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## Introduction—Postcolonial Oceans: Contradictions, Heterogeneities, Knowledges, Materialities

Postcolonial studies have a vested interest in oceans, their embodied and discursive, social and political, historical and ecological dimensions. They foreground histories of colonization, imperial wars, the dispossession of territories, enslavement of people, and circulation of goods and ideas, in their entanglements with contemporary postcolonial societies, substantially shaping decolonial knowledge production, postcolonial literatures, and academic discourses until today. In an interview on the third space, Homi Bhabha has pinpointed the inherent contradiction in the genesis of Western modernity: the progressive development of Western societies, individuals, and thought traditions according to ideas and values that were monumentalized as the “Enlightenment” on the one hand, and the history of the West as despotic power pursuing various forms of colonial aggression and dispossession on the other (Bhabha and Rutherford 1990). Walter D. Mignolo (2009) and Paul Gilroy (1993) have likewise defined histories of colonization and enslavement as Western modernity’s well-concealed darker side. Mignolo holds: “‘modernity’ is a European narrative that hides its darker side, ‘coloniality’. Coloniality, in other words, is constitutive of modernity—there is no modernity without coloniality” (39). To him, modernity was possible through: 1) capitalism; 2) scientific development that gave Europeans absolute control over the environment; and 3) the racial ranking of human beings and the expendability of human lives (i.e. enslaved humans) (41). Paul Gilroy stresses that enslavement is irreducibly entangled with modern capitalism, plantation slavery being “capitalism with its clothes off” (1993, 15). He has theorized the Black Atlantic—the complex legacies of the empire of enslavement—as the base matrix of

Western modernity, imperialism, racial politics, and philosophy. To him, the shared experience of the horrors of enslavement connects African diasporic cultures around the Atlantic and generates fluid and diverse Black Atlantic communities beyond national and ethnic boundaries (19).

These dark shadows of coloniality and enslavement, veiled colonial histories and legacies, cover up how colonization and displacement of Indigenous inhabitants worldwide, the colossal long-term extraction of natural resources from such areas, and the enormous and most inhuman enslavement of local inhabitants and of African people then transported to the Americas have not only devastated local populations. They have killed and accepted the death of large parts of these populations, considerably changed social, gender, political, and economic structures of said populations, realigned established territorial borders, and transformed whole landscapes through deforestation, agriculture, resource extraction, industrialization, and urbanization. The dark shadows also conceal how these entangled processes have likewise generated gigantic profits for mostly European colonizing nations, colonial agents, and business corporations that, reinvested in long-term perpetuating capitalist cycles since the beginning of economic colonialism, have produced the gigantic profits and hence all-encompassing wealth for such nations (cf. Hickel 2018). These profits and wealth yield immense economic power that is, in turn, continually invested to dominate political and economic realities and power relations in the world, which cause political and economic (and ecological) deterioration of weaker economies that happen to be, in most cases, former colonized nations and territories.<sup>1</sup> In his recent book *The Great Imperial Hangover*, Samir Puri astutely outlines how colonial empires and their politics have long-lasting legacies that “have helped to construct national identities [...] geopolitical realities and mentalities that prove hard to escape” and that still shape “the twenty-first century in profound ways through their abiding influences on present generations,” among others in terms of “matters of security, foreign policy, international aid and global commerce” (2020, 1–2).<sup>2</sup>

Oceans and rivers sailed have enabled the exploration of unknown territories, the spread of colonial empires, the trade in and transport of natural resources, goods, animals, human beings, diseases, ideas, and

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1 See, for example, the documentary films *Life and Debt* (dir. Stephanie Black, USA, 2001), *Hühnerwahnsinn* (dir. Joachim Vollenschier, Germany, 2009), and *Dead Donkeys Fear no Hyenas [Das grüne Gold]* (dir. Joakim Demmer, Sweden, Germany, Finland, 2016).

2 See, for example, Paul Gilroy outlining the implication of descendants of former enslaved people in the US in contemporary capitalist structures and ideologies in Gilroy 2010, 4–54.

knowledges. The study of the history of seas and oceans—particularly important for postcolonial perspectives is the study of the sea as a medium serving colonial exploration, settlement, enslavement, travel, resistance, extraction of resources, trade, and distribution of goods and ideas—is well established (see, for example, Buschmann 2007; Buschmann and Nolde 2018; Gilroy 1993; Hartman 2007; Klein and Mackenthun 2004; Linebaugh and Rediker 2000; Malekandathil [2010] 2015; Sharpe 2016; Weaver 2011 and 2014; Jowitt, Lambert, and Mentz 2020). Local maritime histories and cross-ocean relations in historical and contemporary perspectives were objectives of pioneering scholarly work and generated key terms that are still very much influential in the study of oceans and seas, for example “Maritime India” (Malekandathil [2010] 2015), the “Black Atlantic” (Gilroy 1993), the “Red Atlantic” (Weaver 2014), and the “Black Pacific” (Shilliam 2015). Also local and Indigenous involvements in extractational endeavours such as whaling have become a small but vibrant niche in ocean history (see Shoemaker 2014 and 2015; Russell 2012). Working against an all-encompassing Eurocentric notion of the sea as a male space are studies that look at female travel, female experience, female agency, and female governance at sea (see Creighton and Nordling 1996; Druett 1998; Grant de Pauw 1982; Gissi, Portman, and Hornidge 2018; Shellock et al. 2022; Stark 1998).

Oceans and river deltas serve as objects in the ever-increasing mass tourism industry, and were and are penetrated for exploitation of marine natural resources beside the canonical whale, such as sea cucumbers, pearls, fish, seafood, seals, and deep-sea minerals. Increasing plastic, faecal, toxic, and other wastes have polluted the deep and vast spaces of oceans (and rivers) to such an extent that this pollution is now one major aspect in our impending global environmental catastrophe. Oceans and marine spaces thus became an explicit category of study in environmental history and environmental studies (see Bolster 2006 and 2012; De Bont 2009; Gillis 2004, 2011, and 2012; Gillis and Torma 2015; Hoehler 2002; Hornidge and Antweiler 2012; Kehrt and Torma 2014). And they are an established field of study in geography (see Steinberg 2001; Peters 2014 and 2015) and maritime anthropology (see Astuti 1995; Helmreich 2011 and 2014; Schneider 2012). Likewise, studies of oceans and coasts have generated a wealth of understanding of the ecosystem processes and social-ecological system interactions to be found (see, for example, Helmreich 2009; Mack 2011; and Steinberg 2001) as well as of urban coastal dynamics (Siriwardane-de Zoysa, Low, Abdullah, Hornidge 2023). Furthermore, increasing attempts from the sociology of knowledge, social and cultural anthropology, geography, and social studies of science and technology,

very often from postcolonial critical perspectives, offer a growing insight into the cognitive, structurally determined, discursive, and power-laden processes of making sense of these ecosystems. Coastal areas, lakes, and rivers have always been inhabited environments, providing shelter, nourishment, lifeways, and relations that have generated marine cultures and knowledges (see Ingersoll 2016; D’Arcy 2006; Schneider 2012; Sharp 2002; Siriwardane and Hornidge 2016). Exceptional navigational expertise of Polynesian sailors past and present that sustained such marine cultures and their oceanic networks and that were not seldom employed to facilitate colonial endeavours brought forth diverse academic studies (see Druett 2011; Eckstein and Schwarz 2019; LaFeir 2014; Lewis [1972] 1994; Teriierooiterai 2013), while Indigenous cartographic knowledge around the world has received due academic attention as well (e.g. Woodward and Lewis 1998). Work on marine knowledges, their production, and organization enables reflection processes on human-ocean interactions (see, for example, Hornidge 2018; Gissi, Portman, and Hornidge 2018, Partelow, Haddjimichael, Hornidge 2023).

Such studies of the relations between colonial and postcolonial societies and practices, oceans and lands, oceans and humans, rejecting and/or complementing one-sided terrestrial perspectives, are nevertheless only gradually emerging. Rupert Emerson, for instance, roughly fifty years ago defined colonialism as “imposition of white rule on alien peoples inhabiting lands separated by salt water” (1969, 3), understanding salt water—in line with widespread Western ideas of seas and oceans—as separating lands, cultures, people, and ideas. In contrast, Gísli Pálsson argued twenty years later that different and isolated worlds were connected by colonial sea voyages into a “global but polarized network of power-relations” (1991, xvii). Epeli Hau’ofa (1994; 2008), introducing Indigenous Pacific epistemological perspectives and pioneering Pacifica-centred ocean studies, understands diverse Pacific islands, cultures, and environments as a network, not separated but linked by the ocean—a “sea of islands.” This notion allows a shift away from a land-based view of Pacific islands as small isolated entities towards an ocean-based, more encompassing view of oceans and islands as interrelated entities, “the conglomerations of islands with their economies and cultures” (1993, 6–7, 9; cf. Ingersoll 2016, 15). This notion is further taken up by Paul D’Arcy, who outlines the multifaceted and changing, indeed fluid, interconnections among island societies and interactions between them and their marine environments (2006). Parallelling and extending this idea, Édouard Glissant’s “archipelagic thinking” suggests a perspective on the entire world as a connected archipelago, an epistemic shift that is a counterpoint to insular thinking

and allows registering the heterogeneities and myriad entanglements and creolization processes in our globalizing world (1997, 194; cf. Glissant 2008). In Hau'ofa's and Glissant's wake, Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2004) and others have pioneered what is now established as “archipelagic studies,” focusing on island spaces and their histories and representations as well as on transoceanic spaces, histories, and representations. Such archipelagic approach is based on an ocean-centred perspective that decentralizes and decontinentalizes land-locked approaches, and unsettles established tropes of islands and sea (Stratford et al. 2011, 114; see Knopf in this volume). In due course, archipelagic American, Caribbean, and Pacific studies developed (see Cathcart 2021; Ernst and Glaser 2020; Stephens and Martínez-San Miguel 2020; Roberts and Stephens 2017; Roberts 2021), including historical, cultural, literary, and filmic perspectives, as well as studies solely focusing on islands in global history, geography, culture, and literature (see Shell 2014).

Kimberly Peters and Philip Steinberg stress the mobilities paradigm in ocean studies, and argue that oceans' dynamic force, fluidity, and complexity call for “wet ontologies,” approaches that “not merely [...] endorse the perspective of a world of flows, connections, liquidities, and becomings, but also [...] propose a means by which the sea's material and phenomenological distinctiveness can facilitate the reimagining and re-enlivening of a world ever on the move” (Steinberg and Peters 2015, 248). The nature/culture divide tended to implicate water as associated with the domain of nature, “open to control and colonization by the other” (Strathern 1980, 181). In the construed nature/culture divide, Stefan Helmreich argues, “[w]ater oscillates between natural and cultural substance, its putative materiality masking the fact that its fluidity is a rhetorical effect of how we think about ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ in the first place” (Helmreich 2011, 132). Water thus appears as natural form and “uncontainable flux,” moving “faster than culture,” as opposed to “culture often imagined in a land-based idiom grounded in the culture concept's origins in European practices and theories of agriculture and cultivation” (132); or it is perceived as materiality (nature) to be channelled by culture as opposed to being a medium of pleasure, sustenance, travel and disaster (culture) (132). In the more recent perspective of naturecultures research, social, cultural, and natural sciences collaborate in establishing the oceans and seas as a new epistemological and ontological subject of relational enquiry and care (see Helmreich 2011, 2014; Gesing et. al 2019; Collett in this volume). Critical maritime history grappled with the opposition between a fully historicized land vs. a supposedly atemporal, “ahistorical” sea that is “outside and beyond history” and began researching oceans as polymorphous

and transnational contact zones (Klein and Mackenthun 2004, 2). Indigenous “seascape epistemologies,” such as in Hawai‘i, are often approaches explicitly stressing the nexus between sea and land, and knowing the ocean, wind, and land as interconnected system (Ingersoll 2016, 6). Karin Amimoto Ingersoll explains that “seascape epistemology” is not a knowledge of the sea, but “an approach to knowing presumed on a knowledge of the sea, which tells one how to move through it, how to approach life and knowing through a visual, spiritual, intellectual, and embodied literacy of the āina (land) and kai (sea)” (5–6). Also Indigenous epistemologies on the North American Pacific coast and further inland, for example the Syilx Okanagan, understand nature, culture, sea, and land as one non-hierarchical system interconnected by networks, relations, flows, and mobilities (see Armstrong 2009; Knopf 2015).

Colonial exploration, colonization, and (forced) migration via oceans have created cultural, linguistic, and epistemic contact zones where transcultural processes, contact language varieties or “mixed languages” (Mazzoli and Sippola 2021), and pluriversal knowledges and narratives emerged, however implicated in a hierarchical power matrix (see Pratt 1991; Warnke, Stolz, and Schmidt-Brücken 2016). The imposition of colonizers’ languages constituted a vital component of the imperial project, with many Indigenous languages—and knowledges encoded in them (Ngũgĩ 1981)—becoming endangered or extinct as a result. Following that, the relatively recent field of postcolonial language studies is concerned with asking how historical relationships of power, domination, and practices of imperialism and colonialism are reflected in and can be studied through language use (see Makoni and Pennycook 2007). Postcolonial language studies are also concerned with documenting emergent and changing postcolonial languages and dialects (Bakker 2020; Perez and Sippola 2021), challenging dominant traditions of linguistic knowledge, linguistic methods, and their application to postcolonial situations (e.g. Levisen and Jogie 2015), and critically reflecting on the dominant ideas and ideologies in linguistics and/or society (e.g. Schmidt-Brücken, Schuster, and Wienberg 2016).

The sea prominently features in colonial literatures as both facilitating sea voyages and sustaining colonial imaginaries and myth-making (take, for example, such novels as Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* [1719], Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* [1726], James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Pilot* [1824] and *The Red Rover: A Tale* [1828], Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* [1837], Herman Melville’s *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* [1846] and *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* [1851], R. M. Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island* [1857], and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* [1899], which

were analysed in studies of British, Black Atlantic, and Anglophone sea fiction [Klein 2002; Mackenthun 2004; Mentz and Rojas 2017]). Melissa Gniadek looks at how oceans, seafaring, and cultural contacts through ocean travel feature in nineteenth-century women's writing, texts that do not necessarily focus on oceans and were written by women who have not experienced seafaring themselves (Gniadek 2021). In postcolonial literatures, oceans and seas often appear as lethal force enabling colonization, enslavement, and exploitation of marine resources in, for example, texts by Dionne Brand (2001), Fred D'Aguiar (1998), George Lamming (1972), and Kim Scott (2010); they might appear as a life-giving force, sometimes as a destructive force, and as life itself, into which humans and other beings are equally integrated, in, for example, novels by Patricia Grace (2001), Linda Hogan (2008), Witi Ihimaera ([1987] 2009), Eden Robinson (2000), Amitav Ghosh (2005), Lisa See (2019), and again Dionne Brand (2001) and Kim Scott (2010); or they might be represented as a devastated life force struggling with humanity's wastes and pollutants as, for example, in novels by Alexis Wright (2006) and Helon Habila (2010) (see Knopf in this volume).

And yet, oceans and seas have prompted a wealth of visualizations, be it paintings, photographs, documentary films, and feature films. While early imagery cast the sea as an overpowering and often lethal natural force (e.g. in paintings of wild seas with distressed vessels in their centre) or presented most terrifying sea monsters, whales and octopi among them, later imaginaries of the twentieth century went in opposing directions, for example with the seminal underwater documentaries by Jacques Cousteau, and sensational feature films demonizing sharks or the ocean depths. These days our children look for Marlins and Nemos in aquariums, having grown up with Disney's underwater imagery, while underwater photography of colourful coral and fish still draws scientists and scuba divers into the ocean depths, and underwater footage of sleeping whales, swarms of jellyfish, and deep-sea bioluminescent organisms (some of it computer-generated and/or in the realm of fantasy) impresses viewers in the latest ZDF co-produced TV-series *The Swarm* (2023). Such all-encompassing richness of ocean images and imaginaries has sparked academic studies of such, for example Crylen 2015, Dixon 2013, and Elias 2019.

Contradictory and heterogeneous views and ideas of the ocean are commonplace, while knowledge production on and with oceans and salt water appear to be a small but burgeoning field of multidisciplinary scholarship within the humanities, which lately has emerged as "blue humanities." "The emergence of the blue humanities," as coined by Steve Mentz, "is a belated recognition of the close relationship between modern western culture and the sea," writes John Gillis (Gillis 2013, web). The scholarly

works discussed in this introduction, looking at oceans, seas, and river deltas from the perspectives of history, colonial and postcolonial studies, sociology of knowledge and epistemological studies, cultural and social studies, anthropology, geography, environmental studies, language, literature, and media studies, indeed, could be seen as setting the stage for, or as the pioneers of, blue humanities. Recent works in this field self-consciously employ interdisciplinary approaches and the “blue” denominator, such as the special edition by Alexandra Campbell and Michael Paye *World Literature and the Blue Humanities*, which engages with recent notions and writings of and on oceans (Campbell and Paye 2020) and Steve Mentz’s book just hot off the press *An Introduction to the Blue Humanities* (2023). In his monograph *Blue Ecocriticism and the Oceanic Imperative* (2021) Sidney I. Dobrin writes an ecocritical account of our oceans that interweaves historical and scientific information, and touches upon visualization and media representation of oceans in documentary film, cartoons, comics, literature, music—all in connection with understanding the ocean and with issues of pollution, fishing, and other resource extraction. Also Melody Jue insists on pluri- and interdisciplinarity as the basis for blue humanities in her book *Wild Blue Media*:

the ocean figures as a vital confluence of overlapping theoretical approaches that deal with global climate change, indigenous cultural histories of seafaring and navigation, shipping routes and global capitalism, the alterity of marine organisms, the Middle Passage, technologies of ocean mapping and remote sensing, marine resource extraction, maritime literatures and more. Such topics usually require expertise from more than one field—for example, geography and history, literature and media—giving rise to a number of interstitial scholars who loosely identify under the umbrella of ocean humanities. (Jue 2020, 16)

And yet, Jue argues that she is not out to study the ocean as an object from a diverse field of disciplines or perspectives, but rather wishes to extend terrestrial-based media studies to include perspectives on media and mediation from within the ocean, thinking media—in her words “interface, inscription, and database” (28)—through the ocean, this echoing the methodological concept of Ingersoll’s seascape epistemology. She applies “milieu-specific analysis” to understanding media and mediation as depending on “the conditions of perception” (21) and thinks about what pressure does to the mediality and mediation of the ocean, about non-inscriptive media of liquid ink clouds, and about how the ocean can function as a fluid storage system, albeit in completely different ways than established fixed storage systems.



We want to extend the study of oceans, seas, coastal waters, and rivers within blue humanities and engage in producing, extending, circulating, and interweaving knowledge about salt water, salt water epistemologies, and salt water narratives from pluriversal epistemological, geographical, cultural, and disciplinary perspectives. Exploring the manifold heterogeneities and contradictions in this conundrum of entanglements between oceans, coastal areas, rivers, humans, animals, plants, organisms, landscapes, knowledges, ideas, literature, film, and media throughout human history in our present and possibly future, specifically from theoretical and critical postcolonial perspectives, is the objective of this volume. We do not intend to study contradictions, heterogeneities, and epistemes as theoretical concepts as such but acknowledge that histories, stories, narratives, ideas, and images of oceans, seas, coastal waters and rivers and related protocols, politics, and negotiations are seldom straight forward, uncontested, linear, and clear. Thus we wish to focus on the manifold relations and pluriversal knowledges as well as contradictory and heterogeneous notions, narratives, understandings, and images with respect to oceans in an extended sense. Most of the articles contained in this volume go back to presentations at the conference “Postcolonial Oceans: Contradictions and Heterogeneities in the Episteme of Salt Water” conducted at the University of Bremen, May 30–June 2, 2019, on behalf of the Association for Anglophone Postcolonial Studies (GAPS) and the International Association for Colonial and Postcolonial Language Studies (IACPL).

The first part of this volume, “Oceans and Knowledges,” takes up issues of marine epistemologies and knowledges, discussing how oceans have figured in the colonial and postcolonial constructions of our understanding of the world, languages, and cultures. It opens with an interview given to Rapti Siriwardane-de Zoysa by two of our conference keynote speakers, Robbie Shilliam and Nicholas Faraclas. Shilliam and Faraclas discuss their own perspectives on the conference and its main themes, introducing and commenting on many of the conversations that the entire volume contributes to, for example Indigenous knowledges and sovereignty, death-seeking Western/Eurocentric science, or thinking about oceans as connecting and relating communities that share the experience of colonization and resistance. In the second chapter, another keynote speaker, Karin Amimoto Ingersoll, presents the concept of seascape epistemology as an embodied way of knowing ourselves and our being-in-the-world inspired by the currents and waves of oceans, experienced through the practice of surfing. She shows how seascape epistemology, thinking through ocean-related concepts, perspectives, and practices, can be a potent methodology of opening up our politics, economies, and imaginations to reaffirm and

recreate plural and progressive conceptions of knowing and being. Next, Nicholas Faraclas and Carlos Rodríguez take a radical creole anti-exceptionalist stance to offer a critique of such linguistic categories as “pidgin,” “creole,” and “language” itself. Challenging the prioritization of the influence of European languages, they propose a multi-directional account of language contact as dynamic entanglement and cross-cultural connectedness that de-emphasizes European involvement and celebrates the agency of all people involved in the colonial-era contact in the Atlantic and Pacific regions. The part closes with Kerstin Knopf’s discussion of postcolonial sea fiction, outlining this new subgenre of postcolonial literature. She analyses how three novels by Fred D’Aguiar (*Feeding the Ghosts*), Dionne Brand (*At the Full and Change of the Moon*) and Kiana Davenport (*Shark Dialogues*) conceptualize the human relationship with salt water, paying attention to practices and legacies of colonization and enslavement, people’s engagement with the ocean and ocean creatures as well as marine knowledge formed through closely being with and in the ocean.

The three chapters included in the part “Oceans and Islands” take us on a journey across literary history to show how islands have been conceptualized as in-between, “both-and” spaces. Our keynote speaker Bill Ashcroft considers islands as located between the “Old” and the “New” Worlds, offering the scope for transformation from imperial expansion to postcolonial utopian futures. He focuses on two regions in particular, Oceania and the Caribbean, which most aptly demonstrate the capacity for oceanic and archipelagic thinking about the future. Ashcroft uses the writings of Epli Hau’ofa, Derek Walcott, Kamau Brathwaite, Antonio Benítez-Rojo, and others, to show the utopian hope and imagination which lies at the core of postcolonial resistance. Stefanie Mueller discusses one of Herman Melville’s lesser known works, namely “The Encantadas, or The Enchanted Isles.” In this set of ten literary sketches about the Galapagos archipelago, Melville makes use of the genre’s affordances to establish narrative authority, challenging the narratives of naturalists of his time. Expertly navigating between these literary and naturalist knowledges, as Mueller argues, the author presents a vision of the Galapagos that is both remote and accessible to his readers. Last but not least, Sebastian Jablonski discusses the literary depiction of Pitcairn Islanders in John Shillibeer’s (1817) *Narrative of the Briton’s Voyage to Pitcairn’s Island*, which presents them as a mythical “both-and,” Anglo-Tahitian community. Jablonski applies the critical postcolonial lens to discuss the portrayal of the Islanders’ English proficiency, Anglican religious piety, exemplary morality, and loyalty to the British Empire, arguing that it constitutes an act of epistemic violence.

The part “Oceans and Ports” examines the role played by port towns in global maritime history from anti-Eurocentric, postcolonial perspectives. Varsha Patel draws on archival work, local folklore, memories, and material remnants to piece together the story of sailing routes and trade networks along the Bhavnagar Coast in Gujarat, West India. The region of the Gulf of Cambay with the former princely state of Bhavnagar exemplifies the inadequacy of imperial record keeping and Eurocentric grand historical narratives in describing the small-scale, regional, and coastal trading networks that form an important component of the Indian Ocean history. Ulrike Schmieder interrogates the silence of museums and monuments in the port towns of Barcelona and Cadiz (Spain) and Havana and Matanzas (Cuba) on the subjects of human trafficking, enslavement, and anticolonial resistance of the enslaved populations. She shows how these elements of the history of seafaring nations are completely or partly ignored, marginalized, or treated in ways that suppress any reference to racism as the legacy of enslavement in the memorial cityscapes of these ports. She then discusses the need and ways to decolonize maritime history. In the final chapter of this part, Lilli Hasche and Janne Jensen take us on a tour of the docklands of Bremen—the city that hosted our conference—to discover its involvement in the making of colonialism. By discussing the construction of what has now become Bremen’s hip modern district of Überseestadt, they show how studying local infrastructures of colonial port cities can help us better understand the colonial project as a global phenomenon, and interrogate the trajectories of asymmetrical power relations that still exist today.


The part “Oceans and Identity” contains five contributions that chart the influences of maritime spaces on peoples, their identities, and cultures, especially in the context of diaspora. Gigi Adair’s article explores Black diasporic history and culture through two exemplary literary pieces, namely Awake Emezi’s *Freshwater* (2018) and *The Sacred River* (2014) by Syl Cheney-Coker, in the light of the concepts of archipelagic thought and re-continentalization, following Édouard Glissant. It simultaneously interrogates the ways of reading and thinking continental paradigms. Rethinking and recalibration is also at the heart of Frank Schulze-Engler’s piece, which analyses the seminal East African novel *The Dragonfly Sea* (2019) by Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor to explore Africa’s role in a multipolar world replete with complexities of cultures, memories, and relations. Without the ever-dominating presence of the West, how is the so-called “Global South” entangled in the struggle for power and hegemony? And how are the dominant/dominated, West/rest polarities dismantled in the novel? These are some of the key issues that the article explores. Memories and


relations in connection to the sea is a dialogue that is carried further in Arnab Sinha's article. His analysis of a lesser-known novel, *Six Yards of Silk* (2011) by Mallika Krishnamurthy, focuses on Indian immigrants settled in New Zealand. The characters are studied against the backdrop of forces that often define lives in general and diasporic lives in particular, namely alienation and bonding, death and intimacy. While living in the diaspora contains its own tug of war of forces defining peoples' lives and identities, the journey before such life also has its fair share of turbulences. Ocean and ocean journeys are associated with dislocation and relocation, anxieties and hopes in immigrants undertaking the journey. Iris-Aya Laemmerhirt's article is an exploration of the ocean's contribution to formation of identities in Vietnamese refugees as is manifested in Thi Bui's novel *The Best We Could Do* (2017). It connects refugee experiences with the larger history of Vietnam, keeping migratory sea voyages in focus. This part ends with the theme of resistance, which forms the core of ideas that shatter, rethink, and rebuild established paradigms and epistemologies that tend to confine and dominate. Stephen Henighen's article explores Angolan history and culture and its resistance to Anglophone postcolonial interpretations through the study of the Creole class. Here the ocean and the coastal regions channelled the emergence of the neo-Creole national imaginary that rendered the role of colonial power secondary. The formation and consolidation of creole identity is explored through three Angolan works, namely the novels of Pepetela and Ondjaki titled *A Gloriosa Família* (1997) and *AvóDezanove e o Secreto do Soviético* (2008) respectively, and Maria João Ganga's film *Na Cidade Vazia* (2004).

Discussion on ocean spaces remain incomplete without exploring them as sites of disjunctive violence against humans and nature and without investigating political, historical, and environmental responsibility. The final part on "Oceans and Responsibility" includes contributions that expose the vulnerability of human lives and their inextricable attachment to oceans. Rozena Maart's article analyses Europe and the West's perverse interest and gaze on Black bodies as they arrive on European shores, dangling between stages of being alive and dead. Maart analyses newspaper reports from prominent Western media houses that reflect Western society's racist phobia of African bodies, and simultaneously situates such enquiry in the larger context of Black consciousness and Pan-Africanist critique. Sukla Chatterjee continues the discussion on the legitimacy of refugee bodies and their ordeals in the sea through her article that focuses on the precarity of maritime spaces, as experienced by refugees during sea migration. Focusing on the plight of African refugees on their journey to Europe and the Rohingya refugees, her article explores


the impact of the encounter between humans and seas and the state of extreme vulnerability in which refugees find themselves on rickety boats as they embark on what may as well be their final voyage. The article focuses on different themes of as-told-to refugee narratives through Melissa Fleming’s book on the experiences of the Syrian refugee Doaa Al Zamel, *A Hope More Powerful Than the Sea* (2017), the Rohingya refugee Habiburrahman’s experience as narrated to Sophie Ansel, titled *First, They Erased Our Name* (2019), and the Afghan refugee Gulwali Passarlay’s autobiographical narrative documented by Nadene Ghouri, titled *The Lightless Sky* (2015), to study the fearsome maritime spaces through the affects embedded in such narratives. Marlena Tronicke’s article continues the conversation through the analysis of the BBC television crime drama and historical fiction series *Taboo*, which reminds us that salt water is a signifier of colonial power and death. While various aspects of Victorian England are up for discussion, one needs to be reminded that this was the era during which Britain’s imperial and enslaving agenda gained great momentum. Enslavement has not been the only aspect to add to the lethality of the sea, but the salt water, historically, has continued to be the grave of people and their histories—a fact which will continue to resurface time and again to haunt the consciousness of an imperialist nation. Our lifetime is experiencing an intense and intricate play of power, politics, and environment around the oceans, in which conflicts leave a lasting imprint on the ecology. Tanimomo Oluseun’s article explores the petrofiction *Oil on Water* (2010) by Helon Habila to address this urgent topic and add another dimension to the concept of wasted lives. While violence runs as a connecting thread through this segment of articles, Oluseun’s piece seamlessly connects violence on human lives to the violence committed upon the ecosystem in the age of petroleum modernity. The segment ends with an optimistic touch through keynote Anne Collett’s article on understanding the biological and cultural ecologies of coral reefs through the works of two notable postcolonial poets and activists, Judith Wright and Kamau Brathwaite. For a planet plagued with conflicts and violence, reading the coral reefs is a step toward rebuilding the broken relationship between human and non-human world, as Collett argues.

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