" ("hilflose[n], stammelnde[n] Monologen"), to report a "comparatively simple thing: at sea, a flag curled up and was rolled out again" ("verhältnismäßig einfache Sache zu berichten: daß sich auf See eine Flagge eindrehte und wieder ausgedreht wurde," Aichinger [1970] 1991, 215). Despite repeated attempts at dialogue, the play does not succeed to communicate the event in an appropriate form. It seems "as if the report cancelled out the event, language as a means of communication evades it" ("als ob der Bericht das Ereignis lösche, die Sprache als Mittel der Mitteilung entzieht sich ihm," 215). The sailors help themselves by distorting the chronology of the narrative and continually start anew. A missionary undertakes "fussy attempts … to restore old chronological practices" ("betuliche Versuche, … die alten chronologischen Praktiken wiederherzustellen," 216), but because of the repeated narration doubts arise: not just with regard to the truthfulness of history, but also concerning the possibility of reporting itself.

When William Thackeray becomes recognizable as a historically distant signaler, the report about the unattainability of the flag, piece of cloth and sign of sovereignty, becomes a test case for the possibilities of contemporary realist narrative. An inexperienced sailor reports dilettantish, disproportional attempts to catch the flag with the grappling hook. But after a promising beginning, the cloth gets torn; it was "too entangled, curled up perhaps fourteen times" ("zu verwickelt, vielleicht vierzehnmal eingedreht," Aichinger [1970] 1991, 234). In the meantime, a second and actual sailor, who is used to having "water all around" ("ringsherum Wasser," 245) does not waste a thought on rolled-up flags; he follows the

motto "[f]ull speed ahead" (243) and can still remember he once had a skillful weaver aboard, before realist narrative had fallen out of fashion. His report makes clear that realist narrative at this point exists only in memories of bygone childhood reading. After the weaver left the ship, the flag of realist narrative can no longer be taken off the pole without tearing it apart: the ship, and narrative with it, are sailing under a false flag.

Stain-Sediment

The prose miniature *Flecken* (1975, literally "Stains") finally succeeds in anchoring the resistant signs of liquidity in the text on the mainland—in the form of stains left by dehydration. The mobile, imageless sea is thus given the solidity on which signs depend in writing in the form of a stain-sediment. For, "properly speaking, there cannot be liquid words": "Articulations can be as smooth as one wishes … . In order for language to function, signs must be isolable one from the other" (Bois 1997, 124): "Once they were wet" ("Einmal waren sie naß"), Aichinger writes about the stains, but now they are characterized by a "past wetness" ("gewesene Nässe") and "limited by the condition of dryness" ("durch den Zustand der Trockenheit begrenzt," Aichinger [1975] 1991, 17).

The text opens: "Now we have stains on our chairs. It looks as if someone had spilled sugared milk on them. Those stains are to be considered" ("Wir haben jetzt Flecken auf unseren Sesseln. Es sieht aus, als hätte jemand gezuckerte Milch darüber geschüttet. Diese Flecken sind zu bedenken," Aichinger [1975] 1991, 15). The stains can be read as figures of thought regarding an event that one day simply happened. Their presence causes an irritating flood of inquiries—into who is responsible, at what point in time, to which consequences. But the questions remain unanswered, the stains simply do not make sense. Despite their meaninglessness and indeterminacy, they do not remain without function. As soon as they appear in the sphere of written signs, they interrupt the unwavering closure of gaps performed by signs, which—thus Aichinger—cannot really be crossed, not even by death and deportation.[10] The stains disturb the habitual reading direction and change meaning: "Another one, one

[10] Death and deportation appear rather abruptly in the text. Aichinger's aesthetics of allusion thus creates a relationship between the text's dedication to Rudolf Hirsch, Jewish publisher and manager of the publication house Fischer, who went underground during the Nazi era, and the stain-stigmata.

carelessly says, and pushes the rows together. But these stains change the vertical. The hierarchy starts to falter" ("Wieder einer, sagt man leichtfertig und schiebt die Reihen zusammen. Aber diese Flecken verändern die Vertikale. Die Hierarchie beginnt zu schwanken," Aichinger [1975] 1991, 16).

In contrast to the horizontal constitution of meaning, where gaps are closed time and again, the stains take the reading onto the track of the repressed, that which has escaped writing (Liska 2009, 203-204). They subvert the familiar order of signification, appear as haphazard, impure, unintelligible, and, due to their lack of determinacy, their form- and colorlessness, as feeble, ridiculous, and inconsolable. Because of their irreducible strangeness, the stains remain an apparition one can only approach by way of questions. They have to be admitted into the hierarchy of the archive in their "unbearable" ("unerträgliche") form, which "cannot be created through words" ("in Worten nicht bildbar"). "Maybe it helps" ("Vielleicht hilft es"), Aichinger writes, "to look at them. To see them as the center of explanations that never come" ("sie zu betrachten. Sie als das Zentrum der Erklärungen anzusehen, die nicht kommen," [1975] 1991, 15–16).

Nothing else is said about the quality of the stains in the text except that the formerly wet, now dried sediment looks "as if someone had poured sugared milk on them" ("als hätte jemand gezuckerte Milch darüber geschüttet," Aichinger [1975] 1991, 15). Such dried sediments are called marine and fluvial facies in geomorphology (Kraft 2005, 757); the memory of the deposits is inscribed in its surface appearance. Aichinger repeatedly emphasizes that these sediments are made of sugared milk, a crystalline, transparent substance of which "not nothing" ("nicht nichts") remains:

> Sugared milk…. But the stains, the sugared milk stains … . Incomparable to wild, young rivers … . But milk, to which was added, in small amounts, what does not belong … . Milk stains, and sugared ones at that, this makes self-abandonment worthwhile. This is where one saves up. Better yet: this is where something is being saved up…. Not nothing remains.[11]

[11] "Gezuckerte Milch. … Aber die Flecken, die gezuckerten Milchflecken? … In nichts den wilden, jungen Flüssen vergleichbar…. Aber Milch, zu der noch kam, was nicht dazugehört, und das in einem geringfügigen Maß? … Milchflecken und dazu noch gezuckert, da beginnt sich die Selbstaufgabe zu lohnen. Da spart man ein. Besser: da wird eingespart. ... Da bleibt nicht nichts" i.o. (Aichinger [1975] 1991, 15–17).

Within Aichinger's literary cosmos, milk is connected with childhood memories of her deported grandmother and the open sea of linguistic possibilities. In the radio play *Nachmittag in Ostende*, Simplizius and Jason practice the art of milking sea cows (Aichinger [1969] 1991, 120). In his book *La Mer* (1861, Engl. *The Sea*), Jules Michelet (see also this volume's introduction) talks about the milky sea as a viscous (114) ur-liquid made of innumerable suspended particles—remains of death that are returned to life. The natural law of the sea renders life in continuous transformation between the terminal stage and the starting point of quickly developing new organisms and still animate particles that "have not had time to die" (117). Following Michelet, every single cautious drop contains the first stage of a body that aims at organizing itself: If you take one drop from the sea, it will, in all its transformations, reveal the history of the universe (119)—given that we "[be] patient, and observe" (119), "wait … and watch" ("warten … und schauen zu," 94).

Michelet's understanding of water drops as "life's first-born" (1861, 119) and Aichinger's figure of thought of the stain as the center of explanations that never arrive anywhere, touch upon each other where single drops and stains contain the seeds of potential life and, hence, potential narratives. Under the microscope, Michelet observes fine, modest threads in the water, which he assumes to contain the natural history or matrix of all future life at sea and on land (119). In their immobilized form, Aichinger's stains carry the memory of their "past wetness" ("gewesene Nässe") and remind the reader that in the future, they will not be able to form a traditional narrative anymore: "comparable," it is stated, "to the wild, young rivers" ("den wilden, jungen Flüssen vergleichbar," Aichinger [1975] 1991, 17). The stains disturb and will not go away; the memory of the National Socialist era is sedimented in them; they mark the starting and end points of writing about something that has had no time to die and is denied the chance to organize itself into a vivid narrative.

"Writing the sea" is what Michel de Certeau calls a method of "library navigation" (1986, 138) in nineteenth-century literature: writing fiction on the basis of (other) fictions of travel (139). This method, which is not "governed by the search for an origin, nature or truth that would be there *before* and *behind* the documents" (139) but works by amassing a variety of sources, aims at filling the gaps in oceanic geography with the names of the 'great' navigators and to semanticize the voids of the universe (129; 139). In this sense, seafaring history, in order to saturate the oceans with meaning, habitually recounts an act of name-giving, which, on the

imaginary blank slate of the Pacific, slowly generates meaning in order to saturate the oceans. This act of nautical colonization turns the sea into a map that proclaims allegiances, in order to wrest them from the indeterminacy of the sea.

Aichinger's oeuvre works in the opposite direction, decolonizing such significations and denouncing historical appropriations and allegiances. The passengers who want to "change for the sea" gather on the margins and shorelines in order to turn the inconvenient stain of repressed knowledge into a systematic component of language. At other points in Aichinger's work, the removal from the habitual system of signification becomes thematic as a writing of stains and blanks. Remembering her sister's emigration to England in 1938 with a *Kindertransport* (children's transport), *Aus der Geschichte der Trennungen* (2002) reflects on the writing of gaps: "How does a gap that has yawned for decades become constructive—without looking for connections and recoveries that are no longer possible?" ("Wie wird die Lücke, die jahrzehntelang klafft, konstruktiv, ohne Querverbindungen und Rettungen zu suchen, die nicht mehr möglich sind?" Aichinger 2005, 68). In writings on author Ernst Schnabel, the stains turn into significant signs of discontinuity in the narrative flow—into an "identification of the real" ("Ausweis des Wirklichen"), whose "main characteristic [is that] it throws us out of habit, that it becomes uncomfortable—this regression into the negative out of which the real image comes" ("wesentliches Merkmal [es ist], daß es uns aus der Gewöhnung wirft, daß es uns unbequem wird—diese Rückentwicklung zum Negativ, aus dem das wirkliche Bild kommt," Aichinger 2001, 55).

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CHAPTER 10

"Ocean People": Maritime (Im)Mobilities in the Chinese American Imaginary

Nicole Poppenhagen

"Ocean people are different from land people," claims the narrator of Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*. The narrator continues by suggesting that the ocean, personified and irresistible, represents an important aspect in the lives of those dwelling on its shores:

> The ocean never stops saying and asking into ears, which don't sleep like eyes. Those who live by the sea examine the driftwood and glass balls that float from foreign ships. They let scores of invisible imps loose out of found bottles. In a scoop of salt water, they revive the dead blobs that have been beached in storms and tides: fins, whiskers, and gills unfold; mouths, eyes, and colors bloom and spread. Sometimes ocean people are given to understand the newness and oldness of the world; then all morning they try to keep that boundless joy like a little sun inside their chests. The ocean also makes its people know immensity. They wonder what continents contain the ocean on its other side, what people live there. ([1980] 1989, 90)

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In this passage, those who live near the ocean are influenced by the material qualities of the oceanic space: the sounds, the natural movement of the sea, the items washed ashore, and the ocean's vastness ultimately shape the individuals' identities as "ocean people." Simultaneously, the narrator's description of the ocean echoes many of the prevalent features commonly associated with the sea: It is described as constantly changing and used as a familiar metaphor for fluidity, open-mindedness, curiosity, flexibility, infinity, and, as Kingston's narrator ultimately points out, mobility (91).

Scholars from various disciplines explain that mobility is often regarded as a distinctive if not positive factor in our modern, globalized world. In his study *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*, geographer Tim Cresswell claims that "mobility bears a number of meanings that circulate widely in the modern Western world. Mobility as progress, as freedom, as opportunity, and as modernity, sit side by side with mobility as shiftlessness, as deviance, and as resistance" (2006, 1–2). Caren Kaplan has used the expression "romantic reading of mobility" to describe this approach in scholarship (qtd. in Sheller and Urry 2006, 211). In recent years, scholars studying mobility and migration have become increasingly aware of the pitfalls of these romanticized perspectives in their respective fields. Sociologist Mimi Sheller therefore advocates that "[c]ritical mobilities research instead interrogates who and what is demobilized and remobilized across many different scales, and in what situations mobility or immobility might be desired options, coerced, or paradoxically interconnected" (2011, 2). In a (post)colonial, globalized world, mobility and migration must also be understood in terms of power relations and material conditions—and cannot be studied without considering the countless absences of and restrictions on mobility.[1]

The ocean, itself continuously in flux and an actual route for migration, is often "used to signal a world of mobilities, betweenness, instabilities, and becomings" and is regarded as "a signifier for a world of shifting, fragmented identities, mobilities and connections" in oceanic studies scholarship (Steinberg 2013, 156, 158; see also Blum 2010). This metaphorical reading of the ocean might not only risk neglecting the

[1] See also Noel B. Salazar's discussion of mobility in the field of anthropology and his criticism of the "general celebration and romanticization" of movement (2014, 59), as well as Anne-Marie Fortier's call for "a reconsideration of the fluidity, accessibility and desirability of the assumed mobile world, as well as the conditions under which people are 'mobile' (or not)" (qtd. in Salazar 2014, 65).

negative aspects of mobility but often also ignore the material circumstances of the ocean and oceanic mobility. Criticizing this mono-dimensional approach, Hester Blum calls for "a practice of oceanic studies that is attentive to the material conditions and praxis of the maritime world, one that draws from the epistemological structures provided by the lives and writings of those for whom the sea was simultaneously workplace, home, passage, penitentiary and promise" (Blum 2010, 670).

Understanding the ocean in both metaphorical and material terms as Kingston's use of "ocean people" ultimately suggests, this article examines the ambiguous relationships between time and space, mobility and immobility, sea and land and the way they are represented in Chinese American literature. I focus on two oceanic tropes, the ship voyage and the island, in texts that represent the effects of Chinese exclusion laws on Chinese (American) maritime (im)mobilities. First, I explore the accounts of ship voyages across the ocean in two memoir-like family narratives, Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* (1980) and Pam Chun's *The Money Dragon* (2002). Both texts engage with the conditions that the authors' families faced on board the ships that brought them to the continental United States and the territory of Hawai'i respectively. Second, my analysis will focus on the description of Ellis Island and, especially, Angel Island, the main immigration centers for Chinese migrants arriving in the United States. Here, I will focus on the early twentieth-century poetry found on the walls of the immigration centers as well as Genny Lim's play *Paper Angels* (1978) that was inspired by Angel Island poetry, and which explores the Chinese experience on the island in more depth.[2] As these texts depict encounters on ships and islands, the representations of maritime (im)mobilities and the significant though, at times, ambiguous role of the ocean define the Chinese American experience during the era of Chinese exclusion.

[2] My essay follows the traditional itinerary of Chinese migrants: The first part of my analysis focuses on depictions of the ship voyage before I examine the representations of their island experiences in the second part of this essay. The two more recent texts by Maxine Hong Kingston and Pam Chun pay more attention to the role of the sea passage in the Chinese American experience and suggest that the reach of the Chinese exclusion laws and the anti-Chinese policies extended far beyond US national territory and was indeed transoceanic in scope. This also reflects the transnational perspective of these two memoir-like family narratives that explore the authors' family histories as intricately linked with the US past but not necessarily bound by US-American national borders.

Crossing Oceans: Chinese (American) Mobility in the Pacific and Beyond

In US-American culture, mobility on both the individual and national level is highly valued and closely interconnected. Its role remains pertinent to any understanding of US-American culture: "Throughout U.S.-American cultural history, geographical and social mobility—oftentimes seen as interdependent—have been of major significance for the narratives of nation-building and American subject formation" (Paul, Ganser, and Gerund 2012, 12; see also Campbell 2001, 285). Transatlantic crossings were the starting point for the British colonial project, and transatlantic migration and exchange have defined the American Republic from its very beginnings. However, this focus often neglects the role of transpacific mobility and migration as scholars of transpacific studies have shown (e.g., Nguyen and Hoskins 2014). Not only did American interests extend across the Pacific, but Asians and Pacific Islanders navigated and shaped the Pacific long before the advent of European and later American imperial forces (see McKeown 2014). From the sixteenth century onward, the Chinese were particularly active in transpacific endeavors: People of Chinese descent were active agents in commerce; they were key players in the history of Spanish Manila (today's Philippines) and in cities in Southeast Asia (Reid 2008, xxi–xxiv). In the nineteenth century, the free cities of Singapore and Hong Kong as well as Malaysia, Indonesia, but also Peru were among the destinations of an increasing number of Chinese migrants (xxv). Chinese migrants cultivated sugar in Hawai'i (Nordyke and Lee 1989, 197) and became an important source of labor in the United States and elsewhere in the Americas, including the Caribbean islands. While many Chinese came to the United States to find work building the transcontinental railroad, others participated in the California Gold Rush. The often dire situation in their homeland was a further incentive for many Chinese to seek opportunities abroad.[3]

[3] For an overview of the history of the Chinese in the Pacific see Anthony Reid's edited volume *The Chinese Diaspora in the Pacific* (2008), particularly Reid's introduction and Adam McKeown's essay "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842–1949" in the same volume. McKeown's work on *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900–1936* (2001) and Elizabeth Sinn's *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong* (2013) present more focused accounts of the history of the Chinese role in the Pacific. McKeown's essay also elaborates on the role of push factors such as "the midcentury rebellions and worsening land-man ratios" as well economic circumstances, at times specific to certain regions in China (2008, 8–10). While many of the migrants from China had their origins in the region of Canton, this article considers the representation of the experiences of Cantonese immigrants as part of the larger Chinese American imaginary.

While many literary representations and scholarly analyses are concerned with these immigrants' integration in US society as well as their contribution to the development of the US nation-state, there has been a recent surge of interest in the role of Chinese migrants in transnational histories. In particular, the field of transpacific studies reflects and advocates this new perspective (e.g., Ngyuen and Hoskins 2014; Kurashige 2017; Wang and Cho 2017). At the same time, a growing body of scholarly literature in Asian American studies turns toward the Atlantic and focuses on the Caribbean histories of Chinese migrants.[4] Yet, while the Pacific and Atlantic crossings of Chinese migrants inform these works, Asian American studies has shown little interest in the role of the ocean—in its material and metaphorical qualities—in Chinese American texts and, in general, few scholars have focused on what Elizabeth DeLoughrey calls "the *aquatic* aspects of transoceanic diaspora" (2007, 60). Examining Atlantic and Pacific experiences alongside each other, this essay highlights the overall significance of the ocean—and the maritime tropes of ships and islands—in Chinese American literature.[5]

Ship Voyages

The ship has been of central significance in (trans)Atlantic studies, especially in relation to and as a symbol of the trauma experienced by enslaved Africans during the Middle Passage of the transatlantic slave trade. Paul Gilroy identified the chronotope of the slave ship as the "central organizing symbol" of the Black Atlantic (1993, 4). The ship voyage, specifically in its relation to time and space, also plays an important role in Chinese American history and culture.[6] The Chinese participated not only in transpacific commerce, but they also crossed the Pacific (and the Atlantic) as

[4] For research on the Chinese in the Caribbean, see, among others, Walton Look Lai and Tan Chee-Beng's *The Chinese in Latin America and the Caribbean* (2010) or Lisa Yun's *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African Slaves in Cuba* (2008).

[5] Given the fact that most Chinese migrants had to cross the Pacific to reach their destination, most of the representations analyzed here reflect this geographic precondition and mainly relate transpacific experiences. Yet, it remains indicative of the impact of Chinese exclusion that these geographic differences play little role in their effect on the representation of maritime (im)mobilities.

[6] For more on the chronotope of the slave ship, especially with regard to time and space, see DeLoughrey's discussion of the role of the slave ship in the first chapter "Middle Passages: Modernity and Creolization" of *Routes and Roots* (2007) as well as Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016).

laborers and coolies (see McKeown 2014, 151).[7] The popular designation "FOB" or "fresh off the boat" for first-generation Chinese Americans might suggest that the maritime voyage is still regarded as the imaginary starting point of the Chinese American experience for Chinese immigrants.[8] The analysis of these voyages further reveals the traumatizing effects caused by exclusion laws and practices and sheds light on how the subsequent restriction of maritime mobility affects the characterization of the ocean in the Chinese American imaginary.

In *China Men*, what John Eperjesi has described as the "romanticized, ahistorical vision of 'ocean people'" in his analysis of Kingston's text, is sharply contradicted by the actual material conditions the protagonists face during transpacific migration (2005, 145). Eperjesi regards the notion of "ocean people" as a vision that provides "momentary relief" from the actual situation, both on and off board, that the great-grandfather, Bak Goong, has to endure (146).[9] The father's presumed transoceanic crossing, depicted early in *China Men*, is probably the best-known representation of a ship voyage in Chinese American literature and, indeed, casts the oceanic experience in a very different light. When she chronicles the lives of her male relatives, Kingston, who admits that she does not know the details of her father BaBa's life, blurs the boundaries of fact and fiction and relates multiple versions of his immigrant tale. The first version exemplifies a "legal trip from Cuba to New York" ([1980] 1989, 48). Shortly afterwards, the narrator, uncertain of the actual circumstances, proposes an

[7] Although Judith Misrahi-Barak has pointed out that Patricia Powell, a writer of Jamaican descent, describes the sea voyage of Chinese migrants to the Caribbean in terms that recall the transatlantic slave trade (see Misrahi-Barak 2012), I do not want to insinuate that depictions of ship voyages in Chinese American representations of transpacific mobility and transnational migration can be compared to the repercussions of the Middle Passage in the Atlantic—in particular with respect to the traumatic impact on Black collective memory.

[8] The term is mostly employed to distinguish between American-born Chinese ('ABCs') and new immigrants. It is usually understood as a derogatory term, and has been used extensively to designate newly arrived immigrants in relation to migration from Asia after 1965, and to describe styles of speaking and behaving (see Hall-Lew 2014, 62 and Shalini Shankar 2008, 270). Eddie Huang's 2013 memoir *Fresh off the Boat* and the eponymous TV series (2015–2020) based on the memoir reflect and reinforce the currency of this term.

[9] Eperjesi further suggests that Kingston's *China Men* presents the "myth of a founding ocean people, with [a] celebratory shading of diaspora" which is, however, contrasted and complicated by the characters' experiences of separation, exploitation, and racialization (2005, 147; 150–152).

alternative, much more disturbing narrative: "I think this is the journey you don't tell me: The father's friends nailed him inside a crate with no conspicuous air holes. Light leaked through the slats that he himself had fitted together, and the bright streaks jumped and winked as the friends hammered the lid shut above his head" (49). While the time frame and the exact political details are not described in the chapter "The Father from China," this voyage clearly stands in contrast to the legal journey depicted in the preceding passage, and alludes to the restraints on Chinese immigration to the United States under the Chinese exclusion laws. What follows in the account of BaBa's sea passage describes not only these repercussions but also challenges widespread assumptions of the ocean as promising freedom, mobility, and non-territoriality, thereby complicating and questioning the narrator's positive description of the ocean and "ocean people."

Indeed, the ocean, as experienced while enclosed in a box aboard a ship, is portrayed in an ambivalent light; the sea journey becomes a deeply traumatic event: "[T]he father's body is converted into a transportable body-box of limbs arranged to fit the parameters of the hiding space" (Gsoels-Lorensen 2010, 106), a fragmentation, as Jutta Gsoels-Lorensen observes, that does not end with the journey but is echoed later in the father's life (107; 109): anxious and under pressure, the father, albeit safe in his home, "checked his limbs" in what could be understood as a moment of depersonalization (Kingston [1980] 1989, 251). The disruption of both his body image and his perception of linear time dominates the narrative of the sea journey: "Because of fear, he did not eat nor did he feel hungry. His bowels felt loose and bladder full, but he squeezed shut ass and sphincter against using the chamber pot. He slept and woke and slept again and time seemed long and forever" (50). As he loses his sense of time, "[v]arious futures ran through his mind" (49), and his temporal distress becomes closely connected to spatial disorientation:

> Then he felt himself being lifted as in a palanquin and carried to a darker place. Nothing happened for hours so that he began to lose his bearings—whether or not he was in a deep part of the ship where horns and anchor chains could not be heard, whether or not there had already been a pulling away from land, a plunging into the ocean and this was steady speed. (49)

He does not know where he is on board the ship nor does he have an idea where the ship is located geographically. The most threatening aspect of his disorientation is the actual possibility that he might have fallen overboard: “He wanted to look out and see if his box had dropped overboard and was floating atop water, a transparency that ought not to be able to bear weight; he could have been immersed and this wooden air bubble hanging at a middle depth, or falling through the whale waters” (50). Remembering the tale of an underwater city in the Yellow River, BaBa further considers the dangers lurking in the water as he wonders “what larger oceanic unknown—tortoises twenty feet across, open-mouthed fish like the marine monster that swallowed the sutras—swam alongside or beneath him. What eels, sharks, jellies, rays glided a board’s-width away?” (50). The description of the sea and life under water, as “whale waters,” a habitat populated by and intended for unfamiliar, beast-like creatures rather than humans, suggests that the ocean constitutes a possibly life-threatening environment, essentially hostile to humans in its material characteristics.

Yet, these tales also become a source of hope when BaBa enters the realm of the mythical, which suggests agency on the part of the creatures inhabiting rivers and oceans and a larger connection between humans and non-humans in and through the element of water: “He must not be afraid; it was sea turtles and water lizards that had formed a bridge for King Mu of Chou” (50). Indeed, the continuous movements of the ocean and the sounds of the waves become a source of imagination for the confined father: “Rocking and dozing, he felt the ocean’s variety—the peaked waves that must have looked like the pines; the rolling waves, round like shrubs, the occasional icy mountain; and for stretches, lulling grasslands” (50). When he hears voices, they “must have been the sounds of the ocean given sense by his memory.” The ocean becomes personified, “invent[ing] words too” (51). BaBa “hear[s] a new language, which might have been English, the water’s many tongues speaking and speaking. Though he could not make out words, the whispers sounded personal, intimate, talking him over, sometimes disapproving, sometimes in praise of his bravery” (51). The mythical and metaphorical qualities of the “open sea” (49), described as a source of hope for the father, are reflected in the narrator’s vision of “ocean people” some chapters later; yet, they remain in stark contrast to the actual material conditions of transoceanic mobility that are produced by the effects of Chinese exclusion and the existential dangers

inherent in sea travel that command the need for hope in the first place.[10] In this context, *China Men*'s overall style and structure, negotiating oral and written modes, storytelling and historiography, might also be worthy of consideration. On the one hand, the chapter on BaBa's journey to the United States offers parallel versions of the story and thus manifests a fluidity that reflects the ocean, itself described as a storyteller; on the other hand, the chapter entitled "The Laws," inserted right in the middle of *China Men*, suggests that the historiographical, legal account inscribes the journey's material effects in the lives of those crossing the ocean.[11]

This tension between the imagined qualities of the ocean and the actual consequences of legal exclusion, but also of military conflict, heightened by the dangers of transoceanic migration also opens the first chapter of Pam Chun's *The Money Dragon*. Chronicling the family saga of Ah Leong, the author's great-grandfather and a Chinese Hawaiian businessman also known as the Money Dragon, the book's first chapter adopts the narrative perspective of Ah Leong's daughter-in-law Phoenix, who crosses the Pacific with her husband Tat-Tung and their daughter Fung-Tai in 1918 to join Ah Leong's family in Hawai'i. When Phoenix's father returns from Singapore, her desire for stories of mobility and adventure sets the tone of the first part of the book: "I wanted stories—of sword-wielding pirates roving the South China Straits, of emperors bewitched by tiger demons, of ghosts rising from graves on moonlit nights" (Chun 2002, 3). Her retrospective assessment some lines later foreshadows the traumatizing sea

[10] Kingston's text also includes a parodic version of Daniel Defoe's tale of Robinson Crusoe. The chapter entitled "The Adventures of Lo Bun Sun" sheds additional light on Kingston's treatment of the ocean and islands. For an extensive analysis of Kingston's parody, see Monica Chiu's article "Being Human in the Wor(l)d: Chinese Men and Maxine Hong Kingston's Reworking of 'Robinson Crusoe'"(Chiu 2000). See also Eperjesi's analysis of the respective chapter in *China Men* (2005, 149–150).

[11] *China Men* (1980) was published shortly after Kingston's well-known work *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* (1976). Given the fact that Maxine Hong Kingston was vehemently attacked by Chinese American critics such as Frank Chin (1991) for *Woman Warrior* and labeled a writer of "the fake," the notion of "ocean people," the representation of the ocean as storyteller, and the overall style and structure of *China Men* might be of further interest to this debate as they underline the tension between storytelling, memory, and historiography, while also questioning assumptions of stability and fluidity of identities. In this regard, an interesting analysis of *China Men*'s structure is provided in Jinqi Ling's chapter "Maxine Hong Kingston's Remapping of Asian American Historical Imagination in *China Men*" (1998, 110–138) although Ling's discussion does not examine the specific role of the ocean.

journey she is to experience herself: “How was I to know that ten years later, when I turned eighteen, L. Ah Leong would pluck me from a ship where my baby and I were imprisoned by Immigration?” (3).

In fact, social and military conflicts quickly call into question Phoenix’s initially romanticized notion of mobility: from the first moment the possibility of the family’s relocation to Hawai‘i is discussed, the deteriorating security in China, as “warlords terrorized the country” and “China plunged in to chaos” (11), defines the context of transoceanic migration. Driven out of the country by the unrest in China, the situation in the Pacific hardly promises relief: “Tat-Tung searched for passage to Hawai‘i. He found no ships. In 1918, America was at war” (14). As America’s involvement in the war makes the escape to Hawai‘i both more urgent and dangerous, Tat-Tung takes his wife to Hong Kong despite her pregnancy; soon thereafter they board a ship with their newborn. Their maritime mobility is motivated by the desire to escape from the dangers of war and violence.

The movement of the ocean itself, however, becomes an existential threat for the passengers, which is only increased in light of the challenges Phoenix faces as a young mother on a ship: “The ship heaved to and fro, sliding me and baby Fung-Tai from one side of the cabin to the other. When I bathed her, the wash pan slid across the floor. The bath water flew up with each sway of the ship. ‘Wait, wait’! I cried. My body was so light that I, too, rolled with each pitch of the ship. My milk stopped. Baby Fung-Tai wailed” (16). When Phoenix has to visit the bathroom, she has to leave her child alone “in the middle of the bed surrounded by pillows, and propped chairs along the side of the bed. One time, the ship rolled as if the seas meant to turn us upside down.” On her return, she finds “everything—chairs, pillows, bedding—strewn on the floor. I tore through the jumble. When I found my baby asleep in the middle of the bedspread, I collapsed, clutching her in my arms. My heart beat so loudly I thought it would explode through my chest and wake her. What have I gotten into? I cried” (16). As the ocean’s inherent movement threatens the child’s well-being aboard, the passage suggests that the specific challenges sea voyages present might also be determined by gender roles.

When Phoenix and her baby are threatened by immigration procedures upon the family’s arrival on the island of O‘ahu, her status as a woman becomes even more significant. Similar to Kingston’s depiction, the ship becomes a space that limits mobility and is perceived as a “prison” (18), a space of ultimate immobility, a situation that poses an increasing threat to

the child's very life: "There was more bewilderment when Immigration told Tat-Tung I could not be released for three weeks. They had too many Chinese to interview, check, and document. Three weeks! 'Your child and I will be dead by then,' I protested. I need a milk-nurse before the baby starves to death" (17). Despite her husband's assurance that she will soon be admitted to Hawai'i, Phoenix, left alone with her child aboard, is desperate since the life of her child is in danger: "If Tat-Tung were to return, he should come soon before the Immigration Office closed for the evening. Fung-Tai could not last another day without milk …" (18). The sea voyage and her confinement on the ship highlight her vulnerability as a woman and the significance of her physical attributes as a mother, thus implying that maritime (im)mobility might constitute a different experience for men and women.

While the ocean, despite its dangers, was a source of hope in Kingston's *China Men*, the sea, with its color and breeze, offers minimal relief in *The Money Dragon* and stands in stark contrast to Phoenix's actual condition aboard: she continues to "pace[] the deck" like an animal trapped in a cage. And while the Money Dragon has the power to rescue his daughter-in-law and grandson in time, the promises of the Pacific paradise, Hawai'i, though close, remain out of reach for many others searching for opportunities or fleeing from violence and poverty in China. The ship that signified hope and escape becomes a space of immobility and despair as the Chinese, singled out among the passengers and separated from their family members, have to wait for and undergo the scrutiny of immigration procedures:

> [E]ven those with legitimate papers were terrified of the Immigration interviews. The Inspectors separated husbands from wives, children from parents. After the standard questions of birth and names, they asked detailed questions about the number of rooms and doors and windows in one's house, the number of chickens and dogs a certain person owned, then fed wrong answers to other family members to confirm or deny. Any blunder was grounds for deportation. (19)

Both Kingston's detailed description of the father's sea voyage and Chun's account of her ancestors' plight on their transpacific journey voice ambivalence towards the ocean and maritime mobility in the Chinese American imaginary. Movement across and of the ocean promises opportunity but is juxtaposed with the actual limitation of human mobility caused not only

by the ocean itself, whose vastness and unpredictability often remains averse to human life, but, more importantly, by the restriction of mobility through US immigration laws.

Island Sojourns

In much of Western literature, islands are celebrated as places distinct from yet available for EuroAmerican culture. Imagined as untouched by civilization, remote, and isolated, islands are often regarded as a "new Eden, a sociopolitical utopia," places for communities, whose members live a life that remains free of the dictates of modern societies (DeLoughrey 2007, 8–9; 13). Despite the actual exploitation of island ecologies that transforms them into places of economic opportunity, exotic islands often become places of sexual adventure and represent what Rob Wilson has called, with respect to the Hawaiian islands, a "precapitalist *paradise*" (2000, 132). Isolation from the metropoles, endured by many Western protagonists in Robinsonades, is often experienced as a crisis but ultimately becomes an opportunity for the self-improvement of the colonial man who, after going through several stages of development, ultimately becomes the master of a colonized race that lives (or arrives) on the island (see DeLoughrey 2007, 12–14). Accordingly, island sojourns, to this day, often conjure the vision of pleasant stays on tropical islands, whose remoteness from the complexities of civilization allows for the rejuvenation of the Western visitor.

In contrast, islands that double as immigration stations, namely, Ellis Island and Angel Island, feature prominently in the Chinese American literary imaginary. The depictions of these islands in the texts I analyze in this essay are less romanticized and more ambiguous than those conventionally used in EuroAmerican representations. The two islands were chosen as locations for the detention centers because they allowed for the isolation and 'processing' of immigrants in the early twentieth century. Angel Island Immigration Station was opened in 1910; between 1910 and 1940, over 300,000 immigrants were detained on Angel Island, about a third of them Chinese (Lai, Lim, and Yung 2014a, 3). At the detention center, immigrants were segregated on the basis of gender, but also of race. The facilities reserved for whites were of higher quality, Caucasians received better treatment, and non-Asians had to undergo less severe medical examinations while those of Asian immigrants were considerably more extensive (14). The crowded and unhealthy conditions at the

detention center and the bad quality of the food contributed to a sense of humiliation and despair. Chinese immigrants had to face "longer and more exhaustive interrogations than … any other immigrant group on Angel Island"; they often stayed on the island for a significant amount of time (sometimes up to over a year), saw the second-highest rate of rejection and deportation, and some of these rejected applicants decided to end their lives rather than face deportation (15, 21–25).[12]

In 1970, a park ranger noticed writing on the walls of the former immigration station on Angel Island. Members of the Asian American community collected and translated the poems, discovered additional poetry that was copied by two immigrants during their detention at the station, and conducted oral history interviews (Yung and Lim 2014, viii). In 1980, Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung published 135 poems (both in their original and translated versions) in a first edition of the anthology *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940*. A few thousand Chinese immigrants were also detained at Ellis Island, mostly Chinese seamen who often arrived on the island after weeks at sea. When the Ellis Island immigration station was renovated in 1985, Chinese writing was similarly found on the walls (Lai, Lim, and Yung 2014b, 40). A number of these poems from Ellis Island—as well as some that were found at the immigration station at Victoria, British Columbia, Canada—were included in a second edition of the anthology. According to the editors of these poems, written on Ellis Island and Angel Island and depicting the experiences of Chinese immigrants there, constitute "the first literary body of work by Chinese [sic] in North America" (42).

Yunte Huang regards the Angel Island poems as expressions of resistance, as they "delineate historical trajectories that are in many ways unaccountable in canonical discourses" (2008, 102). Examining them "as examples of *tibishi* (poetry inscribed on a wall), a traditional form of travel writing," Y. Huang explains that Chinese travelogues often become an alternative medium of historiography, since the documentation of history was limited to official historical accounts, and any act of historical writing,

[12] Detailed information on Angel Island Immigration Station and the treatment of Chinese migrants can be found in the introduction "Under the Shadow of Exclusion: Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island" in Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung's *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940* (1980).

unless authorized, was punishable by law in China (102–103).[13] In addition, their physical presence on the walls recalls that of graffiti, which is often understood in terms of defiance (see 109–110) as it provides not only a means of expression for disenfranchised groups but also represents, as an act of vandalism, a tool of resistance against the norms set by those in power.

Indeed, many of the poems that were found at the immigration stations reflect this defiance in their form as *tibishi* or graffiti-like inscriptions on the wall, as Y. Huang argues. Their words also express resistance against immigration procedures, voicing the hardship of their writers before and after the journey across the ocean. Some of the poems are explicitly concerned with oceanic mobility and its discontents while others display a conspicuous absence of the maritime surroundings that serve as confinement for the newly arrived immigrants. One poem from Ellis Island focuses on the injustice of the exclusion laws that have led to the writer's imprisonment, characterizing them as "oppressive laws" that have shattered his hopes to "be safe and free of sadness" in the United States ("Poems from Ellis Island" 2014, Poem 1, 6–9).[14] Indeed, many of the poems stress the fact that the migration to the United States was rather a matter of necessity than one of choice. The Ellis Island poet outlines the circumstances that led to his transoceanic mobility as consequences of the Sino-Japanese War (see Lai, Lim, and Yung 1980, 180 n. 1) doubting that he will live a life "free of worry" while his family is completely dispersed and their home destroyed (Poem 1, 1–4). Writers from Angel Island share these concerns about the injustice of anti-Chinese immigration procedures and about the difficult, even threatening situation at home that compels them to attempt the sea journey in the first place.

A poem from Angel Island connects the ship voyage to the United States itself to the poverty the writer has faced at home. It was his poverty that has led him to leave his family behind and embark on the sea voyage across the Pacific ("The Voyage," 2014, Poem 15, 1–3). Similar to Chun's description of Phoenix's escape across the Pacific, the sea voyage and the detention

[13] Yunte Huang's (2008) chapter "The Poetics of Error: Angel Island" in *Transpacific Imagination: History, Literature, Counterpoetics* offers a detailed analysis of the significance of the subgenres and the role of translation for our (mis-)understanding of Angel Island poetry. I also encourage readers interested in maritime (im)mobilities in the Chinese American imaginary to explore oral histories, some of which have been collected in the anthology *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940*, edited by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung (1980).

[14] The poems published in the anthology are divided into sections and numbered, starting anew for each location. This poem is the first poem in the section "Poems from Ellis Island," translated by Charles Egan (see Lai, Lim, and Yung 1980, 52).

abroad are the result of dire circumstances at home: war or, in this latter case, poverty. Maritime mobility itself, here described as "drift[ing]," has to be passively endured and constitutes tremendous hardship for the migrant. Likewise, the poem that the editors chose as opening piece for the anthology describes the voyage and the arrival on the island as difficult: The ocean's movement is described as "twisting" and "turning," and is juxtaposed with the confinement of the "wooden building" that awaits the immigrant on the island ("The Voyage," 2014, Poem 1, 1–4).[15] The fact that the unnerving sea voyage is followed by an equally distressing immobilization during the Chinese immigrants' detention on Ellis Island and Angel Island further highlights the migrants' vulnerability.

As another writer suggests, his confinement on the island is experienced as a long "sojourn in jail" that makes him suffer from "ordeals" and leaves little room for hope despite the fact that he can already catch sight of "Oakland so close by." It is effectively the insular location of the detention center that separates the writer from nearby Oakland. Thus, America, the country he has long adored, remains inaccessible. And although the writer expresses his desire to return to his home country, the description of the long and troubled sea passage suggests that this is not a desirable option either ("The Voyage," 2014, Poem 9, 1–8). Thus, the islands, rather than symbolizing places of paradise-like pleasures, represent places of imprisonment and disillusion where the Chinese remain trapped in a legal and personal limbo.

Genny Lim's 1978 play *Paper Angels* centers on the despair caused by this state of uncertainty and by the overall conditions on the island. Lim, who was involved in the Angel Island poetry project, was inspired by the writing found on the walls of the buildings on the immigrant station's walls to write her one-act play. First produced in San Francisco in 1980 and in New York in 1982, the play was lauded by critics and won several awards (O'Connor 1985; Liu 2002, 190, 194). It was performed numerous times and picked up by PBS for their *American Playhouse* series in 1985 (Gussow 1982; O'Connor 1985),[16] and more recently in Seattle in 2015 (Berson 2015). Lim's "play examines the physical and psychic effects of detention, more broadly, of the 1882 Exclusion Act … on four male and three female Chinese immigrants who crossed the vast ocean with dreams of success, only to be detained and humiliated" (G. Huang 2006, 100). The characters are "emblematic," reflecting the larger impact of Chinese Exclusion and immigration procedures on the Chinese immigrant

[15] This is the first poem from Angel Island in the anthology (see Lai, Lim, and Yung 1980, 46).

[16] For a selected production history, see Liu 2002 (189–200).

community as a whole, but they also claim "individual subjectivity" as Josephine Lee points out in her analysis of the play (1997, 151). The play is set in 1915 in the Angel Island Immigration Detention Center—information readers can derive from the secondary text at the very beginning of the play when time and location are included. Yet, with the exception of the Warden, none of the characters ever refer to the immigration station as detention center and none uses the designation Angel Island. Instead, the detainees refer to the location with words that describe more drastically their experience of confinement, such as "prison" (Lim [1978] 1993, 21, 44), "wooden cage," or "cage full of lies" (45). They reduce the term "Angel Island" to simply "Island" (21, 25, 27, 42, 47), always used in capital letters—again with a single exception during the Warden's monologue (46). In its importance for the detainees, the 'Island' thus eclipses all other islands and lacks any sign of maritime charm. Whenever the Chinese migrants use the term, they either emphasize the distance from the mainland, "And I say all of you on this Island (*Gesturing*) will taste fool's gold. You know how I know? Because America is just (*Pointing to his head*) a faraway place in the mind—a piece of dream that scatters like gold dust in the wind" (25). Or they use it in close conjunction with the time frame of their imprisonment (21, 27). As in the case of the poetry that has inspired the play, the "Island" becomes, through its separation from the mainland, synonymous with imprisonment. Throughout, this sense of imprisonment remains closely connected to time and is reflected in the setting. Reviewers have pointed out that the "small stage" is "divided" and features a "compartmentalized design" for the 1982 Henry Street Settlement's New Federal Theater performance in New York (Gussow 1982) while the set of the 1985 *American Playhouse* production "is abstract, a few props and architectural lines defining the necessary spaces" (O'Connor 1985). These choices reinforce the play's claustrophobic quality suggested by Lim's play. From the very beginning, a "*darkly lit dormitory*" functions as the setting for the opening scene, and the oppressive atmosphere is enhanced by the "*voice-over audio of an interrogation in progress*" that has the Chinese immigrants "*suspended in silent postures of expectation, longing and fear*" (Lim [1978] 1993, 19) and "*[a] low, continuous moan … heard from off-stage*," overshadowing the first scene.[17] The moaning turns out to be coming from a Chinese immigrant whose three-year imprisonment at Angel Island seems to have left him mentally

[17] John J. O'Connor points out that in the *American Playhouse* production, music was used to further enhance "the emotional weight of a scene" (1985).

disturbed and hallucinating. His lamentation perturbs his fellow internees (as one character puts it, "[h]e's driving me crazy," 21). The prologue and the first scene set the tone for the whole play: The dark and suffocating environment is enhanced by a disturbing sense of time as never-ending as repetitive interrogations are followed by monotonous periods of waiting, articulating immobility on the island in both temporal and spatial terms.

The relation between imprisonment and time is a recurring motif in the play. Similar to the disorientation BaBa experiences during his journey in Kingston's *China Men*, the Chinese inmates lose their sense of time in the detention center and try to measure time by marking off the days on a calendar (34). The Chinese inmates are repeatedly depicted as immobile and frozen in time, highlighting their powerlessness and immobility:

> *The inmates, men and women, stand by the poles (as in the opening) suspended in time, looking straight ahead. It's as if they have been stripped naked under surveillance, but their thoughts are what remain of themselves. The Inspector paces among them, referring to them in an objective interview manner. He occasionally gestures at them but for all intents and purposes, they are inanimate …* (36–37)

The inmates' subjection to surveillance and interrogation is heightened by their portrayal as "inanimate," a term that further denies the Chinese any claim to humanity. The immobility of the immigrants is again juxtaposed with the white's mobility just two scenes later when Henderson, one of the guards, vehemently complains about the Chinese (42), while "[*t*]*he lights dim as the men stare ahead in frozen postures which convey their differing attitudes. Henderson enters, watching the men like specimens through an imaginary partition of glass*" (42). The constellation echoes that of the scene before but is never used in reverse: The Chinese remain in a situation of immobility and powerlessness. Throughout the play, the detainees' psychological situation is described as dire and the characters vacillate between the desire to attack those holding them captive and to use violence against themselves (24, 29). Some characters finally resort to violence in order to overcome the temporal and spatial paralysis imposed upon them.

Their immobility and isolation is only emphasized by the few but significant reminders of the maritime location of the detention center and by a number of allusions to oceanic mobility. In one scene, the female inmates, led by Gregory, a missionary, sing "My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean," a

song that highlights their "*unfamiliarity*" (25) with Western culture. Nevertheless, the fact that they "*sing with gusto and animation*" also underlines the women's awareness of their situation on the island, separated from the Chinese homeland and the American mainland. Similarly, ships function as reminders of separation and distance from the continent rather than a means of transport to the US mainland. When mentioned, the ships either bring migrants (or witnesses in the immigration procedures) to the island or turn into vehicles of deportation—in both cases, maritime mobility is represented as a form of disappointment or even danger. From the first scene, the phrase "[t]hey'll ship you back to China so fast!" (22; also 42) expresses the fear of deportation and remains the central, implicit threat throughout the play. The sea passage the migrants have endured to come to the United States is not devoid of risk either. The ship voyage proves especially dangerous for women, as some of the male inmates acknowledge. Fong, one of the Chinese men, reveals to his fellow inmates what happened to a woman on board his ship: "Everyone knows what happened to her on that ship. Unless you like white man's leftovers, forget her" (34). The sexual violence alluded to in the men's dialogue is absent in the description of the sea passage Chin Gung, a Chinese man on Angel island, has undertaken. Rather he expresses the discrepancy between the hope that he experienced aboard and the disenchantment that characterizes his time on Angel Island: "I came on a ship full of dreams and landed in a cage full of lies" (45). Mere moments after making this statement, he decides to end his life when he fears he might be deported. The play ends with his widow's refusal to leave Angel Island for the United States: In a final scene, accompanied by the sound of a foghorn—yet another reminder of the detention center's maritime location—she reveals her yearning to return home. Her fate on the island exemplifies the legal and emotional limbo that has defined the depictions of Chinese American maritime (im)mobilities not only in this play about Angel Island but also in the poems found on the walls of the immigrations stations and the texts by Kingston and Chun.[18]

[18] Genny Lim admits that she actually toned down the suffering of the Chinese immigrants: "When I originally wrote the play, I deliberately tried to avoid depicting any of the real horror stories, because I was worried that people might think I was heightening reality by adding artificial moments of sensationalism. But history is sensationalistic. One woman, when she discovered that she and her three sons were going to be deported, was so distraught that she sharpened a chopstick, poked it into her ear and died instantly. Because the authorities feared a full-blown scandal, they allowed her sons to land. Though the story is true, I decided not to include it because it seemed so fantastic" (qtd. in Koyama 1985).

Conclusion

The representations of maritime (im)mobilities and oceanic experiences in the Chinese American texts analyzed in this essay are ultimately always determined by the specific historical context of Chinese exclusion that challenges any romanticized notion of transoceanic mobility. Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* outlines the metaphorical quality of the ocean and of water in detail. As the ocean becomes personified and inhabited by mythical figures that promise hope and support, water, at times, transforms into a connecting and renewing element. The account of the father's sea voyage echoes not only connotations conventionally attached to the very element itself but also the notions of newness, curiosity, and mobility that characterize Kingston's "ocean people." However, her memoir also portrays the oceanic experience as one defined by the material qualities of the ocean and the physical limitations of the human body: The father's inability to move in the wooden box to which he is confined during his traumatizing sea voyage is contrasted to the movement of the ocean which endangers and disorients him. Under these circumstances, the sea itself, though presenting a source of hope, also materializes as an environment inherently hostile to human survival. In Chun's *The Money Dragon*, the protagonist's romanticized view of sea travel, which opens the book, is equally followed by the account of the hardships during her family's transpacific passage. Her and her daughter's suffering is exacerbated by the physical limitations of the maternal body when her milk stops and she fears she can no longer nurse her child during her ongoing confinement on the ship. The hazards of the sea voyage and the subsequent detainment while waiting for the immigration procedures appear even more tragic in view of the family's abrupt and escape-like departure from China. The poems written on the walls of the immigration stations on Ellis Island and Angel Island reflect similar constraints in China that force their writers to leave their homeland: Violence and poverty drive them across the ocean to seek safety and better fortune in the United States. And as in Kingston's and Chun's accounts, the Chinese migrants encounter discomfort and dangers on their voyage before they face immigration procedures and imprisonment upon their arrival on the islands. The poems voice the migrants' discontent with the exclusion laws and distress in the face of their imprisonment. Genny Lim's play *Paper Angels* paints a suffocating picture of the conditions at Angel Island Detention Center and presents the disastrous effects of the migrants' imprisonment on their physical and

mental status. Maritime elements are mere reminders of the paralyzing immobility the detainees have to endure as they are neither prepared to return to China nor allowed to enter the United States. Similar to the father's temporal and spatial disorientation in Kingston's *China Men*, the migrants in *Paper Angels* are suspended in time and space and stuck in an emotional and legal limbo that defines the Chinese American experience of maritime (im)mobility throughout all of the texts discussed.

In *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures*, DeLoughrey explores the connection between time and space with regard to the ocean: While "theorists suggest that perceptions of time are constituted by physical and conceptual movement across terrestrial space," the ocean as a space mostly devoid of geographic markers calls for another evaluation of time and space. DeLoughrey asks, "how one's location in the perpetually moving ocean may produce alternative renderings of time-space" (2007, 2). In fact, the Chinese American representations largely reject conceptualizations of the ocean as transcending time and space; rather, the Chinese American writers and protagonists I have considered here inhabit a specific historical moment and geographical place in US history whose momentary loss of temporal and spatial orientation reflects their powerlessness. This disorientation and the ongoing traumatization are enhanced by the ocean's properties as ever moving and devoid of distinct geographical markers. Yet, they are not a consequence of these oceanic qualities alone, as the continual reference to US immigration practices demonstrates. While the territorialization of the ocean remains a controversial topic (see DeLoughrey 2007, 30–41; Ganser in this volume), these texts suggest that US immigration practices have an effect beyond national borders. Asian immigrants and the complexities of their legal, political, and social exclusion have played an important role in the conceptualization of the US nation-state and American national culture as Lisa Lowe has argued in *Immigrant Acts* (1996, 2–9). The analysis of Chinese American ship voyages and island experiences demonstrates that while this negotiation occurs within or at the borders of the US nation-state, the process often begins in oceanic terrains—on ships and islands, outside of or at the fringes of national territory. As Kingston's notion of "ocean people" suggests, it is the experience of maritime (im)mobilities that shapes the Chinese migrants and initiates their experience as (Chinese) Americans.

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CHAPTER 11

Going Nowhere: Oceanic Im/Mobilities in North American Refugee Fiction

Alexandra Ganser

A Literature of Flight: Writing against Necropolitics

In the aftermath and as a consequence of the canon debates in US literary historiography during the 1980s and 1990s, North American literature in both the United States and Canada has been cast as (at least also) a

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literature of immigration.[1] In Canada, immigrant literature has been frequently analyzed with reference to postcolonial theory, while US-American scholars have long shied away from that framework of inquiry; only recently have American Studies scholars broadly started to call the United States a settler colonial nation (see, e.g., Hixson 2013), with its literature as deeply ingrained in and influenced by this framework. Both settler colonial and immigrant writing, as paradoxical as it may seem, share an emphasis on settlement; immigration and the difficulties of new homes and transforming identities have thus become key tropes of writing and research in both contexts. This essay, in contrast and complementary to that literary history, is concerned with a repository of literary works focusing on the spatial and temporal *before* and *in-between* of emigration and immigration in narratives of flight: stories of refugees and migrants who never arrive anywhere geographically and/or stories that focus on the limbo in the aftermath of the refugees' departure from war- and poverty-stricken countries. Transoceanic flight produces, following Françoise Vergès (who writes in the context of the Indian Ocean), "writing on water, layers of texts, narratives, and imagined worlds" (2003, 247). These narratives need to be explored beyond traditional, territorial archives. In the following, I discuss Edwidge Danticat's short story "Children of the Sea" (1995) and Madeleine Thien's novel *Dogs at the Perimeter* (2011) as exemplary texts, teasing out possible characteristics of such narratives of flight and establishing them as important supplements to the tradition of North American immigrant fiction.

To some extent, such refugee narratives can also be read as offering an epistemological supplement to contemporary theory as they can point to—by means of narratology, poetics, and literary language in general—theoretical blind spots and hidden subject positions. Thus, I understand these texts in their potential to help us think further and beyond established theoretical frameworks. My case in point in this article is the Deleuzian conceptual metaphor of "lines of flight," pivotal to the trialectics of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization. Most extensively in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980/1987), Deleuze and Guattari refer to "lines of flight" as unpredictable, unruly routes, defying spatial control, which potentially break down a hegemonic spatial semantics through the mobility associated

[1] One oft-cited evidence of this shift is the publication of the multivolume *Heath Anthology of American Literature,* which reconceptualized American literary history along these lines.

with the figure of the nomad.[2] "Deterritorialization" is cast as a strategy to contravene the normative structuration characteristic of regulated or "striated" space and produces "smooth space" beyond differentiation and regulation. "Territorialization," in turn, comprises both deterritorializing and reterritorializing movements. For Deleuze and Guattari, this references the process of subject formation, in which identity is simultaneously constituting and defining itself ("territorializing"), while these acts of constitution are always already dissolving ("deterritorializing") and substituted by new ones ("reterritorializing"). For them, deterritorialization has a positive, even idealist value, as is visible in an imperative phrasing early on in *A Thousand Plateaus*: "form a rhizome, increase your territory by deterritorialization" ([1980/1987] 1996, 11);[3] as Bryant et al. summarize, "since systems of any kind … can operate as territories, deterritorialisations activate freedom or movement" (2003, 150). The figurative language betrays an expansive underlying discourse of mobility in which the lines of flight that produce deterritorialization "increase" one's territory; the imperative form reveals a residual falling-back on models of subjectivity that Deleuze and Guattari are actually abandoning in their theory of assemblages, challenging such Western models of subject formation—models that not coincidentally emerged with trans-Atlantic European expansion.

A strand of postcolonial criticism, most notably Gayatri Spivak's, has held Deleuze's philosophy accountable for reaffirming, in this and other ways, a European universal (male) subject.[4] Generally speaking, in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak uses Foucault's and Deleuze's work as examples of an "interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject" (1988, 271). While I find her intentionalism ("interested") somewhat problematic, dismissing an entire body of work that has arguably been highly productive for emancipatory projects such as feminism or surveillance studies (in the case of Foucault), Spivak's argument

[2] For a postcolonial critique of the nomad, see, for example, the summary outlines in Kaplan's *Questions of Travel* (1996, ch. 2), or in my own *Roads of Her Own* (Ganser 2009, ch. 5). In *Dialogues II*, Deleuze's conception of the figure is less dualistic, differentiating between the nomad and the migrant in its tri-partition of the sedentary, nomadic, and migrant (Deleuze and Parnet 2007).

[3] That is, networks of unstructured offshoots and trajectories across smooth spaces.

[4] For scholarship that critically engages Deleuzian thought with postcolonial issues, see also Bignall and Patton 2010; Burns and Kaiser 2012; for a critique of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of territoriality from a postcolonial feminist perspective, see Wuthnow 2002.

itself points to the locatedness of philosophical discourse and the consequences of its disavowal. For Spivak, the work of Deleuze and Foucault gives

> an illusion of undermining subjective sovereignty while often providing a cover for this subject of knowledge. Although the history of Europe as Subject is narrativized by the law, political economy, and ideology of the West, this concealed Subject pretends it has 'no geo-political determinations.' The much-publicized critique of the sovereign subject thus actually inaugurates a Subject. (1988, 271–272)

Spivak requests any philosophical project to take "geo-political determinations" into account and argues that it is "[t]he failure of Deleuze and Guattari to consider the relations between desire, power, and subjectivity" that "renders them incapable of articulating a theory of interests" as "their indifference to ideology (a theory of which is necessary for an understanding of interests) is striking but consistent" (273). While the use of the term "determinations" here hints at Spivak's own deterministic shortcomings, Spivak's critique is difficult to dismiss entirely, particularly with regard to the dissimilarities between the (ideal notion of) the Western Subject and the subaltern in the ways desire is produced regarding the object of that desire—it is not flight and deterritorialization for everyone; mobilization is a desire for some and a life-and-death necessity for others. Deleuze's vocabulary, despite its post-representationalist underpinnings, does not necessarily preclude essentialism or an imperialist epistemic, according to Spivak.[5]

Apart from a brief (and perhaps overstated) comment that "the ferocious motif of 'deterritorialization'" (291) functions as one example of "screen-allegories that foreclose a reading of the broader narratives of imperialism," Spivak does not specifically discuss Deleuze and Guattari's conception of lines of flight or deterritorialization from the perspective of a subaltern Other whose mobility is restricted as a result of political upheaval, war, genocide, and socioeconomic injustice. Caren Kaplan's seminal 1996 study *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* critiques, next to the nomad and "becoming minor" (which she reveals as "a strategy that only makes sense to the central, major, or powerful, yet it is presented as an imperative for 'us all'" 1996, 88),

[5] See also Kaplan (1996, 97–99). For a detailed response to Spivak's critique, see Robinson and Tormey (2010).

deterritorialization and its celebration in Deleuze and Guattari, drawing on many more of their works than just *A Thousand Plateaus*. For Kaplan, the trope

> links the Euro-American modernist valuation of exile, expatriation, defamiliarization, and displacement and the colonial discourses of cultural differences to a philosophy that appears to critique the foundations of that very tradition. … [D]eterritorialization itself cannot escape colonial discourse. The movement of deterritorializiation *colonizes*, appropriates, even raids *other spaces*. … Deterritorialization is always reterritorialization, an increase of territory, an imperialization. (1996, 89)

Kaplan emphasizes that those "smooth" spaces of deterritorialization prominent in Deleuze and Guattari—desert, steppe, ice, and sea—are all prime sites of the colonial sublime, sites onto which colonial imaginaries have projected their utopias as well as their horrors. What if deterritorialization does activate movement *without* activating freedom and an "open future" (Bryant et al. 2003, 150), thus producing involuntary flight and responses that limit (refugee) mobility? Investigating the representation of the sea through contemporary refugee subjectivities, deterritorialized *in toto*—physically, culturally, and psychologically—in Danticat's and Thien's poetics, quite different territorialities of flight come to the fore. Danticat's story focuses on the Haitian 'boat people' that attempted to reach Florida shores in the 1980s and 1990s, while Madeleine Thien examines the Red Khmer genocide in Cambodia and its consequences for the children that came to Canada as orphaned refugees.

I refer to Spivak and Kaplan neither to argue that we have to throw out Deleuzian vocabulary from our writing and thinking (quite the opposite, in fact); nor that Deleuze and Guattari worked in the service of neo-imperialism, as some have argued. Bignall and Patton succinctly summarize this critique as follows:

> For some, his [Deleuze's] failure to relate expressly to postcolonial issues does not simply suggest a careless lack of concern on Deleuze's part, but also the more worrying possibility that his silence on colonialism conceals a certain Eurocentric self-interest, a neo-imperial motivation or a hidden or unacknowledged desire to deflect attention away from the political concerns of the postcolony. (2010, 1)

Disproving such accusations of disinterest, Bignall and Patton (2–4) demonstrate that Deleuze did engage with decolonization in some of his writings and list points of postcolonial critique brought forward there. Rather than rejecting Deleuze and Guattari, I critique a language of theory that uses such Deleuzian concepts in a purely affirmative, even celebratory manner. While it exceeds the scope of this essay to present a sustained theoretical discussion of Deleuze's writings, I try to bring the concept of lines of flight into a critical dialogue with other discursive renderings of flight, by 'minor' voices pervading literatures that Deleuze and Guattari indeed deeply cared about: "to the established fictions that are always rooted in a colonist's discourse, we oppose a minority discourse, with mediators," as Deleuze himself put it (qtd. in Bignall and Patton, 2010, 17; see also Deleuze's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 1986). It is not just the language of theory—Spivak's or others'—but also literary language that can work as such a mediator by making its readers question the tropes and metaphors in which we talk about the world. Following Kaplan, my essay continues the examination of historically bound "metaphors and tropes from an earlier era … that continue to construct colonial spaces in postmodern, poststructuralist theories" (1996, 65) with the help of oceanic narratives of refugee im/mobilities. As such, rather than denigrating postmodern theory, I hope to add to critical "negotiations of modernist and postmodernist impulses in Euro-American production and reception of critical practices and theories" (100) and that in the end, "the primary terms of displacement and movement construct this critical space" in ways "less romanticized and more responsive to the histories of imperialism and economic and cultural hegemonies" (100). I am also inspired by philosopher Thomas Nail's discussion of the term in *The Figure of the Migrant*, which complicates the simplistic opposition between the metaphorical and the empirical: While there are empirical migrants, nomads, or refugees, their "meaning and potential extend beyond their empirical features under the current conditions of social expulsion" (2015, 17); vice versa, while there are metaphorical lines of flight, their meanings and potentials likewise extend beyond the figurative under necropolitical conditions (see below). If we apply Nail's argument not just to figures but also to figurations—like lines of flight or deterritorialization, his idea of a "vague essence" (16) points to an essence in any such figure, or figuration, that lies "*between* the ideal and the empirical" and is "irreducible to either" (16).

The literary articulations of flight I analyze in what follows evoke what Achille Mbembe defines as the necropolitics of genocide and demographic

control, rather than immigrant narrative tropes and plots, which usually begin with arrival and focus mostly on cultural difference, new homes, and the difficulty of adapting. Part and parcel of a contemporary biopolitics, this necropolitics, Mbembe claims (citing Foucault), constitutes the ultimate expression of sovereignty (2003, 11) by "dictat[ing] who may live and who must die" (11), who finds shelter and who is left to drown. In what Sikho Siyotulu termed a "theory of the walking dead" in a discussion of Mbembe's concept at the Graduate School "Minor Cosmopolitanisms" at the University of Potsdam in May 2017, Mbembe asks how the place of life, death, and the body is "inscribed in the order of power" (12) and enquires into the "work of death" performed by necropolitical structures. Life and death are reconceived in the context of a "politics as the work of death" (16) as foundational categories, "less abstract and more tactile" (14) than reason "as the truth of the subject" as "the human being truly becomes a subject … in the struggle and the work through which he or she confronts death" (14). Sovereignty is affirmed through the right to kill and the division of people into the living and the dead, which constitutes the base operation of Othering in general and a "politics of race … ultimately linked to the politics of death" (17, in reference to Hannah Arendt and Foucault):

> Operating on the basis of a split between the living and the dead, such a power defines itself in relation to a biological field—which it takes control of and vests itself in. This control presupposes the distribution of human species into groups, the subdivision of the population into subgroups, and the establishment of a biological caesura between the one and the other. (2003, 17)

This quote can be read as a comment on contemporary refugee camps as infinite, dehumanizing, and immobilizing in-between spaces threatening the hope of getting anywhere. They create new territorialities, in effect territorially fragmenting whole regions or islands and restricting democratic laws and human rights to an exclusive group of those who are recognized by law—as legitimate asylum seekers or as European Union citizens. According to Mbembe, this territorial fragmentation is characteristic of necropower (27). In this "new moment … of global mobility" (31), the biopolitics of resettlement rests on the Othering of massive

amounts of people, whose movement is rendered both impossible and illegitimate by a “management” (34) approach to the multitudes:[6]

> As a political category, populations are … disaggregated into rebels, child soldiers, victims or refugees, or civilians incapacitated by mutilation or simply massacred on the model of ancient sacrifices, while the “survivors,” after a horrific exodus, are confined in camps and zones of exception. (34)

The power of recognition as a form of violent categorization is crucial here and connects Mbembe’s theories to Judith Butler’s post-9/11 theorizing of “precarious life.” In her book of the same title (2004) and its successor *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2009), she asks “whose lives are considered valuable, whose lives are mourned, and whose lives are considered ungrievable. … An ungrievable life is one that cannot be mourned because it has never lived, that is, it has never counted as a life at all” in the context of wars that “defend the lives of certain communities, and … defend them against the lives of others” (Butler 2015). Ungrievable lives such as those of drowned refugees, whose names and identities often remain unknown, correspond to Butler’s earlier concept of precarious life and its differential distribution across the globe. As Butler explains:

> To say that a life is injurable … or that it can be lost, destroyed, or systematically neglected to the point of death, is to underscore not only the finitude of a life (that death is certain) but also its precariousness (that life requires various social and economic conditions to be met in order to be sustained as a life). Precariousness implies living socially, that is, the fact that one’s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other. (2015)

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, Mbembe, and Butler in my critical readings, I examine Danticat’s and Thien’s narratives as attempts to make ungrievable lives grievable by literary intervention into mainstream media discourses (such as Butler calls for). By telling stories of loss and dying in highly fragmented ways, both texts offer insights into such overly precarious, deterritorialized subjectivities and perform a grueling critique of the necropolitical structures that continue to produce transoceanic diasporas of both living and dead people in flight from oppressive global and/or

[6] Mbembe’s critique of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the war machine (2003, 19) appears as no coincidence here, though he does not connect it to their rhetoric of flight and deterritorialization.

state regimes. I discuss the short story and the novel for their aesthetic and discursive negotiation of refugee subjectivity, flight, and survival. Danticat and Thien write transnationally, multivocally, and fragmentarily, and talk back to postmodern theory jargon about fluid subjectivities and deterritorialization as resistance to oppressive spatial structures. Both texts place their readers as witnesses to drowning scenes as a corrective to an "oceanic cartography of liberal humanism" (Sharpe 2009, 106) that often remains within Othering epistemologies.

The Prec(ar)ious Lives of Refugees: De/Territorialization in Edwidge Danticat's "Children of the Sea"

Flight as an involuntary form of escape is an important trope in many of Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat's novels and short stories. Paradigmatically, "Children of the Sea," the opening tale of the short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* (1995), dramatizes a young Haitian dissident's treacherous oceanic journey toward Miami to seek asylum in the United States. Initially titled "From the Ocean Floor," it was first published in October 1993 at the height of the Haitian exodus following the September 1991 military coup. Haitian refugees had been pathologized as an AIDS risk and routinely denied asylum, setting them in competition with Cuban refugees, who more easily received refugee status (Braziel 2010, 155). The US government differentiated Haitian and Cuban boat people, defining Haitians as economic (rather than political) refugees, which

> allowed the Coast Guard to return [them] to the civil war they were escaping. Danticat's story makes it evident that the distinction was not only politically motivated—since it was based on Cold War politics that led the United States to support anti-communist dictators … but also racial, since Cubans tend to be white-identified. While hundreds of Haitian boat people drowned in the Caribbean Sea, thousands more were tortured and murdered [in Haiti]. (Sharpe 2009, 104)

The dissident's story is intertwined with that of his left-behind girlfriend, whose father plans her family's escape from the constant threat of rape and murder by the soldiers of the Duvalier regime in Port-au-Prince. The cycle is itself geographically split, with the majority (seven stories) set in Haiti and only the final two in the United States (Brooklyn). Its geographic

hybridity is echoed formally in its hybrid genre—as a short story cycle, it is less unified than a novel but characterized by more coherence and thematic integrity than a collection of unrelated stories, as James Nagel explains (2001, 17). Furthermore, the genre is linked to the oral narrative tradition (Davis 2001, 65).

"Children of the Sea" is equally split in terms of narrator, switching back and forth between a young man's and a young woman's first-person narrative perspective.[7] Danticat uses the form of the epistolary exchange, presenting alternating letters that the young man and woman have promised to write each other; the letters have an addressee but no address. They thus function like diaries the protagonist-narrators hope to exchange upon their reunion in an indiscernible future. In fact, then, a juxtaposition of two monologues, the two plot lines they represent are eventually reconnected via a black butterfly that, in line with Haitian mythology, brings news of the young man's death and thus further dramatizes the impossibility of direct communication (Davis 2001, 70; Misrahi-Barak 2012, 442).

The difference between the characters' stories and perspectives is also visually marked on the page, with the young woman's voice in bold and lower case and the man's in regular typescript. The bold typography can be read as counteracting the erasure of voices of nameless, 'ordinary people' during political upheavals and wars; in this respect, it is also quite telling that both narrator-protagonists remain nameless. Rather than merely denoting educational difference, as other critics have claimed (e.g., Davis 2001), the lack of an upper case points to the historical denial of subjectivity to Caribbean women in patriarchal structures (or all women of African descent in North America, as bell hooks famously argued).

The imaginary dialogue between the protagonists serves to reestablish their connection, severed by the boyfriend's flight (Misrahi-Barak 2012, 441), and moreover provides an empowering interpellative structure of subjectivity. Also, the letters produce a narrative structure marked by spatial and temporal gaps. As Judith Misrahi-Barak suggests, the story's duplex structure does not lead to a duality of here and there but opens up onto a multiplicity of sites and voices (442). The here and there are constantly shifting, as the characters' involuntary journeys to escape violence and death dramatize repeated dislocations in search of a place to hide.

[7] The title itself might be understood to talk back to "the sea change" in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, a text that prompted postcolonial theorizing, as Caliban speaks back to Prospero. I thank Nigel Hatton for pointing out this reference.

By telling the story from two refugee perspectives, “Children of the Sea” counters these violent, absolute deterritorializations by a heightened sense of the importance of space and time as structuring the chance for survival. The male protagonist’s deterritorialization not only refers to its absolute, physical dimension, but also to a more strictly Deleuzian sense of deterritorialized subjectivities, as his mind increasingly wanders, trying to escape its containment in the boat; likewise, his girlfriend’s deterritorialization also refers to her imagined Self in the arms of her lover. Their mobile subjectivities, however, are contextualized by pain. When the male narrator-protagonist describes the ocean, for instance, he first perceives the sea as seemingly undifferentiated, Deleuzian smooth space: “There are no borderlines on the sea. The whole thing looks like one. … At night, the sky and the sea are one” (Danticat [1995] 1996, 6; 9). The quote highlights the visual and geographic erasure of difference at sea; after a day, however, the materiality of the patchy boat puts the ultimate difference, that between life and death, at the center of his story; “[t]he promise of a new horizon, a chance to begin life anew [in the US] is at once evoked and taken away” (Chen 2011, 39). Another refugee, Justin, discusses the differential treatment of Haitian and Cuban refugees as well as the hostility of Bahamians toward Haitians aboard (“[t]o them, we are not human,” 8), revealing “the imperially imposed barriers to cross-national identification for those of African descent in the Americas” (Braziel 2010, 156; also Sharpe 2009, 108) as well as the uneven construction of precarious life in this postcolonial scenario.

The leaking vessel here resembles a spatial assemblage in the Deleuzian sense, in which territorializing and deterritorializing impulses—both with regard to regimes of maritime mobility and refugee im/mobility—violently clash in a life-and-death manner. The physical conditions of the refugees aboard, from sea sickness and sunburn to giving birth and starvation, and their material effects—the sights, sounds, and smells—soon take center stage. Imagining the sea as territorial, in the increasingly hopeless situation of a confined, unfit vessel torn asunder by the waves, functions as a coping strategy for the narrator at this point: He imagines that the world may be flat after all; he conjures up the US Coast Guard to save them; he dreams of heaven as sinking to the ocean floor and living with the creatures of the sea: “I feel like we are sailing to Africa. Maybe we will sail to Guinin, to live with the spirits, to be with everyone who has come and has died before us. They would probably turn us away from there too”

(Danticat [1995] 1996, 14).[8] This last sentence shows that even though the journey of these 'boat people,' full of allusions to the Middle Passage, is transformative in terms of defining ethnic identity—"[y]es, I am finally an African" (11), he says elsewhere—, his fledgling diasporic subjectivity knows it has no home, not even in Africa, not even in death: There is no safe haven.

In the end, drowning off the coast of the Bahamas, the young man becomes part of a Black Atlantic imaginary collective of the dead, joined a few pages before by a pregnant fifteen-year old refugee, Célianne, who jumps overboard after she is forced by her fellow passengers to drop her stillborn baby, conceived in rape, into the sea. These are his last words: "[A]ll those children of the sea who might soon be claiming me. I go to them now as though it was always meant to be … to live life eternal, among the children of the deep blue sea, those who have escaped the chains of slavery to form a world beneath the heavens and the blood-drenched earth where you live" (27). This prayer-like, poetic and final enunciation forms an instance of a necropolitical aesthetics, harking back to the death politics of the Middle Passage and bringing it to the present: "blood-drenched earth where you live" halts the rhyme, pointing to an ongoing historical continuum of precarious black lives at sea.

Danticat's two voices territorialize flight—as oxymoronic as this may seem—through detailed descriptions of physical and social spaces and settings, mediated by the characters' first-person perspectives. They contravene deterritorializing mechanisms by emphasizing micro-territorialities that provide shelter. These, however, are always under erasure: the enclosed space of the boat, invaded by the forces of the ocean entering through its leaks, for instance, paralleled by the apartments and latrines that function as temporal hiding places for the girl but are likewise invaded by destructive forces (here, human), and by a resulting sense of immobility, especially for women. The female perspective emphasizes flight as gendered, creating a space to contemplate questions about those who are left behind—who are, much more often than not, women. What seems like a binary opposition—mobile men and immobile women—is questioned by the story through the figure of Célianne, on the one hand, and, on the other

[8] Guinin refers to the mythical space that is reached after death from the ocean floor, where the spirits of those slaves on the Middle Passage who never arrived in the Americas reunite. Its *kreyòl* name is derived from the European term for the African West coast, Guinea (Sharpe 2009, 107).

hand, because those left behind are also in flight to find shelter; thus "Children of the Sea" exposes "the male gendering of black Atlantic narratives by extending the uncertainty of undocumented travel to the presumed sanctity of domestic space" (Sharpe 2009, 105). Yet gender difference is not erased: The female narrator-protagonist's trajectory is governed by her father, whose patriarchal authority and sense of masculinity are deeply affected by the emasculating threats of soldiers forcing Haitian men to rape family members. Bringing his family to a safe place seems of restorative importance for his sense of self in this respect; the decision, however, produces an ethical dilemma as the father cannot spend the family money on bribery, in order to save a neighbor's life when her home is invaded by soldiers.

Throughout *Krik? Krak!* the gruesomeness of the descriptions—such as the recurrence of dying infants and intra-family rape—is countered by ancestral discourses of community, such as the Creole call-and-response practice "Krik? Krak!" that helps the refugees "wile away the fearful hours" (Davis 2001, 68) on the boat. The phrase lends the story collection its title: The storyteller asks the audience "Krik?" to which the response is an enthusiastic "Krak!" motivating the narrator to proceed. Other examples Danticat evokes in this and other stories include black Atlantic legends such as that of the flying Africans who escaped slavery by literally taking flight (Chen 2011, 41),[9] throwing themselves off a slaver near the Georgia coast. A poetic rendition of this mass suicide, reminiscent of the belief that the souls of African Americans will return to Africa after death, the legend became a story of magic, freedom, and community: Two interpretations (suicide v. escape) that perfectly express the "diasporic predicament" (46) of people of African descent in the Americas. In addition, many of Danticat's stories in *Krik? Krak!* rewrite the patriarchal trope of the too-mobile woman, the witch-like "flying woman" or *lougarou* (49–50), appropriating the figure as one of female empowerment (see also Nge 2003). By these means, Danticat transforms fleeing subjects into flying subjects (unified in the noun "flight"), posthumously restoring agency to the dead and transforming mourning into empowerment. Even the sea itself is reclaimed in the end in its infinity, as the Haitian woman declares that the sea is "endless" like her love for her dead boyfriend (Danticat [1995] 1996, 21): The existential threat of an ocean indifferent to the fate

[9] For a literary rendition of this trope, see esp. Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977).

of boat people is transformed into a metaphor of endless love; a "space of death" (Sharpe 2009, 109) becomes a sea of love and a site of memory.

In sum, "Children of the Sea" constructs a continuum of violent forms of displacement from the times of slavery to its late twentieth-century present, a "fictional charting[] of multiple passages [that] remind us that the diaspora is shifting and changing as populations continue to move and be displaced" (Sharpe 2009, 109). The story highlights the complexities of forced migration and counters the necropolitics of the Atlantic with a vibrant, affective narrative web of resilience "in a context where migration flows across oceans and between countries are mapping out new geographies and demographies" (Misrahi-Barak 2012, 432). Doing so, "Children of the Sea" renders lives lost and unmourned grievable, *presencing* their historical predecessors during Atlantic slavery. As Danticat remarks in an interview: "No one knows how many people were lost on The Middle Passage. There are no records or graves—and the ocean floor where our fossils are. The journey from Haiti in the 1980s is like a new middle passage" (qtd. in Shea 1995, 12), a "journey to nowhere" and a "state of limbo" (Sharpe 2009, 106). In a more recent essay entitled "Message to My Daughter," Danticat brings her story into the present, recounting her visit with her daughters to a Haitian refugee camp on the border to the Dominican Republic and connecting it to the daily violence people of African descent face in the United States. Both groups are constantly threatened with erasure:

> We, immigrant blacks and African Americans alike, were treated … as though we were members of a group in transit. The message we always heard from those who were meant to protect us: that we should either die or go somewhere else. This is the experience of a refugee. …
>
> We are in America because our lives meant nothing to those in power in the countries where we came from. Yet we come here to realize that our lives also mean nothing here. … [U]ltimately, we realize the precarious nature of citizenship here: that we too are prey, and that those who have been in this country for generations—… they too can suddenly become refugees. (2016, 207; 210–211)

Thus Danticat extends the experience of precariousness, constitutive for refugee subjectivity, to those whose violent deterritorialization and in-betweenness has continued for many generations, far beyond the Middle Passage and into the present-day United States and its necropolitical structures.

Genealogies of Violence and Survival: Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter*

Like "Children of the Sea," *Dogs at the Perimeter* is concerned with long-term effects of deterritorialization, in a literal and metaphorical sense, on refugee subjectivities. It is the second novel by Chinese-Malaysian-Canadian writer Madeleine Thien, who can be grouped with a cohort of contemporary Canadian authors experimenting with the global aesthetics of diasporic narratives (among them Michael Ondaatje or Dionne Brand). The novel recounts the flight of refugees from the Cambodian genocide of a minimum of two million people killed—about a quarter of the population—during the Khmer Rouge regime between 1975 and 1979, and articulates the threat of psychological disintegration caused by traumatic memories haunting refugee Canadians.

Dogs at the Perimeter is populated by well-educated Cambodian, Japanese, and other people of Asian descent in the Americas, who came to Canada and the United States, mostly as child refugees from war-torn countries involving the US military. The novel revolves around the interconnected lives of two refugee characters, displaced from their respective homes by genocide and war: Janie, the protagonist, who arrived in Canada as an orphaned Cambodian refugee and now works as a neuroscientist, and Hiroji Matsui, her mentor, whose family fled to Canada in the aftermath of the US bombing of Tokyo during WWII (which actually resulted in more immediate deaths than the nuclear bombings; Troeung 2013, 155). While Janie struggles with the ghosts of her past—her dead parents, her brother Sopham, and her friends—and with fears and aggressions that come to the fore when she is with her son Kiri, Hiroji disappears. As it turns out, he has left for Cambodia in search of his brother James, who was abducted while working for the International Red Cross in various refugee camps during the Khmer crisis. Janie finally finds the courage to search for Hiroji in Laos and to confront her past. The novel ends on a hopeful note that Janie and her son will be reunited in a future less disturbed by past trauma.

Dogs at the Perimeter is set in a transnational context that transports its readers back and forth between Canada and Southeast Asia on different temporal levels from the 1970s to today, interspersed with stints in the United States and Europe. Through its nonlinear, fragmented temporal structure, contemporary events are interrelated with the complex history

of North American involvement in Southeast Asia—the bombs on Japan, the Vietnam War, and US air raids of Phnom Penh, as well as Canadian support in many of these cases. Hence, the novel is a case in point that "Southeast Asian refugee populations reveal the intersection between U.S. military and imperialist actions overseas with immigration access, and conditions of settlement during the late twentieth century" (Hsu 2017, 117).

Canada is present as a setting at first, but recedes behind the locales of the characters' past in Southeast Asia. Here, it is the protagonist's mind that becomes increasingly deterritorialized as she suffers from a psychological breakdown that carries her back to her native Cambodia and the Red Khmer period. The transnational setting also emphasizes how the story of Cambodian Canadian refugees is interconnected with that of other histories of displacement and survival so that "[t]he figure of the Cambodian Canadian refugee emerges from these entwined genealogies of violence in twenty-first century world history necessitating new frames of epistemological inquiry to understand the complexity of refugee experience and its links to political macro-histories" (Troeung 2013, 156).

When Janie arrives in Canada, she has "no photographs from her childhood" (Thien 2011, 164), no mementos, only the intense memories of a child. Her white Canadian foster mother shows her a film about her vacation in pre-war Cambodia, and interestingly, Janie starts going back to these films night after night; for her, the "clicking [of the projector becomes] the wordless sadness of a lost time" (23). The films have "no order, no chronology" (124) for Janie, and as the camera gives "a 360-degree tour" of Phnom Penh, they make the city feel "so real" that Janie can "smell it" (124). She is comforted by the recordings that feature the past as it can never be retrieved. The scene hints at her repression of trauma from the war, as she relishes in substitute, wishful memories.

The contemporary United States and Canada are also, however, represented as refugee destinations, as places of education and of diasporic kinship. Notably, one of the Montreal settings is the Café Esperanza, and it is the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), an NGO established through a Yale University project with funds from the 1994 Cambodian Genocide Justice Act, that helps Hiroji and Janie locate his lost brother. Yet despite the novel's Canadian framework, the main characters are never even halfway *there*. Only by turning back to their homes in Asia and to the memory of their refugee experiences, the ending suggests, can the refugee

subject transcend herself/himself and truly move on with life—geographically in Canada and psychologically without passing on violence to the next generation.[10]

The characters' family histories are permeated by both geographical displacement and the traumatic effects of Khmer Rouge terror. The dead appear to her in *sramay*s (ghost hauntings) caused by the visitation of *Kmauit* or *Khmoch*, spirits of loved ones not properly buried, or restless, wandering souls (*pralung*). Ghosts constitute a spectral presence transcending time, an alterity that is continually haunting and uncontainable within linear signification (here, similarities with Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* are most clearly apparent). They mix up past and present—both for the protagonists and the reader, trying to follow a sequence of events. Ghosts constitute a presence that knows no temporal, but also no spatial boundaries, as Florian Tatschner summarizes with regard to Jacques Derrida's *hauntology*: "The specter implies spatio-temporal transgression. It cannot be confined in one fixed space: it walks through closed doors, defies linear temporality, and poses a challenge to the pastness of the past by *still presencing* from afar" (2017, 71). Through the pervasive *fort-da* logic (recalling Freud's trauma theory) of spectral presences, the novel opens up toward readings that go beyond the discursive and take account of the presence of the unspeakable, or also ungrievable (especially in Sopham's case) in literary texts.

The family hi/stories assist the novel's acts of consciousness-raising regarding what Lisa Lowe describes as a "reckoning for an American public engaged for much of the twentieth century in wars in Asia" (2010, 240) and, by extension, for a Canadian public that remains largely unaware of its governments' historical record of supporting US imperialism, US exceptionalism, and US exemption at human rights trials such as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal (Troeung 2013, 156). When the novel begins, Janie already inhabits a third name and identity. Her given name is irrecoverable after the Khmer Rouge have forced a second identity onto her, calling her Mei. The following quote articulates the process of uprooting: "[W]e had to cut loose our dreams, … our worldly attachments …. You have no possessions, no history, no parents, the cadre said" (Thien 2011, 79, 98). Once in Canada, she decides one night that she wants "a new name, a new existence" (24) in order to fit in, signifying that one part of

[10] On the transgenerational effects of traumatic violence with regard both to victims and perpetrators, see Schwab 2010.

her identity—prewar Cambodian—is lost to her for good. With her departure, Janie attempts to leave atrocious memories behind; notably, her last image of Cambodia is darkness (135), signifying both the horror of her experience as well as her memories of this time being repressed, left in the dark.

The novel's construction of space is closely tied to its temporal framing: here, deterritorialization and smooth spaces are the result of Khmer Rouge terror, whose very aim was the complete deterritorialization of bodies and subjectivities through geographic dislocation and the separation of any personal or past relationships. By forcefully recording citizen biographies (25), Angkar (the regime) is creating a repository of memory that is turned against its citizens—who are clever enough to fake these biographies in order to protect themselves and their families. All of this leads to Janie's Cambodian past haunting her Canadian present to an extent that present and past become inseparable, which is aesthetically reflected through the nonlinear interweaving of past and present plotlines to a degree that results in a confusion of these temporal planes.

Forced to confront unassimilated episodes of her past after her breakdown, Janie feels like something has "broken and come undone" (139) in her, de-territorialized in a way that can no longer contain the fragments of a traumatized, shattered self. She describes the collective subjectivity of Asian-diasporic refugees as eventually empty, displaced by the ghosts of those who disappeared and/or died: "Hiroji knew what it was to have the missing live on, unending, within us. They grow so large and we so empty that even the coldest winter nights won't swallow them" (9). Hiroji's view highlights the psychological consequences of Mei's forced deterritorialization—feeling little and empty—, which continues as her family members disappear one at a time, until the only one left, her brother Sopham (renamed Rithy), now a child torturer, rescues her from a children's brigade, but eventually drowns during their attempt to escape the Khmer Rouge when their boat breaks apart, a moment that links the novel to Danticat's short story.

Thien's novel is pervaded by an ambivalent water imagery that bears both positive and negative connotations: it drowns, dissolves, deterritorializes identities, but also feeds and heals (e.g., the saline quality of tears paralleling the ocean's salt water), evoking Deleuze's smooth space in both cases. In the book, however, this smooth space is certainly a far cry from being the result of resistance. Not only does Janie/Mei lose her family, she also loses any sense of place and self along with it, being reduced

to mere survival. While her character asks how traumatized refugees can come to terms with genocide, Sopham poses another important and troubling question in the context of a novel in which promises that cannot be kept under the circumstances of war lead to a life-long sense of guilt among the survivors. Sopham is both victim and perpetrator; we are told that he obsessively washes his hands after acts of torture in order to distance himself psychologically; his death at sea, in this vein, can be read as an ultimate cleansing, symbolically restoring him to his innocent, pre-Khmer Rouge self (Morris 2014, 317). By blurring the victim–criminal divide, the figure of Sopham hence asks the reader how nations like Canada would react toward a refugee child torturer had he survived.

In carrying her memories of the war, however, Janie is bound to Cambodia by the responsibility to bear witness to the war as a survivor. Having suffered under the Khmer Rouge, Janie realizes her responsibility to pass on her story, her memories, so that others who have suffered but can no longer speak out will not be forgotten. This responsibility is, of course, burdensome: That her brother's ghost haunts her, for example, is something she "couldn't live with" (Thien 2011, 146). Also, there is fear in voicing precious memories, because they seem safe inside and vulnerable when put into the world, as the following quote shows: "We take in too much, too many people and places, we try to keep them inside us where the world won't alter them" (168)—which is why these memories remain unspoken during her years in Canada; Janie and her partner Navin never talk about their countries of origin, represented as "two lamps dimming" (164). Another Cambodian survivor tells her: "Hardly anyone outside the country remembers this war. Only us, only here" (162) as there is no space for memory in the new environment.

The territorialization—perhaps akin to, though less static than what Thien calls "containment" in an interview (Leighton 2011)—of memory, rather than the forgetting, appears as a desire in the book through the figure of the improperly buried, restless spirits of the dead as well as through the need to locate trauma as a prerequisite for healing. To some extent, then, *Dogs at the Perimeter* can also be read as a critique of Western therapeutic frameworks that treat Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) increasingly by means of pharmaceuticals. It highlights the tensions between Khmer Buddhist notions of health and healing which Janie's mother teaches her children and a model of psychology that assumes suffering as following generic patterns and universalist notions of mental health (Troeung 2013, 161). The book's title, which draws on a striated

spatial metaphor based on the military notion of the perimeter, and on the recurring image of dogs as both potential protectors and attackers, suggests that striated, ordered, delimited space has to be defended rather than subverted from the perspective of a refugee subjectivity. It appears in the body of the text when Janie remembers her mother's words before entering the refugee boat: "Long ago it had not seemed necessary to note [love's] presence, to memorize it, to set the dogs out at the perimeter. I felt her [i.e., her mother] in the persistent drumming of water against the boat's hull. Guard the ones you love, she told me. Carry us with you into the next life" (Thien 2011, 135). While Janie and Hiroji professionally explore how psychological processes restructure the brain, Janie's exploration of her own past suggests that any working through trauma needs to go beyond the biomedical approach and take into account the historically situated circumstances from which trauma arises, as well as non-Western narratives and frameworks of knowing and understanding the world as alternative sources for healing (see Aguila-Way 2014).

In sum, Thien's novel suggests that Canadian literature, defined once and seminally by Margaret Atwood as a literature of *survival*, now has developed this theme in a slightly different way than Atwood had in mind, mostly talking about settler colonials confronting a hostile natural environment (Atwood [1972] 2013). This literature is also a literature of survival in terms of flight to Canada, with its predecessors perhaps being fugitive slave narratives (e.g., as retold by Ishmael Reed in *Flight to Canada*, 1976), but also of the surviving trauma in diasporic spaces and the need to activate memories that will ensure cultural survival for refugee groups.

Conclusion

What Achille Mbembe terms "contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death," that is, necropolitics (2003, 39), is articulated through literary means in both Danticat's and Thien's works, which examine "the status of living dead," to summon Mbembe once more (40). The increase in human flight today and the literary engagement with individual and collective repercussions of traumatic refugee experiences, as represented in contemporary narratives like Thien's or Danticat's, emphasize the need to counter dehumanizing discourses about refugees and recognize the "repressed topographies of cruelty" (Mbembe 2003, 40). Articulating refugee subjectivity through acts of writing and reading has

the possibility to become an act of "emphatic witnessing" across generations, to use Robyn Morris's term (2011, 311), referring also to a definition of literature as a communicative system that always involves a plurality of producers and readers. Emphatic witnessing escapes the postcolonial conundrum of how to speak for Others, how to give them a voice; turned into a narrative act, it highlights its own literariness rather than claiming to speak 'authentically' on behalf of an Other and thus responds to Cathy Caruth's (and others') understanding of trauma as an unclaimed experience impossible to witness (Caruth 1995). Literary writing counters this impossibility by presencing trauma, however imperfectly, by aesthetic means.

In sum, a literature of flight counters the ungrievable erasure of precarious lives threatened by necropolitical structures, taking up the notion of lives "sustained by no regard, no testimony, and ungrieved when lost" (Butler 2015); rendering these lives grievable, they "make[] possible the apprehension of the living being as living." Rewriting the immigrant narrative, Thien's and Danticat's works represent flight and deterritorialization—of subjectivity, of memory—as continuing conditions, rather than desires, of refugee subjectivities. What Jenny Sharpe says about "Children of the Sea" is equally valid for Thien's novel: Both place "the reader within … scene[s] of drowning, not simply to give visibility to the misery and suffering of … boat people, but also to suggest a worldview that exists outside of the oceanic cartography of liberal humanism" (2009, 106). In this, narratives of flight also respond to the idealizations of those forms of postmodern theorizing that forget to take into account their own discursive locatedness. But not only do these texts provide a conceptual corrective; they constitute a discursive space in which flight and its consequences can be articulated and remembered. Both constitute what Gaëlle Cooreman has called "écriture-violence/violence-écriture" (2011, 37)—the representation of violence and the violence of representation, of what cannot be represented—by representing the trauma of total deterritorialization and flight as conditions of refugee subjectivities. Hence "Children of the Sea" and *Dogs at the Perimeter* offer narrative and aesthetic spaces that highlight the necropolitical borders deemed to secure the integrity and identity of contemporary nation-states. Literary works like Danticat's and Thien's—other examples would be Caryl Phillips's *A Distant Shore* (2010) for the Afrodiasporic context or Viet Thanh Nguyen's short story collection *The Refugees* (2017) concerning Vietnamese refugees—are all the more important in a world of renewed nationalism as a textual repository of an

alternative imaginary, beyond Othering metaphors such as refugee 'floods' and 'hordes,' from the perspectives of those whose homes and identities have been repeatedly deterritorialized. Bringing to the fore this alternative imaginary with its aesthetic and epistemological potential is one of the main tasks of a humanities practiced and taught at a specific historical moment and from a specific location, within a Europe currently shattered likewise by its inability to deal with refugees in humane ways.

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CHAPTER 12

"Spoken Nowhere but on the Water": Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* and Lost-and-Found Languages of the Indian Ocean World

Charne Lavery

Introduction

Margaret Cohen, in *The Novel and the Sea*, describes sea fiction as a "travelling genre," a new kind of fiction that was both based on maritime travel and which itself travelled across the seas and centuries (2010, 8). But sea fiction travels mostly, in this analysis, across the north Atlantic and the English Channel and stalls somewhere before the twentieth century when the memory of the craft of sailing and sea travel fades out of the cultural imagination (14). However, several writers from the former British colonies—to which these and other genres certainly traveled—have revisited and revived sea fiction in recent years. Amitav Ghosh's oeuvre plays a major role in this contemporary flourishing of narratives of maritime mobility and imperial immobilities, and serves as a key example of the ways

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in which the genre has traveled south and east, away from the north Atlantic of its Eurocentered origins to the Indian Ocean as a recuperated region of South-South exchange.

This region, traversed across a number of novels and covering a variety of periods in Ghosh's oeuvre, also lends new facets to the genre of sea fiction. His oeuvre is filled with maritime journeys that stretch from Durban to Aden to the Andaman Islands to Calcutta to Canton, as Anshuman Mondal in his comprehensive *Amitav Ghosh*, among others, has described (Mondal 2007; Hofmeyr 2010; Desai 2004, 2010; Chambers 2011). These itineraries map a largely forgotten maritime world: as Ghosh himself suggests in an interview, "it really has become my project, the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean, imagining it, giving it life, filling it in" (Boehmer and Mondal 2012, 7). This filling-in is important, as canonical works of sea fiction—by Melville, Cooper, Conrad, Marryat, and so on—are full of gaps where alternative maritime publics and geographies are concerned. In some ways, a more capacious vision of a nineteenth-century oceanic world had to wait for the postcolonial historical sea fiction of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as I argue also elsewhere (Lavery 2020, 2021).

The turn to Indian Ocean mobilities in Ghosh's work is overdetermined. As he describes in a published correspondence with subaltern historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, he seeks to find a "way of not writing about the nation (or other restrictively imagined collectivities)" (Ghosh and Chakrabarty 2002, 147)—framing a desire to move beyond the restrictions not only of imperially imposed borders but also the "national allegories" of the postcolonial writer (Jameson 1986). Rather than postnational globalization, however, whose referent is an undifferentiated globe, Ghosh turns to the site-specificity and regionalism of the Indian Ocean (see Alpers and Ray 2007; Chaudhuri 2009). Moreover, his work in keeping with the characteristics of sea fiction is interested in the dynamics and peculiarities of shipboard life. As maritime studies, or what is sometimes called the "new thalassology" (Vink 2007) and more recently the "blue humanities" (Gillis 2013) gain ground, it is worth reading Ghosh's ocean-going themes not just as allegories of land-based processes but as descriptive of the sea's uniqueness, including its world of work (Cohen 2010, 14). In considering ways of grounding—or rather floating—these questions, this chapter looks at the interlinked representation of language and space in the novel *Sea of Poppies*, a novel in which, as the narrator states, many of the characters have "nothing in common, except the Indian Ocean" (Ghosh 2008, 12). I argue that the maritime world of the novel is

evoked through its representation of sailor speech, just as the representation of a recreated lingua franca is inflected by the narration of shipboard life.

Sea of Poppies evokes a maritime world through its reinvention of a maritime language, *laskari,* the dialect spoken by sailors from across the Indian Ocean region. Ghosh both describes as well as performs the mixed, oceanic nature of the lascar dialect, providing spatial and historical context while also employing the language in that description. For instance, *laskari* is described in this paragraph, as a "motley tongue, spoken nowhere but on the water," while also being deployed in that description:

> From the silmagoors who sat on the ghats, sewing sails, Jodu had learnt the names of each piece of canvas, in English and in Laskari—that motley tongue, spoken nowhere but on the water, whose words were as varied as the port's traffic, an anarchic medley of Portuguese calaluzes and Kerala pattimars, Arab booms and Bengal paunch-ways, Malay proas and Tamil catamarans, Hindusthani pulwars and English snows—yet beneath the surface of this farrago of sound, meaning flowed as freely as the currents beneath the crowded press of boats. (108)

The many "foreign" words produce a reading experience which is unfamiliar and densely aural, a "farrago of sound" (2008, 108). Through the extended metaphor, the diversity of words used to name the various ships is mimetically reflected by the variety of the ships themselves, and the various *laskari* names—calaluzes, pattimars, booms, paunch-ways, proas and catamarans" (108)—are, in turn, reflected by the hodgepodge of boats. Yet, as the paragraph concludes, despite the heterogeneity of sound, "meaning flowed as freely as the currents beneath the crowded press of boats." The wording suggests a fluidity and connectedness that underlies disconnected multilingualism.

Laskari

In the foreword to an early collection on Indian Ocean studies, Ghosh writes that "the Indian Ocean is not merely a theoretical or geographical construct but a human reality, constituted by a dense (and underexplored) network of human connections" (2010a, ix). To a large extent, over the course of his diverse oeuvre, Ghosh represents the Indian Ocean world as a palimpsest of overlain networks: networks of arms, marriage, oil, ships,

planes, prisoners, trade, friends, information, medical personnel, drugs, and smuggling. This representation is notably consistent with Indian Ocean historiography, which envisions the Indian Ocean as a widely networked social space.[1] Cohen argues that, "our ability to perceive the importance of the maritime frontier may be an example of … a constellation between an earlier era of intensive globalization and our own" (2010, 14). Similarly, Ghosh's interest in that frontier derives not only from a neglected history but also the fact that Indian Ocean histories of intensive, early globalization might inform our understanding of contemporary global and planetary interconnection particularly across the Global South (Vink 2007; Pearson 2003, 2010).

While criticism on Ghosh has focused largely on his postcoloniality—such as his relationship to the subaltern studies historical project, his writing of travel and borderlines, and his work's relationship to the Rushdiean genealogy of Indian literature (see Mondal 2007; Khair 2003; Hawley 2005)—his self-conscious rootedness in an Indian Ocean literary space should also be placed within an incipient tradition of Indian Ocean writing in English. Writers who form part of this small but important group include M.G. Vassanji, V.S. Naipaul, Romesh Gunesekera, Michael Ondaatje, Abdulrazak Gurnah, and Lindsey Collen, as described in my *Writing Ocean Worlds* (2021). In *Sea of Poppies*, the most significant of these networked elements connecting and constituting the Indian Ocean world is the collection of words and languages that travel across and knit together its distant shores. This linguistic connectedness is exemplified by the lingua franca developed in the context of the sailing ship.

Of course, this is in the context of a radically multilingual space, the problem of which is explicitly described in *Sea of Poppies.* Pugli speaks Bengali, French, Latin, and English, but when adopted by a colonial household must only speak "kitchen Hindusthani" (Ghosh 2008, 379); Neel finds it strange that she speaks Bengali when her fellow-travelers speak Bhojpuri, and attributes her knowledge of English to probable prostitution; she wonders, in turn, of Neel and Ah Fatt, "what language might they share, this skeletal Easterner and this tattooed criminal?"

[1] The network trope is apparent in the history of the region and more widely. C. A. Bayly (2004) employs networks in order to comprehend the scope of global history, and Indian Ocean history in particular has recently been viewed in this way, for instance, Milo Kearney's *The Indian Ocean in World History* (2004) and particularly Ray and Alpers's *Cross Currents and Community Networks* (2007).

(379). The close confines of the ship, on which the characters all eventually gather, exaggerates rather than diminishes the diversity of languages. The ship comes to resemble a miniature Babel (just as Herman Melville describes, for instance, in *Redburn* [1850]). Still, given that ships were successfully run with "*laskari* forces from all over"—the term referred indifferently to Arabs, South Asians, Malays, East Africans, Filipinos, and Chinese—their workers had to be able to communicate (Ghosh 2010b, 6, 16).

The linguistic inventiveness of *Sea of Poppies* derives from, conjures up, and is a response to the problem of portraying a multilingual environment. For historian Michael Pearson, the early modern Indian Ocean was radically multilingual, a problem that had to be dealt with in order to conduct the distinctive long-distance yet face-to-face Indian Ocean trade. As he describes, "Communication was difficult because there was a real gallimaufry of people around the littoral of the Indian Ocean. Even in one particular location, and referring to one group, we find the sort of cosmopolitanism which meant linguistic brokers were essential" (Pearson 2010, 32). Pearson here posits a solution to the problem in the form of linguistic brokers, such as the numerous Portuguese and French attendants who served the Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat in the 1530s. A century later, 5000 Portuguese renegades populated the eastern Indian Ocean littoral. These men, he suggests, working outside the formal structure of the *Estado*, "were absorbed into the warp and weft of peddling trade in the Indian Ocean and obviously had to learn the appropriate languages (35). In his much earlier novel, *In an Antique Land*, Ghosh posits a different linguistic option: "a trading argot, or an elaborated pidgin language" (Ghosh 1998, 280).

In *Sea of Poppies,* Ghosh goes on to fictionally elaborate that pidgin language, creating the solution to radical multilingualism that he had earlier proposed. The resulting fictolinguistic experiment draws on considerable historical research, and can be described still as a novel written in English because in fact many of the apparent neologisms are drawn from the unabridged *Oxford English Dictionary*. These terms were in turn drawn—for both the dictionary and the novel—from the *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive*, a colonial glossary that was absorbed in its entirety into the earliest versions of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Ghosh's novel functions almost as a resurrection of the playful, slang-infused vocabulary of that idiosyncratic

dictionary (Yule and Burnell),[2] preceded famously by Salman Rushdie and Rudyard Kipling, among others (Mishra 388). However, in depicting the sailor's dialect, Ghosh also drew heavily on Thomas Roebuck's *A Laskari Dictionary Or Anglo-Indian Vocabulary Of Nautical Terms And Phrases In English And Hindustani* (Ghosh 2010b, 6), a dictionary first compiled in 1811 and published under this title in 1882. However, as Ghosh notes in "Of Fanás and Forecastles: The Indian Ocean and Some Lost Languages of the Age of Sail," the language it recorded was already centuries old (Ghosh 2010b, 16).

The difficulty of navigating a multilingual environment, not only for trade but for representation, is reflected by the novel's reception and its own onward linguistic travel. For one thing, the novel itself has been almost untranslatable. Ghosh, on his blog, records the novel's Russian translator asking for translations of several words—including "sheeshmull," "shammer," and the sentence "[d]o you never think of nothing but knob-knockin and gamahoochie?"—concluding with the slightly gleeful "I wonder how that came out in Russian…" (Ghosh 2011b). This is an exaggerated version of a common problem in approaching the novel, which was highlighted by a number of early reviews. For example, Gaiutra Bahadur points out that, the "characters are often incomprehensible to one another, which makes for occasional comedy, but too often they're also incomprehensible to his readers" (2014).

In "Untranslatables," Emily Apter suggests that a variety of terms have grown up to designate non-national blocs of culture: "imagined communities, parastates, translingualism, diaspora, majimboism, postcolonial deterritorialization, silicon cities, circum-Atlantic, the global south, and so on" (Apter 2008, 583). While these terms go some way toward bringing specificity to global designations, she suggests that they nevertheless fail in the project of ensuring that literary study is sufficiently specific and grounded, so as to avoid reproducing neoimperialist cartographies. A language and translation-focused model of literary history and comparative literature goes some way toward addressing such concerns—because languages, in their plurilingual composition and meandering histories, highlight trajectories that are not necessarily imperial; and, in particular are peppered with untranslatables that mark difference and disconnection.

[2] From a lecture given by Kate Teltscher to the University of Oxford Postcolonial Seminar, November 2010, entitled, "The Floating Lexicon: Amitav Ghosh, Hobson-Jobson and the *OED*." See also Teltscher 2011.

While translation is more explicitly discussed in *The Hungry Tide,* in *Sea of Poppies* translation is both textually and paratextually performed (Rollason 2005).

Possibly in response to the confusion of readers and translators, Ghosh later placed a glossary, described as a "chrestomathy," not in the novel itself but on his official website. The glossary is fictionalized as the work of Neel and his unnamed descendants, the "Ibis Chrestomathy" (2011a), a list of words with their derivations, predictions for their survival into the future, and whimsical definitions. The title is significant because it pursues the historicizing impetus of the novel. A chrestomathy, unlike a glossary, is diachronic, a collection of passages designed to show development in style or meaning. Ghosh situates the words on the same plane as characters, in the "present author's" introduction to the chrestomathy: "Words! Neel was of the view that words, no less than people, are endowed with lives and destinies of their own. Why then were there no astrologers to calculate their kismet and pronounce upon their fate?" Words in this view have life stories like those of fictional characters. If Apter's *Against World Literature* tests the hypothesis that translation and untranslatability are constitutive of world literature, then *Sea of Poppies*, in its deployment of lascar language, conducts a similar, literary rather than critical, experiment (Apter 2014, 16).

Lost Languages of the World of Work

Ghosh situates *laskari* as the lingua franca of the Indian Ocean—a language born not of a nation but of the sea and of work. It is this emphasis on a language of work in an environment of mobility that links the novel to an older tradition of sea fiction, although with significant differences. As Cohen suggests, the work of the novel and the work of the sea are connected partly through their overlapping attitude to language. In describing the correspondence between maritime, ship-centered literature and the world of work—what Conrad calls 'craft'—Cohen points out the significance of "plain style," a convention of mariner's journals and the language of work at sea, that carried over into the realist novel.

In *Sea of Poppies,* Zachary Reid, who enters the Indian Ocean trade from the Atlantic side, introduces the novel's *laskari* sailor speech in its early pages. Zachary's ship, the *Ibis*, has a disastrous voyage to Cape Town, fraught with illness and ill-luck, so that no one but lascar crews will consider signing on. The new, lively lascar crew forces Zachary, a novice sailor who has just learned the art of sailing, "to undergo yet another

education," re-learning anew all the names for shipboard parts and procedures. The narrator includes a long list of substitutions: "'malum' instead of mate, 'serang' for bosun, 'tindal' for bosun's mate, and 'seacunny' for helmsman" (Ghosh 2008, 14). This "new shipboard vocabulary, which sounded a bit like English and yet not" (14) forms the inflection point between the familiar Atlantic world and the unfamiliar Indian Ocean, and his induction into the new oceanic realm is figured as first and foremost a linguistic transition (Crane 2012).

As this suggests, in *Sea of Poppies*, language and ships are inextricably linked. In his essay "Of Fanás and Forecastles," Ghosh writes: "[W]hat really sets a sailing ship apart from other machines is that its functioning is critically dependent on language: underlying the intricate web of its riggings, is an unseen net of words" (2010b, 20). Similarly for Conrad, the language of the sea can be precisely compared to its instruments, so that words match parts of the ship and its operations with exactitude; such that "an anchor is a forged piece of iron, admirably adapted to its end, and technical language is an instrument wrought into perfection by ages of experience, a flawless thing for its purpose" (Conrad 1921, 20–21). Just as Ghosh highlights the metaphoric and practical overlap between language and ships, Conrad portrays sailor speech as a tool of the craft of sailing, of the same substantive importance as the iron-forged anchor.

Conrad serves as an example, then, of this older tradition of sea fiction.[3] Michael Greaney notes that many of Conrad's speech communities are multilingual; incidentally, in many ways the same multilingual environment of the Indian Ocean world that Ghosh depicts. However, it seems as though Conrad's fiction presupposes a radical translatability: "Conrad regarded English as the *lingua franca* of every corner of the earth; and

[3] Despite their mutual interest in sailing ships and Indian Ocean spaces, Ghosh abjures Conradian influence. The refusal is based on an ethics of representation, which fits with Ghosh's recuperative ethic of historical recovery (Desai 2004; Ghosh and Chakrabarty 2002). More specifically, he argues that the problem is not the invisibility of figures such as lascars in Conrad's work, but their inaudibility: "[N]ever does the lascar in Conrad have a voice except as some sort of maligned presence. To me, that's a failure of imagination" (Boehmer and Mondal 2012, 32). Rarely do 'native' speakers speak in Conrad's fiction, which often has recourse rather to suggestive description of the sound-patterning of foreign speech rather than its direct record (Moutet 2006). Ghosh's fiction might be thought of as motivated by a desire to do better than Conrad, with his "failure of imagination" (Boehmer and Mondal 2012, 32).

even when English is not spoken, other languages are readily translatable into English" (Greaney 2002, 19). In contrast, Ghosh disrupts a cohesive and easily comprehensible English, in ways that provide for a far more frictive reading experience. Plain style is almost the opposite of what Ghosh achieves in his evocations of sailor speech in *Sea of Poppies,* which are characterized by excess, frequent ornamentation and tautology, and humor. For instance, the speech of James Doughty, a ship's pilot and the first Anglo-Indian speaker that Zachary encounters upon entering the Hooghly, is guilty of what the leader of the lascars, Serang Ali, describes as "too muchi dumbcowing":

> Cocking his head, Zachary caught the echo of a voice booming down the gangway: 'Damn my eyes if I ever saw such a caffle of barnshooting badmashes! A chowdering of your chutes is what you budzats need. What do you think you're doing, toying with your tatters and luffing your laurels while I stand here in the sun?' (Ghosh 2008, 25)

Excess is immediately apparent in the use of both "badmash" and "budzat," identified as versions of the same word—meaning, politely, "rascal"—as well as the quantity of alliteration. While it is of course easy to understand the gist of what has been said, many of the meanings are likely to evade the reader, producing a disturbing mix of untranslatable opacity and comprehensibility.

Both Ghosh and Conrad, from their different perspectives, lament the loss of sea-language. In *The Mirror of the Sea,* Conrad describes this loss in poignant terms: "the special call of an art which has passed away is never reproduced. It is as utterly gone out of the world as the song of a destroyed wild bird" (Conrad 1921, 47). Ghosh's lament is expressed in similar conservationist terms: the loss of lascar language, as one among many forgotten languages, is figured as an extinction event. While Conrad laments a language of craft, Ghosh appears to descry the loss of a language of connectedness. Both authors therefore employ ecological language, but while Conrad expresses these sentiments in the manner of a eulogy, Ghosh often does so in the manner of comedy. His writing revels in salty language (in both senses), and is replete with puns and innuendos. However, this comedic tone functions in a manner that is both entertaining and critical, masking an overweening melancholy. As he writes in an interview about the novel, "I had to make it funny to make it bearable for myself, otherwise I wouldn't have survived it" (Boehmer and Mondal 2012, 35).

Conclusion

Sea of Poppies participates in fleshing out the idea of literary worldliness. It constructs an Indian Ocean literary world in conjunction with a fictive language, in the manner perhaps closest to that described by Eric Hayot in *On Literary Worlds.* In response to the confusion about terminologies of worldliness, Hayot draws on an older sense of that phrase, as in "the world of the novel": "Worldedness emerges most often from the collective expression—or *im*pression of the work as a whole. … World-creation happens consciously, but also in the ideological 'unconscious' of the work, not as an expression of what the work does not know, but of what it knows most deeply" (2012, 50). By linking the plain style of "craft" that characterized sea fiction's contribution to the novel with a sailing language of the Indian Ocean, the novel contributes to the "world-creation" of a southern maritime mobility (see also Mackenthun in this volume).

In addition, recognizing the reflexivity involved in the production of space involves the impingement of a particular space and history on the form of the novel. As Franco Moretti suggests, "[T]ake a form, follow it from space to space, and study the reasons for its transformations" (2005, 90). Representing the Indian Ocean poses a narrative challenge, partly due, as has been suggested, to its scale and inevitably multilingual nature. In a review of Abdul Rahman Munif's *Cities of Salt*, "Petrofiction: The Oil Encounter and the Novel," Ghosh describes the paucity of literature on the oil trade, which economically dominated the twentieth century, as compared to the many great works that commemorate the similarly dominant spice trade of an earlier period. He argues that one of the reasons for this silence is that the conventional form of the novel struggles to accommodate multilingual, heterogeneous, and transnational contexts, and suggests that the cause lies not in the differentially storied qualities of the trade, but in the nature of the storytelling (Ghosh 2005, 138):

> In the end, perhaps, it is the craft of writing itself—or rather writing as we know it today—that is responsible for the muteness of the Oil Encounter. The experiences that oil has generated run counter to many of the historical imperatives that have shaped writing over the past couple of centuries and given it its distinctive forms. The territory of oil is bafflingly multilingual, for example, while the novel, with its conventions of naturalistic dialogue, is most at home within monolingual speech communities (within nation-states, in other words). (2005, 140)

The same can certainly be said for the oceanic context, even more bafflingly multilingual. Ocean space, its multilingualism and resulting untranslatability, is a goad to experimentation in both linguistic forms and literary geographies.

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