SEA NARRATIVES

Cultural Responses to the Sea, 1600–Present

Edited by

CHARLOTTE MATHIESON

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Introduction: The Literature, History and Culture of the Sea, 1600–Present

Charlotte Mathieson

The sea has its paths too, though water refuses to take and hold marks […] Sea roads are dissolving paths whose passage leaves no trace beyond a wake, a brief turbulence astern.

> Robert Macfarlane (*The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 88)

The wakes of ships and canoes that have crossed it have left no permanent mark on its waters. But if we voyaged in a New 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, looking up to the canopy of the sea's surface above us and had a sort of time-exposure vision, we would find the tracks a closely woven tapestry of lines.

> Greg Dening ('Performing on the Beaches of the Mind: An Essay', *History and Theory*, 41:1 (2002): 1–24, p. 2)

Macfarlane's and Dening's words signal a sea change in recent criticism. If for many years the sea appeared as a blank space in the cultural and critical imagination, then a recent surge of interest has come to assert the histories and geographies that re-centre the sea as an active,

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vital presence. From a range of critical perspectives, a 'new wave of tha-lassography' has reasserted the significance of the sea in cultural and social theory; no longer positioned as a peripheral 'other' to the land or a 'blank' space outside of human spatial relations, the sea has been re-centred as a site of history, geography and cultural activity.[1] Recent works have studied the 'human geographies' of the ocean, worked to envisage 'the sea as social space', and explored the 'cultural seascape'; meanwhile others have sought to historicise the cultural presence of the sea, recovering forgotten and interconnected traces of the sea across diverse cultural forms.[2]

This book contributes to these debates by seeking to trace another kind of 'sea path': the cultural narratives forged by, through and around the sea. The impulse to represent the sea is resonant across historical periods and cultures, and has inspired a varied corpus of 'sea narratives' encom-passing letters, diaries, films, newspapers, novels, poems, plays, scientific and political documents, material artefacts and travel writing. These forms have captured the diverse ways in which humans interact with the sea, from representing it as a space of danger and the unknown, a space of pos-sibility and potential, and a site of conflict and contest. In studies to date, sea narratives have often been drawn upon in historical and cultural criti-cism, providing a rich resource for understanding the diverse relationships between humans and the sea; others have studied the idea of narrative by

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[1] Philip E. Steinberg, 'Foreword: On Thalassography', in Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters, eds, *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. xiii–xvii, p. xvi.

[2] Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters, *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean*; Tricia Cusack, ed., *Framing the Ocean, 1700 to the Present: Envisaging the Sea as Social Space* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); Mike Brown and Barbara Humberstone, eds, *Seascapes: Shaped by the Sea* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); see also Philip E. Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). On the cultural presence of the ocean, see Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750–1840,* trans. Jocelyn Phelps (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994); Barry Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and its Peoples, 8000 BC–AD 1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Kären Wigen, eds, *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007); David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (London: Penguin Allen Lane, 2011); John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion, 2011); Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, eds, *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

taking a distinct genre—the novel, poetry, travel writing—and explored the sea's effects upon its development. But none have sought to take a cross-genre and cross-cultural perspective that centres the very question of what is a sea narrative. In what ways does it make sense to speak of the 'sea narrative' as a form? What draws together this diverse corpus of material and makes it distinctive? And how might we better understand and conceptualise the relationship between narrative and the sea: how do narratives not only represent the sea, but also find their very forms shaped, challenged, reinvented, in the process?

This collection starts from the impulse to foreground the relationship between the sea and cultural narration; it seeks to centre this as the focal point of, rather than the backdrop to, its enquiry. It investigates the sea narrative across a variety of modes of cultural production, and explores both the diverse ways in which the sea has been narrated, and the ways in which the sea has, in turn, had a demonstrable effect upon—shaped, challenged, reinvented—those narrative modes too. From inter- and cross-disciplinary perspectives, covering a range of geographical spaces and historical periods, this collection argues that the sea stimulates innovative modes of narration that, in various ways, foreground the *process* of narrating the sea as central to their representation.

To this end, the chapters that follow have been selected for the perspectives they pose on the very idea of the sea narrative, and what this tells us more broadly about the relationship between the sea and cultural production. Some of the chapters here discern the ways in which writers generate new textual strategies to narrate unfamiliar encounters at sea; they identify the persistence and adaptation of longstanding mythologies of the sea; and they read specific sea spaces that constitute rich points of intersection within narratives. Others consider the impact of different sea spaces—ports, beaches, ships—as effecting the move into liminal narrative sites, or figure the sea as an imaginative 'space beyond' the land where ideas are projected and coalesce into new discursive configurations.

In what follows of this introduction, I explore the two intersecting facets of this collection's exploration of 'culture': the relationship between the sea narrative and modes of cultural production; and reading sea narratives in (trans)national contexts. From this assessment, the idea of the sea narrative that this collection works with will be traced, along with the ways in which it contributes to a growing body of scholarly work that has assessed the relationship between the sea and culture.

WHAT IS A SEA NARRATIVE? CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND THE SEA

The relationship between the sea and culture has risen to prominence in social and cultural criticism over the last 20 years or so; as Kären Wigen succinctly writes, 'No longer outside time, the sea is being given a history, even as the history of the world is being retold from the perspective of the sea.'[3] From the standpoint of social geography, scholars have moved to assert the sea as a socially constructed space—'simultaneously an arena wherein social conflicts occur and a space shaped by these conflicts'— and have sought, like Philip Steinberg, to construct 'a holistic geographical accounting of human interactions with the sea' that understands the 'ocean as a space that, like land, shapes and is shaped by social and physical processes'.[4] A holistic geography of the kind that Steinberg calls for thus starts from the premise of understanding the sea as a space that is not just used by society but that figures as an interactive component within it. So too does this invite a nuanced understanding of the role of cultural representation, recognising that the cultural sphere does not simply reflect ideas about the sea, but actively shapes and reconfigures what the ocean *is*: as Steinberg writes, 'the stories we tell about the sea […] contribute to the ocean assemblage'.[5]

The symbiotic relationship between the sea and culture is incisively established in seminal works by Barry Cunliffe and John Mack, whose far-reaching studies take into account a broad fabric of human existence, the social and spatial, as it resonates within and across sea and land. Cunliffe's expansive consideration of 8000 years of human history along the Atlantic coast enquired into the interactions of physical, human and cultural geographies, and initiated questions about how cultures have historically perceived the ocean and shaped their identities around it.[6] Mack's more recent cultural history of the sea has explored 'the variety of ways in which people

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[3] Kären Wigen, 'Introduction: Oceans of History', *American Historical Review*, 111:3 (2006): 717–21, p. 717.

[4] Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean*, p. 10.

[5] Philip E. Steinberg, 'Mediterranean Metaphors: Travel, Translation and Oceanic Imaginaries in the "New Mediterraneans" of the Arctic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean', in Anderson and Peters, *Water Worlds*, pp. 23–37, p. 23.

[6] Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*. John R. Gillis's *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012) undertakes similar work in the context of the coast, covering 100,000 years of seaside civilisation.

"inhabit" the sea'; how human beings 'interact because of it, navigate their course across it, live on and around it'.[7] Mack writes that 'the sea, then, is not a single conception but often has a kind of cultural geography associated with its construction'.[8] Continuing in this vein, scholars such as David Lambert and Miles Ogborn have headed a burgeoning field of historical geographies of the sea that seeks to rethink the subject from the perspective of the ocean.[9]

If such works have established a framework for considering the relationship between the sea and culture, then others have focused more specifically on the resonances of the sea in particular spheres of cultural production. The field of travel writing research has contributed much to this discussion with richly interdisciplinary and typically transnational studies of sea-writings in diverse oceanic contexts; studies of regions such as the Pacific, for example, have shown how the writing of exploration and discovery narrated and created the sea through discursive contexts of science and observation.[10] This is complemented by literary works such as Margaret Cohen's *The Novel and The Sea* (2012), one of several books to hone in upon the relationship between the sea and literature, her work charting a novelistic trajectory of sea adventure fiction, while in *Sea-Mark: The Metaphorical Voyage, Spenser to Milton* (1997), Philip Edwards has shown how the meta-

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[7] Mack, *The Sea*, p. 13. Likewise in David Abulafia's *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* the interaction between human and physical geography is at the fore, focused through the Mediterranean.

[8] Mack, *The Sea*, p. 89.

[9] See David Lambert, Luciana Martins and Miles Ogborn, 'Currents, Visions and Voyages: Historical Geographies of the Sea', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 32:3 (2006): 479–93; this field-formative essay provides an indicative insight into the key developments and texts that have emerged in recent years.

[10] On travel writing of the Pacific Ocean, see for example, Jonathan Lamb, *Preserving the Self in the South Seas, 1680–1840* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Nicholas Thomas, *In Oceania: Visions, Artifacts, Histories* (London: Duke University Press, 1997); Paul Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World, 1768–1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Sea and ocean voyages are also prominent in works such as Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert and Ivette Romero-Cesareo, eds, *Women at Sea: Travel Writing and the Margins of Caribbean Discourse* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Innes M. Keighren, Charles W. J. Withers and Bill Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773–1859* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Jas Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés, eds, *Voyages and Visions: Toward a Cultural History of Travel* (London: Reaktion, 1999); Tony Ballantyne, ed., *Science, Empire and the European Exploration of the Pacific* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004); and Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst, eds, *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

phor of the voyage resonates throughout Renaissance literature; Bernhard Klein's *Fictions of the Sea: Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature and Culture* (2002) also provides a rich contribution to the field in exploring the connections between literature and other sea-writings that have shaped British histories of the sea.[11] The visual arts also provide a rich resource, with a focus on how art is 'not merely illustrative but constitutive' of core thematic ideas about the sea, while in the sphere of film and TV studies work on sea spaces such as the shoreline has shown how such sites can have a 'narrative, aesthetic and ideological significance'.[12]

These works establish a productive framework for thinking about the relationship between the sea and culture. So too have they established a familiarity with the historical trajectory of the sea's cultural presence, and the persistent tropes that recur throughout cultural representations of the sea—tropes which influence and are contributed to by the chapters that follow, and thus bear initial consideration here. The starting point of many social and cultural studies of the sea has been the recognition that, for much of Western history, the sea has featured as unknown and mysterious, viewed from the land as an 'othered', often feared space: Mack writes that 'the sea was as much somewhere to be endured as somewhere to be explored in the quest for distant coasts and passages', and Alain Corbin has shown that until around 1750, the sea and its beaches were

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[11] Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and The Sea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Philip Edwards, *Sea-Mark: The Metaphorical Voyage, Spenser to Milton* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997). See also Robert Foulke, *The Sea Voyage Narrative* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002); Philip Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); John Peck, *Maritime Fiction: Sailors and the Sea in British and American Novels, 1719–1917* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Bernhard Klein, ed., *Fictions of the Sea: Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature and Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002).

[12] Cusack, *Framing the Ocean*, p. 16; Brady Hammond and Sean Redmond, 'This is the Sea: Cinema at the Shoreline', *Continuum: A Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 27:5 (2013): 601–2, p. 601. On artistic representations, see also Tricia Cusack, ed., *Art and Identity at the Water's Edge* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012); Christiana Payne, *Where the Sea Meets the Land: Artists on the Coast in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Bristol: Sansom and Co., 2007); Carl Thompson, ed., *Shipwreck in Art and Literature: Images and Interpretations from Antiquity to the Present Day* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Christine Riding and Richard Johns, *Turner and the Sea* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2013); and Geoff Quilley, *Empire to Nation: Art, History and the Visualization of Maritime Britain 1768–1829* (New Haven: Yale University Press and Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2011). On film, see also other issues in the *Continuum: A Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* special issue on 'Cinema at the Shoreline' (27:5).

sites of repulsion and fear.[13] The novelty and wonder of early explorations, as well as the turn to divine agency to make sense of new sights, is evident in Michael Harrigan's chapter in this collection on early modern French voyages in the Atlantic. Meanwhile the early nineteenth-century narratives of war captivity that Elodie Duché discusses here are located within a conceptualisation of the sea as a space to be feared, Duché noting that this nourished the cultural appetite for stories of capture at sea.

Over time, fear of the ocean shifted to a more benign, empty imagining of the sea as a 'great void' beyond human society, merely an empty or blank space to be crossed—epitomised in the oft-quoted lines from Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*, where the sea appears as 'a perfect and absolute blank!'[14] Many of the chapters here gesture towards the ways in which historically, the sea has been idealised as an empty space where new ideas can be forged away from land. This is a theme which emerges most strongly in Eva-Maria Stolberg's chapter, providing an account of the persistence of the great void in the narration of the Russian Arctic; here the sea appears as a blank space that can be crafted as 'a cultural metaphor for explorers' dreams', a meeting point between ideas of ecology, technology and human progress. This and other contributions in this volume show the sea to be, as in the epigraph to this chapter, 'a closely woven tapestry of lines', full of sea paths that constitute its rich and vital presence.

If the sea and the land were historically positioned as separate from one another, then the coast has figured as a liminal, transitional space: 'an in-between space in an in-between space', as Dening writes, and Mack concurs that 'the beach is an ambiguous place [...] it is a neutral space, neither properly terrestrial nor yet thoroughly maritime, awaiting a metamorphic role'.[15] The coast, as Anna Ryan's powerful exploration has shown, is 'an environment where an awareness of spatial experience is heightened', and where there is 'a sense of unceasing mobility [...] Nothing is static. Nothing remains the same.'[16] This sense of duality is central to its cultural appeal, and Corbin writes of how the first rise to prominence and admiration of the coast resided in a duality of perception: 'the sea became

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[13] Mack, *The Sea*, p. 16; Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean*, p. 99; Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, Chap. 1.

[14] Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark*, ed. Martin Gardiner (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 56. On the 'great void' see Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean*, pp. 113–24.

[15] Dening, 'Performing on the Beaches of the Mind', p. 8; Mack, *The Sea*, p. 165.

[16] Anna Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea: Coastal Explorations of Landscape, Representation and Spatial Experience* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 7, 9.

a refuge and a source of hope because it inspired fear. The new strategy for seaside holidays was to enjoy the sea and experience the terror it inspired, while overcoming one's personal perils.'[17]

The following chapters draw on these themes, exploring the liminality of the coast as a site of social possibility and conflict, and as a space where the fragility of ecology in the face of modernity becomes visible. With regard to the social codes of the coast, Isaac Land posits the 'tolerant coast' as a site where social mores take more tolerant forms, epitomised here by his reading of the west/'left' coast of the USA. Gemma Goodman historicises these notions in her analysis of gender codes at the shore, reading the need to 'escape' to the coast within a gendered frame that nuances the broader discursive strategies through which the coast is constructed. For Roberta Gefter Wondrich the liminal spaces of shores, islands and peninsulas form evocative sites in the Irish novel where the nation's history is reconceived within the present historical moment. Barbara Franchi and Sayandeb Chowdhury take us towards a consideration of the ecological crises that become visible at the shore, Franchi beginning her chapter with A. S. Byatt's 'Sea Story' (2013) in which the coast reveals 'the destructive impact of human activities on the sea environment'. In Chowdhury's chapter, this notion is drawn out in analysis of the depiction of the beach in the film *Yugant* (1995) which draws on tropes of 'the beach's role as a marginal space of isolation, exclusivity, immanence' and also figures the coast as a powerful site from which to view the ecological disaster of the ocean.

Out at sea, the ship has featured as a powerful site where new social codes coalesce. Since Michel Foucault's exploration of the ship as the 'heterotopia par excellence'—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'—critics have recognised the enduring cultural presence of the ship-space.[18] Ships thread their way throughout the chapters here: Gefter Wondrich writes about the ship as a metonymic space through which Ireland's history is negotiated, while Goodman's exploration of gender at the coast concludes on board a vessel, where the notion of the ship as

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[17] Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, p. 62. See also Gillis, *The Human Shore*, on the significance and shaping of coastal cultures.

[18] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias' (1967), trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16:1 (1984): 22–7, p. 27. See also Gregory Votolato's *Ship* (Objekt series) (London: Reaktion, 2011) which isolates the context of the ship by way of exploring the interaction between sea and land, reading the ship as an everyday object that influences the way we live; and Mack's chapter on 'Ships as Societies' in *The Sea*, pp. 136–64.

a masculinised space becomes imaginatively re-crafted. The social codes of the ship resonate throughout Harrigan's exploration, as the rituals and conventions structuring sea life unfold, themes which are taken up again in Janet Remmington's discussion which explores the micro-society of the ship through the racialised dimension of South African writer Solomon Plaatje's experience, offering a nuanced reading which reminds us that the ship is not entirely a space apart from the social codes of land. The ship as physical object is a pertinent feature in Stolberg's analysis, where icebreakers pushing through the Arctic frontier are one formation of the resonant imagery of the Russian Arctic, while in Duché's chapter the ship-as-object takes the form of ship models that were built by captive prisoners of war.

Identifying and discussing these themes posits a valid and useful approach and, as is clear from this short survey, the chapters in this collection situate themselves in response to and in dialogue with indicative contextual frameworks. Yet this collection begins with the premise that there is value to be found in turning away from a thematic or genre-focused approach as the organising principle of studying the sea. Although the chapters here cross through and contribute to dominant cultural themes, they have been chosen first and foremost for the way in which they pose new perspectives on the idea of the sea narrative. Both individually and as a collection, the chapters are brought together here in order to provoke questions about the processes of narrating the sea, the possibilities that narrating the sea unfolds, and how and in what ways we can talk about the idea of the sea narrative as a grouping which is both broad in its generic inclusions and yet distinct in its fundamental principles.

Many of the contributions here self-consciously foreground the sea narrative as process, posing pertinent questions about what makes a sea narrative and how we might define it. The collection commences with Michael Harrigan's exploration of early modern French travel narratives within the Atlantic basin that seeks to understand what these texts reveal about the process of narrating the sea encounter. Harrigan investigates how human displacement across the ocean acts as a 'generator of narrative', opening up questions about the interplay between the maritime world and textual production as crafted on the sea voyage. Harrigan also considers the networks of narrative circulation within which these texts are situated, considering relationships between narrator and reading public, and between circulating texts, reading the sea narrative as 'a repository for a multiplicity of other narratives within the circuits of early modern maritime communications'.

The sea as a generator of narrative emerges also in Janet Remmington's chapter on South African writer Solomon Plaatje's voyage to England in 1914. Here the sea narrative becomes politicised as a space through which Plaatje contributed to debates on South Africa and Empire by engaging with 'the representational potential of the unbounded ocean […] to unsettle social dynamics and to open imaginative possibilities'. What is especially interesting in Remmington's account is the way in which the sea narrative emerges as a prominent narratorial mode in what was otherwise intended as a political newspaper article: amidst a host of political issues, 'the author's sea narrative became the focus' Remmington writes, suggesting the sea as an effective generator of narrative style. In turn, too, Remmington shows how the sea narrative becomes a strategic literary force, deployed by Plaatje to support the political aims of the article; the sea narrative thus takes on additional meaning, having wider significance beyond the oceanic realm.

Eva-Maria Stolberg's technological account of the Russian Arctic Ocean in the twentieth century locates the sea as a site where socio-political narratives of environment, technology, and modernity coalesce: as Soviet propaganda 'turned the former icy backwater into a space at the forefront of Soviet technological modernization', the sea came to serve as 'a site for inventing Russia as a "northern nation"'. The sea narrative is thus regenerated by new technologies of the ocean, suggesting that there is a symbiosis between modern means of negotiating the sea, and contemporary means of narrating it. What also emerges distinctly in Stolberg's chapter is the extent to which the sea is produced through and by socio-cultural representation: while the processes Stolberg relates represent an especially self-conscious rendering of the production of the sea, the chapter serves as a useful analysis of the often more subtle ways in which the sea space is crafted and manufactured to political and social ends.

These three chapters also begin to direct our attention towards the diversity of narrative forms that come into view in considering the idea of the sea narrative, and indeed it is a central premise of this collection that the corpus of the sea narrative works within and across a broad range of cultural forms—from the etching onto the bark of a tree, in Harrigan's chapter, to contemporary corporate policy documents, in Land's. The studies here are suggestive in their reassessment of 'low' culture—capturing the experiences of those who lived and worked on the sea—as well as exploring how such narratives productively intersect with 'high' culture of professional writers and artists. Duché in particular attests to the thematic

and methodological importance of what she terms a 'holistic perspective on the visual, textual and material culture of the sea'. In her reading, cultural forms as diverse as prisoners' manuscripts, songs, sketches and ship models are read as narratives that are illuminating in showing the persistence of the sea in the imagination of captive prisoners of the Napoleonic Wars: taken together, they show 'the shaping force of maritime outlooks and the diverse emotions that prisoners placed in aquatic landscapes to articulate their dislocation'. It is by drawing together a rich canvas of materials that, Duché shows us, we can come to understand the persistent cultural importance of the sea as a generator of narrative, even for those imprisoned inland.

Isaac Land's chapter, 'The Tolerant Coast' also invokes questions about what is a sea narrative, suggesting that reading the history of the coast is also a way to 'complicate what we receive as a sea narrative'. Land's discussion of the tolerant coast gestures towards the second way in which the authors here challenge the idea of the sea narrative, which is through situating the coast as a site that provokes new narrative possibilities. Land approaches this through the concept of 'coastal exceptionalism', interrogating such ideas as permissiveness, diversity and innovation at two coastal sites, the Levant and Silicon Valley. The discussion encompasses a thematic grasp of the coastal zone but also initiates inquiries into the modes and means through which these themes are narrated, from essays on the Levant that interweave autobiography with political and cultural analysis, to mainstream news articles on Silicon Valley. Threaded into a narrative of the tolerant coast, these unexpected documents also become sea narratives of sorts, providing their own unique perspectives on the ocean space and its role in the cultural imaginary.

In Gemma Goodman's chapter on Daphne du Maurier's fiction the idea of coastal exceptionalism can also be seen to resonate. Here the coastal site becomes a space of narrative possibility in enabling female characters to negotiate alternative identities to socially inscribed gender roles, and Goodman particularly foregrounds how 'the sea functions as a space of possibility for such an escape'. Yet if the coast is a space of narratorial possibility insofar as gender roles are concerned, the broader discursive framework of Goodman's chapter reminds us that coasts are not necessarily the 'free' sites they might appear to be. Echoing the themes of cultural production and manufacture identified in Stolberg's analysis, Goodman discusses how Cornwall's coast has been culturally produced via discourses that privilege 'the romantic and picturesque' to create 'a simplified and

attractive version of place', while obscuring from view other facets of history and lived experience, a narrative which serves to locate Cornwall as peripheral to the British nation.

Goodman's discussion gestures towards the imperial histories that have been prominent in shaping narratives of the sea, and this theme is taken up by Gefter Wondrich's chapter where the idea of the sea narrative is rethought through engagement with the past in the contemporary Irish historical novel. Gefter Wondrich looks first to the relative absence of the sea narrative in the Irish fiction tradition, and then to how its presence is becoming reasserted in rewritings of the past: 'contemporary fiction', she argues, 'is increasingly turning to the sea as an immensely resonant semantic and cultural reservoir'. Drawing on Margaret Cohen's Bakhtinian concept of 'chronotopes of the sea', Gefter Wondrich reveals a path of sea narratives running through the contemporary Irish novel, taking into consideration questions of national history, cultural memory and the acts of narrating such themes; she ends with a novel that 'features the sea voyage as a kind of analogue to the feat of literary writing itself'.

If Gefter Wondrich concludes by considering the monoglossia of sea narratives, then Franchi's work is also concerned with the structure of the novel as it encompasses diverse narrative forms in its narration of the sea. In a reading of two of A. S. Byatt's fictions, Franchi foregrounds the process of sea narration via a consideration of the rich intertextuality that comprises Byatt's representations of the sea: the seas represented in these narratives 'are spaces created by numerous layers of intertextual connections, across texts, time and space', resulting, Franchi writes, in 'a veritable ocean of sea images which takes the reader on a journey through nineteenth-century and ancient myths of the sea'. These stories of the sea are thus themselves a 'sea of stories'. This narratorial intertextuality becomes a space of possibility, Franchi argues, leading Byatt to pose questions about the histories—in particular the history of colonialism—that have played out upon the oceans.

The interconnections between the process of narration, the sea as opening up new narrative possibilities, and the interplay between diverse narrative forms are thoughtfully interwoven in Sayandeb Chowdhury's contribution on the Indian film *Yugant*. The only chapter here to analyse film media, Chowdhury situates the film as thematically important in its 'early and prophetic exposition of the idea of the Anthropocene', and identifies how the film utilises the representation of the sea as a space through which ecological disaster is foretold, ending with an image of 'climactic and catastrophic denouement' as the oil-burdened sea catches fire.

Yet Chowdhury also uses this reading to foreground the question of what a sea narrative is, arguing that the film is resistant to generic categorisation and instead demands to be read as 'primarily a narrative of the Sea' that can be situated within a historical trajectory of sea narratives stretching back to the *Odyssey*.

Chowdhury leaves us with a final thought on the narration of the sea: the persistence of the 'cultural memory of the sea as a complex motif of opposing factors' which is appropriated in the present moment, as well as 'the sea's continuing role as a signifier of the human condition'. As the chapters make clear, across historical periods and civilisations the sea has persisted as a significant site in the cultural imagination, around which societies shape their identities; but its role in that cultural history has been not only to be represented, but also to inspire, challenge and re-craft the very forms through which that representation occurs. If there is any unifying definition that we might give to the sea narrative, then, it is that at its core is an ongoing, fluid, renegotiation between the sea and the process of narration.

Transnational Sea Spaces

The second cultural consideration that arises in this collection is the question of nationality and culture: the decision to include a broad, although by no means inclusive, selection of cultural perspectives, and the ways in which the chapters each respond to and reflect upon their own national and transnational positioning in the crafting of the sea narrative.

The justification for comparative, transnational studies is richly elucidated in the context of contemporary ocean socio-cultural studies. Cunliffe's *Facing the Ocean* (2001) first expounded the necessities of reading oceanic cultures as drawn together across nationalities by their shared sea experiences more than by their national contexts: people on the Atlantic shore, he writes, were 'in many ways remote from neighbours by land yet easily linked to others by the sea'.[19] Studies since have sought to theorise this view recognising, as Kären Wigen writes, that 'maritime social-cultural history as an analytical project requires an expansive spatial vision, extending not only from the ships to the docks but bridging multiple regions of the ocean and including littorals and their hinterlands as well'.[20] Such a stance is necessitated when considering, as Steinberg

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[19] Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*, p. viii.
[20] Bentley, Bridenthal and Wigen, *Seascapes*, p. 12.

does, the importance of the ocean in the move towards globalization: 'it is difficult', he writes, 'to overstate the role of the ocean in the rise of the modern world-system', and his study demonstrates the inherent interconnectedness of the world's oceans.[21] Cusack adds that, today, 'Western and non-Western cultures remain imbricated and […] the ocean itself may be viewed as a space that connects and transposes places and cultures'.[22]

This perspective has informed cultural studies of the sea, too. As John Mack writes, 'The history of any one sea or ocean quickly becomes the history of others':

> To explore the range of cultural experience of the seas we need to move beyond the confines of any individual sea or oceanic system. In a world where Eurocentric preoccupations have found their way to the very heart of historical thinking, an attention to oceans in a wider context immediately opens up a globalized perspective.[23]

Mack's study is evident both of the benefits of such a framework, and of the challenges and nuances required in such a reading, and he illustrates the way in which a cultural reading must incorporate both detailed attention to distinct national contexts, while providing productive points of transnational comparison.[24] This collection starts with a similar contention that the spatial vision should not be restricted by geographical locale or oceanic region, and aims to contribute to the wealth of recent ocean studies that have usefully drawn on such a framework.[25] *Sea Narratives* brings transnational approaches to the literary and cultural sphere, reading the maritime contexts of France, Britain, America and India both alongside and in rela-

[21] Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean*, p. 8. See also Philip de Souza, *Seafaring and Civilisation: Maritime Perspectives on World History* (London: Profile, 2005).

[22] Cusack, *Framing the Ocean*, p. 3.

[23] Mack, *The Sea*, p. 20.

[24] See also Jerry H. Bentley, 'Sea and Ocean Basins as Frameworks of Historical Analysis', *Geographical Review*, 89:2 (April 1999): 215–24, which considers issues of transnational interaction posed by centring oceanic regions as focal points of study, while arguing that such an approach is richly productive for the understanding of large-scale historical processes. A transnational approach is especially evident in the field of travel writing studies, where travellers move across and between ocean zones and regions.

[25] Bentley, Bridenthal and Wigen, *Seascapes*; Cusack, *Framing the Ocean*; Anderson and Peters, *Water Worlds*; Thompson, *Shipwreck in Art and Literature*; Brown and Humberstone, *Seascapes*; Peter N. Miller, ed., *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013); Gillis, *The Human Shore*.

tion to lesser-studied zones such as South Africa and the Russian Arctic. Although the chapters here were chosen to reflect a range of national cultural experiences, it is recognised that the collection is not exhaustive in its range: the Atlantic, Arctic and Indian oceans, English Channel, Irish Sea, Levantine region and US West coasts are included, leaving the notable omission of the Pacific ocean; and while French, English, South African, Irish, Indian, Russian, American and Middle Eastern cultures are represented, South American and Asian Pacific cultures are not. While the chapters thus speak to transnational themes and perspectives, the collection is by no means comprehensive in its global grasp.

Through parallel consideration of these different socio-cultural and political national contexts, the chapters reveal productive interconnections across geographical borders and temporalities, enhancing the study of distinct regions by forging comparative connections with other cultures. The chronological distribution of the essays from the 1600s to the present day, while similarly not exhaustive in its coverage of different periods, seeks to further enrich this approach by providing points of contact across historical periods that elucidate transnational connections. This approach is not only undertaken collectively across the book, but is also apparent within individual chapters that interweave transnational considerations through their studies of the sea. Harrigan and Duché historicise the transnationalism of the ocean. Harrigan's study of early modern French sea narratives is situated within an awareness of the transcultural currents that surround these texts: French, Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish ships circulate in the Atlantic basin, encountering multiple other cultures along the way. Duché's study is similarly located within the context of a transcultural circulation of travel narratives within Europe, and it is the clash of two nations—the English and French in the Napoleonic Wars—that generates the narratives of captivity discussed here. The advantages of a comparative transnational perspective is further demonstrated in Duché's consideration of both French narratives of captives within Britain, and British narratives by those imprisoned in France; the sea that divides becomes a meeting point too, a space of fluid cultural connection where resonant images, metaphors and imaginings of the sea are shared between the two nations.

Taking us to more recent histories, Chowdhury and Land show the fruits of global oceanic development in their interrogations of globalisation in the early twenty-first century. Land's study follows the theme of the transculturalism of the sea in his discussion of the coast as a tolerant space which, in the context of the Levant, takes shape around the notions of cosmopolitanism

that coastal and portal sites engender. Meanwhile Chowdhury's study shows the ecological effects of global modernity. Situated within the context of critiques of globalisation in the 1990s, Chowdhury reads the film *Yugant* as a 'prophetic exposition' of the ecological disasters wrought by global modernity, and cites its narrative of the sea as the centre-point through which this critique unfolds, the film revealing 'the symbolic corruption of the sea under the climatic violence of petroleum imperialism'. The sea, Chowdhury shows, is both enabling of globalisation, but it becomes a victim of it too.

At the same time, the chapters here reflect back upon their own national spaces. While sea spaces are inherently transnational, so too do they strongly pertain to the national contexts from which their voyagers originate; as Mack writes, the 'sea is an extension of island or continental territoriality'.[26] Steinberg further elucidates the socio-historic processes that lead to 'the designation and reclamation of the coastal sea', writing of how the coast and its surrounding waters first became construed as a 'legitimate arena for state power and possession' and then, in turn, 'as part of the integral territory of the state'.[27] In the context of Britain, Isaac Land has shown that sailors were central to the idea of the nation and negotiated a dialogue—albeit 'an uneasy dialogue, sometimes conciliatory, sometimes reproachful'—with British nationalism.[28] John Peck's *Maritime Fiction* demonstrates through the lens of the novel how 'maritime life permeates and affects the whole texture of British life' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: many novels that don't directly contain a sea narrative, he argues, have 'something significant to say about the maritime character of the nation and use maritime references to explore some broad questions about British life'.[29]

The focus on the relationship between Britain and the sea has been dominant in recent years, and the chapters here usefully contribute perspectives on the relationship between nation and the sea from a broader range of national contexts.[30] Remmington bridges the national and transnational

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[26] Mack, *The Sea*, p. 82.

[27] Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean*, pp. 135–8, p. 135.

[28] Isaac Land, *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor, 1750–1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 11.

[29] Peck, *Maritime Fiction*, p. 4.

[30] Such views are useful in shifting oceanic studies away from a heavy focus on Britain's imperial maritime power which has predominated. Many studies cluster around the theme of imperial politics, such as David Cannadine, *Empire, The Sea and Global History: Britain's Maritime World, c.1760–c.1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Miles Taylor,

context, revealing the 'dynamic interplay' between the two in Solomon Plaatje's travel account. Here the sea provides a vantage point from which to reflect back upon the socio-political order of the South African nation—particularly as it pertains to black Africans—and to negotiate a transnational, diasporic positioning that is further nuanced by the imperial currents of the direction of Plaatje's movement towards Britain. In Stolberg's chapter, the sea features as a space away from the nation but becomes a site of national imaginative projection: the Arctic Ocean, Stolberg writes, is 'a persistent component of the Russian national idea' where narratives of technological progress and political propaganda coalesce to promote and sustain the national ideal. Goodman's discussion, while located within the British context, complicates the notion of the sea as the extension of a coherent national ideology. The coast and its locale can also represent the 'other within' the nation and become a site where internal national politics play out; in the case of Cornwall, the coast is co-opted into national narratives, as well as offering the potential of freedom from other ideologies.

The sea also provides a space for reflection upon a nation's history, and the two chapters with which we finish here contribute to what Elizabeth Ho has identified as the 'neo-Victorian-at-sea' genre: such novels engage with 'a global memory of "the Victorian" that is attuned to the conditions and experience of transnationality' and serve to make sense of global consumption, trade and the mobilities of globalised imperialism.[31] Gefter Wondrich's chapter recognises the Irish sea as a historically problematic site given the 'subaltern role of Ireland in the history of British maritime and imperial supremacy', but finds that in more recent fiction the sea thus becomes a productive source through which to engage and contend

The Victorian Empire and Britain's Maritime World, 1837–1901: The Sea and Global History (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Peck, *Maritime Fiction*; H. V. Bowen, Elizabeth Mancke and John G. Reid, eds, *Britain's Oceanic Empire: Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c.1550–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Jonathan Scott, *When the Waves Ruled Britannia: Geography and Political Identities, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Other distinct oceanic regions have also been of interest in indicative studies such as Michael N. Pearson, *The World of the Indian Ocean, 1500–1800* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005); Pedro Machado, *Ocean of Trade: South Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, c.1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Matt K. Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[31] Elizabeth Ho, 'The Neo-Victorian at Sea: Towards a Global Memory of the Victorian', in Nadine Boehm-Schnitker and Susanne Gruss, eds, *Neo-Victorian Literature and Culture: Immersions and Revisitations* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 165–78, pp. 166, 168.

with the nation's past. Franchi similarly reflects back on Britain's imperial past through the space of the sea, identifying how the intricate intertextuality of sea narration in Byatt's fiction creates productive juxtapositions between colonial and postcolonial ideas of the sea, enabling the historical novel to engage with the global complexities of the history of the ocean.

We conclude, then, with the contemporary sea narrative as a space where history is encountered in response to and in dialogue with the present. Today, the sea remains an active, vital presence in the social, political and cultural imagination: as Wigen reflects, 'Seascapes loom large in the public imagination.'[32] The ecology of the sea and the encroachment of environmental disaster continue to grow in significance, with frequent news reports of the acceleration of icecap melt, coral reef shrinkage and the depletion of ocean fishing stocks; environmental concerns resonate strongly in popular culture, with numerous TV documentaries on the state of the ocean. During the summer of 2015, in which this introduction has been written, the human geographies of the ocean have risen to perhaps unprecedented prominence. As the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe continues to escalate to devastating effect, the sea has become a space of death where thousands have died in capsized boats. Echoing Land's opening quotation that 'bureaucrats hate a port', coastal locales have become centred as sites of political contest as governments debate policies on asylum and immigration. Sea narratives have been crafted not only in political discourse but also in the media, where daily reports have reflected and redirected public opinion on the crisis. Sea imagery has had its part to play too, nowhere more evocatively than in the photograph of Alan Kurdi, the 3-year-old Syrian boy whose body was pictured washed up on the Turkish shore; while the ethics of the media circulation of this image have been much criticised, its effect in generating a widespread shift in public and political response to the refugee crisis is illustrative of how images of the sea have a powerful and prescient social role to play, not just responding to but also crafting cultural responses.

The sea continues to be narrated and to narrate its paths through the currents of contemporary culture, while recalling its histories and geographies as pertinent and pressing in their ongoing relevance. The chapters in this collection speak to this importance of the ocean, narrating their own stories of conflict, contest and creation, and tracing out new sea paths in the cultural imagination.

[32] Bentley, Bridenthal and Wigen, *Seascapes*, p. 1.

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A Need to Narrate? Early Modern French Accounts of Atlantic Crossings

Michael Harrigan

On 25 June 1610, the Frenchman François Pyrard arrived on the Atlantic island of Saint Helena for the second time. It had been a long, difficult voyage since the departure from Goa the preceding February, late in the sailing year, on a carrack bound for Portugal. Having been robbed at Goa, he was penniless and reliant on the ship's biscuit and water, and on charity, and the overloaded and crowded vessel was infested with vermin. The Portuguese crew were suspicious of Pyrard and his two French comrades and violence was a risk; threats had even been made to throw them overboard. Terrible storms off Rodriguez Island, and the Cape of Good Hope, had damaged the ship; the shrouds had suffered and she was leaking. There had been deaths amongst passengers and crew through childbirth, a fall from the main mast and several drownings. Around the Cape of Good Hope there had been snow, ice and fog. Here, in his light cotton clothing, Pyrard says, he 'would have died from cold' had he not had jobs like pumping the ship to keep him warm.[1] Once past the Cape,

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[1] 'sans cela nous fussions morts de froid'; François Pyrard, *Voyage de François Pyrard de Laval, contenant sa Navigation aux Indes Orientales, Maldives, Moluques, Brésil…*, 3rd edn, 2 vols (Paris: Samuel Thiboust and Remy Dallin, 1619), trans. as *The Voyage of François Pyrard*

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the ship's council had decided to replenish the water supply and refit the ship on Saint Helena.

While there were no ships at the island, passing crews had left a trace. There were letters from diverse Portuguese and a Spanish ship, the latter enquiring about Pyrard's vessel. There had been less welcome interventions. A chapel had been vandalised by Dutch sailors, and another letter warned the Portuguese not to damage the Dutch correspondence and written notices if they wished their own to be untouched in future. In the 9 years since Pyrard's first visit, the landscape had also been seriously damaged, with trees 'broken or cut down' and the flourishing mustard supply dried up.[2] One popular practice is described by the Frenchman:

> Everyone who passes writes their name for amusement ['*par plaisir*'] with the date [they were there], that they carve on the bark of a fig tree, which lasts as long as the tree lasts, and the letters keep on growing until they are a half a foot long. There are some there from the year 1515 and 1520.[3]

What we are looking at in this act of carving a name and date into the trees, then, is a form of text which, although minimal, seems to be curiously representative of the early modern Atlantic crossing. It tells of a passage and of the transformative nature that such displacements were to have on ecosystems around the Atlantic. Etched into bark with the intention, one assumes, of expanding with the growth of a tree, these signatures of long-dead mariners also hint at processes of creation and transmission. From the destructive carving of simple micro-narratives into nature, to lost oral tales, the journeying of human beings around the vastness of the globe has been marked by such processes.

Multiple ocean narratives circulated in often heterogeneous readerships, encapsulating forms such as travellers' tales recounting the contact with rarely-encountered peoples, or navigators' handbooks noting latitude

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of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil, Albert Gray and H. C. P. Bell, 2 vols (London: Hakluyt Society, 1887–90); 1619, vol. 2, p. 305; 1890, vol. 2, part 2, p. 291. Given the occasionally imperfect nature of the 1887–90 English translation, my own translation has at all times been preferred.

[2] Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, p. 317; see 1890, vol. 2, part 2, p. 297.

[3] 'Tous ceux qui y passent écrivent leur nom par plaisir avec la date du temps, qu'ils gravent sur l'écorce de figuier, ce qui dure autant que l'arbre dure, et les lettres vont croissant jusques à demi-pied de long. Il s'y en voit d'écrites de l'an 1515 et 1520'; Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, p. 319; 1890, vol. 2, part 2, p. 302.

and geographical features, or the extensive printed cosmographies that classified natural (as well as human) phenomena. The form of the travel narrative has been receiving increasing critical attention in recent years, and diverse paradigms have been proposed to apprehend accounts of displacement. Sophie Linon-Chipon's *Gallia Orientalis* (2003) is an extensive study of early modern French maritime voyages to the Indian Ocean basin (including the eastern segment of the voyage of Pyrard), principally focusing on the poetics of a genre born in the early colonial context in Asia.[4] Frédéric Tinguely's recent *état présent* of Renaissance-era voyages urges the conjunction of the study of narrative 'forms' with 'questions of interculturality' ('*questions d'interculturalité*').[5] In a study of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French travel texts, Neil Kenny explores the *collection* as one of three 'discursive mode[s]' as well as a practice engaged in while travelling, suggesting that 'the representation of other cultures […] could only be obtained through a conjunction of the narrative with the non-narrative mode'.[6]

The present study, however, is concerned less with the construction of a proto-colonial genre or with the nature of intercultural representation, focusing instead on the processes of transmission within the Atlantic basin. In embarking on a discussion about the essential mobility of narrative through the study of sources written centuries ago (and as such, long consigned to script), this may appear a somewhat paradoxical step. Yet those manuscript or printed forms that have survived to the present day may be considered the mere traces of a wealth of oral and written narratives, which might be adapted, suppressed or supplemented during often considerable trajectories across space, cultures and different languages.

The act of reading the texts from this period is often accompanied by a consciousness of what is not said as much as what is, by the sentiment of capturing an isolated moment of an immense conversation encapsulating

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[4] Sophie Linon-Chipon, *Gallia Orientalis: Voyages aux Indes orientales (1529–1722): Poétique et imaginaire d'un genre littéraire en formation*, Collection Imago Mundi no. 5 (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003).

[5] Frédéric Tinguely, 'Ecritures du voyage à la Renaissance', *French Studies*, 64:3 (July 2010): 329–35; p. 334.

[6] Neil Kenny, 'La Collection comme mode discursif dans les relations de voyage françaises aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles', *French Studies*, 65:3 (July 2011): 357–69. 'Tout se passe comme s'il allait de soi que la représentation d'autres cultures […] ne pouvait se faire que par une conjonction du récit avec le mode non-narratif, qui comprend la collecte, la description, l'inventaire'; Kenny, 'La Collection', p. 368.

multiple interlocutors, and potentially, multiple places and even chronologies. An essential absence is therefore implicit in the step of apprehending early modern narratives (although one might contend that the nature of that absence, compared to that inherent in more familiar narratives, may be in essence one of degree). It is in large part such absences that create the challenges, and the rewards, of reading them.

This chapter focuses on what will be called, for want of a better term, the travel narrative. To the extent that the term is applied to a narrative based on the displacement of a (generally first-person) narrator, the term is relatively unproblematic. However, this criterion is complicated by the implication that we might consider an extensive printed account, as much as a personal correspondence (and both are represented in this study) to constitute travel narratives. Among the factors which further complicate the notion of a unified genre defined by the maritime displacement of the narrator, we might particularly evoke questions of authorship and readership. There is evidence of such travel narratives having been ghost-written (one such case will also be discussed here), and a range of other interventions or self-censorship could shape a narrative, in turn, based on the projected readership of a manuscript or printed text. The frequent mutations in the political, religious and cultural climates in which early modern French texts were produced shape the contextual matrix into which the narrative was released.

We might then say that exploring the ways in which the ocean is narrated in such a climate exposes an animated, mobile 'micro-context', surrounding author/narrator and readership. In turn, beyond the conditions of this narratorial transaction stretches a wider context governing the very conditions of human displacement itself. Here, the dynamics between social groups interact with suprahuman factors, such as the maritime currents, climatic events or geology that ultimately shaped the trajectories of wind-powered vessels. How the macro context is reflected in the maritime narrative, and how the narrator situates human interactions in relation to the suprahuman, are among the questions that the consideration of the travel narrative as a sea narrative or an ocean narrative inspires.

This chapter will analyse what a limited body of early modern texts might tell us about the process of narrating the encounter with the Atlantic. This will be structured by a progressive move away from the social (human interactions) towards the suprahuman (perceptions of interactions with environment, the ocean and beyond). Beginning with an examination of the accelerated and collective human displacement of the

early modern period as a generator of narrative, it will move on to explore the role of narrative as a vector of new and familiar cultural capital. This encapsulates both the realm of cultural manifestations which appear to have circulated before crystallisation in text, and the adoption of recognisable strategies to narrate the ocean. A third section will discuss the role of human agency within the narrative; implied within are questions about the role of fate and of faith in early modern culture. Through this analysis, it is intended to signpost further discussion about the relationship of narrative to the agency of human beings beyond the chronological and geographical parameters of this study.

I have circumscribed the Atlantic as an object of study according to the principal physical trajectory of three of the four texts to be examined. While all four of their narrators crossed the Atlantic, they did so through trajectories that differed, sometimes considerably, from one another. Variations in route, due to factors such as the difficulty establishing longitude, damage to ships and so on, might be considerable. The focus on texts written in French, in turn, has been adopted despite the awareness that grouping texts according to the criteria of language or indeed national origin can spill out beyond such categorisation. Certain types of early modern narratives (in the form of text or not) might have significant potential for translation and transfer by supranational circuits such as religious organisations. Recent work on types of maritime narrative demonstrate the importance that trajectories including the economic, the geographical and the ecological, play in determining narratives, and emphasise the need to move beyond the barriers of 'discrete [national] Atlantics'.[7] Nevertheless, as François Regourd has recently written, maritime networks along the French Atlantic coast, sometimes determined by confession, also ensured more local circulations of knowledge, even 'adventures, legends, the rumours of ports and of taverns'.[8] An attempt has therefore been made to take account of both the regional/national, and the supranational potential for influences on the shaping of narrative.

The earliest of the texts examined in this chapter testifies to the importance of both the national and the supranational in such narratives. While

[7] Wim Klooster, 'Atlantic and Caribbean Perspectives: Analyzing a Hybrid and Entangled World', in Peter N. Miller, ed., *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), pp. 60–83, p. 72.

[8] 'aventures, légendes, rumeurs de ports et de tavernes', François Regourd, 'Capitale savante, capital colonial: sciences et savoirs coloniaux à Paris aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 55:2 (2008): 121–51; p. 123.

the *Voyage* of François Pyrard (examined here in the 1619 third edition) relates a Frenchman's crossing of the Atlantic as part of a Portuguese fleet in 1610, competition between national interests meant that this type of crossing was somewhat exceptional. Pyrard was himself a survivor of the wreck of a French ship in 1602 in the Maldives, where he would spend 5 years in captivity; it was during his eventual return to Europe in 1610–1611, via Brazil, that he landed on Saint Helena. While Pyrard's (ghost-written) text is best known for its wealth of data on the unfamiliar Maldives, his description of the Atlantic crossing is a noteworthy testimony to the nature of human contact on the maritime routes of the turn of the seventeenth century.

The remaining texts which compose the corpus in this chapter date from a time of considerable increase in French displacements (and migrations) to the Americas with the settlement of the Caribbean. French settlement began on a sustained basis in Saint Kitts from 1627 and in Guadeloupe and Martinique from 1635. As a result, freebooters, commercial agents, poor indentured labourers and marriageable women, ecclesiastics and many African slaves found themselves making the crossing of the Atlantic in often hazardous conditions. The majority of these migrants, voluntary or involuntary, have at most left a passing trace—a name, a signature—in the archives or printed corpus dating from this early migration. However, some adventurers and ecclesiastics have left more expansive narratives which allow us to engage with the responses of this varied population to the ocean.

The following three are of particular interest. Guillaume Coppier's 1645 *Histoire* narrates an initial 6-month voyage from Le Havre, landing on Cabo Blanco (in modern-day Mauritania), then sailing for Cape Verde before crossing the Atlantic. Coppier would be for some time an engaged labourer (on Saint Kitts), and his eventual return journey was particularly animated, taking in the Azores, the Canadian coast and Ireland before his arrival in France.[9] Coppier's often wandering narrative of the trajectory is accompanied by numerous axioms and aphorisms (attributed or not) in Latin, and references to classical and church sources.[10] There is, in addition, a significant number of what might be best classified as digressions,

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[9] Guillaume Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage des Indes Occidentales, et de plusieurs autres Régions maritimes et éloignées* (Lyon: Jean Huguetan, 1645), p. 151.

[10] Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, Preface, non-paginated [11/26 pages].

such as the 'panegyrics of antiperfections' of several populations or *symboles* (such as comparisons of animal and human behaviours).[11]

The *Voyage de la France Equinoxiale* (1664) by the priest Antoine Biet relates the journey of a large French expedition which sought to colonise the area around Cayenne in 1652–1653. Biet's narrative is dominated by the account of internal conflicts which included the murder of the expedition leader, General Royville, during the trajectory from Le Havre to Cayenne (via Madeira). Finally, and although a source not printed until nearly three centuries after it was originally written, the letter sent from Martinique by the Jesuit Jean Mongin (published as *Mangin*) in 1676 has been consulted. Mongin's reflections on maritime tradition and on the character of passengers and crew during his Atlantic crossing have proved very informative.[12]

This group of ocean narratives emerged as a result of circumstances that must alert us to their implication in an act of communication between a narratorial persona and a projected readership (a *public*) of diverse composition. These varied from the private, epistolary source (Mongin) to a printed source in which a narrator speaks not only in his own name, but in that of an entire people, justifying their lack of participation in colonial initiatives (Pyrard).[13] The narrator was an entity subject to various levels of potential intervention before printing, and that must lie outside the remit of this study (that Pyrard's *Voyage* was transcribed by the erudites Jérôme Bignon and Pierre Bergeron has been well-documented).[14] However, how this persona is situated in relation to the social, or to the maritime environment, is instructive about the act of narration. Biet's *Voyage* is a polemical text that is immersed in the concerns of the social realm, and he devotes much of his narrative to defending himself from accusations of involvement in intrigues which include Royville's murder. Biet's dedicatory epistle to the Duke of Brissac not only solicits the protection of an

[11] See the *Panégyre des antiperfections de la plus grand part des Septentrionaux* in Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, pp. 164–8; on the *symboles* (or *hiéroglyphes*) see the unflattering comparison of the chameleon with, respectively, a heretic and a debtor, p. 76.

[12] Jean Mongin [pub. as *Mangin*], *Journal d'un Voyage à la Martinique en 1676*, in *Annales des Antilles*, 10 (1962): 35–58.

[13] Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 1, pp. 1–4; 1887, vol. 1, pp. 1–4.

[14] For a full account of the genesis of Pyrard's account see Grégoire Holtz, *L'Ombre de l'auteur: Pierre Bergeron et l'écriture du voyage à la fin de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2011), pp. 297–320.

aristocrat; it also allows the narrator to depict himself as a 'voyager who [had] escaped from the wreck of "an ill-fated colony"'.[15]

This creation of a narratorial persona may, in turn, allow us to glimpse the *public* in relation to which it implicitly situates itself. The question of the gender composition of the *public* (and indeed, although it is impossible to establish at this remove, that of the actual readership) is one tantalising interrogation in exploring the circulation of such narratives. Although few narrators are as explicit as Guillaume Coppier, who repeatedly addresses his readers as '*Messieurs*' throughout his voyage, other clues can be instructive about the implication of shared gender between narrator and reader.[16] The narrator might further establish a bond with the readership based on religious confession, *nation*, or through discreet strategies as mundane as the recourse to shared understandings to clarify a cultural phenomenon (clothing, culinary habits, etc.).

In each act of writing, then, the narrator presents to the readership a text which can be established because of the assumption of its recognisability. What this can tell us about the socio-cultural role of these narratives of human displacement, about their potential to crystallise the circulation of narratives, and about the nature of their ultimate signification, will be the object of the following pages.

Mapping Human Displacement

The kind of extensive voyage recounted in this body of sources was a human event which might have had significant consequences for the lives of many hundreds of passengers. Countless others were involved to differing degrees: the families left behind, the labourers involved, the spectators who had gathered before embarkation, and after departure those non-European peoples who might be indelibly marked by the passage. The narratives can be considered as responses to new socio-economic configurations both *internal* to the collectivity, and arising from the *external* collective encounters with unfamiliar peoples.

These crossings might imply significant organisation and deployment of resources; Coppier was one of six hundred French who departed from

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[15] 'C'est un voyageur qui ayant échappé le naufrage, que toute une infortunée colonie a fait....', Antoine Biet, *Voyage de la France Equinoxiale entrepris par les Français en l'année MDCLII* (Paris: François Clouzier, 1664), dedicatory epistle, non-paginated [1/6 pages].

[16] See Biet's comments on the disruptive role of women in the following section of this chapter.

Le Havre, and Pyrard estimates at eight hundred those on the vessel in which he left Goa in 1610.[17] The textual record testifies to the significance of these large, sometimes mass displacements of people and resources, and to the consequences of placing hundreds of people together in confined spaces with access to food and drink of very variable quality.[18] Disastrous levels of casualties might be suffered in maritime and terrestrial environments to which Europeans were unaccustomed.[19]

The new configurations that took place on board were, unsurprisingly, most particularly a subject of reflection when they were perceived as problematic. Biet's narrative vividly depicts the make-up of the populations embarking on colonial initiatives. Enumerating the many passengers whose inaptitude for work he considered an important factor in the colony's failure, he furnishes an informative list of the kind of person who might be desperate enough to cross the Atlantic in the mid-seventeenth century. The fathers of 'incorrigible children were very content to dispense with them in this instance'.[20] There were 'young children' given to 'causing disorder', many people who had been made bankrupt and who were ill-fitted for manual labour, 'many young debauchees', apostate monks and, Biet adds, 'the worst of all: many women'. While some were virtuous, others 'by their bad life, were sufficient to bring the anger of God onto the colony'.[21] This (minority) presence of women in the French Atlantic narrative might call for intervention by an ecclesiastical narrator. Mongin's solution for the *cajolerie* which he noticed taking place on board in the evenings was to separate the sexes and to recount 'a devotional tale, the longest and most full of digressions that [his] memory could furnish'. He continues this strategy on succeeding nights so as to 'anticipate all the disturbances that the women could have caused', especially as some 'appeared to be quite badly brought up'.[22]

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[17] Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, Preface, non-paginated [6/26 pages]; Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, p. 298; 1888, vol. 2, part 1, p. 284.

[18] On the robbers lying in wait for passengers in Goa, see Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, p. 296; 1888, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 282–3.

[19] Biet, *Voyage*, p. 249.

[20] 'Les pères qui avaient des enfants incorrigibles, étaient bien aises de s'en décharger par cette rencontre', Biet, *Voyage*, p. 8.

[21] Biet, *Voyage*, pp. 8–9.

[22] 'Aussi le fis-je pendant toute la route, et pour prévenir tous les désordres que les femmes eussent pu causer, quelques-unes d'elles, paraissant assez mal élevées', Mongin, *Journal d'un Voyage*, p. 39.

Beyond marking the separation from a society of a vanguard constituted of its undesirable elements, the publication of these narratives can also be considered to engender productions that, in telling the encounter with unfamiliar cultures, map the inherent mobility in human societies. As well as recounting departure (and often death) they mark the process of encounter. Political and religious tensions meant that chancing upon ships of different European nations might be hazardous, and there was a recurrent fear of pirates off the European and North African coasts. Coppier depicts what might be best described as a generalised state of piracy, with the corsairs a recurrent danger.[23] In turn, his expedition itself kidnapped 57 *morisques* and Portuguese *mulattos* while at sea, so as to sell them in the West Indies.[24] French encounters with peoples along the Atlantic coast were tentative, varied and often dangerous for both the members of the expedition and those they encountered. They might, as a result, entail the integration of the members of one group into, or alongside, another. Often, in the seventeenth-century French Atlantic, this meant the integration of populations who, like the 57 victims of kidnap by Coppier's crew, were the unwilling objects of enforced mobility. Slave populations are comparably little-represented in the four texts discussed in this chapter, although there were a potentially significant number in the Portuguese carrack in which Pyrard had embarked.[25] However, in other French voyages, especially as the demand for slaves in the Caribbean increased, this particular socio-economic milieu might constitute the principal population of a ship. Nevertheless, this mass of humanity might remain submerged in the narrative, meriting little more than an enumeration.[26]

The ocean trajectory, then, is *significant* on the social level. Its narration, in turn, could mark a series of circumstances which were disruptive within and without the culture for which it was intended. The narrative might also fulfil a range of further socio-cultural functions. Aside from the evident potential to affirm the personal status of the narrator, it could situate him (and in such voyages, the narrator is nearly

[23] Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, Preface, non-paginated [14 and 16/26 pages]; p. 7.

[24] Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, p. 9.

[25] Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, p. 298; 1888, vol. 2, part 1, p. 284.

[26] For an example notable for its discretion, see Dralsé de Grand-Pierre, *Relation de Divers Voyages faits dans l'Afrique, dans l'Amérique, et aux Indes Occidentales* (Paris: Claude Jombert, 1718), p. 171.

inevitably masculine[27]) in relation to a collectivity distinguished from a sub-collectivity. In so doing, it might reaffirm, perhaps redefine, the contours of the mutating collectivity. Of course, a further function concerns the uncertain, fluctuating depiction of those peoples on the exterior of this aggregation. Writing such a narrative reflects the disruption engendered by the encounter with unfamiliar populations, and could entail a further reaffirmation of collective values, or reflect the interrogations on the margins of a culture. How else were such disruptions marked, and in what way does the narrative move beyond the human to encapsulate the oceans, the very vector of displacement itself?

The Ocean Text and the Circulation of Narrative

These narratives, beyond marking significant instances of cultural upheaval, may also be considered as artefacts that crystallise currents of narrative circulation within Europe and along the Atlantic crossing. In diverse relationships with existing (often authoritative) texts and textual strategies, they also testify to the intriguing force of narratives in accompanying the maritime displacement. While the seventeenth-century texts discussed in this chapter are relatively heterogeneous, they can at least be said to have in common the recourse to strategies that imply some level of recognition of the narrative (a letter might appear to be the least problematic). Although, at this remove, we may know very little about how they were received, acceptance as part of a *genre* is one example of such recognition. The *Voyage* and *Histoire et Voyage* of, respectively, Biet and Coppier, thus ascribe to themselves affinity with an extant (and very popular) corpus.

The structure of the written text constitutes a locus at which to consider how culturally-determined criteria guided the process of narration. In the early modern period, the classical corpus was one perennial source of a range of narratives or narrative strategies. This was one significant influence which ensured that a multitude of unfamiliar phenomena (notably flora

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[27] For a rare example of a female-narrated Atlantic crossing in French, see *Teneur de la Lettre écrite par Mademoiselle de Fayolle, conductrice des Filles de S. Joseph en l'Amérique, à Mademoiselle de l'Estang leur Supérieure institutrice* in *Relation de ce qui s'est passé à l'arrivée des Filles de S. Joseph en Amérique* (Paris: Pierre Targa, 1644), pp. 3–8. Given that this is the *teneur* of a letter implies post-authorial intervention.

and fauna) were narrated in inherited categories with a considerable weight of authority, and this from the earliest days of the Atlantic crossings.[28]

Perhaps the most striking of strategies demonstrate what, following the terminology of Gérard Genette, we can consider as *transtextuality*, or the networks of 'all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts'.[29] Coppier has the most evident recourse to such networks, frequently calling on classical and scriptural tradition with often unattributed (and sometimes questionably placed) citations in Latin. In the preface, Tacitus reinforces the assertion of the danger of the sea ('*Nihil tam capax fortuitorum quam mare*').[30] Rich in tobacco, but forced to hunt while on Saint Kitts, Coppier identifies himself with Tantalus ('*inopem me copia faciebat*').[31] Such devices exalt the learned status of the narrator, and direct the reader towards meaning, or complementary meaning.

We also witness the shared textual corpus acting as a source of meaning to the voyage and, the case arising, to its unexpected peripheries. We have seen how Mongin could intervene directly with the retelling of a devotional tale. Biet, as another cleric, has direct recourse to the Scriptural text before the voyage, which he precedes with a public exhortation. This has as its subject 'the commandment that Jesus Christ made to St Peter, *Duc in altum*'.[32] On the Feast of Saint Louis he speaks at length on the theme: '*Non possumus duobus dominis servire*'. He does this, he says, because most of his listeners are divided between the service of God and their 'ambition' (although the theme does appear striking in the light of the conflicts

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[28] On the 'traditional distribution of natural history during the entire Middle Ages, continuing into the Renaissance' ('la distribution traditionnelle de l'histoire naturelle durant tout le Moyen Âge et encore à la Renaissance'), see Frank Lestringant, *Jean de Léry ou l'invention du Sauvage: essai sur* L'Histoire d'un voyage en Terre de Brésil, 2nd edn (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005), p. 83.

[29] 'tout ce qui […] met en relation, manifeste ou secrète [un texte] avec d'autres textes'. Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), p. 7, trans. as *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 1.

[30] Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, Preface, non-paginated [14/26 pages]. See Tacitus, *Annals*, Book 14, 3, *Annals of Tacitus*, ed. G. O. Holbrooke (London: Macmillan, 1882), p. 353.

[31] Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, p. 33. This instead paraphrases Narcissus in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III, 466, 'inopem me copia fecit' ('the very abundance of my riches beggars me'). Trans. from *Ovid in Six Volumes*, III, *Metamorphoses*, 2 vols, ed. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), vol. 1, pp. 156–7.

[32] 'Duc in altum' (Luke 5.4); Biet, *Voyage*, p. 26.

between Royville and the governors of the Company).[33] The oral recourse to a stock of recognisable narratives demonstrates the perception of their potential to motivate, or to reinforce social binds (testimony exists that Biet's first sermon was, in fact, considered edifying), or indeed, to impart change in the behaviour of the collectivity.[34]

The re-narration of the Classics and Scripture by Coppier and by Biet constitute what are in effect reappropriations of *text* (or for the latter author, the circulation of text back to text, via a moment of orality) which were authoritative. The corpus discussed in the present chapter also constitutes a site at which to observe the intersection of a multiplicity of narratives which might convey or accompany the early modern voyage. Of particular interest are what we might call *pre-textual* traces: the residue of the circulation of narratives, or the traces of the cultural mechanisms which determine the form of the written narrative, or perhaps, of the narrative impulse itself.

The ocean narrative is ultimately a repository for a multiplicity of other narratives within the circuits of early modern maritime communications. Mapping the spatial trajectory, it might encompass the oral and the written encounter, in letters such as those described by Pyrard in a chapel on the island of Saint Helena. Such correspondence might constitute significant data which could determine the nature of the recounted trajectory. This is reminiscent of the 'information [which] was obtained on desert islands' which, for Wim Klooster, testifies to the 'numerous communication networks [that] sprang up' and which demonstrate Atlantic 'connectivity'.[35] Such 'connectivity' had its limits; it was, after all, the interception and destruction of Dutch correspondence by the Portuguese that led to the former retaliating and vandalising the chapel on Saint Helena.[36]

Diverse cultural mechanisms are also profoundly bound to the conditions of existence within a maritime environment and to a trajectory circumscribed by spatial and temporal boundaries. The tracing of a spatial trajectory might nonetheless be uncertain and fluctuating. The pilot of the *Corbin*, the ship on which Pyrard originally left France in 1601, assumed that their position was outside the Mozambique Channel when they actually lay

[33] 'Nemo potest duobus dominis servire' (Matthew 6.24); Biet, *Voyage*, p. 46.

[34] On the *edification* of Biet's sermon, see J. de Laon, Sieur Daigremont, *Relation du Voyage des François fait au Cap du Nord en Amérique* (Paris: Edmé Pepingué, 1654), p. 20.

[35] Klooster, 'Atlantic and Caribbean Perspectives', pp. 72–3.

[36] Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, pp. 312–13; 1890, vol. 2, part 2, p. 297.

between Madagascar and the continent of Africa, and the considerable further disagreement about position was ultimately to lead to shipwreck on the Maldives.[37] While the temporal boundaries of the voyage might, rarely, be undeclared by the narrator (Coppier is a striking case in point), establishing them was far less problematic. Catholic temporality also tended to follow the liturgical year and might punctuate the voyage with collective festivities. We might add that the ship's log or journal, perhaps the most basic of maritime texts, reposes essentially on such localisation in time and in space.

It is in turn the crossing of a geographical boundary, marked by the maritime custom of the *baptism* (*baptême*) that is frequently noted in descriptions of Atlantic voyages. This ceremony (the term *cérémonie* is used by Biet and by Mongin) was inevitably undergone by those who had never crossed the Tropic of Cancer. Biet is one of the passengers who is obliged to submit to this rite, which entailed swearing an oath to repeat the ceremony (on future crossings of the tropic) before a 'president' elected by the pilots and sailors, and who had his own 'councillors and other officers'. The 'president' and his 'councillors', wearing 'grotesque' disguises, obliged all those who were to be 'baptised' to appear before them, though as the cleric explains, this was 'only to get brandy and wine from the store that everyone has in the ship'. Those who made a generous promise of alcohol were spared a soaking, while those who did not had 'full buckets of water poured over their heads, with extraordinary laughter and shouts of mockery'. No one was spared in this ceremony, in which 'everyone marched according to their status' (the General 'deferred to the Church' and had Biet and another cleric pass before him), and in which even the sick were 'soaked on their beds'. Biet adds that the crew were 'drunk for three days on the brandy and wine that they were given'.[38]

Mongin, like Biet, attributes this 'custom that is maintained by all European voyagers', to simple mariners' greed, but in so doing, evokes other interesting justifications for the practice. He refutes the Dutch claim that it was a 'guarantee' against 'the maladies that the change in climate can

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[37] Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 1, pp. 23–4, 53–4; 1887, vol. 1, pp. 25–6, 49–51.

[38] 'il a ses conseillers et autres officiers. Ce président est revêtu grotesquement […] tout cela n'est que pour tirer de l'eau de vie ou du vin de la réserve que chacun doit avoir dans le navire. Si la personne qui doit être mouillée est libérale, et si elle promet honnêtement de l'eau de vie, du vin ou autre chose, on l'épargne; si elle ne l'est pas et que ce soit un vilain, on lui jette les seaux d'eau tout entiers sur la tête, avec des cris de risée et de raillerie tout extraordinaires. […] Ils s'enivrèrent pendant trois jours de l'eau de vie et du vin qu'on leur avait donné', Biet, *Voyage*, pp. 44–5.

cause', because those who practised it still became ill. A second explanation that 'people in this crossing seeing themselves enter another world, wanted to reflect the baptism that we receive at birth' seems equally implausible to him, because the ceremony was still carried out 'during the voyages where neither the equator nor the tropics were crossed'.[39] In this second refutation Mongin nonetheless demonstrates how much personal and collective significance might be attached to the crossing and how a religious vocabulary was marshalled to convey it.[40]

In this temporary, joyous, levelling of social and spiritual orders, there is considerable crossover with the sort of popular festivities analysed by Mikhail Bakhtin.[41] These festivities which, for Bakhtin, are 'linked to moments of crisis, of breaking points in the cycle of nature or in the life of society and man' are mirrored in a potentially subversive maritime practice submitted to by collective assent.[42] That Mongin assimilates the sailors' disguises to those adopted during the *charivari* is no accident.[43] The widespread nature of this 'ceremony' (or perhaps, rite) hints at the need to mark the cultural and spiritual boundaries which were crossed in the act of the voyage.[44]

HUMAN AGENCY AND THE OCEAN

It will have become apparent that the mapping of maritime mobility in narrative discussed so far has been centred on the human beings who, clumsily and uncertainly, attempted to make their way in dangerous environments

[39] 'Car de dire avec les Hollandais que cela se fait pour se garantir des maladies que le changement de climat peut produire à cause de quoi ils se baignent tous dans ce passage, cela est sans fondement, car ceux qui ne le font pas n'en sont pas plus malades. Il n'est pas plus vraisemblable que les gens dans cette traversée se voyant comme entrer dans un autre monde, aient voulu faire allusion au baptême que nous recevons à notre naissance, puisque cette formalité s'observe même dans les voyages où l'on ne passe ni la ligne ni les tropiques', Mongin, *Journal d'un Voyage*, p. 49.

[40] 'The seafarers [employ] the sacred names of *alms* and baptism in this self-seeking entertainment' ('[les] gens de mer […] [font] entrer dans ce divertissement intéressé les noms sacrés d'*aumône* et de *baptême*'), Mongin, *Journal d'un Voyage*, p. 49.

[41] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1968), p. 9.

[42] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 9.

[43] Mongin, *Journal d'un Voyage*, p. 48.

[44] For Jacques Petitjean-Roget, this baptism constitutes a 'resurrection in[to] a savage world' ('la résurrection dans un monde sauvage'), in 'Archéologie de l'Esclavage à la Martinique (1635–1660)', *Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne*, 11 (1985): 738–52; p. 740.

which often determined the nature of trajectories and encounters. As Coppier writes, the ocean is 'the most famous theatre of shipwrecks' and 'the most capable of all sorts of violence and of tragic adventures'.[45] Despite the uncertainties, narrators still attribute essential levels of agency to the actors in various configurations of circumstances along the Atlantic trajectory. Yet this agency is paradoxically inscribed within a narration in which it is mitigated and confined by distinct forces, narrative, suprahuman and even supernatural. What might we say about the particular relationship of the human to such forces in the maritime text?

We might, after all, consider the extent to which these texts relate to what we would now call ecology. They certainly relate what are essentially 'environmental' features such as flora, fauna and topography, but might do so in a form which hints that such phenomena were conceived of as occupying a domain separate, and even peripheral, to the human. Pyrard's *Treatise and Description of the Animals, Trees and Fruit of the East Indies* isolates flora and fauna in a text which is distinct from the voyage proper and which attaches particular importance to a description of the coconut tree which, notably, 'alone produces all commodities and things necessary for the life of Man'.[46] The third and last of the books into which Biet's *History* is divided begins with a relatively sparse ten-page account of land, fruit and fertility, before moving onto chapters on hunting, fishing and then a much more extensive description of the customs of the indigenous people of Cayenne.[47] In Coppier, such phenomena are more closely integrated in the body of the text, interspersed among data concerning the indigenous peoples. The manner in which he introduces the first of the *fruit and roots* he describes is representative, choosing the pineapple because 'it is the most delicious that there is'.[48] All three texts, whether through their organisation into chapters (Pyrard and Biet) or their apprehension of natural phenomena, seem to hint in different ways that the

[45] 'le fameux-théâtre des naufrages, et la lie du monde, la plus capable de toutes sortes de violences, et d'aventures tragiques', Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, Preface, non-paginated [14/26 pages].

[46] Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, pp. 363–412; *Description particulière de l'arbre admirable qui porte la noix d'Inde, appellée cocos…, qui seul produit toutes commodités, et choses nécessaires pour la vie de l'homme*, Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, pp. 395–412; 1890, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 343–86; on the coconut tree, see pp. 372–86.

[47] Biet, *Voyage*, pp. 329–38.

[48] 'Des Fruits et Racines', Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, pp. 89–94. On the *hannannas* (*ananas*), '[le] plus délicieux [fruit] qui y soit', see p. 90.

principal interest of these narratives consists in human interactions. When the focus is rather on interactions with the non-human (like fruit), one has the distinct impression that this is governed by criteria based on their function in relation, once more, to the realm of the human. 'Nature' is as such reflected in the present corpus of texts as what surrounds the human ('environmental' in the literal sense), principally in terms of how it impacts on human settlement or even life.

The assertions made in relation to the presence of women in these displacements will indicate that the focus of the narration is, rather than human-centred, principally anthropocentric. That this is the case may, once more, be accentuated by factors linked, for example, to the trajectory, to the entity of the *public*, or to the ultimate recipient of the narrative. Those factors arising from trajectory include the nature of human encounter at sea or in nascent colonies. Terrestrial stops (particularly, in the present corpus, on islands) were inevitable generators of narrative, as were the encounters—human interactions—between vessels. Interactions between people and peoples in the Atlantic environment had the potential to be extremely hazardous. They would then provide the setting for recounting bravery, violence, compassion, humanity and so on: a good story, in other words, but one that implies human agency. On the other end of the narrative trajectory, one could also suggest that the anthropocentric character of these maritime texts is heightened by their deployment within a certain designated readership. That they might focus on condemning or praising a range of acts depicted as having been carried out within the realm of the human (or principally so) reminds us that our reading of them is in essence the interruption of an act of communication to a *public*, however restricted that public might be.

This anthropocentrism is also reflected in the perception of an environment in which events outside the agency of the human obtain signification. The reading of non-human phenomena (animal and meteorological, for example) as precursors to events governed by suprahuman forces is a constant. Coppier sees whales as a 'certain omen' (*augure*) of 'horrible and terrifying storms', the memory of which 'nearly makes [his] hair stand on end, and [his] pen fall from [his] hands'.[49] Such maritime superstition also appears to be another pre-textual phenomenon, to judge by Jean

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[49] 'des tempêtes horribles, et épouvantables, l'idée et ressouvenir desquelles me fait encore presque hérisser mes cheveux, et choir ma plume des mains', Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, p. 95.

Mongin's account of the anxious curiosity of his co-passengers upon their first sight of a pod of porpoises. When they ask the sailors 'what was presaged by these animals passing with so much speed', one of them replies that it was a 'bad omen'. After the 'alarmed' passenger asks for an explanation, the sailor replies 'it is a bad sign, I say, when they go so fast, because it is a sign that we won't catch any of them'.[50]

Providence and divine will are also attributed agency in manners that demonstrate crossovers between a vibrant oral tradition and the narration of a tale that hints at suprahuman interventions. Pyrard's narrative is particularly informative about maritime tradition. His voyage is dogged by 'misfortune' (*malheur*), the first manifestation of which was the split of the foremast. Although he qualifies this event as relatively minor (*léger*), he relates that it was taken by 'most of the mariners and travellers in the vessels […] for such a bad omen' that they were ready to abandon the voyage.[51] While Pyrard states he had himself a poor opinion of the success of the voyage from the beginning, he attributes its unfortunate end rather to circumstances which, although encroaching to some extent on the religious, reflect principally on the discipline on board ('the lack of order and discipline in [the] ships, no piety and devotion, but rather many oaths and blasphemies, no obedience to superiors …').[52]

There is a further ambiguous note in the chain of cause and effect, this time with respect to his mainly Portuguese shipmates, when the vessel is stranded and damaged after an accident at Saint Helena. After verifying the state of the hull, a ship's carpenter discovers that the rudder is itself in a perilous state; it can thankfully be repaired. Pyrard limits himself to recounting that this 'unfortunate event' (*malheur*) was believed ('l'on tenait') to have been sent by God so as to 'spare [us] a worse one'.[53] He situates himself in a not dissimilar manner with respect to his shipmates,

[50] 'quelques-uns des passagers […] voulurent questionner les matelots et leur demander que pronostiquaient ces animaux qui passaient avec tant de rapidité'; '"c'est mauvais signe, reprit ce matelot, quand ils passent si vite, car c'est une marque que nous n'en prendrons pas"', Mongin, *Journal d'un Voyage*, p. 42.
[51] 'la plupart des mariniers et voyageurs […] avaient pris cet inconvénient, bien que léger, pour un si mauvais présage, qu'ils disaient […] [qu']ils s'en iraient et abandonneraient tout', Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 1, p. 5; 1887, vol. 1, p. 5.
[52] 'le mauvais ordre et le peu de police […]; nulle piété et dévotion, mais au contraire force juremens et blasphèmes, nulle obéissance aux chefs', Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 1, p. 6; 1887, vol. 1, p. 5.
[53] 'l'on tenait que Dieu nous avait envoyé ce malheur pour en éviter un plus grand', Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, p. 323; see 1890, vol. 2, part 2, p. 305.

when they undertake a manifestation of piety intended to counteract another divinely-attributed intervention on Saint Helena. Given the state of the ship, 'it was thought' ('on s'avisa') among the Portuguese that an image of the Virgin Mary on board 'did not want to leave behind' an image of the Child Jesus in the chapel. In recounting that 'everyone said it was the cause of the accident', and that in consequence 'they went there [to the chapel]' and 'held a procession' around the chapel and then the boat, his level of reserve, and his apparent lack of participation, is quite striking.[54]

Nonetheless, beyond Pyrard's apparent distancing of himself from the superstition of his shipmates, his narrative also ascribes a measure of agency to direct suprahuman interventions. He was to remain 'accompanied' by *malheur* throughout his long trajectory, as he laments after being robbed of all his money just before his departure from Goa.[55] This is countered by more positive interventions. While the voyage to the Indies was indeed to end catastrophically for the French ship, the dangerous return journey is instead repeatedly subject to interventions from the 'mercy of God' ('la miséricorde de Dieu'), to 'divine kindness' ('la bonté divine').[56] It might 'please God to send [the mariners] [...] a good wind', which enabled the Portuguese ship to round the Cape of Good Hope after a calm.[57] In yet another dispute on Saint Helena about the source of divine intervention (whether Saint Francis or the Virgin was responsible for the refloating of the ship) Pyrard offers his own opinion, confiding in the reader that it was 'alone due to the hand of the Almighty'.[58] Indeed Pyrard's own narrative—the fact that his tale could be narrated at all—is declared to be the account of a 'miraculous' set of circumstances in which 'fortune' was trumped by the will of God.[59]

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[54] 'chacun disait que c'était la cause de l'accident [...], ils y allèrent avec la croix et la bannière, en chantant des hymnes et des litanies, et firent la procession tout autour de la chapelle', Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, p. 322; see 1890, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 304–5.

[55] Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, p. 295; 1890, vol. 2, part 1, p. 282.

[56] Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, p. 308; see 1890, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 293–4.

[57] 'il plut à Dieu nous envoyer un si bon vent, que [...] nous doublâmes heureusement le Cap', Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, p. 310; see 1890, vol. 2, part 2, p. 295.

[58] 'je croyais que cela venait de la main seule du Tout-puissant', Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 2, p. 321; see 1890, vol. 2, part 2, p. 304.

[59] '[*le Corbin*] ayant eu pire fortune que l'autre [navire], et s'étant perdu, j'en suis enfin miraculeusement réchappé après plusieurs misères. [...] puisqu'il a plu à Dieu, contre mon espérance, me rendre sain et sauf ...', Pyrard, *Voyage*, 1619, vol. 1, p. 3; see 1887, vol. 1, p. 4.

What are we to make of the criteria by which the narrator of Pyrard's *Voyage* deems one set of interventions feasible, and refutes or distances himself from others? One could speculate about the potential distancing of a narrator from the misplaced devotion of the Portuguese (a maritime competitor), or even the scope for intervention from a nuanced ghostwriter. But if we limit ourselves to the internal cohesion of Pyrard's narrative, we can see that whether it evokes divine interventions on the collective, or unites an entire sequence of events, encounters and even crimes within the category of *malheur*, it is in both cases played out in a universe subject to suprahuman interventions. How this was received by readers is yet another question we might pose. Among the possible readings we could advance for the coexistence of *malheur* or *fortune* with the intervention of God figure, are on one level the pleasurable (from the confrontation with the unexpected or perilous), and on another, the edifying.[60]

Coppier, in his frequent narrative departures from the trajectory, is an interesting site at which to close this discussion, as he 'gives free rein to his thoughts, in the vast landscapes of the ocean'.[61] For, in what is not the first paradox encountered in this corpus, Coppier's narration of the ocean is in large part a lament to the impossibility of representing it. Its movement is 'incomprehensible, unimaginable and beyond the reach of the greatest minds'.[62] Had he 'a mouth as big as the sky, and words that shine like the stars and as many tongues as hair', narrating the sea would still be 'presumptuous'; 'silence' and 'humility' are the ultimate response.[63] And yet, he does narrate the ocean—or perhaps, one might say instead, he narrates Man (as opposed to humanity) onto it. The sea becomes a metaphor for the world, itself conceived of as the domain of human affairs. Faith in God will stop the current of 'uncertainty' in a world in which 'men float like

[60] On the 'inconstance' of the 'caprices' of *la fortune*, see also Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, Preface, non-paginated [4–5/26 pages].

[61] 'J'ai toutefois pris plaisir de donner essor à mes pensées, dans les vastes campagnes de l'océan', Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, Preface, non-paginated [25/26 pages].

[62] 'incompréhensible, inimaginable et hors de l'abord des plus grands esprits', Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, Preface, non-paginated [25/26 pages].

[63] 'me conviendrait avoir une bouche aussi grande que le ciel, et des paroles aussi brillantes que les étoiles, et autant de langues que de cheveux, et encore j'aurais trop de la présomption de vouloir entreprendre d'en tracer un traité'; 'lâchons, en ce sujet, les rênes au silence et à l'humilité', Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, Preface, non-paginated [10–11/26 pages].

vessels, and prudence is their compass which guides them amongst the banks and reefs'.[64]

This metaphorisation extends to the creatures inhabiting the marine environment, although it is not incompatible with an empirical appreciation. The cuttlefish's ability to secrete ink inspires the narrator, in a rare address to a female readership, to imitate their 'industry' and to cover 'what they have that is most charming, [and] that could incite desire in lascivious eyes'. The size and form of the starfish is described, and it becomes a model for narrator and reader ('cher lecteur'); as the creatures are 'covered with eyes' they inspire both to 'recognise [their] faults' and to correct them.[65] This mapping of human affairs onto the marine environment fulfils one typical role of narration, maritime or not, within early modern literary culture: that of providing moral *exempla*. It can also be considered to be the peak of anthropocentrism, in assimilating animal behaviours and forms to human behaviours. One might see within a reflection of Coppier's avowal of the impotence of narration when confronted with the ocean. Ultimately this telling of the un-narratable, through the mirroring of marine and terrestrial forms, approaches the *non*-representation of the subject.

Conclusion

This examination of a corpus of maritime narratives has considered them as the marker of mutations within a population, as an artefact to the apprehension of oral and written narratives, and as a form which echoes the anthropocentric nature of the encounter with the sea. Given that we have ended—inevitably, it seems—with a human-centred reading of the ocean, we might ultimately question the extent to which the ocean is actually narrated at all in the corpus of texts discussed here. It is constantly present to the extent that it is a source of wonder and of still-uncertain natural richness, and which inevitably encroaches upon the human through spectacular interventions. Yet it is at the same time the medium that conveys the narrative, permitting the passage from one culture to what lies outside it, enabling interactions among human populations, and facilitating the

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[64] 'ce monde n'est qu'une mer, où les hommes flottent ainsi que des vaisseaux, et que la prudence est leur boussole qui les guide parmi les bancs et les écueils: […] celui qui arrêtera sa pensée en Dieu, ne flottera jamais dans les incertitudes', Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, p. 50.

[65] 'Je conseille aux femmes d'imiter l'industrie de ce poisson, en couvrant ce qu'elles ont de plus charmant, qui pourrait donner de l'envie aux yeux lascifs', Coppier, *Histoire et Voyage*, p. 100; 'Que plût à Dieu (cher lecteur) que nous fussions tout œil comme ces poissonets', p. 101.

act of recounting which is embarked upon by the narrator–witness. Does Coppier's incapacity to narrate testify to the absence of human boundaries, markers and interactions that are the principal carriers of signification, as much as to the wonder before a vast marine expanse?

One potential role of the written narrative within its destined *public* can be seen to lie in its extension of the gestures, even the rites, which construct the solidarities of a culture faced with mobility. The narration, in turn, can be seen to constitute an act that gives signification to absence, temporary or permanent, and that could appropriate difference or reassure the values of those who never left. Narrating the hazardous, wondrous, ocean crossing imparts status to a returning member who, in the recounting of the tribulations faced, warns of natural or other frontiers to be confronted. The tale exposes the reader (or the listener) to a multitude of tribulations. In receiving the story, the reader is free to process it as he/she wishes.

There is a curious undertone amongst these accounts, which often depict the violence and exploitation in European expeditions, and testify to the unforeseen and often disastrous consequences for Europeans or those they encountered. In the act of narration, to the individual or on the printed page, one can perhaps pick up on the insistence, mantra-like, that reassures the reader that human beings *can* act in this environment. In recounting the tale, the individual is resituated, from a position of insignificance in an uncaring universe, to the centre of the narrative world. In turn, not unlike the fate of the carvings defacing a fig tree on a desert island, the contours of this tale are subject to mutation in the telling. Rather than effacement by time, it might instead undergo further acts of transcription and transformation, taking on the new meanings of readers on their own unrepeatable routes.

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'A Sea of Stories': Maritime Imagery and Imagination in Napoleonic Narratives of War Captivity

Elodie Duché

In 1836, 20 years after his liberation, a Royal Navy lieutenant named Richard Langton published a narrative of his captivity in France during the Napoleonic Wars.[1] The memoir opened, like many other pieces of the same genre, on a panorama of his 'voyage and capture' depicting his defeat as a sentimental passage to imprisonment. The temporality of the narration was uneven; the departure of the brig *Scorpion* from Liverpool to the West Indies was instantly followed by an ellipsis: 'nothing remarkable occurred until the third day of sailing'. This particular day, on the other hand, occupied several pages, where Langton dramatically rendered the crew's skirmish with two French vessels. There, the sea was described as a theatre of 'wild odyssey' populated by men of war, and cadenced by relentless cannon shots 'bounding on the water' and adding to the general confusion

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[1] Richard Langton, *Narrative of a Captivity in France From 1809 to 1814*, 2 vols (Liverpool: Smith, 1836).

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of a prolonged chase with French 'pirates'.[2] Overall, this incipit served Langton to contextualise and justify his defeat to his readers. It metamorphosed a story of failure into a heroic tale of survival. The mention of his 'last look of the sea […] with feelings of sorrow', before being landlocked by his captors, had a similar purpose.[3] It signified the commencement of captivity as a romantic separation from the marine world, an open space where employment, status and freedom could be gained and lost.

For various French and British prisoners of the Napoleonic conflicts, captivity was indeed 'sea-marked'.[4] These prisoners experienced different living conditions, whether detained liberally on parole, or confined more severely in fortresses and aboard hulks. Their number was equally asymmetrical: the 16,000 British captives in North-East France formed a minority against the 130,000 French sequestered throughout Britain between 1803 and 1814.[5] Overall, there was not one common type of captive: British prisoners included an estimated 400 civilians residing in France in 1803 (mostly genteel excursionists, artisans and textile workers), along with female passengers, field army and navy officers; whilst Napoleon's 'lost legions' encompassed different nationalities and trades congregated by mass conscription. They had thus different levels of literacy, and diverse identities, abilities and social statuses. Yet, during and after captivity, many of them had access to facilities that would allow them to articulate their situation with the sea in mind. For sailors like Langton, but also for civilians and soldiers, adults and children, men and women, the sea was perceived as inaugurating and concluding their seclusion.

Not only did the Channel delineate the physical and temporal contours of their detention, but the sea formed an imagined space which detainees vested with ideas and sentiments of dislocation.[6] Despite being placed far away from their home shores, the British captives in North-East France perceived the landscapes of their internment through a nautical prism.

[2] Langton, *Narrative of a Captivity*, vol. 1, pp. 1–4. See also Dean King, ed., *Every Man Will Do His Duty: An Anthology of First-Hand Accounts from the Age of Nelson 1793–1815* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1997), p. xiv.

[3] Langton, *Narrative of a Captivity*, vol. 1, p. 31.

[4] Expression borrowed from the work of Philip Edwards.

[5] Patrick Le Caravèse, 'Les Prisonniers Français en Grande-Bretagne de 1803 à 1814', *Napoleonica. La Revue*, 3:9 (2010): 118–52; Gavin Daly, 'Napoleon's Lost Legions: French Prisoners of War in Britain, 1803–1814', *History*, 89:295 (2004): 361–80.

[6] On the imagined space of the Channel, see Renaud Morieux, *Une Mer pour Deux Royaumes: la Manche, Frontière Franco-Anglaise (XVIIe–XVIIIe Siècles)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008).

They depicted themselves as shipwrecked exiles, whilst perceiving their detention places as islands and Burgundy roads as winding like the western ocean. Similarly, sea vistas permeated the objects French prisoners crafted whilst sequestered in Britain, which is exemplified by the vast array of bone ship models they designed for local markets. In this respect, captive productions reveal a twofold dynamic: they illustrate the potency of maritime imaginations in Napoleonic prisoners' creativity, as much as the demand for nautical tales and images amongst the societies surrounding their seclusion. My holistic perspective on the visual, textual and material culture of the sea in the 'contact zone' of captivity aims to draw attention to a neglected aspect which I term the 'environmental divestment' of war detention. By investigating the neglected mobilisation of marine metaphors in various forms of narrations, this chapter re-evaluates the role of the sea as a site of mediation and memorialisation of coerced mobility in the age of sail, when 'the lure of the sea' and the 'voyage' literature soared into prestige across Europe.[7]

An Environmental Divestment

As Pauline Turner Strong argues, scholarly works on prisoner of war experience have long 'tended to be similar in literary form and ideological function to the narratives of captivity they interpret'.[8] Whilst recent studies have attempted to address this issue, the focus has mainly been on identifying the literary components of their 'low literature'.[9] For the eighteenth century, Linda Colley's *Captives* and Catriona Kennedy's *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* have offered valuable insights into the articulation of defeat through intertextuality during a pivotal moment of nation-building and totalising warfare.[10] However, little attention has

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[7] Philip Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). On the cultural shift from negative to positive visions of the sea in the West during the period, see Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750–1840* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

[8] Pauline Turner Strong, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), p. 9.

[9] Linda Colley, 'Perceiving Low Literature: The Captivity Narrative', *Essays in Criticism*, 53:3 (2003): 199–218.

[10] Catriona Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Military and Civilian Experience in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600–1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002);

been given to the use of landscapes, particularly mnemonic and imaginary seascapes, in voicing forced displacement in times of war.[11] Yet, it appears significant that, for contemporaries, war captivity came hand in hand with the dissemination of maritime tales. Seditious rumours in Napoleonic France were, for instance, said to emanate from the 'wave sounds' ('*bruits de vague*') spread by British prisoners of war detained in the country.[12]

This entanglement of marine imaginings and captivity throws into relief how war detention constituted not only a social unsettlement, as has often been argued, but what I would term an environmental divestment, which prompted the retrieval and circulation of sea-inspired tropes via diverse medium.[13] War imprisonment deprived Napoleonic captives of familiar spaces of sociability, where their statuses and identities had been constructed and performed. Affective references to the sea were a response to this dislocation, which revealed the potency of French and British 'hydrographic cultures' in adversity during the period, namely cultures that richly encoded their relationships to saline water across textual, visual and material genres.[14] Looking at the mobilisation of nautical metaphors in detention is important; it invites us to consider how the sea formed a constructive set of references and exchanges, despite the various constraints and motivations under which captives expressed themselves. Overall, the 'narrationality' of the sea in their depictions of coercing or liberating landscapes was an attempt to 'create meaning from non-meaning', especially 'in the face of loss, absence or death'.[15]

Linda Colley, 'Going Native, Telling Tales: Captivity, Collaborations and Empire', *Past and Present*, 168:1 (2000): 170–93.

[11] Catriona Kennedy has briefly explored the symbolic significance for the sea amongst Revolutionary and Napoleonic 'travellers in uniforms', namely sailors in regular service abroad. Yet, the question of how coerced mobility, in the context of war captivity, affected and was impinged by representations of the sea remains uncharted territory. Catriona Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, p. 95.

[12] For example, see *Narrateur de la Meuse*, 8 October 1813, p. 1.

[13] On the social and gender unsettlement of war captivity, see, amongst others, Alon Rachamimov, 'The Disruptive Comforts of Drag: (Trans) Gender Performances among Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–1920', *American Historical Review*, 111:2 (2006): 362–82.

[14] Simon Schama coined the expression 'hydrographic culture' in *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Collins, 1987), p. 44.

[15] Howard Marchitello, *Narrative and Meaning in Early Modern England: Browne's Skull and other Histories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 4–5.

To explore this question, it is essential to read the prisoners' manuscripts and printed writings in unison with other materials produced in confinement such as songs, sketches and ship models. It is my contention that all these productions should be considered as 'narratives', understood broadly as mediated stories of internment, to investigate the shaping force of maritime outlooks and the diverse emotions that prisoners placed in aquatic landscapes to articulate their dislocation.[16] Inspired by recent works on the archaeology of war internment, my holistic perspective on the textual, visual, material and melodic cultures of the sea in captivity could be named after the Indian 'sea of stories'. This tradition of storytelling refers to the process by which tales, like rivulets, constantly emerge and merge into each other's streams to form an imagined ocean of narration transgressing textual, material and oral boundaries.[17] I do not claim that there is a direct link between captive writings and this tradition, despite the rise of Orientalism in Western cultures during the period.[18] Rather, I use it as an analytic prism to perceive the neglected role of the sea as a site of musing, interpretation and memorialisation of coerced mobility.

After relocating this phenomenon in a European culture of the 'sea voyage', the second section of this chapter will explore how and why Napoleonic prisoners conceptualised their gatherings as displaced islands. These perceptions were nourished by the social performances of naval captives, who disseminated marine imaginings in writing as much as in crafting objects, which is the focus of the penultimate part. This will feed into the final question of the passage to liberty, and how traversing the 'liquid border' of the Channel crystallised the prisoners' changing feelings of interiority and belonging.[19]

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[16] H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 20–2.

[17] Harold Mytum and Gilly Carr, eds. *Prisoners of War: Archaeology, Memory, and Heritage of 19th- and 20th-Century Mass Internment* (New York, Heidelberg, Dordrecht, London: Springer, 2012). On the 'sea of stories', see Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (London: Granta, 1990); Jean-Pierre Durix, '"The Gardener of Stories": Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 28:1 (1993): 114–22.

[18] On the popularity of the *Arabian Nights* and Oriental storytelling in Europe during the period, see, amongst others, Fahd Mohammed Taleb Saeed Al-Olaqi, 'The Influence of the Arabian Nights on English Literature: A Selective Study', *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 31:3 (2012): 384–96.

[19] On the imagined space of the Channel, see Morieux, *Une Mer pour Deux Royaumes*.

A Sea-Girt Audience

In *The Story of the Voyage*, Philip Edwards has cogently argued that Georgian readers were avid consumers of travel writing, particularly narratives of voyages at sea.[20] 'The reading public', he observes, 'could not get enough in the way of accounts of all the maritime activity involved in extending Britain's knowledge of the globe and her control of territories old and new.'[21] This movement was underpinned by a broader socio-cultural phenomenon: more readers had access to books, as the literacy levels rose in the country, and the prices of book printing lowered. Overall, the development of the book industry meant that the 'pleasures of the imagination' were increasingly textual.[22] Translations of French, German or Dutch travel writing were promptly and widely circulated to furnish the shelves and minds of many readers. Equally, publishers multiplied during the period, offering the chance to a variety of authors to see their stories in print. This generated a rage for the 'voyage' genre, which shaped the mental landscapes of Europeans with a remarkable force. 'Voyage-narratives', writes Edwards, 'did have an impact on the imaginative life of the eighteenth century comparable to the impact of the world of chivalry on the imaginative life of the sixteenth century.'[23]

As a genre, the sea voyage literature was not a novelty of the period. The semantic presence of the sea and references to maritime journeys, as an environmental metaphor for political and confessional awakening, had been immensely popular in the preceding centuries. It had been an instrument of self-fashioning amongst Renaissance authors across Europe. In particular, the figurative and fugitive space of the sea had been used in early modern England by Shakespeare, Bacon and Marlowe, as a source of reflection on the scientific, spiritual and imperial conquests of their time.[24] Yet, despite this textual genealogy, the sea voyage acquired a new dimension during the Napoleonic Wars, as the rise and fall of Nelson triggered a new set of military imaginings. As Sue Parill and Margarette Lincoln recently argued, Nelson's navy was fictionalised in novels, memoirs, songs,

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[20] Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage*, pp. 1–7.

[21] Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage*, p. 2.

[22] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 125–97.

[23] Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage*, p. 3.

[24] Philip Edwards, *Sea-Mark: The Metaphorical Voyage, Spenser to Milton* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. 6.

watercolours, caricatures and other varied objects during the conflicts and their aftermath.[25] These creations nourished myths about life outside the territorial boundaries of a nation eager to 'rule the waves' of the world.[26] They shaped enduring conceptions of the sea as a tormented space of colliding powers, violence, exile and sublime as evidenced by J. M. W. Turner's rendering of naval landscapes of the period, particularly his painting of the 'Battle of Trafalgar' (1824), 'The Fighting Temeraire tugged to her last berth to be broken up' (1838), and 'War. The Exile and the Rock Limpet' (1842). The latter depicted Napoleon contemplating his exile in the watery mirror of the Atlantic Ocean, and was accompanied by verses depicting sunsets as a 'sea of blood'.[27]

This romanticisation of naval violence was integral to novel ideas of belonging in space and time which, as Peter Fritzsche noted, were unsettled by the pan-European experience of the Napoleonic conflicts.[28] In 1809, William Golwin voiced the 'images of an apocalyptic sea' that impregnated the minds of a British public menaced by revolutions 'heaving beyond their bounds'.[29] Ideas and feelings of being 'in between […] two worlds', peace and war, past and present, *ancien régime* and revolutions, nourished the following *mal-du-siècle* of the nineteenth century, which was articulated through the sea. In the words of the French author Alfred de Musset in the 1830s, this malaise was 'something like the ocean […] something vague and floating, a rough sea full of wrecks'.[30] This sentimentalisation of

[25] Sue Parrill, *Nelson's Navy in Fiction and Film: Depictions of British Sea Power in the Napoleonic Era* (Jefferson: MacFarland, 2009); Margarette Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy: British Sea Power, 1750–1815* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002).

[26] Nicholas Tracy, *Britannia's Palette: The Arts of Naval Victory* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), p. 222.

[27] The union of sky and sea was a common feature in Turner's productions, yet in his particular portrait of Napoleon in exile the blurred and incandescent marine landscape aimed to represent the brutality and futility of the recently ended conflicts. The Emperor was portrayed as studying a rather banal mollusc, whilst crossing his arm in resignation and despair. See the recent analysis of the painting by Karine Huguenaud for *Napoleonica* http://www.napoleon.org/en/essential_napoleon/key_painting/files/476835.asp [accessed 11 November 2014]. The importance of the sea in Turner's work has recently been highlighted in an exhibition at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. See Christine Riding and Richard Johns, *Turner and the Sea* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2013).

[28] Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[29] Paul Westover, *Necromanticism: Traveling to Meet the Dead, 1750–1860* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 1–2.

[30] Westover, *Necromanticism*, p. 90.

the sea nourished the 'melancholy of history' amongst authors who, like René de Chateaubriand in the bay of Saint-Malo, contemplated in the sea 'a time [of having] nothing of what [they] once had'.[31]

War captivity, particularly Napoleonic tales of capture at sea, satisfied this appetite for reflections on loss and seafaring in Britain and France during the nineteenth century. Following early publications, such as that of the *Journal* of the aptly-named William Story in London in 1815, narratives of former British prisoners in Napoleonic France populated the print market in Britain, with a peak in the 1830s when memoirs of sailors increasingly featured in book subscriptions and in series in the press.[32] In Britain, these captive narratives were read avidly as adventurous tales of forfeiture. This is evidenced by the multiple editions of these texts. Charles Sturt's narrative, for instance, was reprinted six times by the end of the year of its first publication.[33] This is also perceptible in the titles of these accounts, which anchored their life story in maritime and scenic escapades: *A Picture of Verdun*; *Narrative of a Forced Journey*; or *My adventures during the late war, a Narrative of Shipwreck, Captivity, Escapes from French Prisons, and Sea Service in 1804–14.*[34]

Equally, French prisoners of war in Britain penned numerous accounts upon their return home, yet the publication of these texts followed a different chronology. In this respect, the delays Ambroise Louis Garneray experienced in finding an audience for his story are illuminating. After his

[31] Peter Fritzsche, 'Specters of History: On Nostalgia, Exile, and Modernity', *American Historical Review*, 106:5 (2001): 1587–1618.

[32] William Story, *A Journal Kept in France, during a Captivity of More than Nine Years, Commencing the 14th Day of April 1805 and Ending the 5th Day of May 1814* (London: Gale and Fenner, 1815).

[33] Charles Sturt, *The Real State of France, in the Year 1809; with an Account of the Treatment of the Prisoners of War, and Persons Otherwise Detained in France* (London: Ridgway, 1810).

[34] Amongst others, see James Lawrence, *A Picture of Verdun, or the English Detained in France*, 2 vols (London: Hookham, 1810); Andrew Blayney, *Narrative of a Forced Journey through Spain and France*, 2 vols (London: Kerby, 1814); Peter Gordon, *Narrative of the Imprisonment and Escape of Peter Gordon, Second Mate in the Barque Joseph of Limerick, Captain Connolly* (London: Conder, 1816); Robert Wolfe, *English Prisoners in France, Containing Observations on their Manners and Habits Principally with Reference to their Religious State* (London: Hatchard, 1830); Seacombe Ellison, *Prison Scenes: and Narrative of Escape from France, during the Late War* (London: Whittaker, 1838); Donat Henchy O'Brien, *My Adventures During the Late War*, 2 vols (London: Colburn, 1839); Edward Proudfoot Montagu, *The Personal Narrative of the Escape of Edward Proudfoot Montagu: An English Prisoner of War, from the Citadel of Verdun* (London: Beccles, 1849); Edward Boys, *Narrative of a Captivity, Escape, and Adventures in France and Flanders during the War*, 2nd edn. (London: Cautley Newby, 1863).

release in 1814, Garneray wrote an account of his captivity in Britain, which he submitted to the French State in 1847 to be included in the curricular readings of future sailors, yet without much success. The posthumous publication of Garneray's memoirs was, in fact, the project of later publishers in the 1850s, when a fashion for *émigrés*' recollections and apocryphal accounts of the Revolutionary Wars developed in France. Garneray's memoirs were collated, edited and partially rewritten in a three-volume compendium of dramatic fiction entitled *Aventures et Combats* (*Adventures and Fights*). Captivity was placed under the subsection *Mes Pontons* (*My Prison Ships*), which turned his narrative of detention into a novel of maritime adventure in order to appeal to the nautical taste of an audience including juvenile readers.[35] Overall, considered as a corpus, published and manuscript narratives of captivity not only reveal a death of the author, as in Garneray's case, but also the potency of maritime imaginations in shaping these texts and the 'horizon of expectation' of their intended readers, if not publishers.[36] In particular, this culture of the sea voyage influenced the ways in which captivity was perceived as a social and spatial atoll.

Inland Islands

> If water adds to its safety, in the winter months it may certainly boast of great advantages, for the melting snows from the adjacent eminences, and the overflowing of the Meuse, nearly insulate the town; and many prospects from the walls present only spacious lakes, spotted with small islands.[37]

This was how James Forbes, a former civil servant of the English East India Company, described to his sister his first impressions of Verdun, the parole depot where he was sequestered with hundreds of other British civilians captured in mid-Grand Tour in May 1803. Isolated in a remote town of Lorraine, these captives were purposely detained as far away from saltwater as possible to hinder any escape. Yet, despite their location, British parole

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[35] This is exemplified by its multiple adaptations for children's books, which include *Un corsaire de quinze ans* (Paris: Bibliothèque Rouge et Or, 1954) and more recently *Corsaire de la République* (Paris: Phébus, 1984).

[36] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', trans. and ed. Stephen Heath in *Image–Music–Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 42–8; Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

[37] James Forbes, *Letters from France Written in the Years 1803 and 1804, Including a Particular Account of Verdun and the Situation of the British Captives in that City*, 2 vols (London: Bensley, 1806), vol. 2, p. 227.

captives perceived the landscape of their captivity through its watery nature. The redcoat Major General Blayney equally portrayed the town as 'resting […] on several islands', a vision which filtered through the prisoners' pictorial representations of their new dwelling. Their watercolours were all panoramic views of the surroundings of the town with, as a point of focus, the enclosing meanderings of the river Meuse.[38] Verdun was not unique: British prisoners of a lower sort, and confined more severely in the fortresses that constellated the North-East of France, equally associated their coerced migrations with maritime landscapes. In his journal, the common sailor William Story related his march through Burgundy in nautical terms. Approaching Autun, he wrote: 'the weather was intensely hot and our road lay over ridges of hills, like the swell in the western ocean; we were continually ascending and descending, always expecting that, after passing the hill before us, we should see a plain.'[39]

The function of these associations was twofold. First, the insulation trope served to articulate seclusion and displacement, which British prisoners associated with a popular and archetypal figure of the shipwrecked exile: Robinson Crusoe. Relating his first encounter with another English captive, Blayney expressed his astonishment through the novel: 'certainly Robinson Crusoe could not have been much more surprised at hearing his parrot cry "poor Robin!" than I was at being addressed in an English voice from so unexpected a place'.[40] Defoe's novel not only shaped the writing of these narratives, but also their readings after publication. This is evidenced by a review of the aforementioned narrative by Langton in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and which read:

> As Robinson Crusoe wrote a very entertaining journal in a desolate island, so Mr. Langton has made a tolerably entertaining and instructive book, as he was marched from Verdun to Ancona [*sic*], and from Cambrai to Blois. We leave off with one strong impression, that though the French possess a

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[38] These productions differed greatly from local paintings, which, almost without exception, depicted the town from within its ramparts, thus subduing its fluvial charm to highlight urban scenes and architectures. Bibliothèque d'Etude de Verdun, France, Dessins et Cartes: BCM122, Henry, 'Porte de France' (1815); V20, Henry, 'Vue prise de la Grande Digue' (1815). Musée de la Princerie, Verdun, France, uncatalogued: Five watercolours of Verdun by James Forbes, 1804. See also Bibliothèque d'Etude de Verdun, France, Dessins et Cartes: V19 bis, Samuel Robinson, 'A West View of the Town of Verdun in Lorrain from the Heights', undated.

[39] Story, *A Journal Kept in France*, p. 52.

[40] Blayney, *Narrative of a Forced Journey*, vol. 2, p. 341.

deal of genius and politesse, they are far behind the English in the civilisation of manners and of mind.[41]

As Edward Said observes, Defoe's novel was a vehicle for colonial imaginations, especially through the themes it encompassed: the sugar trade, the subjugation of a Native American re-named after the day God created Adam, and the fantasy of transforming foreign lands which illustrated Britain's imperial project abroad.[42] This project was encapsulated in one island, and embodied in one dislocated man, who presented 'a modern vision of the alienated individual attempting to find a way to be at home in the world'.[43] This quest strongly resonated with the prisoners' forced displacement, and the reference to the novel offered them an empowering tool of inversion. Indeed, suggesting that the French were European versions of Friday, knowledgeable yet lacking 'civilised' polish, asserted the prisoners' cultural distinctiveness, if not dominance, over their captors. And so was the function of referring to the depots themselves as little British Isles, all-in-small worlds where prisoners emulated their lost society.[44] Nourished by the microcosmic genre in vogue at the time, these discourses served a second function: the prisoners' attempt to subvert the 'contact zone' of their detention place.[45] Indeed, captives often narrated how, despite understanding French, they renamed buildings, streets and rivers after familiar places in their home country, and thus refashioned the space of their seclusion to 'inspire the English spectator with the idea he was once more at home'.[46]

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[41] 'Miscellaneous Reviews', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, November 1836, pp. 75–6.

[42] Ann Marie Fallon, *Global Crusoe: Comparative Literature, Postcolonial Theory and Transnational Aesthetics* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 28–9.

[43] Fallon, *Global Crusoe*, p. 28.

[44] Lawrence, *A Picture of Verdun*, vol. 1, pp. 90–1; Langton, *Narrative of a Captivity*, vol. 1, pp. 254–5; Blayney, *Narrative of a Forced Journey*, vol. 2, p. 197.

[45] Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, pp. 125–6.

[46] Langton, *Narrative of a Captivity*, vol. 1, pp. 254–5. Contemporaries narrated that 'Verdun began to lose the appearance of a French town' as captives settled in and renamed its commercial artery Bond Street, see Henry Raikes, ed., *Memoir of Vice-Admiral Sir Jahleel Brenton, Baronet, K.C.B.* (London: Hatchard, 1846), p. 189. 'At Verdun', wrote Reverend Lee in a letter, 'I found myself enclosed in a small town, comprehending about the space of that iniquitous part of Oxford which surrounds the castle: the river is the same dimension and nearly in the same manner environed with mansions […] The ramparts afford agreeable walks […] which I have christened by the much loved names of Christ Church, Magdalen

These captive archipelagos were an inward- and outward-looking topos of escapism, yet two questions remain unanswered: why were these nautical references prominent amongst British captives? And was there a similar phenomenon amongst their French counterparts in Britain? Arguably, the sea cemented a social world in detention, by constituting the common denominator of various British and French prisoners. The 16,000 British captives detained in France were primarily naval men. In Verdun, 80 % of the British male military captives were seamen captured in naval skirmishes or from ships that had drifted ashore by stresses of weather. What is often considered as a privileged civilian depot was thus, in fact, a naval gathering.[47] The rest were non-combatant excursionists, male and female passengers and soldiers, who had also first-hand experiences of seafaring. For them, captivity was a second experience of displacement, which had been preceded by at least one passage, as they had all, at one time or another, travelled by boat to reach the continent.

Equally, French detainees in Britain had prior experience of the sea, whether they were soldiers, passengers, merchants, naval men or privateers. In 1810, 59 % of non-ranking French captives were seamen, a tendency which altered only towards the end of the conflict when tensions escalated in the Iberian Peninsula.[48] Regardless of their corps, these captives experienced maritime life, culturally and administratively, during detention. As Louis Cros argued, the Napoleonic Wars inaugurated a shift of the laws of the sea onto the land, exemplified by the decision of the British State in 1796 to divest the Sick and Hurt Board from its traditional responsibility to manage prisoners of war, in order to place captives under the care of the Transport Board, a sub-branch of the Admiralty.[49] Captives were clothed, fed and disciplined by a naval system of welfare, which thus percolated through inland depots, as much as littoral fortresses.[50] In this respect, it

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and such like denominations.' See John Parry-Wingfield, ed., *Napoleon's Prisoner: A Country Parson's Ten-Year Detention in France* (Ilfracombe: Stockwell, 2012), p. 29.

[47] See National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, PRN/6, Officers of HM Royal Navy, prisoners of war at Verdun, 1803–13; John Hopkinson, 'Register of fellow prisoners at Verdun' in Thomas Walker, *The Depot for Prisoners of War at Norman Cross, Huntingdonshire, 1796 to 1816* (London: Constable, 1913), pp. 312–14.

[48] Daly, 'Napoleon's Lost Legions', p. 363.

[49] Louis Cros, *Condition et traitement des prisonniers de guerre* (Montpellier: Delord-Boehm, 1900).

[50] Patricia Crimmin described how some French prisoners refused to eat fish as a form of protest against the naval system under which they were sequestered. Patricia K. Crimmin,

comes as no surprise that French captives were inclined to articulate, in naval terms, their misery in seclusion. The expression '*raffalés*', used by French prisoners to categorise those amongst them who developed drinking and gambling addictions, was derived from an argotic nautical lexicon. It originally meant being 'pushed ashore by gales of wind', and was used to signify social wreckage in detention.[51] Those detained in squalid conditions on hulks—that is, decommissioned naval ships—had even more reasons to describe captivity as a 'floating sepulchre', attributing their predicament to the 'uncivilised' comportment of British islanders, and creating a myth of the *pontons* as a British invention.[52]

In the absence of the sea, paroled sailors from the Royal Navy shifted their locus of activity to rivers, which influenced the ways in which other British captives conceived detention and their social time abroad.[53] Along the Meuse, Molyneux Shuldham invented an ice-skating boat, much to the dismay of both the local inhabitants and the fish; whilst James Kingston Tuckey penned a four-volume compendium of maritime geography.[54] If, as Joan Scott observes, the act of experiencing is inherently visual, the performances of these landlocked tars might have contributed to the perception of depots as islands and rivers as reminiscent of sea.[55] They were active agents of the ongoing production and imagination of space in these locales, as they transferred the rhythm of seafaring ashore through naval patterns of sociability.[56] They called their lodgings 'messes', a term which their civilian room-mates repeated, if not adopted, in their diaries.[57]

'Prisoners of War and British Port Communities, 1793–1815', *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du nord*, 6:4 (1996): 17–27; Daly, 'Napoleon's Lost Legions', p. 364.

[51] On the definition of '*raffaler*', see the Ortolang dictionary project http://www.cnrtl. fr/definition/raffaler [accessed 11 November 2014].

[52] Daly, 'Napoleon's Lost Legions', p. 380.

[53] The *Narrateur de la Meuse* reported on various '*inventions nautiques des Anglais*'. *Narrateur de la Meuse*, 5 September 1813, p. 6.

[54] Léon Renard, *L'Art Naval*, 3rd edn. (Paris: Hachette, 1873), pp. 254–8; John Goldworth Alger, *Napoleon's British Visitors and Captives (1801–1815)* (London: Methuen, 1904), p. 201; James Kingston Tuckey, *Maritime Geography and Statistics*, 4 vols (London: Black, 1815).

[55] Joan W. Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry*, 17:4 (1991): 773–97.

[56] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 118. Other seminal studies of space as an ongoing social production include: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989).

[57] For an example of the adoption of the military term 'mess' to refer to dinner parties organised by civilians, see Lawrence, *A Picture of Verdun*, vol. 1, p. 92.

Their outlooks also filtered through the everyday of captive civilians and soldiers via religion. In particular, devotional activities crystallised a fusion of horizons in the reading of one confessional tool designed by prisoners, a *Book of Common Prayer* edited by John Barnabas Maude, a captive clergyman who, with the help of a French bookseller, published it and printed 1500 copies to be distributed in 11 depots of British prisoners in France.[58] A comparison with other civilian prayer books reveals that sermons on 'deliverance from an enemy' were inserted amongst the regular psalms, as well as 'thanksgivings after a storm' or 'a tempest', which suggest the influence of the 'blue lights' on the religious life in captivity.[59] These prayers strongly resonated with the sermons preached on warships, which suggests that, despite having been extirpated from naval perils and combat, prisoners saw in the sea a space of spiritual communion for civilian and military captives alike.

The Trials of the Sea

Whilst visions and languages of the sea circulated within detention places, the continuation of sea life ashore had specific meanings for sailors, as they perceived and narrated the sea under the constraints of professional practices. One trope can be discerned within naval accounts: the use of the sea to defend and fashion themselves as unfortunate 'sports of war'.[60] Indeed, for French and British sailors, the sea formed a probationary space, which they dramatised to pre-empt accusations of cowardice. Langton's account, mentioned above, bears witness to this self-exculpatory usage of the marine world, since it was his escape that he aimed to legitimise by emphasising prior bravery at sea.[61] Such personal justifications permeated two types of writing—published memoirs, and manuscript Admiralty reports—in which specific stylistic devices were used to depict the trials of the sea.

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[58] John Barnabas Maude, ed., *Book of Common Prayer* (Verdun: Christophe, 1810).

[59] The aforementioned sermons appeared in James Stanier Clarke, *Naval Sermons Preached on Board His Majesty's Ship The Impetueux in the Western Squadron, During Its Services Off Brest* (London: Payne and White, 1798). The expression 'blue lights' refers to evangelical sailors. See Richard Blake, *Evangelicals in the Royal Navy, 1775–1815: Blue Lights & Psalm-Singers* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008).

[60] Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, p. 119.

[61] Throughout his account, Langton endeavoured to justify himself by presenting his breach of honour as a 'meditated escape', Langton, *Narrative of a Captivity*, vol. 1, p. 98.

Sailors profusely employed the epic register in printed accounts, which often embedded narratives of capture in prophetic plots. Alexander Stewart, for instance, related how a series of ominous occurrences had taken place before his passage from Plymouth: the crew had 'wrecked' in Brighton and, in Newcastle, he 'again nearly drowned';[62] 'so precarious is safety at sea', he concluded.[63] These anxieties crystallised when, in Plymouth, 'a young man […] came on the deck, like a ghost rising from the sea'.[64] This Gothic apparition led him to foresee capture in his sleep.[65] The loop was then complete, as 'this capture [took] place close to the very spot where, a few months previous, [he] had been shipwrecked'.[66] This circular history reveals how British seamen tried to pinpoint the beginning of captivity in the sea. Stewart was forced into detention by natural elements, which dissipated his responsibility in his defeat. His outlook offers an insight into the potency of myths of wreckage, as much as the captives' need to place their individual destiny into cosmic and historical vanguards.[67] Stewart quoted his own dream, in inverted commas, as if it was already written not only in nature, but in history and Providence. Over several pages, he attempted to 'trace […] its possible antecedents', before concluding that 'it resemble[d] the dream of Alexander the Great about the Jewish High Priest'.[68] His effort to locate his defeat into a greater scheme materialised in the vision of a providential call in capture. 'This was the turning point in my destiny', he wrote, 'I had given myself to a sea life, but God "hedged up my way"'.[69] The rise of Evangelism in the Navy might explain why other sailors reclaimed the hardships of seclusion as a confessional awakening.[70] Repossessing forfeiture also materialised in

[62] Alexander Stewart, *The Life of Alexander Stewart: Prisoner of Napoleon and Preacher of the Gospel* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1948), p. 15.

[63] Stewart, *The Life of Alexander Stewart*, p. 15.

[64] Stewart, *The Life of Alexander Stewart*, pp. 17–18.

[65] The day after, he wrote, 'the historic fact dovetailed most accurately with every part of the dream'; Stewart, *The Life of Alexander Stewart*, p. 20.

[66] Stewart, *The Life of Alexander Stewart*, p. 18.

[67] On the potency of myths of wreckage in eighteenth-century England, see Cathryn Pearce, *Cornish Wrecking, 1700–1860: Reality and Popular Myth* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010).

[68] Stewart, *The Life of Alexander Stewart*, p. 17.

[69] Stewart, *The Life of Alexander Stewart*, p. 20.

[70] This process manifested itself in letter-writing. See the letters of a Methodist captive named Nicholas Lelean to his wife, Royal Institute of Cornwall, Courtney Library, The Wesleyans of Mevagissey papers, uncatalogued, Correspondence of Nicholas Lelean, 1806–

the use of Classics epitaphs from Virgil's poetry, or humorous references to the 'sentimental journey'—Lawrence Sterne's novel about discovering France—both of which turned their passive experience of military violence into an empowering situation of self-fashioning.[71]

In manuscript Admiralty reports, this empowerment relied mostly on *not* narrating the sea itself. For British captains, capture led to a court martial evaluating the conditions of the ship's loss and the responsibility of the defeated crew. To be acquitted and maintain their affiliation to the service, they had to write to the 'Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty' in London to defend themselves *in absentia*. They often did so at sea, aboard the ships of their captors, as evidenced by the 'Statement of occurrences' penned by Captain Daniel Woodriff on the *Majestueux*.[72] His report stated that the defeat of the Indiaman under his command, HMS *Calcutta*, was necessary for the 'escape' of the merchant convoy he was in charge of escorting from Saint Helena to England.[73] The unexpected assistance request from a 'leaky' and 'heavy' brig from Tobago was the main impediment Woodriff invoked in his five-page letter to justify his navigational strategy. Suffused by a technical language of military 'action', his report thus portrayed the sea as a blank space of gallant maneuvering, which manifested most vividly in his attached sketch of the event, where only vessels, their trajectories and the times of their movement featured.

Conversely, French captains used the rhetoric of pathos to lament the lost sea, particularly through the trope of nautical burial.[74] The memoir of Pierre-Marie-Joseph de Bonnefoux, captured on the *Belle Poule* in the Caribbean and detained in Britain for 5 years, is illuminating. The lexicon field of death permeated his narrative of capture at sea. The captor was a

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1813. A similar confessional awakening in captivity can be found in the writings of Captain Jahleel Brenton detained in Verdun. See Raikes, *Memoir of Vice-Admiral Sir Jahleel Brenton*.

[71] The convention of citing Classics was aligned with the romantic reimagining of the epic, and served to situate individual prisoners at the centre of a 'sentimental journey'. On the question of the place of the epic in history-writing during the period, see Elisa Beshero-Bondar, *Women, Epic, and Transition in British Romanticism* (Plymouth and Lanham: University of Delaware Press, 2011); Chloe Wheatley, *Epic, Epitome, and the Early Modern Historical Imagination* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

[72] Woodriff was tried on HMS *Gladiator* after liberation. See William Patrick Gossett, *The Lost Ships of the Royal Navy, 1793–1900* (London: Mansell, 1986), pp. 48–9.

[73] National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, WDR6, Captain Daniel Woodriff, Map of Lat. 49.34, Long. 9.010, n°3, 25–6 September 1805; 'Statement of occurrences on the 25th and 26th September 1805 n°1'.

[74] This representation was based on a social practice, as it was commonplace to return the dead to the sea during voyages.

predator instilling a fear 'similar to the one inspired by a wolf in a flock of sheep'. Surrender 'sounded like a tolling knell': the crew broke their swords and threw their remains in the sea.[75] Once captured, their passage to Portsmouth was torturous: their decapitated ship 'almost perished' ('*faillit perir*') in a tempest and the sight of French shores was 'heart-wrenching' ('*crève-cœur*') for the defeated crew.[76] This language was coupled with an *argumentum ad passiones*, which elicited empathy from his reader to see sailors as 'victims of a passion for the sea' yet subject to the decay of the French naval sea power after Trafalgar.[77] This self-exculpatory discourse permeated many narrations of officers liable for the defeat of their crew, who depicted themselves as developing leadership in adversity. Yet, other neglected mediums, such as objects, were used by these captives and others of a lower sort, who sometimes lacked literacy, to express their visions of the sea in seclusion.

Marine Crafts

In September 1809, in the churchyard of Odiham, Hampshire, a headstone was raised in memory of Pierre Julian Jonneau, a French parole prisoner in the village, who died aged 29. An epitaph entitled 'Ode to a prisoner of war bone ship model' ornated the stone to celebrate a miniature of the *Temeraire* Jonneau had fabricated in detention. Commissioned by local admirers of his art, this piece of poetry offers an insight into the process and meaning of representing seafaring in captivity during the period:

> Mellow as ancient ivory
> And fine as carven jade,
> From beef-bones of captivity
> The shapely hull was made,
> Whose making helped upon their way
> Such limping hours and slow

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[75] Émile Jobbé-Duval, ed., *Mémoires du Baron de Bonnefoux, Capitaine de vaisseau. 1782–1855* (Paris: Plon, 1900), p. 184.

[76] '*Le crève-cœur de longer les côtes de France, d'en apercevoir les sites riants et de nous en éloigner avec le pénible sentiment de notre liberté perdue. Dans cette tempête, le Marengo fut démâté de tous ses mâts et faillit périr; mais il avait tant souffert dans sa vaillante résistance qu'il n'y avait rien d'étonnant*'; Jobbé-Duval, *Mémoires du Baron de Bonnefoux*, p. 192.

[77] '*victime de sa passion pour la mer […] La République, non plus que l'Empire, ne sut garantir nos côtes, ni même l'intérieur de plusieurs de nos ports, des blocus ou des croisières anglaises; espérons qu'une telle humiliation est passée pour la France*'; Jobbé-Duval, *Mémoires du Baron de Bonnefoux*, pp. xxxi, 53.

As measured out the leaden day
That none but prisoners know.
Old wars, old woes, old wasted years,
Old causes lost and won,
Old bitterness of captives' tears
As dreams–as dreams are done.
As dreams the stubborn hulls, the pride
Of masts that raked the sky,
Sea-shattering bows and oaken side
Of fighting fleets gone by.

Older practices of celebrating craftsmanship in burial and romantic imaginings of dying out of place instilled this lamentation.[78] Nevertheless, the fact that this was written in English, and that the ship model was the point of focus, instead of the artist, appears peculiar. Jonneau was the son of an officer in the administration of the French Navy, and he was born in the *Ile de Ré*, which meant that seafaring had framed his everyday life and education, before being the object of his craft. Yet, far from being a prosaic background to his upbringing, the sea was depicted, in the poem, as an oneiric space of martial loss and elation populated by 'masts that raked the sky'. 'What about her builder?' the poem asks, 'Did he sail/Home to France at last,/To tell in happier times the tale/of wars and prison past?'[79] This penultimate verse suggests that its openness was associated with prospects of freedom. Whilst Jonneau never reached his home shores, the act of composing the ship model had, for the authors of the poem, enabled him to while the time away, as much as to carve out a place in the society of his defeaters. These objects were, in fact, meant to be sold in local markets and were well-appreciated by British clients, who developed amicable relations with the enemy through this commerce. Jonneau was not an exception. Many country houses, museums and private collectors are now in possession of ship models crafted by Napoleonic prisoners of war in Britain. They are categorised by curators as belonging to the 'prisoner of war genre', a genre which bears witness to the grip of the sea on the imagination of both captives and captors, craftsmen and customers.[80]

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[78] Paul Westover has made a compelling argument on the cruciality of dislocation in turning towards the 'dead' in France, America and Britain during the experience of warfare in the Romantic age; Westover, *Necromanticism*, p. 128.

[79] Clive Lloyd, *A History of Napoleonic and American Prisoners of War 1756–1816: Hulk, Depot and Parole*, 2 vols (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, 2007), vol. 2, p. 129.

[80] See the series of curatorial podcasts for the Thomson Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Simon Stephens, 'Napoleonic French Prisoner-of-war boxwood and ebony model of

The objects crafted by French prisoners in Britain were as various in subject, form, material and sophistication, as the conditions of their production. They were created by parolees dispersed in myriad villages in Britain, as much as by captives experiencing a more severe confinement in Portchester Castle or Norman Cross, and in hulks off the coasts of Portsmouth. Their prime material was bone derived from their food ration (half a pound of beef, pork or mutton on the bone), along with straw and wood smuggled or acquired in what was then known as the 'depot market'. These weekly markets were extensions of inner transactions within the prison, which served detainees to exchange goods between barracks, such as coffee and tobacco. The inland 'depot market' was a regulated zone of trade within the detention place, generally in a secured yard within the main gate, between the inner and outer walls of the prison, where captive craftsmen were entrusted to sell their productions to the local population.[81] The colourfulness of these popular fairs was a source of inspiration for various British artists who, like Robert Louis Stevenson, marvelled at the 'little miracles of dexterity and taste' put on sale by French captives in Scotland in his novel *Saint-Ives.*[82]

Ship models were fine examples of the captives' adroitness, as they metamorphosed humble materials into luxury goods.[83] These artefacts were intricately carved and detailed compositions, as evidenced by the replicate below (Fig. 3.1). Whether they represented ships of the line, hulks or whaleboats, the vessels were fully decked, equipped and rigged with human or horse hair. They could feature Roman figureheads, elaborate sterns, miniature lifeboats and brass cannons, which could be linked to a retractable system of pulleys or cords at the stern. These ornaments and mechanisms reflected the versatility of skills of the 'citizen–soldiers' of Napoleon's army, a congregation of workers of various trades and nationalities enforced to take up arms by the conscription.[84] This versatility was

the 120-Gun First-Rate-Ship-Of-The-Line "L'Ocean"' http://www.ago.net/agoid108063b [accessed 11 November 2014].

[81] See Paul Chamberlain, *Hell Upon Water: Prisoners of War in Britain, 1793–1815* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2008).

[82] Arthur Claude Cook painted 'Plait merchants trading with the French prisoners of war at Norman Cross or Yaxley Camp, Cambridgeshire, 1806–1815' (1909), whilst Arthur David McCormick depicted the sale of a ship model in his 'Prospective buyer' (1931).

[83] See Ewart Freeston, *Prisoner-of-War Ship Models, 1775–1825* (Lymington: Nautical Publishing Company, 1973); Wolfram zu Mondfeld, *Knochenschiffe: Die Prisoner-of-War-Modelle 1775 bis 1814* (Herford: Koehler, 1989); Manfred Stein, *Prisoner of War Bone Ship Models: Treasures from the Age of the Napoleonic Wars* (Hamburg: Koehler, 2014).

[84] Daly, 'Napoleon's Lost Legions', p. 376.

Fig. 3.1 Ship model in straw marquetry case crafted by a French prisoner in Britain, *c*.1804–1815 (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, ©Royal Museums Greenwich Picture Library)

also visible in the sizes of these artefacts, varying from an 86-gun ship of almost 50 in. in height to a nutshell, in which a sailing ship was carved within a space three-quarters of an inch in width.[85]

There was something natural, for these captives, about developing this occupation in detention. Carving miniature objects was, after all, not a novelty in their lives. Fishermen and off-watch sailors, for instance, were used to fabricating nautical folk art from whatever scrap material came to hand: rope, wood, wool, but also bones and teeth of walruses aboard whalers that were transformed into creative items known as 'scrimshaw'.[86] This was a way of occupying time during long voyages, or when the sea was not navigable. Farmers and miners designed similar wood carvings and 'whimsy bottles' during winter. This creativity offered to the less literate captives a mode of expression beyond words, which allowed transnational

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[85] Lloyd, *A History of Napoleonic and American Prisoners of War*, vol. 2, p. 139.

[86] Stuart Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances, Curiously Carved: Scrimshaw in the New Bedford Whaling Museum* (Jaffrey: Godine, 2012).

transfers to occur, as Danish prisoners adopted their style and techniques in detention.[87]

These productions were variations on naval events of the time, as suggested by a 'funeral catafalque' produced by a French prisoner in Britain in 1806.[88] This large three-decker was decorated with a canopy, a coffin and sarcophagus, to represent Nelson's funeral cortège in an Egyptian manner. On the sides featured the Latin inscription '*Palmam oui meruit ferat Trafalgar hoste devicto requievit Nile*': a combination of the Admiral's motto 'let he who has earned it bear the palm' with a satirical comment from the artist 'the enemy having been defeated, he rested'. In this respect, it seems that crafting marine scenes was a politically empowering tool of artistic and exotic escapism. These creations were performances of survival for Napoleonic prisoners, as much as displays of professional skills and identity, especially as they offered meagre financial rewards to their creators.

Brian Lavery and Simon Stephens have shown that ship models were produced for a variety of purposes during the period: as scale models in shipbuilding; as souvenirs of naval events, sometimes including relics of battleships; or as domestic decorations.[89] Prisoner of war models were generally not made to scale, since accurate plans were not available and their tools were modest. These models were consumed in Britain as ornaments, especially as they contained multifaceted *mises en scène* which made them more marketable than plain folk art. Locating the ship in a maritime milieu—with a watercolour of a seascape in the background, a balustrade, or a baseboard featuring a boat slip and suggesting that the ship was yet to be finished—offered additional scenic and interactive value to these items.[90] The silver-tinted carrying case shown in Fig. 3.1 is illuminating in that regard.[91] The case itself increased the artistic and economic value of the model: three surface-silvered mirrors

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[87] These transfers explain the variety of nationalities represented by these models, which encompassed French, Danish, American and British vessels.

[88] National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, SLR0655, full hull model of a funereal catafalque made by a French prisoner of war in Britain, 1806.

[89] Brian Lavery and Simon Stephens, *Ship Models: Their Purpose and Development from 1650 to the Present* (London: Zwemmer, 1995).

[90] National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, SLR0638, full model of a 74-gun two-decker warship mounted on a slipway prior to launching made by a French prisoner of war in Britain (1804–14); SLR0615, full hull model of a French 100-gun, three-decker ship of the line with an attached scenic watercolour of a maritime landscape (1804–15).

[91] National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, SLR0641, ship model in straw marquetry case crafted by a French prisoner in Britain (1804–15).

were placed inside the straw plaited box to reflect light on the ivory sails of the model to give them a translucent effect, and reproduce the shimmer of water whilst sailing at sea. The use of light made the bone construction an object of luxurious display, as suggested by the glass door through which the scene could be observed, and the external doors which, with additional curtains, enclosed it as a miniature theatre.[92] Other strategies were deployed by captive artists to distinguish themselves and their productions in a market where competition was fierce, such as placing the bone model in an ebony box, which, by contrast of colours, highlighted the subtle hues of the ivory and upgraded the piece to a higher price.

Prisoners did not only produce ship models in detention; they fabricated decorated tea caddies, chests (for jewels or needlework), cigar cases, snuff and game boxes (for cribbage, dominoes or chess sets), paper sculptures, automated toys, watch stands, straw marquetry pictures, miniature bone furniture and kitchenware such as apple corers. Despite this diversity, the aesthetics of the sea permeated many of these creations as a kind of metanarrative suffusing the material culture of captivity life. Marine scenes were a common motif of marquetry pictures executed by French straw workers. They often depicted harbour vistas with, in the foreground, a developed point of land with buildings or a clock tower and, in the background, large vessels setting off to sea whilst smaller fishing boats would sail in the opposite direction, the whole composition being framed with a wave motif.[93] Equally, watch stands were elaborate cabinets, which could contain an encased ship model between supporting columns, or watercolours featuring fishing or shipping scenes.[94] Others were constructed in the shape of a grandfather clock, in which the pendulum was replaced by bone-framed paintings of ships of the line.[95] Furthermore, the practice of housing objects in bottles reveals the devotional culture of the sea in detention. Ingrained in older traditions of religious folk art known as 'patience bottles' amongst seasonal working classes, the technique of putting objects in bottles flourished in the early nineteenth century.[96]

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[92] For other examples of such a display with additional miniature curtains, see Lloyd, *A History of Napoleonic and American Prisoners of War*, vol. 2, pp. 94–5.

[93] Lloyd, *A History of Napoleonic and American Prisoners of War*, vol. 2, pp. 92–3.

[94] Lloyd, *A History of Napoleonic and American Prisoners of War*, vol. 2, pp. 110–11.

[95] Lloyd, *A History of Napoleonic and American Prisoners of War*, vol. 2, p. 112.

[96] The development of ship models in bottles was concomitant with the development of clear glass bottles over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; Robert B. Kieding, *Scuttlebutt: Tales and Experiences of a Life at Sea* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2011), pp. 249–50.

Ships were often placed in glass flasks, in a similar fashion as messages in drift bottles, a practice which expanded to other types of objects in detention. This was the case of devotional artefacts, such as bone Crucifixion scenes, which were bottled to protect their fragile assemblage as much as to display the dexterity of the artist.[97]

Overall, these objects reflect a twofold phenomenon: firstly, the potency of maritime imagery in French prisoners' creativity; secondly, the fact that these captives were responding to a demand in Britain, since objects were meant to be sold locally. Markets disseminated maritime aesthetics and taste, along with other imaginings. Two symbols of political and industrial change were particularly popular: guillotines and spinning jennies, which were sold as automata and toys to the local population. These were permeated by other imaginations, particularly those of the theatre and neoclassicism, which also underpinned the nautical representations mentioned above, particularly the use of Roman figureheads. Objects crafted by British prisoners of war in France have seldom survived, and they suggest that other environmental imaginations, such as botany, inspired their production.[98] However, for these British captives, the idea and act of traversing the Channel, after being landlocked for a decade, equally crystallised expressions of displacement.

Shores of Homecoming: Seeing the Channel

As the literary scholar Franco Moretti argued, the early nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a certain kind of homecoming, understood as a socio-cultural vortex that necessitated leaving the comforts of home to return to it after an initiatory journey, which redefined home as 'less a particular place than a longing'.[99] This longing permeated the ways in which prisoners narrated their confrontations with the sea in Saint-Malo, Calais and Dover. These narrations did not portray the Channel as a demarcation line affirmed by a journey abroad, as Catriona Kennedy noted for seamen engaged in fights against Revolutionary France.[100]

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[97] Lloyd, *A History of Napoleonic and American Prisoners of War*, vol. 2, p. 125.

[98] National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, AAA0001, wooden watch-stand made by a marine prisoner in France, 1806–14.

[99] Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), p. 23; Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present*, p. 77.

[100] Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, p. 104.

Instead of solidifying differences between 'home' and 'away', this sea was a space of blurred feelings of homesickness for returning prisoners of war.

The experience of children of British detainees illuminates the ways in which traversing the Channel crystallised unsettled feelings of belonging. This is apparent in the memoir penned by Frances Sophia Rainsford, the daughter of a British redcoat sequestered with his wife in Northern France. Born and educated in detention, she and her brothers experienced conflicting feelings in crossing the Channel, the route to a home they had never seen before. Recollecting her first encounter with Calais in 1814, she wrote:

> There I first saw the sea. My Father took me to walk on the sands and I was charmed with the small corals and shells and the fisherwomen. He pointed out to me where England was […] We scarcely lost sight but we had a long rough passage, and arrived very sick and wretched at Dover. Everything looked so dreary there and most of us wished ourselves back to France. My little brother exclaiming 'Is this England? Oh! Take me back to France!'[101]

For these children, the passage to 'the other side' became the tangible manifestation of their former status as displaced captives. For Rainsford, Napoleonic France was 'where [she] made [her] appearance on the stage': this opening remark suggests how she considered her childhood as the prime moment when she developed a sense of her self, in time and space.[102] The sea was where she saw this self most destabilised. After the sudden death of her mother in 1814, she travelled with her father and siblings from Gravesend to Elba, and experienced again a 'long rough passage' aboard the *Princess Charlotte*:

> There was little time to get our cabin in order for it began to blow as soon as we got into the Channel and we were all very sick and unable to move […] It was so stormy that the sea came rushing through the portholes and our miserable little berths were soon wet through, and everything that was not secured was floating about our little cabins. It was so bad that the portholes

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[101] Julie Garland McLellan, ed., *Recollections of my Childhood: The True Story of a Childhood Lived in the Shadow of Napoleon Bonaparte* (London: Create Space, 2010), pp. 7, 47.

[102] As Carolyn Steedman has shown in *Strange Dislocations*, childhood was an intricate concept, a physiological prism through which a 'sense of insideness' developed in the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century; Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780–1930* (London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. xi.

had to be closed and the only light we had was admitted by the bulbic eyes [*sic*], so when anybody on deck happened to step on upon them, or sail got on them, we were thrown into total darkness.[103]

Through the intermediary of the sea, she narrated a story of insecurity and constant disorder, where stability was paradoxically sought in the moving 'heterotopia' of the ship.[104] 'After that we were able to sit up on deck', she concluded, 'and some worked or read, and children were able to play […] It was amusement watching the moving of the log, and the various performances of the sailors. At last, when we had been on board about 3 weeks and were accustomed to the life.'[105] After the death of her father, Rainsford and her sisters were sent on another voyage back to England, in which they further sought a home afloat. 'One day', she wrote, 'the Captain announced that we should soon see England, but it was not very cheering for us, for the ship had been our home, and the rough kind old Captain our only friend.'[106] Home was then conceived of as a constant dislocation, or, in the words of Agnes Heller, a realignment between the familiar and the self-navigation of the world, which made Rainsford transfer her sense of belonging afloat. This moving 'home' was cemented in the keeping of pets—'two cats in a basket, a cage full of birds and a cockatoo'—acquired in detention in France, and with which the family had traversed the Channel and the Atlantic Ocean.[107] As Carolyn Steedman observes, 'little things' fashion identities, and these little animals were indeed part of Rainsford's sense of belonging and search for home in migration.[108]

Adults equally rediscovered the sea upon their liberation. On his arrival in Saint-Malo, Alexander Stewart described his elation at contemplating a

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[103] McLellan, *Recollections of my Childhood*, pp. 23–4.

[104] Foucault referred to an heterotopia: '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 […] The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilisations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.' Michel Foucault, 'Des Espaces Autres', lecture given at *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, October 1967, trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16:1 (1967): 22–7.

[105] Foucault, 'Des Espaces Autres', pp. 24–5.

[106] Foucault, 'Des Espaces Autres', p. 43.

[107] Foucault, 'Des Espaces Autres', p. 44.

[108] Carolyn Steedman, 'Englishness, Clothes and Little Things: Towards a Political Economy of the Corset', in Christopher Breward, Becky Conekin and Caroline Cox, eds, *The Englishness of English Dress* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), pp. 29–44.

marine vista:[109] 'When we first saw the sea from the inland heights, before we reached the town', he wrote, 'our rejoicing was boundless, many hearty cheers, a glass of brandy, and three cheers more.'[110] The sight was not a novelty per se, as he had crossed the Channel before. Yet, he 'saw' it for the 'first' time in Brittany. The sea was then in focus, as a meaningful space, rather than as a medium to another destination. This translated into the narration Stewart made of his passage to Portsmouth and his return to British society as a 'shipwrecked' foreigner:

> Mingled feelings moved our hearts. The fact of our being again in England was delightful, but our pockets and prospects cast a considerable damp over us. Our singular dress rendered us objects of remark wherever we passed on the way, for besides the peculiar cut and colour of our jackets and trousers, we had each his hairy knapsack on his back, and a peculiar shaped straw hat. Some thought we were Swedes or Danes proceeding to London, after shipwreck on the English coast.[111]

The journey across the Channel made apparent a new physical, cultural, social and political identity in migration. Stewart noted that, after landing, he found himself 'getting water a [sic] la Française' and being the object of local mockery. 'I felt so hurt', wrote Stewart, 'that I said I would perish by the roadside rather than ask again. I already felt I could spit in the face of England and abandon it for ever.'[112] These feelings of alienation and injustice collided with the aspirations British captives had previously expressed about rejoining their 'native shores'. The Channel had been a source of nostalgia in prisoners' ballads, poems and plays. The 'Ode to Liberty', penned by Thomas Dutton, a civilian detainee, whilst in close seclusion in Bitche in 1808, reveals the shaping force of the sea on feelings and ideas of national identity in displacement:

> Fair Goddess of my native shore!
> Whom Albion's hardy sons revere;
> To whom they incense burn, and altars rear,
> And at thy hallow'd shrine adore!

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[109] See also the emotive charge of the Channel after displacement in Langton, *Narrative of a Captivity*, vol. 1, p. 120: 'The sea once more seen, created sensations indiscribable [*sic*].'

[110] Stewart, *The Life of Alexander Stewart*, pp. 91–2.

[111] Stewart, *The Life of Alexander Stewart*, pp. 91–2.

[112] Stewart, *The Life of Alexander Stewart*, pp. 91–2.

> Whom Ocean, in his watery cave,
> First rear'd, and gave to rule the wave!
> Gave, 'midst the loud and angry storm,
> To raise sublime thy god-like form!
> At distance, hav'n born FREEDOM! hail! [113]

The conflation of liberty with Britishness in the openness of the sea was based on an ancient socio-cultural construct, which became a defining feature of Englishness during the Elizabethan era.[114] In particular, the work of Shakespeare contributed to the shaping of an image of England as a 'sea-girt isle', 'a precious stone in silver sea', whose sovereignty was 'hedged in with the main, that water-walled bulwark'.[115] The construction of the 'free-born Briton' and the marine deity of liberty emerged during the eighteenth century with celebrations of parliamentary monarchy and the dissemination of songs associated with the Royal Navy, such as 'Rule Britannia'.[116] The lyrics of this song—'Rule the *waves*./Britons never will be *slaves*'—strongly impinged Dutton's captive claim to regain freedom at sea.[117] However, expressions of nautical patriotism were often more latent. Personifications of the Channel as 'murmuring', 'chiding [their] impatience, yet inviting [them] to the protection of its bosom' were concomitant with a femininity evocative of Britannia.[118] Poems were also composed to be read with a musical air reminiscent of seafaring.[119] A good example would be 'Peaceful slum'ring on the Ocean', which was meant to guide the reading of captive poems following the intonation of a marine lullaby. The air served to align the words of the prisoner with the lyrics of

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[113] Thomas Dutton, *The Captive Muse* (London: Sherwood, 1814), p. 31.

[114] In *A Culture of Freedom*, Christian Meier has shown that 'for many people [in Ancient Greece], the sea represented freedom and mobility'. The trope circulated widely in time and space to become a pillar of European culture; Christian Meier, *A Culture of Freedom: Ancient Greece and the Origins of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 8.

[115] See Shakespeare's *King Richard II*, ii, 1; and his *King John*, ii, 1.

[116] Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, p. 95; see also Isaac Land, *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor, 1750–1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[117] On the political implications of the rhyme between slaves and waves and the femininity of Britishness, see Emma Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation 1712–1812* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 56.

[118] Edward Boys, *Narrative of a Captivity, Escape, and Adventures in France and Flanders during the War*, 2nd edn. (London: Cautley Newby, 1863), p. 158.

[119] Dutton, *The Captive Muse*, p. 97.

a song claiming that 'Seamen fear no danger nigh; The winds and waves in gentle motion soothes them with their lullaby.' Despite the rise of patriotism during the period, these references were not evident for non-captive readers. They necessitated the interventions of publishers, who provided 'copious elucidation' of the captives' nostalgia for their 'native shores' in the footnotes of their texts, and which suggests that this articulation of a marine Britishness was still in construction during the period.[120]

Conclusion

In 2009, the historian of First World War captivity Alon Rachamimov depicted war detention as forming 'islands of men'.[121] The image was rhetorical, and yet it seems that, with regard to the Napoleonic narratives mentioned above, this discourse has its origins in the writings of the prisoners themselves. By investigating the mobilisation of marine metaphors in various forms of narration, this chapter has re-evaluated the role of the sea as a site of mediation and memorialisation of coerced mobility. Whilst a resurging interest in prisoner of war experience has shifted the lens of investigation towards their 'low literature', little attention has been given to the use of landscapes, particularly imaginary and mnemonic seascapes, in voicing forced displacement in times of war. Yet, it appears significant that Napoleonic prisoners deployed and circulated sea-inspired tropes not only to express their situation in reference to the 'sea voyage' genre, but also to retrieve a lost everyday and identity.

My holistic perspective on the visual, textual and material culture of the sea has thus drawn attention to the neglected 'environmental divestment' of war detention. I argued that, by unsettling them spatially, war captivity prompted prisoners of various sorts to adopt, reclaim and circulate sea-inspired tropes via diverse mediums. Maritime representations permeated numerous creations of British and French captives, despite them being

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[120] A note from the publisher of Dutton's poems reads: 'it is a proud ground of legitimate triumph, and exultation for the British character, that this passage requires copious elucidation. To the English reader, who has never quitted his own happy sea-girt isle – that inviolable sanctuary of Freedom, and of equal Law – it may well appear inexplicable'; Dutton, *The Captive Muse*, pp. 125–6.

[121] Alon Rachamimov, 'Islands of Men: Shifting Gender Boundaries in World War I Internment Camps', Institute of European Studies Lecture, University of California, Berkeley, 23 April 2009 http://www.nrcweb.org/outreachitem.aspx?nNRCID=56&nActivityID=151021 [accessed 11 November 2014].

mostly landlocked, if not purposely kept far away from their home shores. This phenomenon was underpinned by the fact that prisoners avidly consumed each other's productions, be they texts or objects as much as they were fond of the 'sea voyage' literature. In the first section, I have shown how such processes made the sea a common point of reference for these detainees, and how, in the early nineteenth century, this articulation of detention in seascapes resulted from triangular interactions between captive authors, readers and publishers.

This perspective has revealed the variety of maritime imaginings in war captivity. Whilst nautical outlooks and languages moulded mediations of seclusion, it seems important to differentiate the constraints, meanings and functions of such uses.[122] For instance, the aforementioned conflation of the sea, national identity and freedom was specific to Britishness. Contemporary nation-building processes in France involved other land-inspired symbols and metaphors.[123] Furthermore, references to the sea were multifaceted. These were nourished by Gothic myths of wreckage, romantic narrations of violence, and aesthetics of folk art. They constituted a form of escapism, confessional awakening, power inversion, and self-justification in the case of naval men, for whom the maritime space had a specific meaning, as they perceived it through the lens of professional obligations.

By focusing on two countries separated yet linked by a fluid frontier, this chapter has highlighted the value of approaching the diverse experiences of French and British prisoners of war through imaginings of their common space: the Channel. Jonneau's craft, in particular, is a powerful reminder that the sea did not merely provide an arena in which the antagonism between captives and captors was played out, but offered them a shared space of dialogue, performance and memory. Napoleonic stories of the sea should thus be considered as 'a sea of stories'. The water world was not merely an object of inspiration in war captivity, but a narrative line, a connector or, in the words of a Napoleonic prisoner, 'a point in the universe, where defeaters and defeated, friends and hapless men, sought to overcome myriad difficulties and meet, for a moment, to communicate their emotions, then beg leave to each other after only a brief encounter'.[124]

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[122] Other types of sources such as theatre plays could further inform this differentiation.

[123] See the seminal work of Eugen Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

[124] '*Mélange étonnant, concours singulier d'événements! On eût dit que, sur un point de l'univers, vainqueurs, vaincus, amis, infortunés, avaient cherché à triompher de mille difficultés*

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pour se réunir un instant, se communiquer leurs émotions, et se séparer après s'être seulement entrevus'; Jobbé-Duval, *Mémoires du Baron de Bonnefoux*, p. 190.

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'Through Dustless Tracks' for African Rights: Narrative Currents and Political Imaginaries of Solomon Plaatje's 1914 Sea Voyage

Janet Remmington

> *I drank deeply of the soft balmy air, which was emphatically pure, because—200 miles from the nearest coast—the sea breeze contained not a particle of dust. Hitherto my travelling experience extended from the mountain ranges of the Transkei and Basutoland to the Northern Protectorate and Kalahari forests, and it never used to occur to me that I would live to soar through dustless tracks [...]*
>
> Sol T. Plaatje, 'Native Congress Mission to England'.

INTRODUCTION: OUT TO SEA ABOUT THE LAND

Setting sail from Cape Town aboard the *Norseman* in May 1914, before any hint of the World War that was soon to erupt, black South African journalist and editor Solomon ('Sol') Plaatje (1876–1932) started writing

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an engaging, politically invested article about his first transatlantic voyage. He completed it after arrival in London some weeks later and published it in two parts in newspapers over 6000 miles away in South Africa, Britain's dominion at the foot of the African continent recently consolidated under minority white rule. Plaatje's sea travel piece—its textured composition, dynamic interplay between national and transnational positioning, and layered print history—has not yet received due attention. This chapter examines the insightful contribution that Plaatje's article makes to discourse about early twentieth-century South Africa and the British empire 'from below' through the vehicle of a sea narrative, with its metaphoric distance from landed fixities and generic opportunities for travel reflection. It explores Plaatje's engagement with the representational potential of the unbounded ocean and its people- and land-connecting vessels to unsettle social dynamics and to open imaginative possibilities, not least to question racial prejudice. It considers treatment of the sea as 'space away' from entrenched landed norms and of the ship as a Foucauldian heterotopia and Gilroyan socio-political laboratory. At the same time, the chapter registers new challenges arising in this fluid, alternative environment, including contestations around imperial mobilities.

Sol Plaatje's maritime voyage to the metropolitan capital on the South African Native National Congress's (SANNC's)[1] petitionary mission was impelled by the disinterest of the South African government in engaging with black grievances and supplications regarding the newly legislated Natives' Land Act (1913). In short, the Act set aside a relatively small proportion of South Africa's land for exclusive black use, while largely proscribing black purchase of land designated white, and inducing black wage labour tenancy.[2] In the words of the Congress's petition, it amounted to 'taking away the means of independence and self-improvement'; the Act was interpreted as an onslaught on the interests of South Africa's black majority. African delegations from colonial and crown territories to the

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[1] In 1923 the SANNC renamed itself the African National Congress (ANC), the political organisation and then party that came to power after South Africa's first multiracial democratic elections in 1994. It marked its centenary in 2012.

[2] The 2013 centenary of the Land Act gave rise to reassessments of its impacts and interpretations, including the special issue 'Reflections on the 1913 Land Act and its Legacies, 1913–2013', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 40:4 (2014): 655–779; and Harvey M. Feinberg, *Our Land, Our Life, Our Future: Black South African Challenges to Territorial Segregation, 1913–1948* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2015).

imperial centre were not new;[3] however, the Congress deputation sig-
nalled a new type of black organisational endeavour at the national level,
one in which Plaatje, the Congress's founding General Secretary, played a
prominent and energetic role as political negotiator, cultural commentator
and public communicator. Given the looming deadline of June 1914—the
date by which under the terms of the Act of Union the king could, in
theory, still disallow South African legislation—the trip was arranged with
great urgency and financial difficulty. The article registers the Congress's
highly demanding build-up to the overseas mission and the heightened
sense of historical crisis. Plaatje's encounter with the new seascape of his
journey poignantly unfolds against the troubled background or 'land-
scape' of an increasingly racialised South African socio-political order.

Published in two parts in July 1914 while the author was in London,
Plaatje's article was marked 'Special to the *D.F. Advertiser*' (*DFA*),
Kimberley's well-established (and still active) English-speaking newspa-
per serving South Africa's northern Cape (formerly Colony) and beyond.[4]
This acknowledgement strapline, suggesting a commission arrangement,
carried over to the article's republication in the trilingual African newspa-
per *Tsala ea Batho*, of which Plaatje was editor.[5] The headline of Plaatje's
opening *DFA* article, 'Native Congress Mission to England', supported
by its first bold subhead, 'The Appeal from South African Natives', with
similar headline signage in the *Tsala* edition, made it clear that Plaatje's

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[3] See, for example, Gwilym Colenso, 'Africans meet Queen Victoria', *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 67:3 (2013): 127–42, and 'The 1907 Deputation of Basuto Chiefs to London and the Development of British–South African Networks', *The International History Review*, 36:4 (2013): 619–52. African representatives played a key role in the 1909 multi-racial deputation ahead of the establishment of the Union of South Africa, but they each represented their respective organisations; see Martin Plaut, 'A Menu for Change—The South African Deputation to London, 1909', *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 67:2 (2013), pp. 64–68.

[4] Sol T. Plaatje, 'Native Congress Mission to England', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 14 July 1914, p. 6, hereafter 'Plaatje *DFA* Part I'. The article's second part was published as 'The Native Congress Deputation', *DFA*, 17 July 1914, p. 3, hereafter 'Plaatje *DFA* Part II'. Excerpts of both parts are published in Brian Willan, ed., *Sol Plaatje: Selected Writings* (Athens/Johannesburg: Ohio University Press/Wits University Press, 1996), pp. 174–84. See also Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje: South African Nationalist, 1876–1932* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[5] *Tsala ea Batho*: in English *The People's Friend*, the English–Setswana–Sesotho newspaper that Plaatje launched in 1912, having previously edited two other newspapers. Parts I and II published in the *DFA* also appeared in *Tsala ea Batho* on 7 and 11 July, and 18 and 25 July, respectively.

ocean venture was no leisure trip (Fig. 4.1). At the top level, the article struck a clear political and activist note.

The second subhead of the opening *DFA* article—'First Impressions of a Sea Voyage'—ushered in a notable modal shift, however. It employed the language of a travel account. Markers of the journey were to follow in the form of section heads: 'An Uneventful Night', 'A Lucky Escape', 'Australians and Other Passengers', 'At the Tropics' and 'Peak of Tenerife', among others (Fig. 4.2). In the same vein, the article's second part

THE DIAMOND FIELDS ADVERTISER, KIMBERLEY, TUESDAY

Native Congress Mission to England.

THE APPEAL FROM SOUTH AFRICAN NATIVES.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF A SEA VOYAGE.

By SOL T. PLAATJE (Editor of " Tsala ea Batho," Kimberley).

(Special to " D.F. Advertiser.")

Overloaded with the final cares—not to say anxieties—preceding a sudden, yet long, absence abroad, I was attacked by a splitting headache on the eve of our departure from the Cape. Nasty forebodings about sea-sickness, of which I heard too much, did not allay the sick headache, so that I broke down during the preparations in the morning, and had to be laid to rest immediately in the ship. I do not know when they had luncheon, or when the steamer sailed, but a quiet rest had a curative effect during the afternoon, and, after tea, I went on deck to catch the last glimpse of the African shore, with the hilly district to the east, off what used to be Hottentot's Holland.

B, C, and D sound like "Mb," "th," and "nd" respectively.

The children were at first inclined to be terribly afraid of us, but satisfied now that we are not cannibals, they never tire of admiring Mr. Msane, the stalwart Zulu member of the deputation, and his powerful voice. The saloons of the Norsemen being all of one class, one has the free run of all parts of the ship, and can promenade the deck from stem to stern. This reminds one of an old plantation song descriptive of a journey to the land of Beulah. It says:—
"The fare is cheap and all can go,

The whites and blacks are there;
No second-class on board the train,
No difference in the fare."

There are over 30 white South Africans on board, and it is a pleasure to see them combatting what Mr. Merriman calls "the South African besetting sin of snobbishness." The Australians are perfectly colour blind; but colour prejudice overcame a few South Africans one day along the voyage. It happened in this way:—On our second night out Mr. Msane joined some white passengers at chess. He took them in turns, and invariably swept the boards with them. This did not look quite nice to our countrymen. Next day, one of our party was silly enough to join a sweep, and he came out with a trump. For a threepenny piece he walked off with half a sovereign, gathered from forty of his

Fig. 4.1 Opening excerpt of the newspaper article by Sol T. Plaatje, 'Native Congress Mission to England', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 14 July 1914, p. 6 (courtesy of the National Library of South Africa)
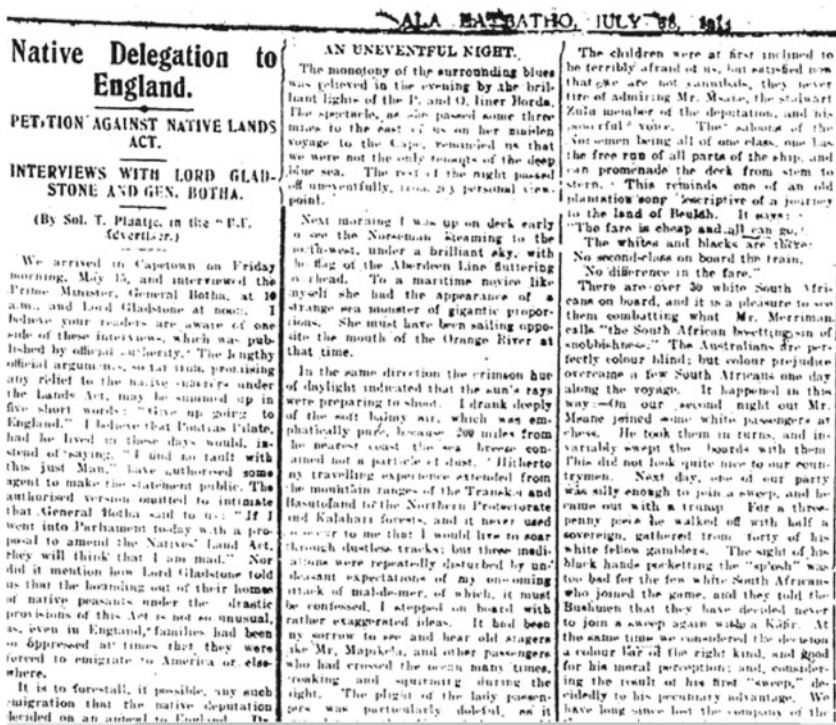
Fig. 4.2 Opening excerpt of the newspaper article by Sol T. Plaatje, 'Native Delegation to England', *Tsala ea Batho*, 18 July 1914, p. 5 (courtesy of the National Library of South Africa). The article is introduced by 'Interviews with Lord Gladstone and General Botha', with the subhead 'First Impressions of a Sea Voyage' appearing some way down (not in view here)

expanded upon the journey's denouement: 'Last Week of the Voyage', 'The Arrival in Great Britain' and 'First Impressions of a Native Visitor'. Thus, nested within, and indeed forming the corpus of, the politically engaged *DFA* article was Plaatje's paced, discursive and personalised travel narrative of the sea voyage.

Significantly, the republication in *Tsala* of Plaatje's article with the sea narrative at its heart was overtly contextualised in a way that the *DFA* piece was not. The *Tsala* piece included a 'prequel', comprising the original opening paragraphs intended for *DFA* it seems: a précis of the political

journey that had spurred the Congress members to set sail for London and their attempts right until before departure to engage with those in government. In Cape Town, at the eleventh hour, 'the two highest personages in the land [Prime Minister Louis Botha and British Governor-General Lord Gladstone] […] consented to be interviewed by us on behalf of the natives', reflected Plaatje derisively. '[Their] lengthy arguments' revealed their 'apparent ignorance […] on native affairs' and could be 'summed up in [their injunction of] five short words: "Give up going to England"'.[6] The *DFA*'s omission of this charged pre-embarkation story would seem to account for the sudden shift in Plaatje's article from bold political headlining to an unfurling of his travel narrative.

The political sentiments articulated by Plaatje following the Botha–Gladstone meeting may have been too sharp, even for the *DFA* with its relatively sympathetic coverage of Congress perspectives. Or the human interest potential of the travel story itself may have proved too enticing for the *DFA* not to foreground. Plaatje was, after all, a local public figure: a prominent native based in the arid environs of Kimberley out at sea for the first time. Whether the *DFA*'s decision to publish the shorter piece, commencing with the *Norseman*'s departure, was made in conjunction with Plaatje, or not—and whether the foreshortening was for political, stylistic, or space considerations (or a combination)—the author's sea narrative became the focus. Plaatje's oceanic voyage account as a 'maritime novice' was ultimately inseparable from the broader political mission. He was strategic in using his seafaring inexperience—the 'strange surroundings'[7] of the open ocean—for dramatic and ironic effect. His tale of 'soar[ing] through dustless tracks' had no small intention. It told a personal story of conquering distance and difference, conjuring the idea of a larger, collective journey towards a freer future for all, not least for those of colour within colonial and other constrained contexts.

Agitation by Travel and Publication

Operating within the print cultures of empire and grounded in conceptions of freedom of expression with both European Enlightenment and African mooring points, Plaatje held that writing and publishing endeav-

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[6] *Tsala ea Batho*, 18 July 1914, p. 5.

[7] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

ours were integral to participation in modern public discourse.[8] In adopting an authorial subject positioning with the provocation that this role brought within the knowledge hierarchies of settler–colonial and imperial contexts, Plaatje wrote himself—and his native representativeness—into the boundary-crossing print world. '[W]hat is at stake' for the author in making a claim on the field of cultural production, as Pierre Bourdieu has illumined, 'is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer'.[9] In writing for the *DFA* and his own *Tsala*, as well as other select South African newspapers like *Pretoria News*, Plaatje contributed to opinion, debate, protest, petition and influence in the networked newspaper cultures of the day. It was a heated environment where divergent views and allegiances played out. The *Cape Times* and *South African News*, for example, 'denounced' the Congress mission to Britain. A minority of newspapers, such as the *DFA* and *Cape Argus*, were more open to Congress views.[10] The press battleground was not circumscribed to white publications—Plaatje would find one of his and the Congress's staunchest critics regarding the Land Act in John Tengo Jabavu's *Imvo Zabantsundu*, the oldest independent African newspaper in the region, which came to be reliant on white Afrikaner nationalist funding.[11] Plaatje would go on to contribute to press outlets arising from and within the cultural crossroads of imperial London and print networks of the black diaspora. Against the backdrop of high empire and South Africa's growing colour bar—which conventionally assigned to blacks the roles of intermediaries and implementers rather than independent knowledge creators or debaters—he projected himself and the progressive black voice into the public sphere and historical record.

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[8] See David Attwell, *Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African Literary History* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005), chapter 1; Andrew van der Vlies, *South African Textual Cultures: White, Black, Read All Over* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr, eds, 'Introduction', *Ten Books That Shaped the British Empire: Creating an Imperial Commons* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 1–27; Andrew van der Vlies, 'Print, Texts and Books in South Africa', in van der Vlies, ed., *Print, Text and Book Cultures in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), pp. 2–48.

[9] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. and introd. R. Johnson (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), p. 42, cited in van der Vlies, *South African Textual Cultures*, pp. 7–8.

[10] *Tsala ea Batho*, 18 July 1914, p. 5.

[11] Les Switzer, ed., *South Africa's Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance, 1880s–1960s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 65.

Importantly, in addition to 'writing back' to the imperial metropolis,[12] Plaatje 'travelled back' to the seats of white power.[13] Mobility in South Africa had long been subject to various forms of racialised control under colonial rule; thus self-determined travel within and beyond the Union acquired political significance.[14] He voyaged against great odds to the British imperium via loci of colonial authority in South Africa, strategically covering distance and delivering his words in person, undergirded by the texts in circulation and galvanised by those in the making. He indicated early on and throughout the *DFA* article that he was no armchair author, nor anchor reporter, but that he would inhabit the story and travel with it. If the story was a journey for the author—the familiar trope of discovery being exploited—the subtext was that it was intended to be so for the reader too.

Thus, for Plaatje, travel and writing were vital forms of political and creative agency, and in his pioneering sea journey of 1914 he found their symbiosis. From the outset of the ocean journey, intent on narrating his purposeful travel experience and starting the 'little book' that would become *Native Life in South Africa* (1916)—the foundational, far-reaching political treatise, 'shipborn/e' like Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (*Indian Home Rule*, 1909)[15]—Plaatje demonstrated that his politics were bound to travel and transnational engagement, and to texts and their transmission.

This chapter highlights three intersecting imaginaries of Plaatje's oceanic travel account that impelled his mission for African rights. First, the symbolic potency of the ocean's kinesis and the ship's progress; second, his successful negotiation of domains traditionally claimed by white

[12] Key texts on 'postcolonial' and anti-colonial writings include: Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993); Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National and the Postcolonial 1890–1920: Resistance in Interaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[13] See Tim Youngs, 'Travelling B(l)ack', in Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 115–30.

[14] Janet Remmington, 'Solomon Plaatje's Decade of Creative Mobility, 1912–1922: The Politics of Travel and Writing in and beyond South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39:2 (2013): 425–46.

[15] Elleke Boehmer, 'Failure to Connect—Resistant Modernities at National Crossroads: Solomon Plaatje and Mohandas Gandhi', in Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio, eds, *Beyond the Black Atlantic: Relocating Modernization and Technology* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 60. Although the two leaders and their contemporary nationalist movements, African and Indian, had much in common, they did not liaise or coordinate efforts.

mastery: management of seasickness, time and travel; and third, his observation-gathering and vision-building of the interconnectedness of humanity as an idealised form of empire. Plaatje's narrative explored and extended these imaginaries in the face of their negatives: the maritime environment's destructive legacies and ever-present dangers, the persistence of white hegemonies and humanity's fragmentation owing to vested group interests.

Analysis of Plaatje's vivid travel account aims to add to historical and literary work on subaltern sea narratives, not least those by Africans and the black diaspora.[16] It highlights study of the colonised and mobile in relation to the ocean—the creative, often precarious, movements and circuits, identity negotiations, cultural interchanges, claims for rights, and buried and buoyant stories. More than a century hence, a focus on sea voyages cannot help but bring to mind the plights of shore-bound and water-traversing travellers of various kinds—including refugees and migrants from former colonial territories and elsewhere, more often than not in the absence of official channels—who tackle the seas that connect, and yet separate, countries and continents.[17]

BUOYANT? WRITING THE SEA AND THE SHIP

'Overloaded' is the story's first word in Plaatje's *DFA* article. It sets the scene of the difficulties facing the traveller: the 'sudden, yet long, absence abroad' combined with an acute consciousness of his maritime inexperi-

[16] See Alasdair Pettinger, *Always Elsewhere: Travels of the Black Atlantic* (London: Cassell, 1998); Bernhard Klein, 'Staying Afloat: Literary Shipboard Encounters from Columbus to Equiano', in Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, eds, *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 91–110; Anita Rupprecht, '*Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands* (1857): Colonial Identity and the Geographical Imagination', in David Lambert and Alan Lester, eds, *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 176–203; Michael Titlestad and Pamila Gupta, eds, 'Introduction: The Story of the Voyage', *South African Historical Journal*, 61:4 (2009): 673–9; Jonathan Hyslop, 'Zulu Sailors in the Steamship Era: The African Modern in the World Voyage Narratives of Fulunge Mpofu and George Magodini, 1916–1924', in Fiona Paisley and Kirsty Reid, eds, *Critical Perspectives on Colonialism: Writing the Empire from Below* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 123–40.

[17] See Cristina Lombardi-Diop, 'Ghosts of Memories, Spirits of Ancestors: Slavery, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic', in Annalisa Oboe and Anna Scacchi, eds, *Recharting the Black Atlantic: Modern Cultures, Local Communities, Global Connections* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 162–80.

ence and the responsibility of representing black South Africans on the Congress's political mission. Plaatje brought the reader into his confidence, lowering the 'threshold' between himself and his audience to create a certain intimacy based on an understanding of communicating on equal terms.[18] He was '[o]verloaded with final cares—not to say anxieties [...] attacked by a splitting headache on the eve of [...] departure from the Cape [... breaking] down during preparations in the morning [... and] had to be laid to rest immediately in the ship'. Ushered into the bowels of the vessel, he 'did not know when they had luncheon or when the steamer sailed'.[19]

Plaatje's engulfing embarkation episode could be said to momentarily evoke—while clearly differentiating itself from—the interment of enslaved Africans in European ships outlawed by Britain only 100 years before. (The transatlantic slave trade was not too far from Plaatje's thoughts as is suggested by his quotation of a 'plantation song' to which we shall return.) The ship-boarding, associated with being incapacitated below deck, prompted reflection on the status of black lives past and present: the extent of rights gained or retained, and the distance still to travel towards equality of treatment. In Paul Gilroy's conceptualisation, black counter-modernity arose resiliently and proactively from slavery's harrowing legacy of exchange and movement, with some relevance for Plaatje and other mobile colonised peoples who forged and extended networks of black solidarity, among others. While critics have usefully articulated some shortcomings of Gilroy's 'Black Atlantic' framework and called for modulations—including the need to extend the geographical compass, highlight continental African contributions to the modern world, and give more recognition to nationalist impulses in relation to the emphasis on black 'outer-' or trans-nationalism[20]—his influential book has invaluably foregrounded the resourceful, far-reaching impacts of black cultural mobilities. That Plaatje's troubled embarkation takes place in Cape Town, South Africa's 'mother city' and oldest port, with its own violent, but

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[18] On the author–reader relationship, see Bhekizizwe Peterson, 'Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*: Melancholy Narratives, Petitioning Selves and the Ethics of Suffering', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 43:1 (2008): 79–95.

[19] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

[20] See Ntongela Masilela, 'The "Black Atlantic" and African Modernity in South Africa', *Research in African Literatures*, 27:4 (1996): 88–96; Laura Chrisman, 'Rethinking Black Atlanticism', *The Black Scholar*, 30:3–4 (2000): 12–17; Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio, *Beyond the Black Atlantic: Relocating Modernization and Technology* (London: Routledge, 2006); Oboe and Scacchi, *Recharting the Black Atlantic* (2008).

often repressed, slave history of dock landings from as far away as Guinea and Malay, adds to our reading of Plaatje's determined sea-crossing.[21]

If the narrative opens with a striking account of Plaatje's being laid low on departure, it then shifts to signal a rejuvenation made possible by gaining distance from the land. His awakening the following morning out of the belly of the steamer to take in the ocean vista is a type of rebirth and a strengthening of resolve. It might even be said to echo or refract the biblical prophet Jonah's release from subterranean confinement to pursue the mission ahead. Plaatje's sense of relief and opportunity at being out to sea are palpable. As captured in the epigraph at the head of this chapter, he 'drank deeply' of the open air and watched the vessel 'soar […] through dustless tracks' unimpeded. He and fellow members of the deputation (Fig. 4.3) had mustered resources under great pressure and overcome government dissuasion to stop the mission; they were now venturing beyond Cape Town's Table Mountain 'where the clouds do end'. Not only was the air comfortingly 'soft and balmy', but it was also free of any trace of the land—'emphatically pure'.[22] The distance from South Africa—from its geo-socio-political fixity—was cleansing and liberating. In Plaatje's description, the sea breeze moving the vessel steadily forward was figured as enabling, even comforting, evocative of the feminine, about which the traveller–author was at pains to indicate surprise. His 'forebodings' about 'mal-de-mer', and more generally about 'sea scare' with its 'jaws of death' couched in monstrous terms, were deferred.

Plaatje spent about four weeks aboard with fellow Congress members Saul Msane and Thomas Mapikela,[23] and a host of other passengers from near and far.[24] He celebrated the 'saloons of the *Norseman* being all of one class'. This enabled one to have 'free run of all parts of the ship' so one could 'promenade the deck from stern to stern'.[25] The liner was a converted cargo ship (Fig. 4.4), offering relatively affordable passage with no class differentiation, the deck providing the optimal, unbounded

[21] Kerry Ward and Nigel Worden, 'Commemorating, Suppressing, and Invoking Cape Slavery', in Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, eds, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 201–19.

[22] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

[23] SANNC President John Dube and Vice President Walter Rubusana having left two days before aboard a mail steamer.

[24] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

[25] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

Fig. 4.3 Members of the 1914 South African deputation (anticlockwise): Rev. W. B. Rubusana, Ph.D., T. M. Mapikela, Rev. John L. Dube, Sol Plaatje, and Saul Msane (courtesy of Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa (A1384f Plaatje Collection))

area for contemplation and interaction.[26] The extent of the vessel was the Congress members' to survey and occupy in equal measure to the others on board: the 200-strong passenger load 'representing divers nations of different colours'.[27] Thus, to the imaginative liberty of the open, moving ocean Plaatje was able to add the relative socio-political freedom of the unsegregated ship. Gilroy's trope of the ship as 'a living micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion'[28] offers useful insights into Plaatje's observations of the dynamics aboard, as does Michel Foucault's conjuring

[26] Herbert Thornton Letters, SS *Norseman*, September–December 1911 http://www.pluggy.me.uk/ogfb/viewtopic.php?f=359&t=7271#p13341 [accessed 9 January 2015].

[27] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

[28] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 4.

Fig. 4.4 Photograph of the *Norseman* taken from an early twentieth-century postcard (courtesy of Jeff Newman, http://www.greatships.net/norseman. html)

of the ship's imaginative capital via the concept of 'heterotopia': 'the *other* place par excellence'. The ship, according to Foucault, represents

> the greatest reserve of the imagination […] 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.[29]

In a complementary vein, Tricia Cusack reflects that 'ships are places that are constantly displaced', characterised as 'liminal spaces' because 'whether in a harbour or in mid-ocean they exist geographically outside of established land-based societies and cultures'. The ship as a micro-society, belonging to the changing and moving ocean, rather than to *terra firma*, holds out the symbolic hope of 'modification and formation of identities'.[30] The social fluidity and adaptiveness associated with the 'free

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[29] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces, Utopias and Heterotopias', trans. Jay Miskowiec ('Des Espaces Autres', 1967), *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité* (October 1984), emphasis mine.

[30] Tricia Cusack, ed., 'Introduction', *Framing the Ocean, 1700 to the Present: Envisaging the Sea as Social Space* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 8.

run' of the ship was a key imaginary for Plaatje in relation to South African society: what was witnessed on a small scale on board offered hope for what might be possible on a larger societal basis with the right infrastructure and attitudes in place.

The non-segmented and non-racialised social microcosm of the *Norseman* was thus to be valorised and acclaimed. To Plaatje's later dismay a number of his subsequent journeys would reveal the long reach of South Africa's deepening racial discrimination as well as manifestations of harder-nosed imperial endeavours over more liberal forms.[31] Stifling and troubling on-board experiences have long been recorded for passengers of colour (not to mention the unspeakable conditions of those treated as cargo).[32] Ships were anything but heterotopic for many—anything but 'given over to the infinity [and openness] of the sea'. Ships could be concentrated, more hostile forms of landed space, as Plaatje's contemporary, Rabindranath Tagore, Indian writer and nationalist, suggested in his *Diary of a Westward Voyage*:

> It seems that the ship has torn off a slice of the domestic world [...] Every time before boarding the ship this thought oppresses my mind—this distance of the nearness, this association without companionship.[33]

While Plaatje struck a celebratory note about the heterotopic nature of the *Norseman* in particular, he also registered a complex set of reactions to, and negotiations of, being a black subject in transit between the two locales, that is, en route from the settler-ruled dominion to the distant imperial metropole. While Plaatje and his compatriots enjoyed easy interracial socialising and philosophising with fellow passengers, it was not all 'plain

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[31] Plaatje fought opposition from white South African non-commissioned officers over access to invalided members of the Native Labour Contingent on the 1917 *Galway Castle* voyage (Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje: South African Nationalist, 1876–1932* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1992); hereafter SAN, p. 205); when the same ship disembarked in Cape Town he intervened in the plight of the impounded African–American Baptist couple who had fallen foul of South Africa's immigration ban on foreign blacks (ibid.); and he became entangled in trying to resolve the much-publicised 1919 ejection in Southampton of SANNC members from the *Edinburgh Castle* instigated by demobbed white South African troops (*SAN*, pp. 240–1).

[32] For example, Frederick Douglass, 'Impressions Abroad', *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: His Early Life as a Slave, his Escape from Bondage, and his Complete History to the Present Time* (North Chelmsford, MA: Courier Corporation, 2012 [1845]).

[33] Rabindranath Tagore, *The Diary of a Westward Voyage*, trans. I. Dutt (Bombay: Asian Publishing House, 1962 [1925]), p. 12.

sailing'. The presence of some white countrymen on board introduced the 'South African besetting sin of snobbishness'; they brought discriminatory behavioural patterns from home, causing a ripple in otherwise smooth and open interactions. These white compatriots were affronted by Msane's '[sweeping of] the boards' at chess and when he won a sweepstake, 'the sight of black hands pocketing the "splosh"' was too much.[34] To Plaatje, they were countrymen who shared an admiration for '*our* Eureka or Springbok [cigarettes]' and the 'Cape peach',[35] but to them Plaatje was not a fellow South African, but of a different order: an inferior native of the land aspiring to join the ranks of connected white society.

Thus to summarise, Plaatje situated himself boldly within the imagined multiracialism of South Africa and empire, but he also identified with transnational and diasporic mappings of being a person of colour. He acknowledged the histories of oppression and misrepresentation, but also the realities of resistance and the forging of new paths. Alluding to the distorted, othered images of Africans in circulation, not least via European travel writings and empire stories with their trickle-down effect to younger readers, he observed tongue in cheek: 'The children [aboard the *Norseman*] were at first inclined to be terribly afraid of us, but satisfied now that we are not cannibals, they never tire of admiring the stalwart Zulu member of the deputation [Msane], and his powerful voice.'[36] Conveying an empathic race consciousness, he evoked an old plantation song descriptive of a journey to the land of Beulah, that is, to the promised biblical place of peace at the end of life's voyage, but which he was calling for in the present. Beulah was of course the destination of John Bunyan's pilgrim: the Everyman with whom millions of Africans had become familiar and adapted in some measure as their own.[37] He pointed to the stark irony of the Christian after-life of equality while registering slavery's—and more generally colonialism's—historical shadow of stark inequality:

> The fare is cheap and all can go,
> The whites and blacks are there;
> No second-class on board the train,
> No difference in the fare.

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[34] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

[35] Plaatje *DFA* Part II, emphasis mine.

[36] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

[37] Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim's Progress* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

He recounted the words set poignantly in the present tense. The song was not so much consolatory as invocatory—'let there be no difference' in treatment among white and black; let the black traveller in the voyage of life experience fair dues.

Narrating the sea passage offered Plaatje a productive medium to negotiate history and modernity, and to test, enact and imagine possible futures. His sea narrative was a symbolic engine for his own propulsion as a political actor and social commentator. Its impetus was also one of challenge for those not angled towards openness. Its implication was that readers should 'come on board' and respond to the messages of the ship and the sea.

QUESTIONS OF MASTERY

Attitudes towards the sea, captured in texts of all kinds, are characteristically complex, as has been observed—'built around the polarities […] of exaltation and despair' and often 'embody[ing]—simultaneously—the literary forms of romance and irony'.[38] As reflected upon, Plaatje's account does not defy this contradictoriness concerning the sea, however he chose to read its potentialities primarily. He consciously located himself as a subaltern writer and traveller, negotiating a conflicted relationship with the ocean for rhetorical effect and political purchase. Writing in relation to a tradition of travel reportage freighted by privileged white perspectives and reinforcements of European authority, Plaatje drew self-deprecating attention to his ethnicity and working status. He was not a European gentleman traveller–writer, but a 'native working-man', to some a 'raw Kaffir'. He was not an experienced sea voyager, but a 'maritime novice', a 'greenhorn'.[39] Disavowal of his credentials as a seafaring travel writer provided him with the advantage of surprise and authorial edge over the expectations of his readers.[40]

Plaatje, probably the most widely read black South African journalist of the day,[41] was already used to adopting this type of positionality through

[38] Robert Foulke, *The Sea Voyage Narrative* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. 2; see also John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London, Reaktion, 2013).

[39] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

[40] See Peterson, 'Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*', p. 82, drawing on Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. J. E. Lewin (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 2.

[41] Willan, *Sol Plaatje: South African Nationalist*, p. 136.

his regular column 'Through Native Eyes' for the English-speaking *Pretoria News*. This column, unnervingly introduced to the readership by editor Vere Stent as 'an experiment', was designed to 'persuade the more rabid negrophobes to adopt a more moderate and sensible attitude',[42] but with more of an emphasis on Plaatje's need to set out his case than for readers to adjust their mindset. In writing the newspaper travel accounts, Plaatje was acutely aware of his readers, indeed his multiple and potential audiences. Each issue of *Tsala* carried bold self-styling notices about its reach and influence: 'Nearly every post from North, South, East and West brings fresh subscribers'.[43] Karin Barber elaborates insightfully on the 'presumptive quality' of the modern 'emergence and multiplication of publics', including 'members [who] are not known [...] but still addressed simultaneously [...] potentially vast in extent'.[44] Thus, for both black and white audiences at home, and potentially for readers further afield and still to come, Plaatje deftly but confidently addressed interlinked areas conventionally taken to be white domains of authority in order to challenge presumptions about native capacity and suitability for full participation in cultural and national life. I will briefly cover three areas that received the ironic treatment of Plaatje's pen—his mastery of seasickness, management of time and adoption of the traveller's gaze.

From the outset, Plaatje implied that he expected to fall victim to the ocean in one way or another. The personally incapacitating start to the journey helped to reinforce the idea of the voyage's daunting nature. He developed the theme of seasickness (and his personal conquest thereof) in combination with the greater dangers of the sea (and his signalling of the communal success in navigating its treachery) to negotiate questions of mastery. Not far into the first part of the account, under the bold subhead of 'The Invincible White Man', he referenced the given understanding of Europe's, and in particular Britain's, prowess over the seas[45]—a

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[42] Editorial in *Pretoria News*, 16 January 1911.

[43] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

[44] Karin Barber, *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 138–40, discussing Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Formation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992 [1962]).

[45] Texts that valorised Britain's maritime capabilities were in no short supply, for example: Thomas Wemyss Fulton, *The Sovereignty of the Sea: An Historical Account of the Claims of England to the Dominion of the British Seas, and of the Evolution of the Territorial Waters, with Special Reference to the Rights of Fishing and the Naval Salute* [Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1911] (Union: The Lawbook Exchange, 2002).

comfortable affirmation for his white readers, yet the overstatement bringing with it a provocative undertone. At once he celebrated the 'white man's' sturdily built ship (notwithstanding the mixed crew) as providing effective transportation for he and fellow voyaging imperial subjects, while registering the unremitting threats from the encircling ocean and outside forces:

> Far away from the nearest coast our nearest land is hundreds of fathoms beneath the ocean. These rippling waves represent to us the jaws of death. From the outer rails of our floating restaurant we can see him yawning at us through the waves, and ready to engulf us. But a solid white man's contrivance securely acts as the barrier between us and death, though within full view of each other by day and by night.[46]

Again, in the second part of his serialised account, with reference to their harrowing but safe passage through the fierce Bay of Biscay storm, Plaatje congratulates 'the mastery over nature of the white man's science' and 'the indomitable sons of the sea'.[47] However, he then recalls the 1896 'sea catastrophe' of the Cape Town-departing *Drummond Castle* 'still green in our minds' to add to the news received during the brief stopover in Tenerife of the calamitous sinking of the *Empress of Ireland* that month. The limitations of white power are thus implied, the dangers of complacency signalled and the fragile nature of freedoms suggested.

If Plaatje makes explicit a truism of white maritime supremacy, he also draws attention to presumptions about or accusations of black naiveté concerning the sea. In self-identifying with being an inhabitant and traveller within South Africa's dusty interior, Plaatje plays with stereotypical notions of South African blacks being at odds with the ocean. Near the start of the journey, he paints a disconcerting picture of the fear of motion illness:

> It had been my sorrow to see and hear old stagers […] who had crossed the ocean many times, croaking and squirming during the night […] I shuddered in anticipation of the impending onslaught on an inexperienced greenhorn like myself. [48]

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[46] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

[47] Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility, and White South Africa 1820–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[48] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

After Plaatje's recovery from the severe headache associated with what he had left behind on the shores of South Africa, he emerged to be reassured that he would not suffer from seasickness as he had not already succumbed to it after a day and night. Under the heading of 'The Lucky Escape', he fashioned a buoyant release from the servitude of expectation concerning seasickness, a second figuration of emergence from captivity: 'I felt like a discharged prisoner, and prepared for my work with extra freshness and security.'[49] The self-effacement of his credentials allowed for the subtle conveyance of pleasure at his 'sea legs' set against the incapacity of many white travellers to handle the sea's relentless motion:

> Lost in my daily work [….] I completely forget at times that we are in mid-ocean […] when eventually I go upstairs for a spell and stand face to face with the briny deep on the deck side, it will then occur to me that the 'billows are inclined to toss,' and incidentally, how fortunate it is for me as a working-man on board to be insensible to mal-de-mer. I think that thus far I owe my health and vigour on the voyage partly to native idiosyncrasy.[50]

Towards the end of the journey when the ferocious Bay of Biscay storm hits, he struck a satisfied note in conveying that 'raw Kaffirs like myself and other members of the deputation remained immune'. A sentiment that Africans weren't wont to hear too often was that white men 'wished they had his constitution'.[51] He demonstrated capacity to ride the waves, cross the seas and readily embrace change, which plays on ironic associations he conjured between his ethnicity and land orientation (and by extrapolation, settledness). His coverage of distance and his conquering of motion illness were forms of self and race assertion. He went as far as to suggest that his Africanness—his 'native idiosyncrasy'—was somehow responsible, perhaps paradoxically, for his mastery of the sea's debilitating effects. This African victory unfolded within the narrative as a humorous means of having a swipe at white claims to rule the seas, let alone the land. It led on too to introducing Plaatje's challenge to white claims on the domains of work and time.

For Plaatje, the overcoming of seasickness and the conditions of the month-long voyage with its open seascape were directly related to productivity. As soon as he realised that his constitution was at peace with the sea,

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[49] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.
[50] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.
[51] Plaatje *DFA* Part II.

he 'prepared for work'. He quickly set up a 'regular programme', rationalising that he could skip one of the four meals to increase his writing time:

> I am compiling a little book on the Natives' Land Act and its operations which I hope to put through the press immediately after landing in England. It keeps me busy typewriting in the dining-saloon all forenoons and evenings: the afternoons I spend on deck, making notes, etc. With such a regular programme I can afford to sympathise with our fellow passengers who are always very busy doing nothing.[52]

In the face of crisis for black South Africans, Plaatje felt immense pressure to articulate native viewpoints and to sustain his livelihood through writing and editorship. The sea voyage became an opportunity to breathe in the 'dustless' air of an alternative socio-political milieu or heterotopia and to have uninterrupted hours not ordinarily available as a 'native workingman' battling to pay the bills.

Plaatje's approach to the deployment of time arose in part from his background of a structured mission environment and the educated class of 'New Africans'[53] within which he moved. While he gave credence to traditional indigenous ways of measuring time and seasons,[54] he had largely absorbed, adopted and adapted the mores of a Western working day and Protestant work drive. Indeed he used these formations to reflect back normative and purposeful behaviour to representatives of European origin who had imposed 'the astronomical logic of the Christian calendar and the biblical authority of the seven-day week'[55] who were not upholding its expectations. In the journey narrative, he did not hold back in criticising white hypocrisy concerning the use of time. If there were sectors of the population on the ship—and in South African and Western societies more broadly—who showed a disregard for the disciplines and ethics of time, then it was to these peoples that the message about being out of step with the present and irresponsible about the future should be conveyed,

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[52] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

[53] Tim Couzens, *The New African: A Study of the Life and Work of H. I. E. Dhlomo* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1985).

[54] Plaatje (*DFA* Part II) refers to winter and summer constellations of stars which mark the ripening of grain and ploughing seasons respectively. He also refers to Venus, known as 'the harbinger of the morning'.

[55] Giordano Nanni, *The Colonisation of Time: Ritual, Routine and Resistance in the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 9.

not the aboriginals.[56] The *Norseman*'s passengers' indolence comes in for strong censure:

> Their inertia must be well-nigh maddening, and, as I see the heavy loads of time hanging down their weary necks, it is to me strange how they can stand it so long. I think the reason why three of them got fainting fits is that they had nothing else to do, but I will be the sorrier for them when, after landing, they endeavour to re-attune themselves with the normal life of toil.[57]

One hears in his words the echoes of long-time colonial and missionary disapproval directed at Africans for idleness and lack of time-awareness, here redirected at whites and others on board. The effect of inverting the charge is incisive. He has taken on the role of commentator and critic, gaining the moral high ground from below.

Furthermore, in remarking on the functioning of the socio-political microcosm of the ship and his place within it in the story of the journey, Plaatje appropriates the traveller's pen and perspective. Travel and travel writing of the day were predominantly domains of the privileged, white male 'civilisers', making claims to expansive, authoritative views of the world in contrast to the rather more limited perspectives of the 'rooted' indigenes or 'savages'. In relation to Africa, Henry Stanley was the quintessential, if extreme, example of the imperious journalist who wrote overblown dispatches littered with exotica for *The Daily Telegraph* and *The New York Herald* while navigating through the jungles, rivers and savannahs of the continent. His works, which generally fixed and diminished the natives—such as *In Darkest Africa* (1890) and *Through South Africa* (1898), the latter starting with the sea voyage to Cape Town—circulated widely during Plaatje's early career in the Cape colonial service. Indeed, there was no shortage of African reportage and travel literature emanating from the diverse terrains of the empire upon which the sun did not set. It was in relation to this tradition of explorers' accounts seen through 'imperial eyes' that Plaatje would situate his travel account.[58]

On the one hand, Plaatje clearly marked himself out as a black South African traveller and writer, setting himself apart from the imperial

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[56] Nanni, *Colonisation of Time*, p. 9.

[57] Plaatje, *DFA* Part 1.

[58] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 2008).

adventurers and their well-heeled positions and predictable descriptions. Notably, he did not overtly adopt the authoritative 'I' of the traveller's gaze in surveying and relaying all set before him, but often used the inclusive plural pronoun 'we', signalling the collective nature of the vessel's passage and his identification as one of many 'divers' passengers:

> We have long since lost the company of the Cape penguins and other sea-birds which used to follow our ship. We see the whales no more, nor the smoke-like spray which they shoot in the air from beneath the surface of the water. Their places have been taken by the flying-fish, which rise from the ocean in scores, fly away from the ship like a swarm of house martins, and drop in again no sooner [than] their pinions are dry.[59]

> [On arriving at Tenerife], [w]e saw the divers of whom we had heard so much, jumping out of their little boats and following penny pieces […] We saw their banana fields [….] We visited their arena where bullfights are happening each other month [….] We saw some marvellous hand-crafting at the cathedral […] When we remonstrated with [the church porters] about this barefaced rack-renting of innocent visitors, the Spanish caretaker told us in his best English that the takings at the door were for the sole benefit of the cripple at the door […][60]

He used subalternity and claims to community to authorial advantage, playing with traditions of the travel writing genre and drawing attention to its discourse. Clearly, the black Congress members on board were anything but 'cannibals'. Plaatje implied that the exotic appeal of the 'stalwart' Msane for the white colonists was based on an essentialised or stereotypical African physicality, and in counterpoint he celebrated Msane's superiority in intellectual pursuits such as chess. In a number of ways, he also alluded to the legitimacy of other perspectives not prescribed by Western classification; for example, he referred to African naming conventions for stars—not fixed, but given designations for where they appear in the skies in different seasons.[61] He pointed to alternative African knowledge systems, while acknowledging epistemological structures of the West; the two were not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Plaatje thus developed an ironic positioning for himself and his fellow black compatriots in relation to the sea and the ship, which enabled narrative

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[59] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.
[60] Plaatje *DFA* Part II.
[61] Plaatje *DFA* Part II.

lines of overcoming to be explored and celebrated. By adopting a prejudged status of racial inadequacy and ignorance concerning the ocean and other areas, he was able to heighten victories in realms that had long been claimed by white mastery: handling seasickness, using time and travelling.

An Interconnected 'World Empire'

While Plaatje referenced black triumphs at sea deftly, he primarily used the voyage to explore and summon tropes to extend his vision of socio-political integration—the microcosm of the integrated ship, the macrocosmic constellation of empire territories, and the notion of the global connectedness of human citizenry. On a personal level, borne out of his travel experience and journalistic observation, Plaatje hailed the diverse constituency of the ship, while at the same time pointing to what the passengers had in common. For one, he highlighted the technology of language—the permeating legacy of the British Empire's cultural and linguistic imperialism.[62] The *Norseman*'s passengers—'including the Belgian Jew from Elisabethville, and the Angoni visitor from Central Africa'—could all converse in English, though it was a mixed group with numerous mother tongues. The proverbial 'tower of Babel' confusion was thus avoided.[63] Plaatje played a high-stakes game in appealing to the uniting strands of empire while being careful not to efface the violence inherent in imperialism. When it came to observations about Tenerife, 'the first stoppage of our voyage, after sailing incessantly for 4444 miles', he acknowledged the acquisitive aggression of Europe's annexations, and yet at the same time seemed to suggest an element of pride in Britain's maritime dominance and resultant imperial reach:

> To think that Spain formerly rules the seas from east to west, and the Canaries are all that they possess hereabout! The castles and fortifications in the mountain tops around the island show that if the Anglo-Saxons did not also gobble and retain these Grand Canaries as a calling place to their colonies, it is not entirely their fault.[64]

Furthermore, while Plaatje was intrigued by his excursion onto the island, referencing unexpected linguistic connections such as 'morena' mean-

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[62] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993); Alastair Pennycook, *English and the Discourses of Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998).

[63] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

[64] Plaatje *DFA* Part II.

ing 'man' ('ethnologists should enquire how the Sotho-Chuana group of language in South Africa came to share that word, and its meaning, with Spaniards'[65]), he is not uncritical of a range of Tenerifan practices and products and Spanish influences. When it came to the larger question of communication he praised the structures and networks of the British Empire in contrast to those of Spain and its colonies. As a 'seafarer who write[s] because [he] must', he was 'forcibly realised how economic it [was] to be on British territory' in contrast to the 'scabby treatment' afforded by the costly Spanish postal service.[66] Indeed, the publication of his article in South African newspapers was reliant on transatlantic mail steamers and British rail networks. How much of Plaatje's contrast-drawing was to reinforce affinity with and allegiance to imperial Britain in order to call on metropolitan support? By underlining British loyalties, he appealed to idealised empire values and capacities in world terms, as well as in relation to Britain's paternalistic role in South Africa. Although blame could be laid at Britain's door for foundations of racial segregation and white collaboration in settler-colonial South Africa, Plaatje accentuated the policies of the Afrikaner-dominated Union government and those of the former Boer republics to strengthen his case.

Plaatje did much to highlight linkages with other colonists under the British flag, providing texture to his message of colonial commonalities and the Congress appeal for imperial intervention. Many are his allusions to shared endeavours, interests and cultural threads, including for example, the Australian contribution to the South African War against the Boers and the similarity of the Fijian and Samoan vowels of Antipodean natives to those of his own mother tongue, Setswana. He appealed to a vision of an imperial brother- and sisterhood of peoples who could share in politico-cultural and technological capital by virtue of empire. As the *Norseman* neared its destination, overcoming the ferocity of the Biscay storm, Plaatje dramatised the on-board solidarity and fraternity with its patriotic flavour:

> [I]t is safe to say that white and black never sang with a deeper meaning in harmony as we sang with those sailors on the Bay of Biscay:–
> 'They may build the ships, m'lad, and think they know the game,
> But they can't build boys of the bulldog breed,

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[65] 'Morena' in Plaatje's Setswana (Sechauna) meant 'leader'. It was used by children on Tenerife to refer to Saul Msane who was of striking stature. The word in Spanish is associated with dark skin and features.

[66] Plaatje *DFA* Part I.

That made old England's name.'[67]

Plaatje's inscription of this harmony at sea, despite its knowingly temporal nature, was crucial for his political imagining, let alone his political messaging. He was all too aware of the harsh reality of the inequalities prevalent in empire, not least in South Africa's settler-colonial state which had acquired Responsible Government. In London he would have further opportunity to meet native colonists from across the empire, building on epistolary and press interactions, and also to participate in multi-racial religious organisations such as the International Brotherhood whose ideals spoke of the 'partnership' he foresaw.[68] In his book *Native Life in South Africa* started on board the *Norseman*, which he was to publish in 1916 despite many obstacles, he would cite Mr S. S. A. Cambridge, Brotherhood member and black barrister from British Guiana. Cambridge's position would seem to have echoed his own:

> The British Empire has a population of over 430,000,000, of which less than 100,000,000 are white, and there was a big problem to solve: How to rule with justice and equity this great multitude of various races and creeds and consolidate them as fellow-subjects of one great and mighty Empire. The future of the British Empire could be secured by following the high ideals of 'Brotherhood' which were foreshadowed by Christ in the Bible, and by great writers such as Shakespeare and Addison. The fall of Rome was due to her failure to recognize the duty of welding her subjects together as brothers one and all as subjects of the Crown.[69]

Plaatje's sea narrative thus attempts to convey unity in diversity through the *Norseman*'s composition, figurations of an idealised British empire, and evocations of the interdependence of humanity, indirectly calling both imperial Britain and colonial South Africa to account.

CONCLUSION: HARD REALITIES, MOBILE POSSIBILITIES

Solomon Plaatje's travel account continues beyond its sea journey to describe the arrival in Britain and the ultimate destination of London, 'the capital of the world', which he celebrated for its scale, efficiency and

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[67] Plaatje *DFA* Part II.
[68] Willan, *Sol Plaatje: Selected Writings*, pp. 264–74.
[69] Sol T. Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Picador, 2007 [1916]), pp. 223–34.

diversity. Beneath the subhead 'London through Native Eyes', he allowed for a passing reflection on the possibilities of this distinctive 'other' place, made up of 'more people than in the whole Union of South Africa'.[70] The narrative handling of his welcome to heterotopic, cosmopolitan London was influenced by his productivity and rejuvenating experience aboard the integrated *Norseman* and the momentum of his hitherto undefeated journey against the odds. After surviving the difficult transition from land to sea and the varied challenges and uncertainties of the passage, he 'soar[ed] through dustless tracks' in espousing the open seascapes of potentiality. He had demonstrated the ability to negotiate realms claimed as white: the ocean with its ever-threatening ill effects, the travel writer's subject positioning, and the use of time to produce measurable outputs. He had nurtured vision-building around inclusive societies modelled on notions of a 'world empire'. That the integrated ship (and a tolerant, diverse London, if on first impressions), were 'actually localisable' spaces and places, not idealised utopias, is what counted.[71]

Plaatje's story of the voyage to the empire's heart appealed to the dream of a world system in which all of humanity moved, mixed and lived without undue constraint, not only in the promised afterlife, but in the hard, insistent reality of the everyday. On arrival in London, he parted with ship-made friends, but met 'home friends, and some retired colonists who [came] back to swell the millions who comprise John Bull's family'. He told of their 'surprise' in learning of 'the tyrannical provisions of the Natives Land Act' from the Congress members who had seen its effects at first hand in contrast to the 'whitewashing' of its implications by white South African leaders.[72]

The sullying influence—the 'dust'—of South African propaganda in effect visited the Congress in London as they waited for their audience with the Colonial Office. As Plaatje would experience, the Congress was stalled and hampered in its efforts, not least because President Botha's messaging was taken more seriously than its native representations.[73] Plaatje was not unaware that transnational linkages and flows worked for better and worse. Transatlantic collusion between white authorities and influ-

[70] Plaatje *DFA* Part II.

[71] Foucault cited in Peter Johnson, 'The Geographies of Heterotopia', *Geography Compass*, 7:11 (2013): 790–803, p. 791.

[72] Plaatje *DFA* Part II.

[73] Willan, *Sol Plaatje, South African Nationalist*, p. 177.

encers frustrated the Congress's progress in the imperial capital. White bonds across space and time, and white domination of the seas between landed territories, had much to answer for in terms of subjugating others. Although the Congress's 1914 deputation did not achieve imperial government intervention, Plaatje did not give up lobbying and inserting the black South African voice in public discourse about South Africa, even when the First World War broke out in August of that year. He struck out on his own to continue the campaign and to address the British public directly in meetings and through his writings, despite not having sustained financial support. He refused loans in London that came with 'gagging' conditions.[74] Plaatje had, after all, 'drunk deeply' of the energising sea air and its metaphoric freedoms. The last words of the article hailed and summed up the capital's diversity—'That's London in a nutshell'—leaving the heterotopic image alive for the next stage of his journey.

Cognisant of the tall order of the mission given Britain's disinterest in interfering in the dominion, Plaatje boldly and consciously situated himself as the travel-cum-political correspondent, intent on reaching publics near and far. He constructed crucial social and political imaginaries out of the narrative currents of his ocean journey and cosmopolitan destination to register African perspectives and to present himself as a modern interlocutor and mobile commentator. Fuelled by his pioneering sea voyage, in 'full view' of the costs and dangers, Plaatje would map out, narrate and foretell fluid, mobile possibilities on behalf of black South Africans and other peoples of colour. His was a vision of an inclusive South African nation and British Empire 'of different colours' of which he had caught prophetic glimpses in the socio-political microcosm of the *Norseman* and to some degree, if impressionistically, in the melting pot of imperial London. He would not be confined to fixed social stations, spatial locations and creative dead ends. Plaatje's energetic, irony-laced narrative might be said to travel on, resonating in some measure with high-risk sea voyages made the world over by many in pursuit of better futures.

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[74] See Willan, *Sol Plaatje, South African Nationalist*, pp. 183–4. The dispute over return funds is recorded in a series of letters in the Congress's newspaper; see P. Limb, ed., *The People's Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), pp. 369–71.

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'From Icy Backwater to Nuclear Waste Ground': The Russian Arctic Ocean in the Twentieth Century

Eva-Maria Stolberg

INTRODUCTION

As a landlocked empire, Russia presents a lacuna in sea history, yet it has a maritime past thanks to its location on the Arctic Ocean. With the Soviet advance in the twentieth century to the far north, the Russian Arctic Ocean became an outstanding topos in popular culture, not only due to its harshness and remoteness, but also due to technological progress. Once established in power, the Soviet regime under Stalin created a distinct cultural phenomenon of the Arctic Ocean, in the process of which science, technology and popular culture were combined.

Since pre-modern times, Russians have been faced with icy, barren waters in the far north. Indeed the Russian Arctic Ocean, stretching from longitude 40° W to 80° E, starts up at the White Sea—the place where Russians met the 'icy ocean' for the first time. The White Sea and the Arctic Ocean beyond are associated with the thrilling imagination of an icy ocean world that has intimidated and inspired fishermen, seafarers and the explorers of the legendary Northeast Passage alike. The fascina-

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tion with these white waters continued through the twentieth century. The Bolsheviks were eager to build up socialism in the far north, and to explore this last frontier and the unimaginable remoteness of the Arctic Ocean using the technology of the period. The Soviet Arctic conquest had its roots in materialist Marxist ideology which was nourished by convictions that natural resources could be exploited by human collectives in even harsh environments. The Bolsheviks expected to achieve a socialist society through their belief in unlimited technological progress; by this means, the socialist man of the twentieth century would be free from the extreme limitations set by the Arctic wilderness. Beyond Soviet ideology, the Russian Arctic Ocean is a persistent component of the Russian national idea which has survived the demise of the Soviet Union. When the 2007 expedition of the Russian Arctic research vessel *Akademik Fedeorov* and the nuclear-powered submarine *Rossiya* collected water and sediments from the depths of the Arctic Ocean, the chief of the expedition crew, Artur Chilingarov, boasted: 'It's lovely down there with yellowish ground around us […] a point no one had so far been able to reach.'[1] Russia's media today compares the Russian conquest of the Arctic Ocean with the scientific and technological breakthrough by the launching of the Sputnik into orbit.[2]

In this chapter I propose to give a technological narrative of this exploration in its cultural and ecological dimensions. I argue that, unlike previous centuries when sailing ships struggled with the masses of ice, the technology of the twentieth century offered another imagery of the Arctic Ocean which now became associated with the breakthroughs by crews of icebreakers and polar submarines. The image of these vessels breaking their way through the barren ice world was fuelled by a fascination for new energies—electrical and nuclear—that would bring modernity into the frozen sea. Throughout the twentieth century, the *mare incognito* of the far north had become an arena for new technological explorations, but nuclear energy and its impact on the Arctic environment was a great unknown. Simultaneously, the Arctic Ocean was a metaphor for explorers' dreams of Soviet governments, bureaucracies, the military and nuclear scientists. For Russians, the Arctic Ocean is the coldest part of their cold country. As a landlocked empire with most parts lying near the Arctic Circle, including vast Siberia, Russians had to meet two challenges:

[1] Alexis S. Troubetzkoy, *Arctic Obsession: The Lure of the Far North* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2011), pp. 11–12.

[2] Troubetzkoy, *Arctic Obsession*, p. 12.

access to the ocean for military and economic reasons, and easy access to energy in order to accelerate the path to the ocean.

This chapter is divided into two parts: the first tells of the advance of the Arctic frontier by technology under Stalin during the 1930s–1950s; the second enlightens a new epoch after the Second World War, the atomic age in the Arctic Ocean. I will show how Soviet propaganda turned the former 'icy backwater' into a space at the forefront of Soviet technological modernisation. In the cultural context in which the Arctic served as a site for inventing Russia as a 'northern nation',[3] the search for natural resources and energies, at least nuclear energy, was key to building a modern, socialist society free from shortages and limitations. My inquiry into the mode of Soviet Arctic propaganda has two aspects, both of which are related to the central questions concerning the significance of the Arctic as the Soviet Union's last frontier. Reflecting the cultural and social conditions of Soviet Arctic propaganda production, the crucial questions of my discussion are: When and why did it appear? And whose interests did it serve?

The peak of propaganda creation occurred in the 1930s. This was a time when the repressive machinery of the Stalinist regime tried to engineer a perfect socialist society. The framework for this propaganda was set under Stalin, and its unbroken techno-euphoria continued throughout post-Stalinist periods. Icebreakers and submarines charted wide parts of the Arctic Ocean without concerns for environmental protection. Moreover, the icy ocean became a kind of natural enemy that stood in socialist modernity's way and had to be subjugated by any means whatsoever. This was further enforced by the ramifications of the Second World War and the Cold War. Although an icy backwater, the Russian Arctic Ocean became part of the intertwined geopolitical and geo-ecological scenery of the twentieth century.

The 'Great Game' over the Arctic with the West pushed the Soviets towards a rougher exploration and exploitation of the Russian Arctic, for the development of more technological advances in order to serve national interests, but simultaneously it endangered the fragile world of the icy ocean.[4] In the context of the arms race and militarisation of the Arctic, nuclear energy gained dominant significance. The atomic age in the far

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[3] Troubetzkoy, *Arctic Obsession*, p. 12.

[4] The 'Great Game' was originally coined to describe the Anglo-Russian struggle over Central Asia in the nineteenth century, but this metaphor is appropriate to describe the US–Soviet struggle over the circumpolar world, the last frontier of the twentieth century.

north had two facets: the threat of a nuclear war between the superpowers and the threat of nuclear contamination. As this chapter will explore, the Soviets had to pay a high price for their national security and scientific progress. In Arctic science and in the Soviet popular imagination of the icy ocean, the icebreaker and the polar submarine became technological icons for Soviet progress. In this context, Soviet icebreakers were often named after political leaders like Lenin, Stalin and Brezhnev.[5]

Since the 1950s, Soviet engineers and natural scientists claimed that nuclear reactors, if installed in icebreakers in the Arctic Ocean, would make possible the advance of greater ships, capable of breaking through thicker layers of ice, at greater speeds. All this technological enthusiasm created a permanent environmental disaster due to massive nuclear contamination. From the White Sea in the western part of Russia's Arctic Ocean to the Bering Strait in the east, this icy backwater has been used to dump nuclear waste from icebreakers and submarines. The sinking of the nuclear submarine *Kursk* in August 2000 gave the worst illustration of the environmental disaster in post-Soviet Russia and it sheds light on its long legacy beyond the existence of the Soviet Union.

Whereas the nineteenth century had been characterised by the collection and formation of scientific knowledge on the hydrographic and hydrometeorological peculiarities of the Russian Arctic Ocean, the development of sea technology in the twentieth century accelerated the Russian push into the region and the disastrous exploitation of its water resources.[6] The exploration and exploitation of the Russian Arctic became something of a mania under the Soviets that consequently endangered the fragile ecosystem of the Arctic Ocean. Both in tsarist and Soviet times, the exploration of this environment had scientific and military motives, serving both curiosity and national security. Attitudes towards the Arctic Ocean said more about Soviet scientists' emotional make-up than about their rational discoveries: the sea acted as a monitor for national feelings about what existed under ice and water, and the Soviets wanted to expand not only into the far north, but also into the far deep, that is, the Arctic seabed frontier charted by submarines and drilling vessels. Deep-sea drilling

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[5] See *Soviet Shipping*, 4:6 (1984), a quarterly journal published by the Association of Soviet Shipowners.

[6] See Ivan E. Frolov, Zalman M. Gudkovich, Vladimir F. Radionov, Alexander V. Shirochkov and Leonid A. Timokhov, *The Arctic Basin: Results from the Russian Drifting Stations* (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 2005), p. 1.

was praised by Soviet geologists as a major achievement in the Arctic. Technological advances were accelerated by the exciting underwater vistas.[7] Additionally, the Arctic was the only great ocean on which the Soviet Union bordered, and this sea was symbolically and emotionally laden. Beyond scientific exploration and resource development, Russian activities in the Arctic Ocean remained a mystery: they were mysterious like the Arctic Ocean itself, and, like beasts from the depths, the Soviets stimulated fears and fantasies in the West, especially in maritime countries such as Britain and the United States. During the Cold War, Soviet submarines were imagined as a mysterious technological monster from the deep.[8] The Hollywood film industry discovered the Arctic as a thrilling imaginary arena of the Cold War in two dimensions: first, the espionage missions undertaken by Soviet submarines in the Arctic waters and second, their invisible nuclear threat. In the film *The Bedford Incident* (1965) a Soviet submarine penetrates the maritime territory of Greenland and Iceland.[9] The film reflects the Western fear of the Soviet advance into the Arctic Ocean in its military–technological dimensions which will be discussed in the following sections.

The Technological Opening of the Arctic Ocean During the Geopolitical Turmoil of World War I, the Revolution, and Civil War

In the years before the First World War, General A. I. Vil'kitskii, Chief of the Russian Hydrographic Administration, launched a 30-year plan for the military and economic exploitation of the Russian Arctic Ocean, which in many ways resembled later Soviet planned decision-making. Russia's sea technology in the Arctic was still in its infancy, but Vil'kitskii's efforts laid the basis for establishing the 'Northern Sea Route' under the Soviets.[10] There were

[7] See *Soviet Literature*, 1:6 (1976), p. 29 (almanac published by Novosti Press Agency, Moscow).

[8] Lisa Yount, *Modern Marine Science: Exploring the Deep* (New York: Chelsea House, 2006), p. xv.

[9] Philip E. Steinberg, Jeremy Tasch and Hannes Gerhardt, *Contesting the Arctic: Politics and Imaginaries in the Circumpolar North* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p. 161.

[10] William E. Butler argues that the Northern Sea Route and the Northeast Passage are not one and the same. He refers to the Northeast Passage as encompassing the Arctic Ocean from the Norwegian–Soviet frontier to the Bering Strait, whereas the Northern Sea Route is more related to trade shipping. William E. Butler, *Northeast Arctic Passage* (Alphen aan den

some expeditions into the Arctic Ocean and to the North Pole operated by wooden sealing barques, equipped with a 100 horsepower steam engine.[11] The First World War, the Revolution of 1917, and the Russian Civil War put this administrative project 'on ice'. Administrative attempts aside, the conflicting parties, the Bolshevik military and the White forces, made use of the Northern Sea Route and they recognised the military and strategic purpose of the Arctic Ocean. At this time, the Russian Arctic Ocean was an uncharted area. In 1919, the first icebreaker used by the White, anti-Bolshevik forces operated near Arkhangel'sk on the White Sea.[12]

Simultaneously, the Soviet government recognised the military significance of the Northern Sea Route in order to secure the sea ports Arkhangel'sk and Petrograd. Camouflaged against anti-Bolshevik forces and their Western allies, i.e. the British, the Council of People's Commissars decided that the icebreaker *Svyatogor* should operate under the Norwegian flag.[13] The role of the *Svyatogor* in the Russian Civil War is still a riddle, and the icebreaker seemed to be an object of a tug-of-war between Britain and Soviet Russia. Originally produced during the First World War in Britain by the famous shipbuilding company W. G. Armstrong Whitworth & Co. Ltd, *Svyatogor* was captured by the Royal Navy during the British intervention in the Russian Civil War. Officially, Britain returned the icebreaker to Soviet Russia under the Krasin Trade Agreement of 1921. The ship was renamed *Krasin* after the then People's Commissar of Trade, Leonid B. Krasin. No less intriguing is that the early construction of *Svyatogor*, alias *Krasin*, in British docks had been supervised by the Russian engineer and left-wing writer Yevgeni Zamyatin (1884–1937) who was a visionary in the use of icebreakers on the Northeast Passage as his following words reveal:

> During the years of the Great War, the Baltic Sea—that 'window into Europe' which Peter the Great had cut two hundred years before—was closed by the German fleet. In order to maintain communications with her

Rijn: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1978), p. 42. In my opinion, the Northeast Passage is a geographical location in the imagination of Arctic explorers, i.e. a passage of adventure and uncertainty, whereas the Northern Sea Route is a term that illustrates the navigational mastering of the Arctic Ocean.

[11] William Barr, 'Imperial Russia's Pioneers in Arctic Aviation', *Arctic*, 38:3 (1985): 219–30.

[12] Terence Armstrong, *The Northern Sea Route: Soviet Exploitation of the North East Passage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 17.

[13] Council of People's Commissars is the official name of the Soviet Government.

allies, Russia was obliged to cut a new window into Europe far in the icy North, through the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean. A whole flotilla of icebreakers was urgently needed for this purpose.[14]

Zamyatin's words anticipated the later Soviet technological advance into the Arctic Ocean. Moreover, as an engineer and writer he developed a literary vision of a new Russia as a technological land of the future in the far north in the twentieth century. At first supporting the October Revolution, Zamyatin was drawn increasingly into opposition to the Bolshevik regime. In 1920–1921 he completed *We*, a science fiction novel about a future technological dictatorship in which the writer warned about the collective dream of technology.[15] Zamyatin anticipated the technological representation of the Arctic Ocean under Stalin. In *We*, the narrator lives and works on a spectacularly huge icebreaker in a technological society ruled by the Benefactor. Others writers followed this thread, like Igor V. Kurchatov who in his young life during the Russian Civil War studied shipbuilding and dreamed of becoming the constructor of a nuclear icebreaker, a dream which came true in the 1960s.[16]

For Stalin's and the Soviet Union's Glory: The Northeast Passage as a Wonder of Socialist Technology

Due to Civil War conditions, the Northeast Passage was not passable but the next through voyage from Arkhangel'sk to the Bering Strait was made by the icebreaker *Sibiriakov* (built in 1909 in Glasgow by D. & W. Henderson Ltd) under the command of Otto Yu Schmidt in 1932 in order to open the Passage as an artery for future sea traffic. On the occasion of the Second International Polar Year, this expedition would attract national and international attention. The outstanding significance for Stalin's regime to present the Soviet Union and socialism as a technologically advanced civilisation was moreover underlined by the involvement

[14] For more details on Zamyatin's stay in Britain, see 'Zamyatin in Newcastle' http://web. archive.org/web/20070718013543/http://www.seaham.i12.com/myers/zamyatin.html [accessed 27 September 2015].

[15] Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, trans. Hugh Aplin, foreword Alan Sillitoe (London: Hesperus, 2009).

[16] Paul R. Josephson, *Red Atom: Russia's Nuclear Power Program from Stalin to Today* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), p. 12.

of many Soviet institutions like the Commissariat of Water Transport, the Soviet Navy and several scientific institutes. In the summer of 1932 the *Sibiryakov* completed its voyage along the Northern Sea Route in one season.[17] Technically this icebreaker was equipped with one shaft steam engine and two boilers, generating 2,360 horsepower and reached a speed of 13 knots (24 km per hour). On the way, the icebreaker lost its propeller in heavy ice near the Cape of Serdtse-Kamen/Bering Strait.[18] There were other difficulties: the *Sibiriakov* had been escorted by an airplane which carried out an ice reconnaissance in advance. To crush the heavy ice, the crew of the *Sibiriakov* used ammonal, a combination of ammonium nitrate and aluminium, an explosive which was put into a package of 15 kg in front of the ship.[19] The mixture of ammonium nitrate and aluminium results in a powerful explosion. Once ignited, ammonal can reach temperatures of 240 °C.[20] This experiment with ammonal paved the way for the later development of nuclear weapons,[21] and in order to increase speed, goods—including food and coal—were removed from the *Sibiriakov*.

Passing the Northern Sea Route along a distance of 4,000 km in 2 months was a glory boasted about by Soviet propaganda in the Second International Polar Year.[22] A year later in 1933, an album of colour lithographs was published in Leningrad.[23] The propaganda had two effects: firstly, that the Soviet Union, as the leading socialist country, could equally participate in the international run for the Arctic and could even take the lead in technological exploration of the icy frontier. According to Soviet

[17] Nataliya Marchenko, *Russian Arctic Seas: Navigational Conditions and Accidents* (Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 2012), p. 7.

[18] William Barr, 'Vladimir Vize', in Marc Nuttall, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Arctic*, vols. 1–3 (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 2139.

[19] Ammonal had been used since the First World War as a filling for grenades and bombs. The Soviets also used it for blowing up mineral deposits in the Arctic.

[20] There are reported explosive accidents with ammonal on Soviet ships in the Arctic. See Martin J. Bollinger, *Stalin's Slave Ships: Kolyma, the Gulag Fleet, and the Role of the West* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), p. 62.

[21] Nuclear weaponry was developed on aluminium-based technology. See Mimi Sheller, *Aluminium Dreams: The Making of Light Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), p. 76.

[22] John McCannon, *Red Arctic: Polar Exploration and the Myth of the North in the Soviet Union, 1932–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 60; Marchenko, *Russian Arctic Seas*, p. 114.

[23] Lev Kantorovich, *Pokhod 'Sibiriakova'* (Leningrad: Lenizogiz, 1933); the title translates as '*Sibiriakov*'s Cruise'.

ideologists, this could prove the technological superiority of socialism over the capitalist West. Secondly, Arctic propaganda became a refreshing artistic field for the imaginary combination of Arctic nature and new technologies. Behind this façade of propaganda and progress there were voices from the administration of the Northern Sea Route warning that 'our world renowned icebreakers and icebreaking steamships should not be in the condition they are now'.[24] There were setbacks: the *Lomonosov* sunk, and the *Malygin* had trouble with drift ice.[25] Ice formation, which can hamper navigation, depends on climatic conditions that were changing throughout the twentieth century; but contrary to the period of 1905 to 1925 (until the end of the Russian Civil War), the climate of the 1930s was warm and hence favourable for navigation.[26]

Despite technological shortcomings, the Soviets had demonstrated their navigational skills in the severe Arctic environment that was hostile to men and technology. But this framework set by nature inspired Soviet science. A network of drifting stations, observation points along the coast and on isles, was established in order to undertake meteorological, hydrographic, biological and geological research, the outcomes of which depended on the climatic surroundings.[27] Some locations, for example bays in the White Sea, were freed from ice formation by underwater tidal currents which facilitated maritime research activities throughout the year.[28]

In the 1930s, Soviet geologists proposed the thesis that navigation was a challenging endeavour because compasses were sensitive to underwater magnetic fields, a fact verified by deep ocean drilling data. The Stalinist period was the beginning of modern seismic underwater research in the Arctic Ocean, but much was in its infancy and, therefore, the ocean seabed

[24] Paul R. Josephson, *The Conquest of the Russian Arctic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 71.

[25] Josephson, *The Conquest of the Russian Arctic*, pp. 71–2.

[26] Torgny Vinje, 'Sea-ice', in Egil Sakshaug, Geir Johnsen and Kit Kovacs, eds, *Ecosystem Barents Sea* (Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press, 2009), p. 62.

[27] For example, the Murmansk Marine Biological Station established in 1935, and the White Sea Biological Station, established in 1938 as an affiliate of the Lomonosov State University in Moscow. See The Murmansk Marine Biological Institute's website at http://www.mmbi.info/eng/aboutus [accessed 27 September 2015], and The White Sea Biological Station's website http://en.wsbs-msu.ru/doc/index.php?ID=13 [accessed 27 September 2015].

[28] Alexander Tzetlin, 'Long-established marine lab on the youngest Sea on Earth', at http://wsbs-msu.ru/res/DOCFOLDER13/wsbs-presentation.pdf [accessed 27 September 2015], p. 6.

remained a field of speculative exploration until the 1960s and 1970s.[29] The Barents and Kara Seas are locations of aperiodic underwater magnetic storms.[30] Step by step, the vast Arctic Ocean had been encompassed by a scientific–spatial structure which measured magnetism and ice-forming processes in regional zones. Data from the environment were tested and influenced maritime technology. The incident of the propeller loss of the *Sibiriakov* showed how fragile modern technology was. The cultural approach to the Arctic Ocean in the Stalinist period was, however, ambivalent: popular propaganda contributed to the mystification of the Arctic Ocean, but the Arctic environment put technology to a harsh test.

Dizzy with success, the Soviet government created the Chief Administration of the Northern Sea Route (the so-called 'Glavsevmorput') which was the starting point of an ambitious industrial programme in the Arctic. The industrialisation of the region was Stalin's design and proved the predicted extremes of dictatorship once prophesied by Yevgeni Zamyatin in his science fiction novel *We*. Stalin's Arctic policy combined exploration, exploitation, terror in the shape of Arctic labour camps, and propaganda. The media commended all achievements in the far north to Stalin, the path of industrialisation was labelled as 'Stalinskii marshrout' ('Stalin's marching route'), and Arctic folklore celebrated a leadership cult as praised by one Soviet writer:

> Behind the Kremlin walls lives the tender, loving hero Stalin, whose words radiate more light and warmth than the sun. Stalin assigns the new heroes the exploration of the Arctic Ocean. […] that Soviet ships can sail the Arctic Ocean and be the envy of the bourgeois countries.[31]

Soon a fleet of icebreakers was built up in order to use the Northeast Passage economically and militarily. After the successful passage of the *Sibiriakov*, the head of the Chief Administration of the Northern Sea Route, Otto Yu Schmidt, dared to send out a non-icebreaker, the *Cheliuskin*, a big steamship which was built for warmer seas. Schmidt's ambition was to show that

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[29] Anatoly Malakhov, *The Mystery of the Earth's Mantle* (1970; Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001), p. 118; Marchenko, *Russian Arctic Seas*, p. 46.

[30] I. I. Belyaev and A. M. Filin, 'Techniques for Marine Magnetic Measurements', in Alexander M. Gorodnitsky, ed., *Anomalous Magnetic Field of the World Ocean* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1995), p. 12.

[31] Frank J. Miller, *Folklore for Stalin: Russian Folklore and Pseudofolklore of the Stalin Era* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), p. 127.

ordinary ships could pass the Northern Sea Route. The ship was of Danish manufacture, produced by the company Burmeister & Wain (Copenhagen). One month after leaving the harbour of Murmansk, the *Cheliuskin* was caught in thick ice. Eventually it was able to continue its voyage, but it was crushed finally in the Chukchee Sea. Captain Vladimir Voronin and his crew escaped to the Chukchee Peninsula where they were rescued by Soviet Arctic pilots. Their help demonstrated how new technology, that of aircraft, could strengthen social bonds in a socialist society. Moreover, for the first time it was established that ship crews could be rescued whereas a century earlier stranded seafarers were usually lost in the icy ocean.[32]

The ships of the Soviet Arctic navy, operating under the supervision of the Chief Commissariat of the Northern Sea Route, were Western-produced, including icebreakers like *Fedor Litke* of Canadian manufacture (the former *Earl Grey*). Icebreakers like the *Fedor Litke* accompanied convoys of freight ships, but also those transporting convicts to the Gulag labour camps in the Arctic. The Northern Sea Route became the main artery to transport natural resources like coal and ores, but also workers—miners for whom it was the route to a prison camp.[33] Alexander Sol'shenitsyn appropriately labelled the Gulag Empire as 'Archipelago Gulag' stretching over the Arctic landscape: 'The glaciers came and went […], the sea howled under the wind and was covered with an icy sludge and in places froze; the northern lights blazed across half the sky.'[34] The Arctic waters and the frozen hinterland of Siberia were natural barriers to escape attempts.[35]

When icebreakers were shipwrecked on the dangerous Northeast Passage, prisoners were forced to walk over the frozen sea to the labour camps.[36] Moreover, Gulag workers built up the industrial infrastructure along the Arctic Coast: they did mining work on Arctic islands, built ports near river mouths and they unloaded cargo.[37] At that time, ships were

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[32] On their mysterious fates see William J. Mills, *Exploring Polar Frontiers: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2003), pp. 338–9.

[33] Martin J. Bollinger, *Stalin's Slave Ships*, p. 29.

[34] Quoted from Roy R. Robson, *Solovki: The Story of Russia Told Through its Most Remarkable Islands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 1.

[35] Fyodor V. Mochulsky, *Gulag Boss. A Soviet Memoir*, ed. and trans. Deborah Kaple (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 16.

[36] Bollinger, *Stalin's Slave Ships*, p. 59.

[37] Andrew Hund, ed., *Antarctica and the Arctic Circle: A Geographic Encyclopedia of the Earth's Polar Regions* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2014), p. 248.

fuelled by coal which was the main energy source until the end of the Second World War.[38] This made icebreakers vulnerable, because under the harsh climatic conditions of the Arctic Ocean the crews' main concern was the refuelling of the engines.[39] The technological dilemma was recognised by Stalinist engineers in the early 1930s and the use of diesel-electric motors provided a solution to this problem. Electricity became the intriguing keyword for Soviet icebreaking technology promoted by the Glavsevmorput, the Chief Administration of the Northern Sea Route. Again the inspiration came from the West. In Sweden, the diesel-electric icebreaker *Ymer* was built in 1932 and the Finns followed with the *Sisu* in 1938.[40] It was easier to produce and transport electricity, but the testing of this young form of energy was still in its infancy. In winter 1937–1938 the icebreaker *Krasin* (built 1917 in Britain) could not complete the Northeast Passage due to a lack of coal.[41] At that time, coal mining in the Soviet Arctic was just starting and exploitation of this natural resource was not a promising endeavour as geologists had found out that seams in the region were of meagre quality for fuelling ships.[42]

Nevertheless, in public the Stalinist regime passed over these deficits with propagandist euphoria. The actors of the Moscow Polar Theatre portrayed enthusiastic coal heavers around the icebreaker *Krasin* on its zig-zag course, crushing the ice and ploughing into water with a loud crack. Whereas the crew members of the *Krasin* were portrayed as true and stubborn proletarians in the icy world of the far north, popular culture of the 1930s stylised the Soviet Union as the mightiest 'icebreaker of the world' under the command of 'Captain Stalin'. Modelled after the Moscow Polar Theatre, numerous provincial theatres in the northern and Siberian regions were established to stir up an Arctic euphoria among the population. In remote regions of the Soviet Arctic, troupes of actors were sent out by airplanes. They also gave performances on vessels bound for the Arctic. In this respect, Arctic enthusiasm was not limited to the Soviet capital.[43]

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[38] Marchenko, *Russian Arctic Seas*, p. 78; see also David Fairhall, *Cold Front: Conflict Ahead in Arctic Waters* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

[39] Terence Armstrong, *The Northern Sea Route: Soviet Exploitation of the Northeast Passage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011 [1952]), p. 77.

[40] Armstrong, *The Northern Sea Route*, p. 77.

[41] Marchenko, *Russian Arctic Seas*, p. 126.

[42] Armstrong, *The Northern Sea Route*, p. 89.

[43] John McCannon, 'Tabula Rasa in the North: The Soviet Arctic and Mythic Landscapes in Stalinist Popular Culture', in Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman, eds, *The Landscape of*

In British fiction of the 1930s, the Soviet Arctic Ocean provided an ideal place for the creative imagination, as can be found in the 'lost' novel *In Ballast to the White Sea* by the British writer Malcolm Lowry (1909–1957).[44] Lowry was a left-wing writer with a political commitment to the labour movement during the Great Depression.[45] In this context, the Soviet Union in the 1930s seemed to be a world apart from socio-economic cataclysms. It was not the world of depression in Britain, but of enthusiasm, at least revealed through the advancement on the Arctic frontier. Moreover, for Lowry seas presented a field for unlimited yearnings. The story starts with the protagonists, Sigbjørn and Tor, two brothers born in Norway but raised in Cambridge. Announcing 'the virile solidarity of the proletariat' they want to discover the great ocean in the far north.[46] The brothers leave Cambridge and take a train from Liverpool to Preston where they board a Norwegian freighter destined for Arkhangel'sk on the White Sea. The whole novel is a narrative of modern travel technologies from trains to freighters as 'the racket of the acceleration of engines'.[47] Traffic technologies reach the far north and the two brothers comment on this advancement with the words: 'But can you tell me why when I think of Norway I always think of Russia at the same time? Isn't it possible that for us, Russia is the future, and Norway the past?'[48] In Lowry's *In Ballast to the White Sea* the future industrial society of the twentieth century arises in the bright, white world of the Arctic: 'But at this instant the town of Archangel rose before him [Sigbjørn] in imagination, flat and sombre.'[49]

This picturesque image changed dramatically in the 1930s. Rich with forests, the pulp and paper industry of the Arkhangel'sk region began to pour polluting chemicals into the White Sea. Mining industries dumped heavy metals (especially mercury) and coal sludge, and the fish and food industry added nitrogen. Additionally, city waste contributed to the sea's

Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), pp. 241–60, p. 248.

[44] Published posthumously in 2014. The original manuscript was destroyed in a fire in 1944.

[45] See the foreword by Patrick A. McCarthy in Malcolm Lowry, *In Ballast to the White Sea* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2014).

[46] See McCarthy, foreword in Lowry, *In Ballast to the White Sea*.

[47] Lowry, *In Ballast to the White Sea*, chapter 1, n.p.

[48] Lowry, *In Ballast to the White Sea*, chapter 1, n.p.

[49] In Russian: Arkhangel'sk, the 'Angel City'; Lowry, *In Ballast to the White Sea*, chapter 1, n.p. The area of Arkhangel'sk was traditionally contested between Norway and Russia, the two powers on the Arctic Ocean.

contamination. The first long-term monitoring of water status in the White Sea did not start until the end of the Second World War, and to the present day the ecosystem of the Arctic Ocean remains an understudied object. There are numerous estuaries, inlets whose influence on the ocean are not known. Some of them function as 'biohydrochemical protection' barriers which hinder circulation of pollutants.[50]

Beginning with the construction of the White Sea Canal, an industrial infrastructure with access to the Arctic Ocean was set up. The canal, built by Gulag convicts, connected the White Sea with the Leningrad region and the Baltic Sea.[51] The most important part of the industrial complex of the Soviet north was the shipping industry, with its newly proclaimed ability to produce deep-water vessels for rivers, canals and the ocean. In 1938 the next class of powerful icebreakers, the so-called Stalin class, was produced by the Ordzhonikidze Shipbuilding Factory in Leningrad. These were the first icebreakers of Soviet design.[52] The initial ship, the *Iosif Stalin*, displaced 10,000 tons and generated 10,000 horsepower, surpassing the *Fedor Litke* (3,028 tons and 7,000 horsepower).[53] The 1930s saw a rapid militarisation of the Northeast Passage. Besides icebreakers, the first submarines of the Dekabrist class D1 and D2, equipped with diesel-electric motors, appeared on the Arctic scene.[54]

During the Second World War the Arctic Ocean became an ideal field for experimentation with military technology. In the first years the western part—the Barents and Kara Seas—became critical for Soviet defence against Germany and Finland and the expeditions of the 1930s into the icy ocean had been useful for testing shipping under harsh climatic conditions. Around New Year's Eve 1942, a Soviet convoy destroyed the German battleship *Lützow* and the heavy cruiser *Admiral Hipper* in the Barents Sea.[55]

[50] Nikolai Filatov, Dmitry Pozdnyakov, Ola M. Johannessen, Lasse H. Petterson and Leonid P. Bobylev, *White Sea: Its Marine Environment and Ecosystem Dynamics Influenced by Global Change* (Berlin and New York: Springer, 2005), pp. xli, 17, 22.

[51] Mikhail Morukov, 'The White Sea–Baltic Canal', at http://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/0817939423_151.pdf [accessed 27 September 2015], p. 153.

[52] Paul R. Josephson, *The Conquest of the Russian Arctic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 90; Armstrong, *The Northern Sea Route*, p. 47.

[53] Mills, *Exploring Polar Frontiers*, p. 50.

[54] Norman Polmar and Jurrien Noot, *Submarines of the Russian and Soviet Navies, 1718–1990* (Shrewsbury: Airlife, 1991), pp. 75–8.

[55] Nathan Miller, *War at Sea: A Naval History of World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 330.

Warfare in the Arctic is ferocious as the ocean has its own weaponry of ice and cold; humans and technology have to adapt to these conditions. The climate brings risks of mechanical breakdown and collision with ice, and then warships become an easy target for an enemy's torpedoes and mines. The Barents Sea, stretching from Spitzbergen, northern Norway, to Novaya Zemlya in Western Siberia, is warmed by the Atlantic current and the Russian port of Murmansk is ice-free, but in the eastern part the Atlantic current meets an icy water stream where the Barents Sea becomes the White and Kara Seas. The climate of this area is shaped by a polar front. The moderate air masses from the Atlantic and the cold ones from the Arctic create cyclones.[56]

By the time of the German attack on the Soviet Union of 22 June 1941 the Soviet northern fleet comprised 8 destroyers, 3 torpedo-boats, 15 icebreakers, 27 submarines and 8 minesweepers under the command of Rear Admiral A. A. Nikolaev.[57] The Second World War in the Arctic Ocean was fought as a 'weather war': sea warfare depended on climate and weather observations. In the summer of 1942 German submarines destroyed Soviet scientific vessels and German airplanes bombarded Soviet weather stations on Novaya Zemlya on the eastern end of the Barents Sea.[58] Sometimes retreats occurred, not due to war, but to weather conditions.[59] Between 1942 and 1945 the Northern Sea Route became the artery of Western Allies' lend lease, British, US and Canadian vessels shipped along the Soviet Arctic coast. The operations of the Germans, the Soviets and the Western Allies demonstrated the military significance of the Arctic Ocean. In these years the Arctic Ocean was contaminated by the minelaying of the war powers in the Barents and Kara Seas.[60] Although the Arctic Ocean lost much of its propaganda relevance during the Second World War, because it was not the centre of Soviet warfare against Nazi Germany, the topic of

[56] Andrey G. Kostianoy, Jacques C. J. Nihoul and Vyacheslav B. Rodionov, *Physical Oceanography of Frontal Zones in the Subarctic Seas* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2004), pp. 100–1.

[57] Mark L. Evans, *Great World War II Battles in the Arctic* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 112.

[58] Jaap Jan Zeeberg, *Climate and Glacial History of the Novaya Zemlya Archipelago, Russian Arctic* (Amsterdam: Rozenberg, 2002), p. 110.

[59] In winter 1943–4 the Germans tried to occupy the islands of Aleksandr and Frants Iosifa, west of Novaya Zemlya. See Wilhelm Dege, *War North of 80: The Last German Arctic Weather Station of World War II*, ed. and trans. William Barr (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004).

[60] Howard S. Levie, *Mine Warfare at Sea* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1992), p. 117.

weather war played an important role in the winter combats. Testing men under harsh climate conditions in the Arctic Ocean was useful for subsequent land-based winter war in western parts of the Soviet Union.[61]

Toward a 'New Land': Novaya Zemlya Enters the Nuclear Age

The introduction of new weaponry, especially those based on nuclear energy, increased the military significance of the Arctic Ocean during the Cold War, and military use of the Northern Sea Route was kept behind a curtain of secrecy. Michael Wallace and Steven Staples are right in describing the arms race in the Arctic Ocean as a 'cat-and-mouse-game' that had much to do with the secrets of nuclear war technology.[62] In contrast to other world regions, the Arctic Ocean has never been object of an international de-nuclearisation treaty.[63] Unlike open oceans, the Arctic sea was an ideal place to operate with nuclear submarines, which could be hidden out of sight.[64] Making use of natural hiding places afforded by ice packs made the Soviets comfortable with their national security and their programme of nuclear armament.

Between 1955 and 1990 the island of Novaya Zemlya (meaning New Land) became an outstanding field for nuclear testing. In the same period, nuclear-powered submarines and icebreakers additionally carried nuclear weapons along the Northern Sea Route. In the post-Second World War period it was believed that nuclear technology was the best available and that it could even survive the harsh conditions of the Arctic climate. This belief in the unlimited power of nuclear energy, along with the arms race with the United States, caused a deterioration in the natural environment of the Arctic Ocean. The region also became a hidden ground for nuclear accidents. Construction of the nuclear site on and around Novaya Zemlya (including underwater tests) started in the summer of 1954 after the Soviet government's decision that sites in Central Asia (Kazakhstan) were too close to human populations in order to test devices with ever

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[61] Concerning the aspect of Soviet winter warfare, see Steven Bull, *World War II: Winter and Mountain Warfare Tactics* (Oxford and New York: Osprey, 2013), p. 61.

[62] Michael Wallace and Steven Staples, *Ridding the Arctic of Nuclear Weapons: A Task Long Overdue* (Ottawa: Canadian Pugwash Group, 2010), p. 5.

[63] Wallace and Staples, *Ridding the Arctic of Nuclear Weapons*, p. 12.

[64] Wallace and Staples, *Ridding the Arctic of Nuclear Weapons*, p. 13.

greater explosive yields.[65] But there was a military factor that favoured Novaya Zemlya as a testing ground: by 1954 the Soviet Union had begun to develop the first nuclear anti-ship torpedo (T-5).[66] Between 1955 and 1962, Soviet nuclear experts experimented with seaboard nuclear testing (three underwater, one at water surface and two slightly above surface).[67] The underwater tests of 1955, 1957 and 1961 took place at Chernaya Bay (Black Bay), an inlet on the south-western coast of Novaya Zemlya where sea-bottom sediments are now contaminated with plutonium. This is a hazardous radionuclide, not only because of its longevity (half-life), but also because it proves stable in combination with water and can be transported over long distances through ocean currents.[68]

In the 1950s, the Soviet Arctic Ocean, especially the waters around Novaya Zemlya, gained interest from the US science fiction writer Frank Herbert. In the novel *The Dragon in the Sea* (1956) US geologists are voyaging on a nuclear submarine to Novaya Zemlya to extract marine deposits. The earth's natural resources are almost depleted, and the last untouched spot is the mysterious island of Novaya Zemlya. Herbert's novel stands in the tradition of sea narratives about the Northeastern Passage through the Arctic Ocean that started in the nineteenth century, but he modernises the subject matter: in the 1950s, the new potential of nuclear energy for maritime traffic stands in the foreground.[69] In reality and in the midst of the age of Soviet nuclear testing in the Arctic Ocean, the US nuclear submarine *Nautilus* left Pearl Harbour on 23 July 1958 with its destination the Bering Strait. In the backyard of the Soviets, the Nautilus passed under the icy ocean for the North Pole.[70] On the other side of the Bering Strait experts of the Atomic Energy Commission suggested a

[65] See Sara Pratt, 'Frozen in Time: A Cold War Relic Gives Up its Secrets', at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, The Earth Institute at Columbia University, http://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/news/2005/11_28_05.htm [accessed 27 September 2015].

[66] Vitaly I. Khalturin, Tatyana G. Rautian, Paul G. Richards and William S. Leith, 'A Review of Nuclear Testing by the Soviet Union at Novaya Zemlya, 1955–1990', at https://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/~richards/my_papers/khalturin_NZ_1-42%20.pdf [accessed 27 September 2015], p. 2.

[67] Khalturin et al., 'A Review of Nuclear Testing', p. 2.

[68] Lindis Skipperud, 'Plutonium in the Arctic Marine Environment – A Short Review', *The Scientific World Journal*, 4 (2004): 460–81, pp. 461, 464.

[69] Frank Herbert, *The Dragon in the Sea* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1956), p. 16.

[70] James A. Oliver, *The Bering Strait Crossing: A 21st Century Frontier Between East and West* (Exmouth: Information Architects, 2006), p. 142; see captain of the USS *Nautilus*,

dredging of the Strait by nuclear explosives.[71] The history of the nuclear site of Novaya Zemlya and the operations of Soviet and US nuclear submarines in the Arctic Ocean demonstrate that nuclear energy had changed warfare, even in the remote Arctic Ocean.[72]

Additional nuclear contamination took place in the 1960s through the unloading of radioactive waste by nuclear-powered ships, including icebreakers, serving the Northern Sea Route for economic and military purposes. The dumping grounds lay in shallow waters in the Kara Sea near the island of Novaya Zemlya. This posed a potential radioactive danger for the coastal region and its fauna, whereas the disposal of waste in the open sea (Barents Sea, Kara Sea) resulted in an overall pollution of the western part of the Arctic Ocean.[73] There is also the danger of movement of nuclear waste by ice and storm.[74] This process was accelerated by the topographic conditions of the respective area. The Kara Sea west of Novaya Zemlya is a shallow basin with an average depth of 120 m. Additionally, it is fed by fresh waters (1,200 km³) of the western Siberian rivers Ob and Yenisey which bring radioactive sediments from industrial sites.[75] Radionuclides like plutonium and others join chemical elements in seabed sediments. This combination leads to a uniform contamination of the soil; moreover, other industrial waste reacts with radionuclides. These chemical processes heighten the toxic content of the ocean which has a long-lasting impact on humans, fauna and flora.[76] Terrestrial nuclear

William R. Anderson, *The Ice Diaries: The Untold Story of the Cold War's Most Daring Mission* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008).

[71] *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, 45:10 (December 1989), p. 31.

[72] Concerning the techno-euphoria for nuclear submarines, see Anderson, *The Ice Diaries*, p. 34.

[73] Vladislav Larin, 'The Concept of a Nuclear-Powered Subsea Drilling Site for Oil and Gas Development on the Russian Arctic Shelf. An Analytical Review', at http://bellona.org/assets/sites/3/2015/06/fil_From_Polar_to_Nuclear_-_Bellona_report1.pdf [accessed 14 December 2015], p. 15.

[74] 'Modelling of the Radiological Impact of Radioactive Waste Dumping in the Arctic Seas. Report of the Modelling and Assessment Working Group of the International Arctic Seas Assessment Project (IASAP)', International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna, January 2003, at http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/publications/PDF/te_1330_web.pdf [accessed 27 September 2015], p. 4.

[75] Skipperud, 'Plutonium in the Arctic Marine Environment', p. 460.

[76] Arctic foxes and glaucous gulls in the Kara Sea are highly contaminated. Polar bears in this region of the Arctic Ocean have alone a PCP (Pentachlorophenol) level of 60 ppm (1990). See Marla Cone, *Silent Snow: The Slow Poisoning of the Arctic* (New York: Grove Press, 2005), p. 63.

explosions on Novaya Zemlya contaminated the atmosphere, but radio-active fallout was also spread over the Arctic Ocean: 12 % of the fallout discharged around the test site, 10 % spread along the same latitude as the test site, and 78 % circulated through atmospheric and water currents around the circumpolar region.[77]

The biosphere developed in the Arctic Ocean is a very sensitive eco-system due to the harsh climate. Low temperatures and short life seasons make this ecosystem more susceptible to environmental damage, especially the impact of long-lasting radioactive substances. Nuclear dumping hap-pened consciously and unconsciously. In the 1970s and 1980s there were 338 emergency situations relating to Soviet nuclear submarines alone.[78] Vladislav Larin gives a strong argument: navigation of submarines in Arctic waters is as risky as that of other vessels, and operational errors occur due to rapidly changing water conditions (ice formation, ice melting, water currents and so on). Moreover, nuclear components of vessels are frag-ile and unreliable. This can result in enormous stresses for the crew to handle, simultaneously with the challenges of the natural environment of the Arctic Ocean and of nuclear technology.[79] However, the use of nuclear submarines of the superpowers has been a technological innovation and it has facilitated the advancement of Arctic geoscientific research.[80]

Nuclear waste was a political taboo in the Soviet public and media, as the ocean in the far north had been associated with national security and the secret development of nuclear weaponry. The Arctic Ocean was also the stage for official propaganda to boast of industrial progress and the victory of socialism over a harsh nature. Nuclear scientists and some chosen engineers and military staff alone had knowledge of the nuclear development programme. Local inhabitants of Novaya Zemlya, that is the indigenous population of reindeer breeders, the Nenets, had been forcibly resettled. This resettlement policy was the outcome of the Soviet military industrialism, and care for the native population was not the main concern as demonstrated by the fact that other indigenous peoples like the Inuit were not evacuated and were exposed further to nuclear contamination. This expulsion is another facet of the environmental disaster of the Soviet

[77] Cone, *Silent Snow*, p. 113.

[78] Larin, *The Concept*, p. 16.

[79] Larin, *The Concept*, p. 2.

[80] 'Opportunities and Priorities in Arctic Geoscience', published by The Committee on Arctic Solid-Earth Geosciences (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1991), p. 52.

Arctic and it is symptomatic of nuclear powers' dealings with natives.[81] In many ways, the island of Novaya Zemlya's demarcation as a special military zone resembles that of the Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific.

Nevertheless, there were rumours in Soviet society about the radioactive mysteries of the ocean in the far north. Soviet citizens had a strong aversion to nuclear energy and Soviet scientists spoke of a popular radiophobia.[82] Thanks to the activities of a Soviet ecological movement and Greenpeace in the late 1980s, who began to raise their voices in the atmosphere of Gorbachev's glasnost, rumours about nuclear incidents in the icy backwater turned into scandals. Until the late 1980s the environmental question of the Soviet Arctic, intertwined with national security, was a highly sensitive issue. This touched the development of nuclear technology, both military and civilian, operations of the Soviet navy and scientific research of the Arctic Ocean. Despite national and international protests against the nuclear use of the Arctic Ocean, even the Soviet government under the presidency of Mikhail Gorbachev did not want to cut back the nuclear programme. Instead, a new vision was devised. Now, economic motives spoke for an increasing nuclearisation of the Arctic Ocean. The submarine-producing trust of Malakhit (Malachite) and ROSNEFT, a state-run oil trust, envisioned the construction of a nuclear-powered tanker fleet in order to transport Siberian oil along the Northern Sea Route.[83] This plan resulted in the discovery of the gas and oil fields in the Barents Sea.[84] In his speech at Murmansk in 1987 Gorbachev suggested making the Arctic Ocean a zone of peace, scientific and economic investigations, and of environmental

[81] Concerning the ecological situation of the indigenous peoples of the former Soviet Arctic, see Linda King and Nina Meschtyb, 'International Survey on Adult Education for Indigenous Peoples, Country Study: Russia', UNESCO Institute for Education (Hamburg, 2000), p. 9; Lassi Heininen, 'Globalization and Security in the Circumpolar North', in Lassi Heininen and Chris Southcott, eds, *Globalization and the Circumpolar North* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2010), p. 236.

[82] 'The Environmental Movement and Environmental Politics', at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/commercial_books/CB367/chap7.pdf [accessed 27 September 2015], pp. 194–5.

[83] 'The Environmental Movement and Environmental Politics', p. 3.

[84] 'Exit from the Labyrinth. Integrated Coastal Management in the Kandalaksha District, Murmansk Region of the Russian Federation', published by the Ministry of Education and Science, Russian Federation, Russian State Hydrometeorological University, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Moscow and St Petersburg, 2006), p. 4.

protection.[85] Although the Chernobyl accident fuelled popular radiophobia, the Soviet government denied any nuclear dumping in the Arctic Ocean.[86] But international monitoring unfolded the nuclear truth: satellite-based research of the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs shed new light on the testing site of Novaya Zemlya and its future environmental problems. The terrestrial nuclear explosions of the past had produced craters in the earth's surface. Consequently the permafrost layer had been broken and it was assumed that radioactivity leaking from the sub-terrestrial caverns contaminated the water table, rivers and, most likely, the ocean.[87]

Not until 1993 did the Russian government release detailed information about the losing and dumping of nuclear waste in the Arctic Ocean. The Inventory of Radioactive Waste Disposals at Sea, published by the International Energy Agency in 1999, listed nearly 50 pages about nuclear waste disposals of the former Soviet Union alone in the Arctic Ocean.[88] Between 1959 and 1991 there were 98 disposals on five sites, the total volume of liquid nuclear waste reached 190,334 cubic metres with an activity of 764 terabecquerels (TBq).[89] According to recent US and Russian scientific reports, only 5 % of the total radioactive contamination remains at the original dumping sites, the rest having dispersed. It can be assumed that over the decades, the material has permeated and polluted the Arctic Ocean.[90]

The Kara Sea located east of Novaya Zemlya is much colder than the Barents Sea with its warmer currents from the Atlantic. This part of the Arctic Ocean is frozen for more than 8 months a year. Expeditions by icebreakers in the 1930s succeeded in mapping a group of isolated isles, the so called 'Severnaya Land' (the 'Northern Land'). The German operation of 'Wonderland' in summer 1942 failed due to weather conditions

[85] Mark Nuttall, *Protecting the Arctic: Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Survival* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 24.

[86] Charles Krupnick, *Decommissioned Russian Nuclear Submarines and International Cooperation* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2001), p. 180.

[87] Peter Gizewski, 'Military Activity and Environmental Security: The Case of Radioactivity in the Arctic', at http://www.carc.org/pubs/v21no4/military.htm [accessed 27 September 2015].

[88] 'IAEA-TECDOC-1105, Inventory of Radioactive Waste Disposals at Sea', published by the International Atomic Energy Agency (Vienna, August 1999), http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/publications/PDF/te_1105_prn.pdf [accessed 14 December 2015], p. 3.

[89] 'IAEA-TECDOC-1105', p. 69.

[90] 'Nuclear Wastes in the Arctic: An Analysis of Arctic and Other Regional Impacts from Soviet Nuclear Contamination', OTA-ENV-623 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, September 1995), p. 6.

(ice and fog). The Kara Sea suffered from nuclear waste dumping from the 1960s to 1980s. Contrary to the situation of Novaya Zemlya which had been a testing site for Soviet nuclear weapons, the Kara Sea was contaminated by waste from nuclear reactors transported by the Northern Fleet. Because of the colder climate the Kara Sea produces more ice and scientists argue that floating ice is a carrier of nuclear contaminates into other parts of the Arctic Ocean.[91]

Systematic research on the radioactive fallout from previous nuclear tests on the environment started in the 1990s.[92] Russia's Scandinavian neighbours, especially Norway, were interested in a joint investigation of nuclear contamination in the Arctic Ocean.[93] The Russian side claimed the following actual status of nuclear waste: three nuclear-powered submarines with fuel, a submarine reactor with fuel, shielding elements and nuclear fuel from the icebreaker *Lenin*, five reactor sections from nuclear submarines and icebreakers, 19 ships loaded with solid radioactive waste, 735 other reactive items, and more than 17,000 containers of radioactive waste. This dumping concerns the western part of the Arctic Ocean alone (from the Barents Sea and Kara Sea to the east coast of Novaya Zemlya).[94] The scope of radioactive pollution in water and sea fauna is being investigated, but as the research is still in progress the impact of nuclear damage on the environment is unknown[95] or, to take up Rachel Carson's words about the sea: 'The sea has always challenged the minds and imagination of men […]. Not even the mighty technological developments of this, the Atomic Age, have greatly changed this situation.'[96] Despite modern technology of the twentieth century, the case study of the Russian Arctic Ocean shows that although the Soviets succeeded in managing the Northern Sea Route within the dynamism of this ocean, its actions of tides

[91] S. L. Pfirman, J. W. Kögeler and I. Rigor, 'Potential for Rapid Transport of Contaminants from the Kara Sea', *Science of the Total Environment*, 202:1–3 (1997): 111–22, p. 111.

[92] 'Nuclear Explosions in the USSR: The North Test Site. Reference Material', version 4, December 2004, published by The Division of Nuclear Safety and Security, International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna, at http://www-ns.iaea.org/downloads/rw/waste-safety/north-test-site-final.pdf [accessed 27 September 2015].

[93] 'Joint Norwegian–Russian Mission to Investigate Dumped Atomic Waste in the Kara Sea', Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority (NRPA) Bulletin 13:12, 2012, p. 1, at http://www.nrpa.no/dav/a62c460288.pdf [accessed 27 September 2015].

[94] 'Joint Norwegian–Russian Mission', p. 1.

[95] 'Joint Norwegian–Russian Mission', p. 1.

[96] Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003 [1951]), p. vii.

and currents in an icy world, they set in motion with nuclear energy a dynamic they could not predict with regards to the pollution and damage of the fragile environment in this region.

Conclusion

The Arctic Ocean was an appropriate topos of Soviet propaganda as the icy backwater presented the ideal scenery in which to celebrate Soviet technological progress in order to overcome the ocean's harshness and remoteness. The narrative of the Arctic Ocean combined natural science and technology in a popularised form. It was the Soviet belief, based on Marxist materialism, that the socialist society of the twentieth century would succeed in unlimited technological progress. High-speed icebreakers and polar submarines were carriers of this technological enthusiasm with the message that the new energies of the twentieth century—electricity and nuclear energy—would bring modernity into the frozen sea. The Arctic Ocean became a cultural metaphor for explorers' dreams of the Soviet government's scientific and military hierarchies, but was also rooted in the popular mind through propaganda. The great technological novel of the Soviet Arctic Ocean began under Stalinism in the 1930s. It was the utopia of subjugation and control of the Arctic environment that, thanks to modern energy, following the Second World War and the era of Cold War nuclear power, a modern socialist society could be free from the shortages and limitations set by a harsh natural environment.

Stalinism used the Arctic Ocean as a foil for engineering a perfect socialist society. This had been anticipated by Yevgeny Zamyatin in his utopian novel *We*, written in the 1920s. The writer warned about a future technological dictatorship which came true under Stalin, at least through the forceful exploitation of the Arctic Ocean. The technological enthusiasm echoed through propaganda had the effect of concealing environmental damage and human losses, at least in the numerous Gulag labour camps. The Cold War and the testing of nuclear weaponry on the island of Novaya Zemlya (New Land) made the Arctic Ocean, from the 1950s onward, into a secret territory that was not the focus of Soviet propaganda. In contrast to the Stalinist period, the still-existing belief that modern technology could master the harsh conditions of the Arctic Ocean was now withheld from the public. This gave rise to speculations and fantasies about the Soviet Arctic Ocean in the Western world: as in Frank Herbert's science

fiction *The Dragon in the Sea*, the United States sent a nuclear submarine in order to extract the last natural resources of the earth, located in the Soviet Arctic Ocean.

Additionally, military exploitation and nuclear waste were a political taboo in the Soviet media. This secrecy created a cultural environment for rumours among the Soviet population about radioactive mysteries of the ocean in the far north. But even beyond the demise of the Soviet system, Russian governments denied the dumping of nuclear waste in the Arctic Ocean. Detailed and reliable information was released in 1993 thanks to international pressure. Coming to a closure, narratives on the Russian Arctic Ocean in the twentieth century took different shapes: from enthusiasm in the 1930s to secrecy from the 1950s onward. Cultural presentations of the Arctic Ocean and the use of modern technology were ambivalent, wavering between scientific facts, government-sponsored doctored facts, or fake news.

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Shores of History, Islands of Ireland: Chronotopes of the Sea in the Contemporary Irish Novel

Roberta Gefter Wondrich

IRELAND, LITERATURE AND THE SEA: A SHORT INTRODUCTION

Among the many contradictions and contrasts of Ireland, its relation with the sea and maritime culture is perhaps one of the least investigated by critics despite the fact that it is a fascinating theme. Ireland as an island was the earliest insular colony of the British Empire and the first to be decolonised. It is washed by the Atlantic Ocean to the west and by the Irish Sea to the east and yet not only contemporary Ireland, but even modern Ireland in the age of the British Empire's greatest maritime expansion, has never really been 'a significant seafaring nation'.[1]

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[1] Kristin Morrison, 'Ireland and the Sea: Where is the Mainland?', in Patricia Lynch, Joachim Fischer and Brian Coates, eds, *Back to the Present, Forward to the Past: Irish Writing and Irish History since 1798* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 111–22, p. 111. It is significant, and related to Morrison's contention, that the growing body of scholarship

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While Irish literature has been relatively rich in marine and coastal imagery and symbolism, from ninth-century Gaelic Immrama (an Old Irish genre that recounts a hero's sea journey to the otherworld) to prominent twentieth-century poets (from W. B. Yeats to Louis MacNeice, Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon and Derek Mahon, among others), it has never really produced any major work or author in what could be defined as the sea-narrative tradition. As Kristin Morrison aptly points out, there are no Irish Conrads or Melvilles, nor, I would add, any Irish Defoe, to have further cultivated the sea tale of adventure, although ever since Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* the themes of the sea voyage and the island as a cultural signifier have always been linked to the idea of power relations between cultures and 'contact zones'. Still, it can be agreed that 'seagoing, actual voyaging, does not figure prominently in the literature of twentieth-century Ireland'.[2] This is a point worthy of further investigation, considering that the historical and cultural reasons at the root of this lacuna may lie in the colonial history of Ireland, its dependence on England for the state of its mercantile and maritime skills and traditions, and in what in Carl Schmitt's words was the essentially 'territorial character' of its identity and economy.[3]

As Morrison notes, the Irish Free State disregarded the maritime heritage of Ireland and privileged the rural identity of the country, forging a rural myth that was to be instrumental in its ideological decolonisation. Anyone familiar with twentieth-century Irish culture as a whole will immediately endorse this critical statement and realise how, by and large, the marine geographies of Ireland in their wealth of cultural significance have generally been superseded by the primacy of the rural and urban dimensions, in the context of a literary sensibility that has cherished and often superbly celebrated 'the sense of place', mostly identified with the land as the 'mainland'. Conversely, those aspects of Ireland's relationship with the sea and sea life over the past three centuries can be read against the defining importance of the sea in the history of Great Britain. Ireland would not experience the maritime turn of early modern England, the great protagonist of that shift from the terrestrial to an oceanic world view in European culture described by Carl Schmitt in *Land and Sea*,

on maritime studies rates very few contributions from Irish literature. Morrison is among the minority of voices who have considered the sea in contemporary Irish fiction, and, with the exception of some titles in Joycean studies, no major works have focused on the topic so far.

[2] Morrison, 'Ireland and the Sea', p. 112.

[3] Carl Schmitt, *Land and Sea*, parts 7 & 8, trans. Simona Draghici (Corvallis: Plutarch Press, 1997). I borrow the definition from Schmitt's argument, although the text does not mention the case of Ireland.

which would shape the imperial destiny of Protestant England. Nor would Ireland, circumscribed by the backwardness of the Catholic rootedness in the land, share in the primacy of the maritime and nautical identity of England well into the nineteenth century. From then on, and especially over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the sea would arouse and consolidate the strongest and most enduring patriotic feelings and sense of national belonging of the British, with the navy as its most prestigious and democratic institution, the bulwark of the nation. As John R. Gillis observes, 'while an identification with the soil became foundational to nineteenth-century nationalism in France and Germany, in Britain it was the sea that aroused strong patriotic passions'.[4]

The trope of insularity, which is recurrent in the consideration of Irish literary culture and of the Irish mindset in general, takes on decidedly different overtones in the national context, and it is thus worthy of critical scrutiny in the light of the (paradoxically) neglected prominence of the nautical, maritime identity of Ireland. 'Insular' is, in fact, a recurrent connotation in the critical discourses of modern and contemporary Ireland, a cultural marker as well as a semantic repository, and several literary texts offer a dense articulation of these semantics, which build on different generic rhetorical strategies in poetry, fiction and drama, but which also seem to weave some interestingly consonant threads and patterns in the cultural images of the nation.[5]

The Chronotopes of the Sea and Irish Fiction: A Critical Framework

Although Irish fiction seems to lack a tradition of sea novels, and this could probably be elucidated by the subaltern role of Ireland in the history of British maritime and imperial supremacy, the sea and its chronotopes, notably the seaside/shoreline and the ship, are not only a relevant symbolic and metaphorical repertoire, but a salient trope in the abiding concern of Irish literature with the oppressive issue of national and cultural identity and the historical past. The sea, then, is gaining prominence in Irish fiction and is bound to do likewise in Irish literary studies. This trend

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[4] John R. Gillis, *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 135.

[5] I would signal, among others, a novel like John McGahern's *The Leavetaking* (1975) and a play like Brian Friel's *Wonderful Tennese* (1993).

is to be appraised in the light of the general move towards the historicising and reconfiguration of the sea as a paradigm of modernity and of the experience of transnationality, colonisation and globalisation that characterises the recent upsurge of 'maritime studies'. It is thus to the sea as a 'territory' in history, and to what Margaret Cohen has classified as its chronotopes, rather than as an ahistorical metaphoric entity, that my focus will be directed in this study.

Cohen begins her well-known essay on 'The Chronotopes of the Sea' by pointing to the dual quality of the marine elements as spatial components of writing in the following illuminating passage:

> As is the case for all spaces depicted in literature, the seas, rivers, coasts, and islands found in novels are at once geographies and topoi; their contours are shaped by historical reference, and they are rhetorical structures with poetic function and imaginative resonance. In prose fiction, their poetic function is narrative—to help advance the action—as well as to convey theme and content.[6]

Drawing from Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope as an intrinsically literary and conceptual connection of time and space, Cohen states that 'waterways too take the form of chronotopes when they are represented in literature' and classifies them as follows:

> There are six waterside chronotopes across the history of the English and French literary traditions that date back to the novel's prehistory in antique forms. These chronotopes are (1) blue water, the open sea; (2) brown water, the murky depths of the river; (3) white water, when bodies of water are riled up into extreme natural danger; (4) the island, land entirely surrounded by water; (5) the shore, a zone of contact between land and sea; and (6) the ship, an unstable piece of terra firma that propels humans across the sea's inhospitable territory.[7]

It is precisely as both historically connoted geographical and spatial features, and as interrelated rhetorical components of the formal structure of the literary text, that the notion of the marine topographies as chronotopes, as theorised by Cohen, is an effective theoretical framework to serve the purpose of my analysis of the converging aspects of the prominence

[6] Margaret Cohen, 'The Chronotopes of the Sea', in Franco Moretti, ed., *The Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), vol. 2, pp. 647–666, p. 649.

[7] Cohen, 'The Chronotopes of the Sea', p. 660.

of the sea in the context of contemporary Irish fiction. Such relevance, in fact, hinges on the foremost role played by the sense of place in Irish literary culture, the heighted sensibility for a landscape that is interiorised and conceptualised as part of a problematic national and cultural identity, and therefore inscribed with intertextual resonances and cultural allusions which accumulated over the course of time. This also applies to the literary seascapes of Ireland, which, as I will point out, are by necessity more littoral, coastal and insular, rather than based on the open sea.

This chapter aims to investigate the most significant patterns than can be traced in late twentieth-century Irish literary fiction's interest in the sea and its related maritime topographies, and to argue how the most resonant associations of sea imagery lie in the problematically related historical and personal past, and the vexed relation between the present and the (historical) past in contemporary Ireland. It is significant that several novels which deploy a marine imaginative and descriptive focus mainly lean on two of the chronotopes of the sea—which are, in their turn, also marine motifs, tropes and spaces: the island and, above all, the shore. Both are resonant cultural signifiers, mutually connected and defined (qua chronotopes) and closely related to the idea of the encounter with the other and to the semantics of liminality. Sharing in the contact between land and water, the shore and the island often conflate in the spatial politics of novels which call into question the very notion of the border, the dividing line and unstable boundary—of which the shore is a pivotal example—thus indirectly recalling the idea of Mary Louise Pratt's 'contact zone'.[8] Regarding the background and the literary antecedents of the marine geographies of the Irish contemporary novel, the Irish Sea and

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[8] A concept that originally refers to 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today'; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 7. The term has expanded and been applied to many different contexts beyond its original formulation, and it has been applied to the context of Ireland, among others, by Vincent Cheng in his seminal *Joyce, Race and Empire*, with reference to 1904 Dublin in *Ulysses*. The cultural and linguistic hybridity of Ireland and its history of divided political allegiances seems to attest to a fruitful application of the concept to Irish literary culture, especially considering the further specification Pratt added in a later essay: 'Autoethnography, transculturation, critique, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, denunciation, imaginary dialogue, vernacular expression—these are some of the literate arts of the contact zone'; Mary Louise Pratt, 'The Art of the Contact Zone', in David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky, eds, *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*, 5th edn. (New York:

Dublin Bay seem to be no longer as central as they had been to James Joyce's archipelagic and materialistic reading of the former 'as a transcript of the Mediterranean onto a cartography of the Unionist state', as John Brannigan recently argued, and, in the authors I examine, the southern coast figures as prominently as the mythologised Gaelic west of Ireland.[9] This part of the country, especially the Aran Islands, has provided a cultural myth and imaginative geographical boundary to the decolonising cultural politics of the early twentieth century, as well as an iconic identification of the island image with atavism. Significantly, the sea-based primitive culture of the Aran Islands features in the literature of the Irish Revival in one of the few texts—J. M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1907)—to consider the chronotope of the white waters, the open sea, the unfathomable, dangerous and anomic territory which implacably kills all the men in the family.

In this study, then, I will consider how the relevance of the sea imagery and chronotopes, and specifically those of the shore, the island and the ship, as they appear to have been valorised by some of the most important Irish novels written over the past 25 years, proves that Irish contemporary fiction is increasingly turning to the sea as an immensely resonant semantic and cultural reservoir, thus paying tribute to Joyce's marine poetics. I will endeavour to outline the cultural implications of the semantics of the shoreline specifically in relation to the association between memory, creativity and trauma, the sense of the past and the search for (re)generation, and the trope of insularity as culturally connoted and defining, always referring to the identitarian tensions of Ireland. After considering the pre-eminence of the insular/littoral seascape, however, I will also argue how Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* (2002), one of the most significant Irish novels of the early 2000s which turn to the historical past of the nation, actually re-functionalises the motif of the sea journey and the chronotope (and heterotopia) of the ship as a powerful image of the nation's collective consciousness, thus redressing a lacuna in the maritime repertoire of Irish narratives. As outlined in the introductory remarks, in fact, what Cohen labels the chonotope of 'the blue water' and 'the white water'—the 'realm of the open sea' and its violent forces where 'individual characters test their agency'—is certainly less significant

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Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 605–26, p. 620. My reference thus considers its broader application, rather than a specific geographical correspondences of such social spaces.

⁹ John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism: Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890–1970* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 68 and *passim*.

in Irish than in British or American literature, and it is to be expected that the contemporary imagination should turn to it only through the prism of the historical narrative, in the way that Joseph O'Connor does in *Star of the Sea*, as will be further illustrated.

'Shore Encounters': Shorelines, Islands, Family Ties and Generational Conflicts in *The Heather Blazing* and *Sunrise with Sea Monster*

Overall, the interrelated marine topographies which form the chronotopes of the sea, share in a cultural construction of the sea and the shore which has changed considerably over the centuries, as Alain Corbin demonstrated in his seminal work *Le Territoire du Vide* (1988).[10] Traditionally conceived, as Blumenburg writes, as the incommensurable limit assigned to human action, the sea and the ocean evolved from the archaic dimension of a demonic space, repugnant and horrifying, envisioned as a reminder of the primeval chaos in its formlessness and lawlessness to the privileged space not only of self-knowledge, but of the epistemological and aesthetic drive which reaches its defining moment with the Romantics.[11] From the eighteenth century on, this process sees the 'invention' of the seashore, formerly the receptacle of the sea's flotsam and jetsam, as the ideal space for the social practice of physical and emotional regeneration that was concomitant with a growing aversion to urban life, and all the more so later on, in the footsteps of the Romantic rediscovery of the sea as the most forceful expression of Nature.[12] As a 'territory of the void', which partakes of the lure of the sea as the greatest mystery and source of human life but lacks the stability of terra firma, the seashore is the locus of the coexistence of opposites, determined by a set of binary oppositions: nature and culture, cosmos and chaos, historical and ancestral time. It is a repository

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[10] Alain Corbin, *Le Territoire du Vide* (Paris: Aubier, 1988); trans. as *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World 1750–1840*, J. Phelps (London: Penguin, 1995).

[11] Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).

[12] As Corbin writes, 'The irresistible awakening of a collective desire for the shore arises in the period from 1750 to 1840 […]. This was when the coasts of the ocean began to appear as a recourse against the misdeeds of civilization, as the place where it was easiest to grasp the new sense of time proposed by scientists, and experience the dissociation of mankind's history from that of the earth'; Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, p. 54.

of ancient times and a natural effacer of traces and memory. In its constitutive mutability, the shore is thus connoted in the cultural imagination to the recurrent paradigms of discovery, encounter, transformation (consider Shakespeare's 'sea change' in *The Tempest*), the contiguity between life and death.

The most iconic literary inscription of the seashore in Irish writing and in Modernist fiction in general is represented by the fourth chapter of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), and particularly by the 'Proteus' chapter of his *Ulysses* (1922). Any later narrative fiction featuring the human subject 'at sea', or simply gazing towards the shoreline and the marine landscape, almost invariably recalls features, tropes and motifs which appear in Joyce's pages. Sandymount Strand in particular becomes the locus of a cultural geography where the nexus of mutability and creativity epitomises a confrontation with the protean, displaced identity of Irish culture and nationality, and of European civilisation as a whole, which is alluded to when Stephen Dedalus reflects on the colonial history of Ireland.

Yet Joyce, as usual, had it all, and before everyone else: his treatment of the semantics of the sea is only apparently polarised between the 'hydrophobe' Stephen and the 'waterlover' Leopold Bloom, and, although it does privilege the shore as the paramount liminal space and the chronotope of a cultural landscape that is essential to his modernist agenda, it is more far-reaching than meets the eye. As Brannigan rightly points out in his very recent study, Joyce's marine poetics bring together the materialistic, the political and the symbolic, and in *Ulysses* 'the sea is recurrently associated with political power, and with the material and symbolic forms of imperial domination'.[13]

Joyce's valorisation of the strand as a site of extraordinary conceptual resonance was taken up by many writers in twentieth-century Irish fiction and poetry. Some of the best novels written in the 1990s and 2000s, in fact, feature the shore, the island and the sea journey as focal and structuring images, metaphors and tropes. In outlining some of the most significant patterns that can be traced in a number of these novels which employ marine landscapes and settings, it appears that the most resonant associations of sea imagery in Irish contemporary fiction lie in a complex relationship with the pervasive burden of the historical past and the individual's search for self-determination. In novels such as Colm Tóibín's *The Heather Blazing* (1992), *The Blackwater Lightship* (1999), and Neil

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[13] Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism*, p. 86.

Jordan's *Sunrise with Sea Monster* (1994), the chronotope of the shore, the coast and the encroachment of the sea on the land constitute the liminal expanse and metaphoric repertoire for the dramatisation of a generation and gender conflict with parents and the ideology of the decolonising nation, and for the uneasy relations between the present and the past in contemporary Ireland.

In the early 1990s, Colm Tóibín established himself as one of the leading writers of the New Irish Renaissance, with three novels, *The South* (1990), and particularly *The Heather Blazing*, followed by *The Blackwater Lightship*, in which the marine geographies of Ireland figured significantly as semantic components of his cultural politics. Often branded as an author capable of giving voice to a revisionist vision, sceptical of the legacy of cultural nationalism and its attending ideologies, Tóibín is a master of minimalist realism who has tackled core issues of the public sphere such as homosexuality, the workings of the judicial system and a sense of belonging. These works by Tóibín foreground the relevance of the Wexford coastline in the semantic and cultural politics of the contemporary Irish novel, as Liam Harte remarked:

> The events of his novels, particularly those set in Ireland, take place within densely imagined material spaces, typically marine landscapes, which provide the structural coordinates through which troubled, alienated subjectivities are defined and to some extent transformed. […] His fiction is studded with marine images and vividly rendered coastal vistas that exude a metaphoric richness. But place is never merely geographical, it is also ideological.[14]

Given the 'scrupulous meanness' of his realism, the ideological edge of his marine topographies perhaps comes across more starkly than in other writers considered in this study, as it underscores processes of awareness and negotiations for self-identity and belonging in the protagonists. *The South* anticipates the centrality that the vanishing coastline assumes in the two later novels, but it is *The Heather Blazing* which contains this almost iconic figuration of a metonymic 'inscape' of Ireland, a kind of interiorised landscape of the Irish mind. It is centred on the character of a High Court Judge, Eamonn Redmond, born into a high-profile Republican family, who is heir to an ideology of the nation that must, inevitably, come

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[14] Liam Harte, '"The Endless Mutation of the Shore": Colm Tóibín's Marine Imaginary', *Critique*, 51:4 (2010): 333–65, p. 337.

to terms with the reality of the new Eire, and who ultimately becomes aware of his lack of real political commitment and authentic religious faith. The novel moves from the contemporary present of Redmond's estrangement from his daughter, a single mother, to memories of an emotionally deprived childhood. Value-crises and self-doubt are forms of erosion, and geographical erosion is what affects the land upon which Redmond's holiday home and *buen retiro* is built, significantly, not far from the nationalist site of Vinegar Hill, the location of a famous battle during the Irish rebellion of 1798. The trope of the vanishing coastline is here woven, in Neil Corcoran's view, together with the declined master narrative of Irish republican heroic myths, into the inscription of a declining culture in a receding, vulnerable landscape, thus 'writing a culture in terms of a topography'.[15]

> It had been so gradual, this erosion, a matter of time, lumps of clay, small boulders studded with stones becoming loose and falling away, the sea gnawing at the land. It was so strange, year after year, the slow disappearance of the one contour to be replaced by another, it was hard to notice that anything had happened until something substantial, like Mike's house, fell down on the strand.[16]

Yet, as Harte points out in his reading of the novel, Tóibín also inserts a space for renewal in his revisionist narrative of Irish republican identity, and problematises the crucial role of the geographical imagination at large, which in the Irish context is connoted by a deep-seated reverence for the sense of place, the idea that the landscape and the very toponymy ideally and literally preserve the history and identity of the country, traditionally configured by two competing traditions, the Gaelic and the Anglo-Irish, and reinforced by the colonial legacy of Ireland. Hence, it may be argued that the liminality of the coastline in its intrinsic mutability, and especially its erosion, underscore the inherent fragility of any construction of identitarian permanence and sameness, in a context of a geographical imagination that is always implicitly imbued with a sense of the communal, the ancestral and the national, and mostly hinging on the land and a primacy of the terrestrial.

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[15] Neil Corcoran, *After Yeats and Joyce: Reading Modern Irish Literature* (Oxford: Opus, 1997), p. 98.

[16] Colm Tóibín, *The Heather Blazing* (London: Picador, 1992), p. 32.

The strand is also important in the geographic imaginary of the novel, as it is the location where the protagonist, who has just lost his wife, seeks relief in long walks. Thus the shore is the elective place of meditations upon the contiguity of life and death. As in Jordan's *Sunrise with Sea Monster* and Bernard MacLaverty's *Grace Notes*, it is the connective space where generations can meet and learn from each other, and this is a defining aspect of the centrality of this chronotope in Irish fiction. Towards the end of the story, the protagonist's daughter brings her son Michael to her father's house, and a late first encounter between the two strikes a note of potential renewal. Eventually, the older man takes the little boy into the water, a scene which bears obvious allusions to the rite of a lay baptism, and reconnects him to his earliest memories of a bonding with his own father. As Harte astutely points out, '[t]he element that erodes also renews'.[17]

The seascape of the coastal house returns in *The Blackwater Lightship* where it contrasts the apparent safety of the home—which hosts three generations of an Irish family now enriched (or threatened) by the added issue of the dying son's homosexuality—to the ultimate indifference and otherness of the sea, a mirror of the transience and irrelevance of human existence: 'Imaginings and resonances and pain and small longings and prejudices. They meant nothing against the resolute hardness of the sea.'[18] This short passage recalls the theme of the irreducible indifference of the sea to the human plight, which, since Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach' (1867), runs like constant subtexts in most literary figurations of the sea, and will be crucial in Banville's *The Sea*.[19] Yet it is in the acceptance of the datum of existence and resilience in the face of it which seems to link the significance of this imagery to the economy of the novel, which ends on a positive note of adjustment to the changing realities of Irish life.

The coastal chronotope in Tóibín's novels thus metaphorises the inevitability of the erosion of boundaries represented by deep-seated ideologies and mindsets, and the difficulties—and challenges—of adapting to what is also seen as a dangerous, and unsettling, irreversible process. As Cohen points out, in fact, 'the danger of boundary dissolution is in keeping with the geology of littoral territories, whose unstable contours are affected by

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[17] Harte, 'The Endless Mutation of the Shore', p. 344.

[18] Colm Tóibín, *The Blackwater Lightship* (London: Picador, 1999), p. 260.

[19] In addition, this echoes Thomas Hardy's songs such as 'Budmouth Dears' or 'O the Opal and the Sapphire of that Wandering Western Sea'; the Hardyesque tones were noted by Terry Eagleton in his review of the novel. See 'Mothering', review of *The Blackwater Lightship*, *London Review of Books*, 21:20 (October 1999): 8.

the tides and subject to erosion from the water and wind. In the chronotope of the shore, as in fact, these territories take multiple forms.'[20] The instability and precariousness of the coast thus challenges, in Tóibín's revisionist literary politics, the implications of a territorial, chthonic sense of place identified with national belonging, gesturing towards the sea as a frontier, the boundary of the coast as another suggestive figuration of the evolving, self-questioning orientation of post-nationalist Ireland.

One of the novels which, in Irish contemporary fiction of the last three decades, most valorises the topographies of the sea and the shore in an explicitly symbolical and visionary way, while still preserving a mostly realistic plot which allows for a political reading of the story, was novelist and filmmaker Neil Jordan's *Sunrise with Sea Monster* (1994). It is a short narrative centred on the recurrent themes of a conflicting family past, and on the link between private and public politics in the family, personified by the fraught relationship between a lonely son and his stern, emotionally aphasic widowed father, a former hero of the Irish War of Independence who later accepts a government post in de Valera's Free State. The novel opens in the years of the Spanish Civil War, with Donal, the protagonist, who becomes a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and then enlists in the Spanish Republican Army and is held hostage by the Franco faction. When he is liberated and returns to Ireland, he finds his father permanently impaired by a stroke, and is haunted by guilt at his renewed relationship with Rose, who has married his father despite having been in love with Donal himself. In this fiction too the Irish coast and seashore is a structuring topography, since it is the setting of the crucial events and most climactic scenes in the novel, and implicitly figures in the pictorial allusion of the title, which recalls Turner's enigmatic catch of fish in his eponymous painting.[21] Donal's father, in fact, mysteriously disappears off the beach at Lisdoonvarna, a thermal resort on the Atlantic coast where he has been brought by his son and Rose to seek treatment for his condition. His body will be searched for as far north as the Aran Islands, the symbolic border of civilisation in Irish culture, the mythical site of the supernatural and the arcane. Although the reference to Aran is not extended in the novel, it is worth dwelling on its implications, as it is well known that the remote fishermen islands off the western coast of Ireland have been con-

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[20] Cohen, 'The Chronotopes of the Sea', p. 662.

[21] J. M. W. Turner, 'Sunrise with Sea Monsters', *c*.1845, unfinshed, The Tate Gallery, London.

sidered a crucial site where an earlier stage of Gaelic culture had been pre-served. They became a mythic space for the construction of Irish cultural identity ever since the late nineteenth century, and particularly after the publication of J. M. Synge's personal and documentary journal *The Aran Islands* in 1907. In the rich imagery that relates to the island trope, in Irish literature, the Aran thus stand for the ultimate repository of an atavistic culture, alien and refractory to modernisation, a boundary of civilisation, a cultural myth of sorts.

Thus, Donal and Rose's quest for the lost father will be fruitless, for he unexpectedly reappears, in accordance with the magical, realistic strain of the novel, through a fantastic process of sea regeneration, as his body emerges from the sea on the east coast of Ireland near Bray, south of Dublin. The magic circumnavigation of the elder hero, representative of the hero of an Immran through the traumatic legacy of a divisive personal and communal history, bears witness to the specific allegory that the seascape unfolds in Irish culture. In the story, this is made possible by Donal's belated renewal of the only ritual that had bonded father and son in the past: fishing with nightlines on the beach, the fishing rods of the two strung together in a silence which is their only viable and acknowledged form of communication.

> We would lay nightlines, in our rare moments of tranquillity, on the beach below the terrace where our house was. Thin strings of gut between two metal rocks strung intermittently with hooks. […] We would turn without a word after watching for a while, as if words would have fractured the moment's peace, I would have said, but that would have implied such a continuity of such moments between us, which there wasn't. Respite would be truer, respite from the many gradations of awkward speech, and more awkward silences. […]
>
> Whatever the word, we both knew this moment and would let nothing broach it […]
>
> The reaping was never as good as the sowing, somehow. I knew that then and would connect that paradox with speech.[22]

Jordan thus, also by means of the Aran allusion, seems to recapture the theme of the fantastic and arcane which occurs at sea, in the realm of the blue or even white waters, by displacing it onto the liminal space of the shoreline, which constantly morphs between two realms, effacing the traces of what had just been real and transforming them into a new,

[22] Neil Jordan, *Sunrise with Sea Monster* (London: Vintage, 1994), pp. 2–3.

incommensurable and ever-shifting reality.[23] Hence the regenerative power of the shore is at one with its destructiveness and relentless power of transformation, which recalls Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the 'Proteus' chapter in *Ulysses*, and appears, much as in MacLaverty's *Grace Notes*, a quintessential space of transcendence. It is the act of fishing, the only bond existing between the father and son, which fosters reconciliation: 'so I was brought back to him by fish'.[24] Thus the 'sea monster' which arises from the waters and is then shared like a miraculous food by the son with his revenant father—who chooses to end his life on the western shore of Ireland but is resuscitated on the beach that was his home—expands this motif of transcendence into transubstantiation. The recurrent Irish trope of betrayal and of the father–son conflict is thus displaced, through Jordan's magic realism and the suspension of narrative linearity, from the political to the spiritual dimension, so that the sea has, in the father's words, the healing power of the place wherein to put an end to the sorrows of life. Jordan's novel suggestively manipulates the proximity of the shoreline with the arcane of the sea depths, and in so doing it inevitably engages with the polysemy of the boundary, narratively posited in terms of magical realism, as this passage by Margaret Cohen suggests:

> As a liminal zone, the shore bears some relation to blue water, with its disorder and affinity for monsters that cross the boundary between species. On blue water, however, monstrous creatures like great white whales and cut-throat pirates flourish, while the shore is a place where the boundaries are tested, only to be reaffirmed rather than dissolved. Shore encounters test boundaries by mixing danger and desire.[25]

SHORES OF MEMORY, TRAUMA AND THE CREATIVE MIND: *A GOAT'S SONG*, *GRACE NOTES* AND *THE SEA*

Yet the liminal space of the seashore, the tropes of the island and the transformative and restorative power of the sea, are also central to narratives in which the nexus of recurring themes and tropes hinging on the disabling

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[23] See Cohen, who writes that 'the high degree of implausibility—this quality of "strange and therefore true"—is one of the important differences between the chronotope of blue water and novelistic depictions of life in land-based domestic and high society'; Cohen, 'The Chronotopes of the Sea', p. 652.

[24] Jordan, *Sunrise with Sea Monster*, p. 135.

[25] Cohen, 'The Chronotopes of the Sea', p. 652.

legacy of traumatic family histories is associated with a strong aesthetic dimension, as it centres around the crisis of creativity and the uncertain course of the artistic vocation. I would like to dwell on three very different but equally accomplished novels that aptly represent this significant strain in the marine iconography and topographies of the contemporary Irish novel, and which testify to the powerful semantics of the shoreline specifically in relation to the association between creativity and personal trauma: Dermot Healy's *A Goat's Song* (1994), Bernard MacLaverty's *Grace Notes* (1997) and John Banville's *The Sea* (2005). In all these texts, the representations of the motif of insularity and of littoral geography configure a transformative landscape which, indirectly and allusively, bears echoes from the Joycean antecedent of *Portrait*, where Stephen in chapter III experiences his metamorphic epiphany on the beach of Bull's Island.[26]

A Goat's Song, published by Dermot Healy in 1994 and immediately acclaimed as one of the best Irish novels of that decade, not only features marine settings but has a distinctive spatial amplitude which encompasses the north and the west of the two faces of Ireland, as well as its main cities, Derry, Belfast and Dublin. The novel centres on the ill-fated romance between a playwright from the west of Ireland, Jack Ferris, and a Protestant actress from the north, Catherine Adams; the most powerful location and imagery of the novel is insular, since it is in the isolation of the Belmullet peninsula, where he earns his living fishing for salmon, that Jack struggles against alcoholism and then tries to recover from it and from his obsession with Catherine through an act of imaginative recreation of his own and her family's story. The insular (and, significantly, peninsular) motif is also crucial to the structuring theme of the aesthetic and artistic quest which the protagonist pursues in order to give shape and significance to the complexity of his life experience. Insularity is thus a dominant and unifying motif, both spatially and chronologically, which functions, once again, as a contentious but resonant chronotope within the circular, as opposed to linear, architecture of the narrative.[27]

The isolation/insulation trope is a pervasive one in Irish fiction, and the novel thrives on the many semantic overtones of the island motif, from

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[26] For an in-depth and original reading of the Irish maritime element in Joyce, see John Brannigan's chapter on 'James Joyce and the Irish Sea', in *Archipelagic Modernism*.

[27] The Belmullet peninsula is also the place where Catherine's father, a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary who ends up involved in the violence of the Troubles, settles with his family and experiences the impossibility of ever coming to terms with the difference of the other Ireland between and beyond borders, conditioned by the political sectarianism of the period.

its dense complex cultural allusiveness, which ranges from the origin of the Greek tragedy and the myth of Dionysus, to echoes of the legend of Tristan and Iseult, to a psychological metaphor of the 'island' of self, and a historicised and gendered rendering of Ireland-as-island. The traditional identification of the Irish nation as female is dramatised in the novel in unison with the traditional conception of the island as female; in *A Goat's Song*, the conquered and violated island cannot be approached neutrally, its language and signs are to be decoded, its knowledge remains a mystery, as suggested by the dense, allegorical chapter 'The Salmon of Knowledge', which revolves around a legend from the Fianna cycle and the tragic figure of Jonathan Adams, a Protestant would-be scholar who cannot connect with a real 'sense of place' as 'lived, illiterate and unconscious', to quote Seamus Heaney.[28] The peninsula of Belmullet thus comes to embody that sense of the extreme, the liminal, the arcane that is so deeply inscribed in the imagery of the island. Holding 'water and ground in their extremity' and thus virtually being the space from where 'to uncode all languages', it appears as a powerful, evocative topography of traumatic separateness and longing, of isolation and shattered connectedness.[29]

The Shakespearean trope of the resonant island—'the isle is full of noises' of *The Tempest*—is remotely recalled in what is possibly Bernard MacLaverty's masterpiece, *Grace Notes* (1998), a perfectly accomplished female *Küstlerroman* centred on the emotional and vocational endurance of a young Northern Irish Catholic-born woman composer, Catherine. It is divided into two parts, the first set in a small town in the north where the protagonist grew up in a Catholic family, the second mainly located on the Scottish Isle of Islay, where Catherine struggles through the painful break-up of a relationship with an alcoholic Englishman, recovers from post-natal depression, raises her baby daughter and finally leaves to return to Glasgow where she will see the triumph of her symphony, 'Vernicle'. The novel focuses on the protagonist's capacity for survival, which she achieves through a parallel, albeit apparently conflicting, experience of generation and creativity: her problematic choice of motherhood, which

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[28] Seamus Heaney, 'The Sense of Place', in *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968–1978* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), pp. 131–49, p. 131.

[29] Seamus Heaney, 'The Peninsula', in *Opened Ground: Selected Poems 1966–1996* (London: Faber & Faber, 1998), p. 21. For an earlier consideration of this aspect of the novel see R. Gefter Wondrich, 'Islands of Ireland: A Tragedy of Separation in Dermot Healy's *A Goat's Song*', in Bill Lazenbatt, ed., *Writing Ulster: Northern Narratives* (Jordanstown: University of Ulster Press, 1999), pp. 69–86.

leads to post-natal depression, and her hard-won battle to keep alive her inspiration and finally find her true voice. The social and political edge of Catherine's predicament essentially lies in her estrangement from her conservative family and in the aesthetic intuition which sustains the originality and the affirmative power of her musical creation, namely the inclusion in the orchestra of the Protestant Lambeg drums, which hold traditional sectarian associations, in a symphony by a Catholic woman composer, an incorporation which changes their perceived effect from intimidation and 'disintegration' to 'pure sound' and 'sheer joy'.[30]

The Isle of Islay is also functional within the cultural politics of the novel, since it reinforces the island trope and its related semantics, especially in the association of the need for regeneration from trauma, while providing a more objective perspective on the isolation bred by Ireland's atavistic divisions, as it is geographically located in front of the Irish coast rather than being part of it, thus allowing vision and insight from an external perspective. Catherine ideally retraces Stephen Dedalus's steps along Sandymount shore, and 'cast[s] a cold eye' on the island she has fled, actually her own mainland, a dystopian Island of Saints and Scholars:

> She walked along the firm sand in bare feet. To her left-hand side, the west, was the open ocean—to her right the beach, backed by the tall sand dunes with grey grass hissing in the dry wind, nothing else. The air was so clear that Ireland looked close, like a further headland rather than a different island. The land of Saints and Scholars and Murderers. In the sand at her feet were some tracks of a bird walking along parallel to the sea—the marks were like tiny arrows, all pointing in one direction. It was a paradox because the arrows pointed, not the way the bird was going but in the direction the bird had come from.[31]

Music is at the core of the novel: it is music that becomes 'the medium through which identity and otherness may commune', and the renovated creativity experienced by the suffering but ultimately empowered protagonist is the agent, the medium and the metaphor of a transcendentalism that enlarges the scope of the *Künstlerroman*.[32] Yet it is the seashore, the coastal location

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[30] Bernard MacLaverty, *Grace Notes* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1997), pp. 272, 276.

[31] MacLaverty, *Grace Notes*, p. 204.

[32] Gerry Smyth, '"The Same Sound but with a Different Meaning": Music, Repetition and Identity in Bernard MacLaverty's *Grace Notes*', *Eire-Ireland*, 37:3–4 (2002): 5–24,

and particularly the imagery of the island, the beach and the mainland which provide the spatial figuration of the strongest emotional conflicts and climactic moments of the narrative, but also of its aesthetic dynamics. It is a seascape which is strongly connoted by the narrative medium through its acoustic component—its auditory dimension is more alive to the reader through the musicality of its sounds as signs than through the visual one— and such a connotation reads as an indirect homage to the prominence of the acoustic component in 'Proteus', while affirmatively reversing the Joycean pattern. While, as Ellmann writes, 'Joyce draws our attention to the noises of language, the acoustic detritus that cannot be assimilated into meaning or intention' and 'Proteus' emphasises this acoustic resistance through the 'unassimilability' of the auditory, sensory experience into intellectual apprehension which is a metonym of a frustrated attempt at controlling the anomic, morphing space of the shore, MacLaverty endows the beach with a generative (or fostering) power.[33] Its sounds and textures ultimately make possible the wonder of inspiration and the elation of a new-found, independent space for both mother and daughter:

> All seemed quiet except for the sliding of the sea, the rhythmic unfurling of small waves and sometimes the metallic screeching of a gull. […] Here there was such silence. Not silence, but appropriate noise. Catherine sat there by the sea, lost in her ears. *Pre-hearing*. Suddenly she heard a sound. A gentle tremolo of strings of different tones. She chose to listen only to the main tone. But joined to it were a higher and a lower octave building to a chord. […] In this place, at this moment, sounds were shaping themselves.[34]

Having just realised that what she has experienced is the inception of her new symphony, Catherine goes to the water's edge to rinse her daughter's feeding spoon and she suddenly sees that the child is standing on her feet for the first time. The creative epiphany of the mother thus coincides with the first rite of passage of her child. The strand is thus positively functionalised in the novel as a space for rebirth and affirmation in the face of adversity, as the very site where trauma is finally overcome, and takes on a decisively gendered tone which, as mentioned, is part of the novel's core concern with creativity and generation.

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pp. 16–17.
[33] Maud Ellmann, 'Joyce's Noises', in *Modernism/Modernity*, 16:2 (2009): 383–90, p. 383.
[34] MacLaverty, *Grace Notes*, pp. 213–14.

The metonymical power of the sea and the shore stands for the world of memory, the past and the abiding legacy of trauma, and is at the heart of John Banville's 2005 Man Booker Prize-winning *The Sea*, a novel that weaves together the threads of youth and old age, withering creativity and illness, all themes featuring in both Healy's and MacLaverty's novels. That this novel should elect the sea, Corbin's 'territory of the void', as its stark but intentionally suggestive title, comes as no surprise to Banville's readers. Together with the Irish sky, with its dense, ever shifting, melancholy, silvery beauty, the sea has always loomed large in Banville's intellectual and emotional topographies. His 1994 *Ghost*s, the second and less successful volume in the tetralogy of art inaugurated by *The Book of Evidence* (1989), followed by *Athena* (1995) and somehow ideally completed by *The Untouchable* (1997), is set on the small island of Coldharbour off the Irish coast, and explicitly foregrounds the purgatorial nature of the island motif (Purgatory being an island). *The Sea* centres once again on an ageing man who lives obsessed by a past he tries to hold on to as his only refuge from the pain of his present life ('the past beats inside me like a second heart') and on his attempt to come to terms with trauma, and with the elusiveness of memory itself.[35] Max Morden, an art historian, retreats to the Irish seaside resort of Ballyless, where he used to spend his childhood summers, and where he tries to overcome the desolation of his recent loss (his wife Anna died prematurely of cancer) and the guilt at the mysterious and traumatic death by water of the twins, Myles and Chloe, he had befriended during one summer of about 50 years before. The sea's role in the text is once again central, both structuring and prismatic, as if most 'moments of being' were actually associated with, or rather conveyed by, the very presence of seascapes: from the title to the closing frame, the habitual layering of chronologically non-sequential narrative sections assumes an almost aquatic, tidal rhythm in the reader's perception.

Rudiger Imhof, Banville's earliest and most devoted critic to date, rightly emphasises the centrality of the sea in the novel as the most sustaining metaphor for what, I would argue, has always been one of Banville's foremost themes and main aesthetic and intellectual concerns: memory and the significance and formlessness of what is past. The novel 'is, literally, about the sea and figuratively, about the sea of memory'.[36] The

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[35] John Banville, *The Sea* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2005), p. 10.
[36] Rudiger Imhof, '*The Sea*: "Was't well done?"', *Irish University Review*, 36:1 (2006): 165–81, p. 166.

metaphorical significance of the sea is overt: 'the sea stands for memory itself, more than anything else'.[37] The sea-memory metaphor signals not so much a journey through the past, despite the recurrent images of swimming and entering the waters, as the condition of being immersed in what Banville's prose evokes as the aqueous floating of the enveloping past, even while the protagonist muses over his own sense of living on the threshold of the 'final dissolution'.[38]

Joanne Rosteck, who in her study focused on how 'the past and history are metaphorically conceived of in terms of the sea' in contemporary anglophone fiction, partly interprets this novel within the context of trauma fiction, and reads the concluding lines as a cathartic moment which transforms the protagonist's 'mnemic therapy' into an accomplishment: 'Max appears to have successfully confronted the ghosts of his past and is therefore able to finally leave the liminal space between death and life and return to the actual centre of his existence.'[39] Yet such a thing as an actual centre of existence sounds rather out of character with Banville's career-long anatomy of the de-centredness and elusiveness of an identity which is fractured, displaced, obsessed by inauthenticity, the divergence between the nature and perception of experience and its expression through language and art. Max Morden in *The Sea* occupies a place of honour in the gallery of self-aware performers (often art historians), whose efforts at recollecting their past are in tune with their awareness of its irretrievability, fictionality and depthlessness. On the other hand, Rosteck rightly points to a further significance of the sea in the conceptual texture of the novel: the sea, as a space of death where the siblings are either accidentally found or deliberately sought death, 'also embodies the world's indifference toward a single human life'.[40] The liminal space of the shore touches on that life which it also impassibly absorbs and effaces. The scene of the drowning is described with a remarkable economy of language as witnessed by Morden and Rose from the vantage point of the beach, and it cannot fail to recall the 'shipwreck with spectator' predicament which Hans Blumenberg analysed:[41]

[37] Imhof, '*The Sea*', p. 166.

[38] Banville, *The Sea*, p. 87.

[39] Joanne Rosteck, *Seaing through the Past: Postmodern Histories and the Maritime Metaphor in Contemporary Anglophone Fiction* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011), pp. 17, 163.

[40] Rosteck, *Seaing through the Past*, p. 166.

[41] See Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*.

We watched them, Rose and I, she clutching her gathered-up things against her, and I just standing. I do not know what I was thinking, I do not remember thinking anything. There are times like that, not frequent enough, when the mind just empties. They were far out now, the two of them, so far as to be pale dots between pale sky and paler sea, and then one of the dots disappeared. After that it was all over very quickly, I mean what we could see of it. A splash, a little white water, whiter than all around, then nothing, the indifferent world closing.[42]

It is also in this regard that the sea *of* memory and the sea *as* memory are both powerful figurations of the ontological separateness of the memory of the past to the subject's present, and of its substantial and utter indifference to it. Although the novel's protagonist is obsessed with his own past as an ideal solace from the pain of existence, loss and ageing, the sea of memory does not afford him comfort and oblivion, but rather comes across in its defining incommensurability and mutability. Thus if Banville's whole oeuvre, and *The Sea* particularly, is permeated by the contiguity and the overlapping of memory and imagination, this novel foregrounds forgetting as integral to memory itself: both an undermining of memory and in the 'struggle against' which 'memory defines itself' as Paul Ricoeur theorised.[43] The sea's indifference, then, as a synecdoche of the world's indifference, its effacing movement, thus seems to metaphorise both memory *and* forgetting in their vital coexistence. Significantly, in a scene in which Morden despairs about the progressive fading of his memories of his dead wife, drunk in bed, he no longer can hear the sea's sound, as if to denote the signifying link between sea and memory.

In the final paragraph of the novel, the shore is once again the dominant motif, subsuming the themes and the narrative architecture of the novel. Having just learnt of his wife's death, Morden recalls a moment, long before, 'in the sea that summer at Ballyless':

I was standing up to my waist in water that was perfectly transparent, so that I could plainly see below me the ribbed sand of the seabed, and tiny shells and bits of a crab's broken claw, and my own feet, pallid and alien, like specimens displayed under glass. As I stood there, suddenly no, not suddenly, but in a sort of driving heave, the whole sea surged, it was not a wave, but a smooth

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[42] Banville, *The Sea*, p. 180.

[43] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), p. 413.

rolling swell that seemed to come up from the depths, as if something vast down there had stirred itself, and I was lifted briefly and carried a little way toward the shore and then was set down on my feet as before, as if nothing had happened. And indeed nothing had happened, a momentous nothing, just another of the world's great shrugs of indifference.

A nurse came out then to fetch me, and I turned and followed her inside, and it was as if I were walking into the sea.[44]

Banville's Morden walks into the sea unlike Jordan's or MacLaverty's protagonists, who are somehow brought back to life by what for them becomes the regenerative space of the shore: it is the faltering, yet smooth dislocation Morden experiences in the surging waters of the beach that engenders the ultimate epiphany. The quasi-orgasmic movement of the sea swell brings him back to himself, though possibly to a self that belongs as much to the past as to the present, witness to the metaphysical indifference of existence to that self. The commonplace metaphor of the flow of life marvellously animates, *in parvo*, in the crystal-clear indeterminacy of this final image. No closure is allowed in Banville's world, and the boundary between past and present, memory and desire, reality and imagination is not only ever shifting, but also faltering. Banville's novel thus appears to share in the abiding centrality of the semantics of the shore and the sea as encompassing death, memory, and the mystery and senselessness of existence. But in the dense, self-reflexive, cultural allusiveness of his writing, the sea also—and indeed primarily—figures as an elsewhere, an 'almost there' animated by the ghosts, the fears and the desires of a knowledge that seeks forgiveness, to paraphrase T. S. Eliot's 'Gerontion', as the arcane, suspended ending of the first part suggests:

Standing there in that white box of light I was transported for a moment to some far shore, real or imagined, I do not know which, although the details had a remarkable dreamlike definition, where I sat in the sun on a hard ridge of scaly sand holding in my hands a big flat smooth blue stone. The stone was dry and warm. I seemed to press it to my lips, it seemed to taste saltily of the sea's deeps and distances, far islands, lost places under leaning fronds, the frail skeleton of fishes, wrack and rot. The little waves before me at the water's edge speak with an animate voice, whispering eagerly of some ancient catastrophe, the sack of Troy, perhaps, or the sinking of Atlantis. All brims, brackish and shining. Water-beads break and fall in a silver string

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[44] Banville, *The Sea*, pp. 194–5.

from the tip of an oar. I see the black ship in the distance, looming imperceptibly nearer at every instant. I am there. I hear your siren's song. I am there, almost there.[45]

Despite being primarily engaged with a subjective past that is indirectly entangled in a communal history, though this is less true of Banville's text, the novels considered in this section all subscribe to the powerful metaphorising of personal memory enacted by the sea waters and the shore; it is now to the idea of a retrieved collective memory-as-history through a sea narrative that I would like to turn in the concluding part of this chapter.

Seafaring History: The Heterotopia of the Ship in the Neo-Historical Irish Novel: Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea*

Thus far, my analysis would seem to confirm the significant lacuna of the sea journey and the ship in contemporary Irish fiction, the importance of which has, instead, been successfully renewed by two of the most significant 'neo-historical' Irish novels of the early 2000s, Jamie O'Neill's *At Swim, Two Boys* (2001) and Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* (2002). In the former, the sea voyage is reconfigured as a swim across Dublin Bay, carried out as part of a sporting challenge on Easter Monday 1916, the day of the Easter Rising, by two young Dublin men, friends and lovers, Jim and Doyler. The aim of their utopian feat is to try to symbolically celebrate sexual freedom and national belonging by reaching a deserted islet in the bay where they plan to raise the flag of an independent Ireland, but the course of the tragic history of the country goes counter to the realisation of their dream, as Jim enlists in the Irish Citizens' Army and is killed in the uprising, and Doyler dies in the civil war only a few years later. Yet the shore and the sea as a space for male bonding, in the post-Romantic tradition, affirmatively resurfaces in the elegiac conclusion of the novel, where Jim echoes both Yeats and Donne in an image of an 'islanding' idealistic youth: 'In the living stream they swim a season. For maybe it was true that no man is an island: but he believed that two very well might be.'[46]

A sea journey figuratively and structurally sustains another ambitious rewriting of a totemic chapter of Irish history in Joseph O'Connor's *Star*

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[45] Banville, *The Sea*, p. 97.
[46] Jamie O'Neill, *At Swim, Two Boys* (London: Scribner, 2001), pp. 641–2.

of the Sea, which in 2003 was acknowledged by influential critics such as Terry Eagleton as one of the most accomplished and important novels of the last decades.[47] Thus, Morrison's statement that 'seagoing, actual voyaging, does not figure prominently in the literature of twentieth-century Ireland'[48] may then be partly disclaimed by the achievement of this novel, which employs a sea voyage as its shaping structural device and theme, as it tells the story of the transatlantic crossing of a 'coffin ship' from Dublin to New York in the early winter of 1847. O'Connor's long, ambitious neo-Victorian novel can be said to be the only text which conforms, in the selection I propose here, to the apparently simple pattern of the three components which characterise 'sea stories' according to John Peck: 'there is a sailor, a challenge, and this takes place in a context'.[49] That such a context should be more relevant in *Star of the Sea* than the other two elements does not diminish the wealth of implications conveyed by the author's choice of the distinctive, recognisable trope of the ship and the sea voyage as the ideal frame and figure for his representational feat of a dark, pivotal moment in the history of Ireland and England. Yet there is a further bond that, upon closer examination, this novel seems to share with the tradition of maritime fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It features that 'lack of respect for the body' as 'the most distinctive feature of maritime fiction in general', which often lies behind the physical marks and maiming that the seafaring heroes bear, from Captain Achab to Long John Silver, for example.[50]

Significantly, O'Connor's entire novel is dominated by corporeal imagery that foregrounds the physical ravages and excruciating suffering caused by the famine, but which also displays many other images of abused or violated bodies. Not only are the many unknown steerage passengers symbolically reclaimed from permanent oblivion by the captain's act of

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[47] It was hailed as a novel which significantly renovated the so-called tradition of famine novels which Irish critics had generally considered inadequate with respect to the enormity of the event.

[48] Morrison, 'Ireland and the Sea', p. 112.

[49] John Peck, *Maritime Fictions: Sailors and the Sea in British and American Novels, 1719–1917* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 14.

[50] Peck, *Maritime Fictions*, p. 14. Peck interestingly reminds how 'the distinguishing feature of a civilized or liberal or democratic society may be said to be respect for the individual, which necessarily involves respect for the individual's body. By contrast, a maritime economy, particularly in a time of war, appears to treat bodies with contempt'; Peck, *Maritime Fictions*, p. 24.

naming them all in his ship's log, but also the human beings wiped out by the famine, cholera, typhoid fever and the protagonists of the story too are variously affected in their bodily existence. The villain Pius Mulvey, lame and repulsive in aspect, has murdered his meek, religiously fanatical brother who practises self-flagellation; the betrayed and abused Mary Duane, formerly the first love of the bankrupt Galway Viscount David Merridith, has lost three children and is driven to prostitution in order to survive; and Merridith himself, a magnificent recreation of the absentee landlord, discovers that he has contracted syphilis after years of mental and physical abasement in a *cupio dissolvi* that turned him into a drug addict and frequenter of the lowest dens of the East End of London. Yet it is primarily the indescribable corporeal reality of the famine, the hideous ravages suffered by human beings annihilated by starvation, that haunts the sea voyage through the accounts of the two main narrators, the ship's captain, Lockwood, the true critical conscience of the novel, and the American journalist and would-be novelist Grantley Dixon, an eyewitness to the famine and the author of the main narrative. A hideous, spectral bodily presence literarily pervades the ship with its 'strange and horrible smell', 'quite pestilential', that emanates from the entrails of the vessel, and is ultimately revealed to be coming from the corpses of two young victims. The 'Star of the Sea', as mentioned, is a coffin ship, one of those vessels which transported evicted Irish families to the coasts of Canada and North America during the famine years; people died aboard by the thousands during the ocean crossing, or during the long quarantine imposed by the authorities who prevented them from disembarking and thus lead them to their deaths.

The 'heterotopia par excellence of the ship', in Foucault's words, is 'a piece of floating space, a placeless place, that lives by its own devices, that is self-enclosed and, at the same time, delivered over to the boundless expanse of the ocean'; in *Star of the Sea* it is made to imaginatively and metonymically 'contain' not only the indescribable national tragedy of the famine, but of the very nation in one of its most tragic moments, by means of a structuring pattern whereby the ship in its constituent parts, the first class and the steerage, alternates with the diverse and multivocal narratives which are set in the Ireland of the previous decades.[51] O'Connor's ambitious

[51] Heterotopias are 'actual places […] sorts of actually realized utopias in which […] all the other real emplacements that can be found within the culture are, at the same time, represented, contested, and reversed, sorts of places that are outside all places […] a kind of con-

and accomplished staging of the ship chronotope accords with Margaret Cohen's principle that 'when a novel passes through the chronotope of the ship, its portrayal of the ship's hierarchical society is revealing of its politics'.[52] As much as the ship is the initial setting and location where all the characters first appear and meet aboard, a device which is reminiscent of Balzac's intertwining of personal destinies that expand towards other spaces and places, a heterotopia reaching out to the 'real' world beyond, the writing develops into a polyphony and a heteroglossia of styles, registers, voices, geographies and heritages. The ship as heterotopia, 'the greatest reservoir of imagination',[53] thus also functions as an archive, and the simile is even more indicative of its juridical status, when one thinks of Carl Schmitt's words: 'A ship on high seas recalls a piece of territory afloat, a "floating extension of the national territory", to use the words sanctioned by the international law.'[54]

Thus, much like the challenge of the mutinous sea, navigation is made to imaginatively underscore the progress through occluded and unknown parts of the personal and communal stories of the protagonists aboard, and the ship reveals the crucial nexus that links the diversity and deformities of some of its passengers. It is a diversity which expands to the point of ideally containing the nation, so much so that the writing becomes polyphonic, and chronologically fragmented, the linear progression of the sea journey is interrupted and veers towards narratives of the country, the land and the city. These narrative threads finally culminate in the dramatic liminality of the forced immobility of the 'Star' in the port of New York, where some characters are allowed to disembark before others. In the climactic episode, Mary Duane is ultimately unable to condemn Pius Mulvey by telling the truth about the evils he had perpetrated against her, thus granting him access to the same lifeboat that will lead her to a new life; it is a powerful inscription of forgiveness and courage that cannot fail to recall the iconic image of female terror of the sea and paralysis on the dockside episode in Joyce's 'Eveline'. Yet, in paying homage to one of the most famous scenes of James Joyce's *Dubliners*, O'Connor reverses

testation, both mythical and real, of the space in which we live'; Michel Foucault, 'Different Spaces', in James Faubion, ed., *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: The New Press, 1998), vol. 2, pp. 175–85, pp. 178–9, 184–5.

[52] Cohen, 'The Chronotopes of the Sea', p. 664.
[53] Foucault, 'Different Spaces', p. 185.
[54] Schmitt, *Land and Sea*, p. 32.

the 'anti-maritime polemic' which surfaces in the episode, as Eveline is afraid of drowning in the sea of worldliness, while Mary is a survivor who, having crossed all sorts of borders and perilous seas, is ultimately capable of affirming life in the face of pain, injustice and despair.[55] Thus the redoubled liminality of the two boundaries, the ship and the dock, becomes one of the emotional and semantic highlights of the novel in the melodramatic scene of the final leaving of the ship:

> If it was mercy—and I simply cannot say what it was—whatever made Mary Duane show it may only be guessed. Wherever she found it can never be known. But she did show it. She did find it. When the moment of retribution rolled up out of history and presented itself like an executioner's sword, she turned away and did not seize it.
>
> Instead, still weeping and now being helped to stand, she confirmed that Pius Mulvey of Ardnagreevagh was the brother of her late husband; her only living relation in three thousand miles. She was asked if she wanted to remain on the ship, to take her chances of being sent back to Ireland alongside him. She hesitated for a moment and then said no, she did not.
>
> They entered the second lifeboat together, taking up the last two places, and were last seen drifting in the direction of the dock.[56]

The novel employs this principle of diversity on the formal level as well, conflating an immensely readable amalgam of a variety of texts and documents, some authentic while others fictional: letters, excerpts from books and from an unfinished novel by Dixon, the ship's log and reports, ballads, songs, newspaper and magazine article illustrations, thus reviving a narrative strategy inaugurated by the Victorian novel and successfully popularised by Bram Stoker in *Dracula*, among others. It is, as Eagleton writes, 'a polyphonic novel, as different voices, social accents and national idioms weave their way in and out of the text'.[57] It could be argued, then, that *Star of the Sea* features the sea voyage as a kind of analogue to the feat of literary writing itself: while the ship is a 'republic of the night', a space inhabited by Irish and British citizens, the unnamed and the privileged, the innocent and the guilty, or the complicit, their stories represent the

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[55] Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism*, p. 71.

[56] Joseph O'Connor, *Star of the Sea* (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 374–5.

[57] Terry Eagleton, 'Another Country', review of *Star of the Sea*, *The Guardian*, 25 January 2003 http://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/jan/25/featuresreviews.guardianreview12 [accessed 17 December 2015].

history and the identity of a country that cannot be extricated from its relationship with England, the past, America, the future, and cannot be expressed through monoglossia.

The crossing thus underscores and dramatises the Irish famine victims' loss of roots, in much the same way as the self-effacing nature of the nautical routes which leave no visible, material trace, is ideally counteracted by the cultural agenda of this ambitious novel, and sustained by the trope of spectrality, which the dénouement of the novel melodramatically reasserts. Despite (or possibly owing to) its avowed literariness and engagement with the cultural politics of neo-Victorianism, which are metonymically signalled by the centrality of Dickens and other great Victorian novelists, the novel succeeds in a process of retrieval and re-engagement with that tragic and still controversial chapter of Irish history.[58]

In making use of the trope of the sea voyage and ocean crossing, this timely fictional revisitation of the tragedy of the famine also reasserts the functional appeal of adventure. This is also partly deployed in the narration of events prior to the voyage in an episodic fashion which is in keeping with the 'organisation' of sea adventures.[59] *Star of the Sea* is one of the most successful neo-Victorian novels of the last decade in this respect, a true 'page-turner' which overtly lays claim to the adventurousness of the classic nineteenth-century novel, filled with stories of guilt, retribution, love and murder, and which sustains the pace and scope of its narrative feat through a highly accomplished and overtly mimetic use of language and styles.[60] O'Connor's novel may or may not rank among what critics like Bernhard Klein consider as 'fictions of the sea', but it shares with them their not being 'limited to any one frame of reference or historically specific perspectival arrangement'.[61] In this regard, the novel fits into the recently proposed critical rubric of the 'neo-Victorian at sea' as a specific genre which can be seen as 'an attempt to move conventional

[58] Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is mistakenly attributed by Merridith to the journalist and writer Grantley Dixon, who is his wife's lover and, even more significantly, Dickens asks the evil Mulvey to tell him a story which he will reuse in *Oliver Twist*.

[59] See Margaret Cohen's introduction 'Seafaring Odysseus' in her *The Novel and the Sea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 11.

[60] O'Connor proclaims his intention to pay homage to the richness, variety and value of adventure of the nineteenth-century novel in his 'A Guide to *Star of the Sea*' http://www.josephoconnorauthor.com/for-book-clubs.html [accessed 17 December 2015].

[61] Bernhard Klein, 'Introduction: Britain and the Sea', in Bernhard Klein, ed., *Fictions of the Sea: Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature and Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 1–12, p. 5.

neo-Victorianism's bounded territorial spaces and status as national literatures and argue instead for a global memory of the "the Victorian" that is attuned to the condition and experience of transnationality'.[62] Although *Star of the Sea* does not figure in Elizabeth Ho's study, I would argue that its standing in this developing subgenre is worthy of greater attention in light of its central concern with the transcendence of national borders, as exemplified by the history of the Irish famine immigration to the United States of America. Since this newly defined production is, in fact, underpinned by the re-historicisation of the sea of the latest decades, it shares in the belief that 'the sea is history', to quote Derek Walcott's famous poem. O'Connor's novel fits this principle also through the heterotopia/chronotope of the ship, a 'key feature' of the 'neo-Victorian-at-sea', and responds as well to the spatial breadth and 'globality' that might expand the scope of the tendency towards a nation-state perspective that has characterised neo-Victorianism.

To conclude, the literariness and self-reflexivity of the novel is part of its historiographic metafictionality and agenda, since the problem of 'writing the famine' which has long beset Irish culture is faced by the author figure -an amateur historian and (fictional) editor of the book- as an aporia, which has moral complicities at its core:[63] 'Dixon was facing an undefeatable reality. The Famine could not be turned into a simile. The best word for death was death.'[64] But silence would amount to an ever deeper mystification: 'to remain silent, in fact, was to say something powerful: that it never happened, that these people did not matter.'[65]

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[62] Elizabeth Ho, 'The Neo-Victorian-at-Sea: Towards a Global Memory of the Victorian', in Nadine Boehm-Schnitker and Susanne Gruss, eds, *Neo-Victorian Literature and Culture: Immersions and Revisitations* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 165–78, p. 166. Ho refers to 'a concentration of neo-Victorian novels based around and structured by the sea-voyage', including Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* and *Jack Maggs*, Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*, Matthew Kneale's *English Passengers*, and Andrea Barrett's *The Voyage of the Narwhal*.

[63] 'I would like to think that I am objective in what I have put down, but of course that is not so and could never have been. I was there. I was involved. I knew some of the people. One I loved; another I despised. I use the word carefully: I did despise him. So easy to despise in the cause of love. Others again I was simply indifferent to, and such indifference is also a part of the tale. And of course I have selected what has been seen of the Captain's words in order to frame and tell the story. A different author would have made a different selection. Everything is in the way the material is composed'; O'Connor, *Star of the Sea*, p. 386.

[64] O'Connor, *Star of the Sea*, p. 129.

[65] O'Connor, *Star of the Sea*, p. 130.

The history and the memory of the nation, then, of its land as well as of its people, and the memory of personal and collective trauma, as *Star of the Sea* would seem to suggest, can also be reimagined and revived through the mysterious archives of the sea, what Yeats called 'the murderous innocence of the sea', the ultimate indifference of its mystery, its journeys, its shores, its deep and shallow waters.[66]

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[66] W. B.Yeats, 'A Prayer for my Daughter', in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921) (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), pp. 20–2.

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Women at Sea: Locating and Escaping Gender on the Cornish Coast in Daphne du Maurier's *The Loving Spirit* and *Frenchman's Creek*

Gemma Goodman

Introduction

There are particular, stereotypical, enduring and pervasive ways in which the Cornish coast is culturally constructed and, equally, in which Daphne du Maurier's work has been positioned. These two instances are not unconnected. Many of du Maurier's novels are set in Cornwall and the marketisation of 'du Maurier's Cornwall' by the tourist industry feeds both a version of the county as romantic and picturesque and the pigeon-holing of du Maurier's novels as over-simplistically romantic. This chapter seeks to complicate and problematise existing constructions of both the Cornish coast and of gender in du Maurier's novels through exploring the experiences of two of the author's female protagonists—Janet Coombe in *The Loving Spirit* (1931) and Dona St Columb in *Frenchman's Creek*

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(1941)—at sea around that coast.[1] Both women look to escape their socially inscribed gender identity and the sea functions as a space of possibility for such an escape. However, for both women that escape is temporary or tempered in some way. The tantalising possibility of freedom is always ultimately denied. While this is something that other critics have already considered in relation to *Frenchman's Creek*, the intention in this chapter is to further the discussion of gender in du Maurier's work through a more nuanced understanding of how Cornwall, and in particular the coastal site, mediates gendered experience. Du Maurier's novels are often noted for their strong sense of place. It is therefore important to consider the implications of Cornwall as a site within her novels.

The Loving Spirit (1931) is du Maurier's first novel. Written at Ferryside, the Cornish family home across from Fowey, the story was sparked by du Maurier's interest in a schooner, the *Jane Slade*, 'its figurehead intact', which she had encountered while sailing with Harry Adams (who had married Jane's granddaughter). Du Maurier drew on the history of Jane Slade from Adams, persuading him to give her access to family letters.[2] This history became the basis for a family saga spanning the years 1830–1930. Du Maurier imbues the story with a supernatural twist: a 'spirit' is passed between elect family members of four generations of the Coombe family, boatbuilders of Plyn (a literary carbon copy of Fowey). When she dies, the ship carrying Janet's name also carries her spirit across the sea as she had always desired. Life and art continue to be intertwined as the restored figurehead of the *Jane Slade* can now be found attached to the house at Ferryside within which her fictional alter-ego was created.[3]

Frenchman's Creek takes its title from an actual location in Cornwall, one of many creeks off the Helford River which flows into the Atlantic Ocean, and which is now forever associated with the novel.[4] Dona St Columb

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[1] Daphne du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit* (London: Virago, 2003); *Frenchman's Creek* (London: Virago, 2003).

[2] Margaret Forster, *Daphne du Maurier* (London: Arrow, 2007), pp. 50–1. See also Helen Doe, *Jane Slade of Polruan: The Inspiration for Daphne du Maurier's First Novel* (Truro: Truran, 2002), pp. 99–100.

[3] Ella Westland, *Reading Daphne: A Guide to the Writing of Daphne du Maurier for Readers and Book Groups* (Truro: Truran, 2007), p. 23.

[4] The same is the case for Jamaica Inn on Bodmin Moor and du Maurier's novel of the same name (published in 1936). Today, the inn seeks to capitalise on this connection with many references to the novel at the site, such as a plaque marking the spot where Joss Merlyn, a fictional character from the novel, was murdered.

impulsively leaves Restoration London for Navron—the family estate in Cornwall located just above the creek. At the creek she encounters the Breton pirate Jean-Benoit Aubéry with whom she has an affair. Swept up by this exciting new life, one night, dressed as a boy, she joins Aubéry's crew aboard *La Mouette* and takes part in a daring heist of an English ship. Escaping undetected on the night, the events have consequences. Unsuspecting of her involvement, the robbery draws her husband and his friend Rockingham to Cornwall. She kills Rockingham when, fuelled by jealousy, he attacks her after discovering her affair. She must also effect a jeopardous rescue of Aubéry who has been imprisoned by Lord Godolphin. Ultimately, though, her adventures are a momentary break from marriage and motherhood to which she returns at the close of the novel.

Margaret Forster points out that du Maurier was 'dismissive' of *Frenchman's Creek*, 'endlessly referring to it as "frivolous"'.[5] Yet there is far more to the novel than du Maurier's own words suggest and I am particularly interested here with the intersection of gender and place. As this chapter will go on to discuss, both protagonists in these novels construct for themselves an escape from social expectations of femininity which is simultaneously made possible and denied within the context of the Cornish coastal site. While many of du Maurier's female characters desire some form of escape, it is useful to look at Janet and Dona because their quests are both played out on the coast and at sea.[6]

The Cornish Coastal Site

The dominant ways in which the sea and the Cornish coastline have been culturally produced are connected to the industries which have dominated its history: mining, fishing and tourism. For the fishing industry the sea controlled the fates of its workers, both providing bounteous catches, of pilchards for example, and taking away life. It was to be revered and respected, and the lives of fishermen and their families revolved around its apparent whimsy. Some of Cornwall's mineral wealth is located under the seabed and so miners hacked at the rock with the sea above their heads. There were obvious dangers of flooding and collapse but seawater could also be used to run waterwheels for pumping engines. While the sea had

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[5] Forster, *Daphne du Maurier*, p. 167.
[6] See for example female characters in Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca* (London: Arrow, 1992); *Jamaica Inn* (London: Virago, 2003).

a practical role to play as the site of fishing or mining, in the nineteenth century aspects of these industries became co-opted into a touristic narrative of place which could be used to attract visitors.

As early as the 1720s Cornwall was beginning to attract visitors, initially to attend coastal sites such as Penzance for the health benefits of sea air and, as the nineteenth century progressed and the twentieth century dawned, increasingly as a holiday destination.[7] While there was a sharp, and eventually terminal, decline of mining which started in the 1860s, and while the fishing industry also experienced its own economic peril, both industries remained central to Cornwall's internal imaginary at the same time as it began to be romanticised for the tourist. Ruined engine houses, especially those perched on cliffs, are not viewed as blights on the landscape as some might see wind turbines or the apparatus of industry today, but are easily absorbed into a touristic promotion of place.[8] Mining and fishing remain important to Cornish culture today but, with the growth of mass tourism and the concomitant extinction of tin and copper mining, and the drastic reduction in scope of the fishing industry, it is unsurprising that images of place related to tourism have come to dominate.[9]

Since the nineteenth century the touristic narrative of Cornwall has relied on producing a simplified and attractive version of place, as is the case with many other tourist sites. As Westland explains, in Cornwall 'the tourist industry depends on displacing Cornwall's past social history and present social condition in favour of a cluster of easily manipulated signs (Celts, cliffs, mines, wrecks) that stand for Cornwall'.[10] Sites such as ports

[7] Paul Thornton, 'Coastal Tourism in Cornwall since 1900', in Stephen Fisher, ed., *Recreation and the Sea* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), pp. 57–83, p. 60.

[8] See also Alan M. Kent, *The Literature of Cornwall: Continuity, Identity, Difference 1000–2000* (Bristol: Redcliffe, 2000), p. 134.

[9] The complexity of the cultural map within Cornwall during the rise of tourism should not be overlooked, however. There is also no simple divide between outsider and insider imaginaries of place. Philip Payton uncovers the collusion between those within Cornwall and those without in the creation of a touristic narrative which conceptualised Cornwall as Celtic and exotic. There was therefore, and continues to be, a complex network of cultural constructions of place, some of which are in conflict and tension with each other, and some which came to prominence through complicated power structures associated with the economic gain derived from attracting people to Cornwall; Philip Payton, 'Paralysis and Revival: The Reconstruction of Celtic–Catholic Cornwall 1890–1945', in Ella Westland, ed., *Cornwall: The Cultural Construction of Place* (Penzance: Patten, 1997), pp. 25–39.

[10] Ella Westland, 'The Passionate Periphery: Cornwall and Romantic Fiction', in Ian A. Bell, ed., *Peripheral Visions: Images of Nationhood in Contemporary British Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), pp. 153–72, p. 158.

and mines are re-signified into a narrative of place that privileges the romantic and the picturesque.

The visual medium is crucial here, and so that which can contribute to the beauty and romanticisation of the landscape—picturesque fishing villages or tumbledown mine engine houses outlined against the sea and sky—can be co-opted. This means that other aspects, such as the china clay mining region of mid-Cornwall, which cannot be romanticised or seen to be picturesque, fall outside of the touristic narrative and often, therefore, the knowledge of the visiting tourist.[11] In this context the sea is central to the marketing of Cornwall as a tourist site because of its dramatic and aesthetic visual appeal. It can be utilised to emphasise Cornwall's beauty, its wildness and its exoticness, all of which have been central to the touristic promotion of Cornwall since the late nineteenth century.

In drawing on the landscape as romantic and picturesque, tourism emphasises already-established tropes. As discussed by Bernard Deacon, the romantic periphery was a common way of characterising Cornwall in British culture.[12] The European Romantic movement begun in the 1790s had introduced a romanticisation of landscape. As Westland points out this movement made 'rocky shores' and 'surging seas' 'approved sites for romantic sublimity', and so began to mediate the construction of the Cornish seascape from the early nineteenth century.[13]

The Cornish coast as a 'passionate periphery' has spawned endless romantic novels which unabashedly embrace what to many will, by now, seem to be highly stereotypical narratives of love and lashing waves.[14] While this romantic use of Cornwall's coastal landscape has never waned, there is a current surge in interest in Cornwall as 'passionate periphery', largely influenced by the significant popularity of the 2015 televised adaptation of Winston Graham's *Poldark* novels. In 1995 Westland asserted that 'in the domain of romance, a deep affinity is assumed between beauti-

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[11] Since 2001 the Eden Project, a major tourist attraction, has been located in a disused china clay pit and so tourist traffic into this area, where clay is still being mined in nearby pits, has significantly increased since this time. This does not necessarily mean, though, that this part of industrial Cornwall is being seen by the tourist in a way which runs counter to the dominant touristic narrative of Cornwall. I have discussed this further in 'Seeing the Clay Country: The Novels of Jack Clemo', *Cornish Studies*, 17:1 (2009): 34–50.

[12] Bernard Deacon, 'Imagining the Fishing: Artists and Fishermen in Late Nineteenth Century Cornwall', *Rural History*, 12:2 (2001): 159–78, p. 161.

[13] Westland, 'The Passionate Periphery', p. 154.

[14] Westland charts this literature and discusses its content in 'The Passionate Periphery'.

ful women, dark Cornishmen, craggy cliffs and sensuous seas', something which could easily have been written in response to this latest televisual incarnation of Cornish romance.[15] Its long-term effect on tourism is evident with increasing numbers of visitors making the journey to Cornwall to visit sites used for filming.[16]

Daphne du Maurier has been pigeonholed as a romantic novelist and, given her Cornish connections, this is a literary reputation which both feeds off and contributes to the romanticisation of Cornwall. Du Maurier's work forms one of the most enduring literary manifestations of the coast, beach and sea in the region. A writer of widely read and disseminated literary versions of Cornwall, which generate a significant desire in her fans to become the literary tourist, there is unlikely to be any appetite to counter the connection of du Maurier's Cornish oeuvre to romance from those promoting Cornwall to potential visitors.

However, this positioning of du Maurier and the content of her work is an oversimplification, another reduction to signs—Jamaica Inn, Fowey, Manderley—which can be co-opted into a romanticised touristic narrative of Cornwall. Du Maurier herself was very concerned with both the impact of tourism on Cornwall, and with her romantic novelist tag. Her travelogue *Vanishing Cornwall* (1967) is an expression of her fears for Cornwall in the face of mass tourism: a prophesied fate at the time of publication, many of her concerns about the impact of people and vehicles on the villages and countryside of Cornwall have come true. While recognising the economic need for tourism, du Maurier asks if Cornwall's future must be to 'become the playground of all England, chalets and holiday-camps set close to every headland'.[17]

It should be noted that *Vanishing Cornwall* itself is a problematic text because it too romanticises Cornwall's history, landscape and people, while

[15] Westland, 'The Passionate Periphery', p. 154.

[16] Steven Morris, 'Poldark could be a goldmine for Cornwall tourist trade', *The Guardian*, 14 March 2015 http://www.theguardian.com/travel/2015/mar/14/poldark-could-be-a-goldmine-for-cornwall-tourist-trade [accessed 29/05/2015]; Phil Goodwin, ' "Poldark effect" a "gift" to tourism in Cornwall for a decade', *Western Morning News*, 24 April 2015 http://www.westernmorningnews.co.uk/Poldark-effect-gift-tourism-Cornwall-decade/story-26384624-detail/story.html [accessed 29/05/2015]; Olivier Vergnault, 'Poldark, Doc Martin and Rosamunde Pilcher responsible for 25 % of visitors to Cornwall', *Western Morning News*, 28 September 2015 http://www.westernmorningnews.co.uk/Poldark-Doc-Martin-Rosamunde-Pilcher-responsible/story-27881904-detail/story.html?00 [accessed 28/09/2015].

[17] Daphne du Maurier, *Vanishing Cornwall* (London: Penguin, 1972), p. 197.

at the same time snootily denigrating tourists as ignorant and the Cornish as 'indifferent' to the 'mushroom growth' of tourism.[18] Du Maurier was not against the right kind of incomer, such as artists like herself, who she thought would appreciate and try to preserve a Cornwall of the past in the face of modernisation and change. She also did not see any contradiction in timing the publication of *Vanishing Cornwall* to capture the tourist market she was decrying in the text itself.[19] Du Maurier's relationship to Cornish tourism is therefore complex, comprising contradictory positions in tension. It will become clear later that this carries through to the content of her novels where the construction of Cornwall, specifically the coastal site, comprises at least two contradictory elements at the same time.

Similarly, du Maurier is not straightforwardly a romantic novelist. As Helen Taylor argues, 'she deployed—indeed transformed—the romance genre, but the term has been used to diminish her achievement. Aware it was used demeaningly, implying a form of writing for women readers of limited intelligence, she fiercely repudiated it.'[20] Du Maurier's fiction often runs counter to the traditional romantic narrative. Westland recognises that du Maurier's 'love plots look jagged against the templates of romantic fiction' but concedes that 'her Cornish coasts are lavishly romantic'.[21] This is an assessment which cannot be wholly denied given that this is what appeals to so many readers, but it can also be challenged through more subversive readings of the novels and of the novels as romance. The Cornish coasts in du Maurier's novels can be romantic but they can also be sites which are far more complex with regard to the gendered experience of her characters.

Land of the Free?

Cornwall can be configured as a space of freedom, yet it is simultaneously a space where freedom is denied or curtailed. This dichotomous reading of space is relevant to Cornwall as a whole but is particularly germane at the coastal site and on the sea surrounding Cornwall. Such a reading takes into account an understanding of the coastal space more generally

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[18] Daphne du Maurier, *Vanishing Cornwall*, p. 199.

[19] Forster, *Daphne du Maurier*, p. 360.

[20] Helen Taylor, 'Introduction', in Helen Taylor, ed., *The Daphne du Maurier Companion* (London: Virago, 2007), pp. xiii-xxiv, p. xiii.

[21] Westland, 'The Passionate Periphery', p. 168.

and maps this onto an understanding of the specificity of Cornish space whose qualities are informed by Cornwall's synchronous otherness from and belonging to England.

Cornwall's peripheral location and its physical distance from the seat of power in London have contributed to its othering and to its construction as a place to which one can escape. This was seized upon to promote Cornwall as a tourist site through emphasising its exoticness and so its appropriateness as a place to 'get away from it all'. Du Maurier's own initial encounter with Cornwall is as an escape from London, and comes with a realisation of her sense of freedom in the county. In a much-cited quotation, du Maurier encapsulates Cornwall as a space in which there was 'freedom to write, to walk, to wander, freedom to climb hills, to pull a boat, to be alone'.[22] Similarly in *Frenchman's Creek* we first meet Dona escaping from London to the family home in Cornwall, because 'she must free herself and escape before the sky fell in upon her and she was trapped'.[23] Like her creator, once in Cornwall there comes a realisation that 'this was freedom, to stand here for one minute with her face to the sun and wind, this was living, to smile and be alone'.[24] Dona is ostensibly fleeing a failed prank on a Countess (for which she cross-dressed) and an argument with her husband Harry, but she is painfully aware that she actually needs to escape from the superficial version of herself which London society has required of her and which she has created in response.[25]

There is a gendered inflection, therefore, to the need to escape and to the type of freedom Cornwall provides for du Maurier and her characters. I want to establish this before also exploring the specificity of the Cornish site in relation to Dona's and Janet's gendered experience which, in turn, complicates the understanding of Cornwall simply as a site of freedom. As Westland points out, Cornwall is the site where du Maurier can 'exercise […] unfeminine freedoms'.[26] It enables freedom from social expectations of femininity that are policed in London but can be evaded in Cornwall. In and around Fowey, du Maurier can wear trousers and scrabble around the countryside; Nina Auerbach comments that, in the 1930s and 1940s, wearing trousers was acceptable in Cornwall when it would have been

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[22] Du Maurier, *Vanishing Cornwall*, p. 6.

[23] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 10.

[24] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 14.

[25] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 9.

[26] Westland, *Reading Daphne*, p. 23.

'provocative' in London. Why, though, is this the case? Auerbach sees du Maurier as being 'sequestered' in Cornwall, which suggests that the rural location, comprising expanses of space and a more sparse concentration of population, provides the opportunity to hide, or to be less noticed.[27] More importantly, however, Cornwall's peripherality locates it, if not outside of society, at a remove from the rules of gendered behaviour which are most intensely observed in the capital, the location of governance. It is possible to stretch the boundaries of social rules of gender as the miles stretch out between London and Cornwall: for Dona, 'to know that she was at least three hundred miles away from St James's Street, and dressing for dinner' is 'to have escaped, to have broken free'.[28] Cornwall, then, is experienced as a site within which one can enjoy certain freedoms from social expectation.

In her analysis of the trope of the women on the Cornish cliff top in film, in television adaptations, and in paintings by Laura Knight, Rachel Moseley identifies Cornwall, and the coastal site in particular, as a '"liminal" or "third space" of enunciation', made possible due to Cornwall's otherness from England. Cornwall's cultural difference, as Payton discusses in detail, has been sustained through history and continues to be emphasised and celebrated by political groups, cultural practitioners and others living within the region. Moseley argues that 'Cornwall's own identity, then, is uncertain, anxious, perpetually in process […] a landscape both of indeterminacy and possibility'. She recognises the emphasis on the coastal site in representations of Cornwall and identifies the coast as imbuing an 'intensification' of the liminality which is also applicable to Cornwall as a whole.[29] Therefore, notions of escape, of freedom and possibility, are heightened at the coastal site encapsulating Cornwall.

As will be demonstrated in the next section, this is certainly the case for Janet and Dona. Both of their attempted escapes play out in ships on the sea. For Dona the sea is the zenith of that feeling of freedom that Cornwall in general enables—'there was a boat—and she would embark on it, let it carry her to the sea. […] what an adventure'.[30] Dona's escape

[27] Nina Auerbach, *Daphne du Maurier: Haunted Heiress* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 38.

[28] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 18.

[29] Rachel Moseley, 'Women at the Edge: Encounters with the Cornish Coast in British Film and Television', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 27:5 (2013): 644–62, p. 644.

[30] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 18.

is not just to Cornwall but to Navron, located at the coast. Her affair takes place at the water's edge in the creek and then aboard the pirate ship on the night of the robbery. Janet's life is already located in Cornwall but it is on the beach, cliffs, and then ultimately the sea, where she claims freedom.

The cultural and political configuration of Cornwall heightens the liminality of the coastal site which is already, as Moseley states, more generally recognised as such. Moseley's chapter also refers to the work of Rob Shields which is useful here: he identifies 'the liminal status of the seaside vis-à-vis the more closely governed realms of the nation'.[31] This liminal nature is possible because of the qualities of the coastal site. It is an 'ill-defined margin between land and sea' because of its 'shifting nature between high and low tide'. It also exists outside of normal social structures, 'unterritorialised' because it is 'unincorporated into the system of controlled, civilised spaces'.[32] Moseley's chapter concentrates fascinatingly on the female figure on the cliff edge and expounds an understanding of the relationship of the liminality of the coastal site to anxieties about the sexuality and desire of the modern women depicted.

What can be said about the sea, then, that visibly renders the coastal site fluid through its continual shifting and movement? It is the site of potential change through its ceaseless movement but, in also being beyond land, it suggests a space which, if not liminal in the same way as the interstitial site of the beach, which is located between land and sea, is literally and experientially fluid in comparison to being located, fixed, on land. This understanding of the sea is certainly relevant to du Maurier's Cornish fiction. Westland points out that 'the idea of the boundless ocean stirs within the reader a deep desire for escape from the restrictions of everyday life, offering an image of individual freedom that we will encounter many times in Daphne du Maurier's fiction'.[33] The possibility of escape from social constructions of femininity is nowhere more present than in the coastal site of the beach and the sea.

While previous work on du Maurier registers Cornwall's function as escape, it does so within a context of both Cornwall's and du Maurier's Englishness. Helen Taylor confirms that du Maurier is 'continually identified as very "English"—indeed a specifically "regional English"—writer'.[34]

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[31] Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 74.

[32] Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin*, p. 84.

[33] Westland, *Reading Daphne*, p. 14.

[34] Taylor, 'Introduction', p. xv.

Auerbach calls du Maurier 'an inveterately English novelist'.[35] Light recognises that 'du Maurier liked to picture Cornwall as a land on the border of Englishness' and it is the sense of a borderland that can productively open up how Cornwall operates as a site in these novels.[36]

In relation to du Maurier's work, the heterogeneity of Cornwall's relationship to England has so far been overlooked. It is necessary to map the possibility of freedom that Cornwall seems to offer, and the qualities of coastal site discussed above, onto a wider understanding of the cultural construction of Cornwall as simultaneously English and something 'other' in order to understand why freedom is both realised and illusory for the female characters in *The Loving Spirit* and *Frenchman's Creek*. The construction of Cornish space, then, is inherently determined by Cornwall's peripheral location within Britain, as discussed above, but also by its cultural and political relationship with the rest of England; an understanding of the complexity of this relationship and its ramifications for a gendered experience within that space is crucial.

Cornwall is both England and not-England and these possibilities exist simultaneously and in tension with each other. James Vernon states that 'Cornwall had always existed on the margins of Englishness, both a county of England and a foreign country'.[37] These two aspects are held in tension through, for example, tourism which requires Cornwall's otherness but always, ultimately, its inclusion as a part of England.[38] It is its otherness, its un-Englishness, its Celticness, which opens up a space within which the site can be configured as one of freedom, escape and possibility for the female protagonists. Yet, at the same time, its colonisation by England occurred in the distant past. There is a sense of encroaching Englishness, in terms of authoritative control, which is particularly felt from the nineteenth century onwards through such changes as the extension of the police force as far as Cornwall, the connection of the county to the national rail network, and the exertion of greater control by the capital to stop smuggling off its coasts. This is registered in *Jamaica*

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[35] Auerbach, *Daphne du Maurier*, p. 15.

[36] Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 205.

[37] James Vernon, 'Border Crossings: Cornwall and the English (imagi)nation', in Geoffrey Cubitt, ed., *Imagining Nations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 153–72, p. 153.

[38] See also Keith Robbins, *Nineteenth-Century Britain: Integration and Diversity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

Inn where, as Helen Hughes points out, 'progress—undoubted in this case—is spreading, and the world of Bodmin Moor will soon be part of a law-abiding England'.[39]

Aspects of Cornwall can also be co-opted into a national imaginary at the same time as other features work to demonstrate Cornwall's difference. An example would be the centrality of certain versions of rurality, and even Cornwall's peripheral rurality, to a national identity. During the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth century Britain's maritime identity was an important part of its construction as a nation.[40] This ambivalence both opens up the suggestion of escape, of something other, for the female protagonists in these novels and, at the very same time, suggests its impossibility.

Frenchman's Creek

The understanding of the construction of Cornish space outlined above informs how we can read the experience of gender within Cornwall and, more specifically, at the coast. Navron, the estate to which Dona flees, is an example whereby it is necessary to understand the complexity of the Cornish location. Located on the cliff edge above the creek, Josephine Dolan identifies Navron as 'the domain of Englishness', a 'protected zone' whose security 'is undermined by the spatial and sexual mobility of the heroine'.[41] Such an analysis assumes that Navron is originally an English and, consequently, a fixed and secure space prior to Dona's alliance with the pirates in the creek. However, an understanding of this site as being simultaneously both Cornish and English, a space of otherness *and* one of Englishness, destabilises the space prior to Dona's or William's actions. Navron is never simply the sanctuary that Dona perceives it to be—its dichotomistic nature suggests both the possibility of escape and entrapment within the norm for Dona. This is also represented by the two groups who infiltrate that space: William, a part of the adventure and freedom she

[39] Helen Hughes, 'A Silent, Desolate Country: Images of Cornwall in Daphne du Maurier's *Jamaica Inn*', in Ella Westland, ed., *Cornwall: The Cultural Construction of Place* (Penzance: Patten, 1997), pp. 68–76, p. 71.

[40] Geoffrey Cubitt, 'Introduction', in Geoffrey Cubitt, ed., *Imagining Nations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 1–20, p.11.

[41] Josephine Dolan, 'Anchorage and Play in *Frenchman's Creek*: Children, Gender, and National Identity', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 32 (2002): 95–109, p. 106.

is about to experience on the water, and Henry and Rockingham from her life of duty and motherhood.

It is well recognised that Dona's time in Cornwall, her affair and the adventure on the water, form a temporary interlude after which she returns to her role as wife and mother. What can this more complex understanding of the space in which that interlude takes place inform us about the adventure itself and Dona's seemingly inevitable return? In one respect the sea is the space on which Dona can most successfully escape the constrictions—of dress, behaviour and duty—assigned to her as an aristocratic woman in London. Her cross-dressing in London had not been successful because it had produced in her 'a curious sense of degradation'.[42] Being in Cornwall, and more specifically aboard the pirate ship, means that, this time, dressed as a cabin boy, she can finally enjoy 'a lovely freedom, no longer hampered by petticoats and ribbons' and can embrace 'playing the part of a boy, which as a child she had so often longed to be'.[43] In Cornwall, at sea, the cross-dressing is more successful than her attempt in London.

There has been discussion, though, as to the degree to which Dona passes as a boy during the escapade in which the *Merry Fortune* is stolen and the pirates are chased by Rashleigh and Godolphin. To date, that debate has been split by how critics view the delineation of gender in the novel. Dolan sees Dona's cross-dressing as flawed because her biological sex cannot be overwritten by a performance as a male—'her shoes rub, she is physically weak, and her distinctive long hair always threatens to betray her "true" feminine identity. […] [F]emininity cannot be disguised or socially reorganised through changes and adjustments to the accoutrements of costume and/or role.'[44] Valentina Bold and Pauline Greenhill, however, believe Dona passes as a cabin boy, although temporarily and even though 'she doesn't fool everyone' the performance draws attention to gender 'as histrionic rather than "natural"'.[45]

As discussed above, an understanding of the Cornish site as the space in which the performance takes place can contribute to this discussion. Beyond land or in the liminal space of the coast, there is at least more potential for the performance as a boy that had previously been

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[42] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 11.

[43] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 118.

[44] Dolan, 'Anchorage and Play in *Frenchman's Creek*', p. 98.

[45] Valentina Bold and Pauline Greenhill, '*Frenchman's Creek* and the Female Sailor: Transgendering Daphne du Maurier', *Western Folklore*, 71:1 (2012): 47–67, p. 50.

problematic in the capital. We can connect this to an understanding of Cornwall as removed from the governance epitomised by London, an 'other' space which enables Dona's cross-dressing. However, simultaneously, it is a site which closes down these possibilities. In terms of Dona's cross-dressing, therefore, there is always registered within the performance its temporariness, its limitations, in the very moment of the act. For example, Dona passes (she escapes capture and her performance is not conclusively revealed) but, as Jean Aubéry remarks, she 'would not pass in moonlight'.[46] Spatially and temporally, therefore, Dona's performance is curtailed even as it unfolds: she must remain in the darkness in order to 'pass' as a boy and from the moment the adventure begins the clock ticks down to daylight when passing will be impossible.

This does not necessarily confirm a biological essentialist reading, though, of Dona's return to life with Henry and her children, resuming the traditional female roles of wife and mother. As Bold and Greenhill have already pointed out, 'Dona's lack of escape is explained in terms of a biological betrayal'.[47] William and her lover Jean Aubéry read her flawed performance as cabin boy and her inability to become a permanent part of the crew in terms of an essentialised femininity: 'Women are apt to obey the laws of nature, my lady, and produce babies', says William.[48]

Yet Dona's own understanding and experience of gender is more complicated. Her return from sea to land has more to do with social constructions of gender that she has internalised, and which she takes with her onto the space of the ship, than with a concern about producing babies. Dona is not as wedded to the notion of an essential self as William or Jean but recognises her multiple selves: the feeling of freedom on the ship, for example, leads her to feel that 'the other Dona was dead'.[49] She understands social interaction in terms of a series of roles to be performed. For example, she is frustrated by the 'familiar' and light-hearted way that the pirates interact with her on their first encounter because 'it went ill with the heroic dignified part she wished to play' and, equally, that Jean does not play the part of the pirate as she had imagined it.[50] Dona also performs characteristics associated with a particular gender in order to manipulate

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[46] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 117.
[47] Bold and Greenhill, '*Frenchman's Creek* and the Female Sailor', p. 62.
[48] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 57.
[49] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 98.
[50] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, pp. 44–6.

situations to her advantage. For example, when she first meets Jean, and he accuses her of spying, she speaks 'coldly, clearly, in the boyish voice she used to the servants'.[51] When she needs to assume authority she performs a masculine style of voice.

In the course of the novel, Dona plays a range of gendered roles either to meet or to subvert expectations but these roles do not escape the bounds of a binary understanding of gender. Even the male roles she assumes— the highwayman and the pirate—are stereotypical versions of masculinity. In this respect, Bold and Greenhill's understanding of the novel's conclusion as 'reinforcing heteronormativity and the inescapability of binary sex roles' can be extended to Dona's experience of gender in the novel as a whole, which then directly impacts on her withdrawal from the ship.[52] Dona's reasons for her flight to Cornwall are relevant here because it is the understanding of gender she brings with her from London which determines her return to land from sea in Cornwall. In London, Dona feels trapped but, more specifically, she is trapped between two extremes of femininity—the upper class aristocratic wife and mother and the fallen woman. Suffocated by the narrow confines of her married role, the one which society deems to be the only option acceptable or available to her, she dabbles with its opposite by associating with the mistresses and 'ladies of the town' at the Swan. Looking into the mirror she feels she 'had played too long a part unworthy of her'. A phantom Dona stares back at her from the mirror which she reads as 'the other self' that she must flee London to realise. She wants to find a self that is not 'bounded by a narrow casement, but could be limitless, infinite'. The desire is to break out from social expectations of gender. Yet this whole passage is suffused with the 'prick of shame' and 'sense of degradation' that is derived from her internalisation of the angel–whore dichotomy and, despite her desire to break out from her socially assigned role, her abject fear of being identified as a fallen woman, either through her associations at the Swan or by her cross-dressing as a highwayman.[53]

This is what she takes to Cornwall. This is what she takes into the site of the coast and the sea, that space which could serve to provide something more: the potential to break out from the bounds of gender which are more closely policed in London. This fear infects her interactions with Jean. When he smiles at her 'she looked away, lest he should read her eyes

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51 Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 46.
52 Bold and Greenhill, '*Frenchman's Creek* and the Female Sailor', p. 62.
53 Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, pp. 9–11.

and think her wanton, which she knew herself to be and did not care'.[54] She clearly does care, though, which is registered in the act of looking away. Dona fears that he will discover 'her own naked self', a self that she understands very well and is problematic for her, one she wishes to disguise. Dona is a woman capable of strong desires, and this does not fit with the social expectations of gender she has internalised as anything other than wanton or fallen. Once again she looks away, 'fearful that he might read the message in her eyes and so despise her'; that message is 'the new flame that had arisen within her' and she directly equates her desiring self with the women at the Swan.[55] Dolan explains why Dona is so fearful:

> In the constitution of femininity, formations of social place and social reputation are highly dependent upon discourses of respectability and non-respectability. These discourses are central to the processes of adjudication that elide high status with respectability and produce class-marked feminine subjects through prescriptions of appearance, permissions of sexuality, and the organisational structures of women's daily activities. And in playing the boy, in playing the pirate, in loving the pirate, the heroine's activities are indisputably non-respectable, positioning her at risk of social displacement in the event of discovery.[56]

There is so much at stake for Dona that, despite her desire to break out, she brings the social rules regarding gender from land onto the ship and, even though Jean and William also bring their essentialised understanding of femininity with them too, it is Dona who self-governs, even in the space where she tries to escape that governance. It is ultimately Dona who requires the return to land and to conformity, and who maintains the English and governing element of the Cornish space in tension with its otherness and potential.

The Loving Spirit

For Janet Coombe the sea is also the space within which freedom seems to be possible. On the opening page of *The Loving Spirit* this is a freedom characterised as being beyond land, 'part of the air and the sea'.[57] Janet was

[54] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 108.

[55] Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, p. 88.

[56] Dolan, 'Anchorage and Play in *Frenchman's Creek*', pp. 101–2.

[57] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 3.

'old wild Janet' when she 'wandered on the seashore', which recognises the qualities of that space, but 'riding the sea with the wind for company; roaming the wide world over' is her conception of freedom.[58] More specifically, the freedom needed is from her body and from the socialisation of that body as feminine. As a child, just like Dona, she prays '[p]lease God, make me a lad afore I'm grown'.[59] Her desires are purely physical and for the opposite gender, the opposite body, but as she grows into a woman and marries, her situation is even more complex and she is torn between the socialised feminine role she must play and fulfil, and the pull within her 'only to be part of a ship, part of the sea'.[60]

The sea for Janet, then, stands for freedom. The sea as an element of nature seems to be something outside of the social. Looking at herself in the mirror, dressed in her bridal gown, a powerful image of her completed journey into socialised femininity, it is not surprising that the sea seems to her to be the sight of the freedom she desires.[61] To sail across the world, out of sight of land on which society is located, created and governed, and where her body is fixed and read is the potential imbued within that space.

Janet's life plays out in tension between these two drives: to fulfil her duty as a woman in everyday life, and the ongoing desire to be at sea so that 'it was as if she had two selves'.[62] Yet she is not two bodies: she behaves as expected as a woman, she dresses as she should, she holds her body as she should 'sitting as prim as you like with her cup and saucer in her hands' amongst the village ladies, and she bears six children.[63] She is not a comfortable fit within her own body though and, at times, what is read by others as unwomanliness breaks through the socially-learned femininity which usually controls her body. For example, on a trip to Plymouth Janet, who 'carried herself like a queen' through the streets, is manhandled by a drunk. She punishes him for his ungentlemanly behaviour by throwing his hat into the harbor. She is reproved by her husband Thomas who recognises that it is his role which she has usurped but, equally, that it was 'scarcely a womanly action'—both the doling out of punishment and the physical action of reaching out and grabbing the man's hat.[64]

[58] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, pp. 11, 15.
[59] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 5.
[60] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 9.
[61] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 11.
[62] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 27.
[63] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 16.
[64] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 37.

Janet never gets to sail a ship, though, and the closest she comes is the sea journey from Plymouth to Plyn where she is reminded by Thomas that the cabin 'was the proper place for a woman', while she is irresistibly drawn to the deck.[65] She is already supernaturally aware, by this point, that Joseph will be born to her and the loving spirit will pour from her to him, and so while this sea journey is a communion in that respect, an acknowledgement of something beyond her earthly body, it is also the most acute recognition of the limitations of her female body and the trappings of socialised femininity. Again she cries '[w]hy wasn't I born a man' and 'she felt the fact of her sex to be like a chain to her feet, as bad as the hampering petticoats around her ankles'.[66] She does get to view the tempestuous sea from the front of the ship however, where, prophetically, 'her cap streaming out behind her, her dark hair wild and tossed. She looked like the figurehead of a ship.' It is an image that foreshadows her afterlife and which will become central to the culmination of this discussion.[67]

Academics such as Alison Light have questioned the supernatural emancipation du Maurier provides Janet, citing her naiveté as a young novelist. When Janet dies she finally escapes her body: she is reborn as part of the ship the *Janet Coombe*, when 'her soul passed away into the breathing, living ship'.[68] Joseph becomes the ship's captain and can feel her presence when he is on board. This solution is seen to be problematic because it is not available to du Maurier's female readers, who might fantasise about a similar kind of escape, but who have to fight for their emancipation in the real world, like Janet's real-life counterpart Jane Slade.[69] In the discussion that follows I want to open up other ways of interpreting Janet's release from her body.[70]

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[65] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 39.

[66] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 40.

[67] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 42.

[68] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 106.

[69] Light, *Forever England*, p. 167; Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, *Daphne du Maurier: Writing, Identity and the Gothic Imagination* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 39; Westland, *Reading Daphne*, p. 26.

[70] The nature of the 'solution' made available to Janet is relevant to du Maurier's own experience of gender where, at different times in her life she both came to understand the desire to escape her gender and the impossibility of that escape. Forster explains that early in life she comes to understand that 'there was no escape from being a girl' and so she must suppress the boy-in-the-box. Later in life she looked to shift the boundaries of this either–or gender dichotomy by referring to herself as 'neither a girl nor a boy but a disembodied spirit' suggesting that it is only disembodiment that can facilitate the escape from being read in

We can instead see Janet's transformation as part of an understanding throughout du Maurier's work that flight from femininity or the role laid out for women, or indeed escape from the socially feminised body, is problematic or even impossible within a social context. In this way, du Maurier's recourse to a supernatural transformation for Janet is not a facile or juvenile solution but one which recognises the impossibility of escaping social constructions of gender.

Although it has been taken for granted that Janet's bodiless transition into the ship as a soul or spirit is the solution offered by the novel, it is also, and at the same time, no remedy at all to Janet's entrapment by her gender. Even when incorporeal, Janet is still subject to an embodied gendering which is located within a male gaze. She becomes manifested again through the ship. The vessel is her namesake, in keeping with the tradition of referring to ships as female. Her spirit, though, is located within the schooner's figurehead. When Joseph bemoans the loss of his mother aboard the *Janet Coombe*, when he remembers that she should have been present beside him as they had dreamt, 'the figurehead of the Janet Coombe smiled to herself in the darkness'.[71] He later comes to know of her presence, her spirit, travelling with him on board the ship, yet the scene above reminds us as readers that Janet has not really achieved her wish in the form she had pleaded for throughout her life.

Janet is not a man, travelling aboard her ship like her son Joseph to whom the loving spirit has passed and who, because male, is the only one who can truly experience the 'strange indefinable freedom' of the sea, for whom it 'held danger, much beauty, and the elusive quality of unknown things in its keeping'.[72] Joseph's gender positions him, as captain of his ship, as both conqueror of the seas and as provider as he criss-crosses global networks of goods distribution in record time. His wife and family

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relation to gender; Forster, *Daphne du Maurier*, pp. 28, 221–2. It is not surprising, therefore, that rather than a one-off experiment from a first-time novelist, later novels continue to explore supernatural elements as potential solutions. Light recognises 'her later concern with the boundaries of the body and the possibility of the "supernatural"' but it is clear that this is a concern right from the very beginning with her first novel. She also explains that novels written after the Second World War 'sought to find other ways out of the blind alleys into which flights from respectable womanhood seemed to lead. Many of her stories start to look for metaphysical escape routes into a super- or hyper-natural reality'; Light, *Forever England*, pp. 158, 181.

[71] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, pp. 111–12.

[72] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, pp. 129, 111.

are 'make-believe' when he is at sea, where he can experience 'a strange undefinable sense of freedom'.[73] He provides for them but is not tied to them by any other sense of responsibility or duty, returning to Plyn when he pleases and going to sea when he tires of land. Joseph's realisation of the freedom Janet had always desired is due to his being male.

How, then, should we view Janet's spirit, riding the seas as the figurehead of the ship? Light remarks that 'most of du Maurier's stories break the bounds of the "feminine" world of feeling into that of action and incident, answering the call of the wild in another sense'.[74] We could see Janet's transformation in this light, a breaking of the bounds of the body for a spiritual experience at sea: action and movement and adventure as opposed to domesticity and feminine duty. I would argue, however, that aboard ship, where she seems to come closest to the freedom she had desired in life, is when she is most recognisably trapped within a female body, and read as female. This is not in fact a sexless disembodiment: her new body is a wooden, painted representation of a woman. The real figurehead of the *Jane Slade*, now at Ferryside, is a stylised depiction of femininity, heavily made-up and claustrophobically clothed. The figurehead of a ship is a projection—literally, a body projected forth from the front of the ship—of the female form, and a female form as envisaged within the male gaze. Although not the case for Jane's or Janet's figurehead, other female figureheads were often bare-breasted, signalling the display of the female body and the function of the female body as spectacle.[75] Far from manning the ship as she had desired, Janet as figurehead is passive, fixed and captured within patriarchal definitions of femininity. Ultimately, too, she is returned to land and to the domestic location she had intended to escape from, for when the *Janet Coombe* is scrapped, the figurehead, like its alter ego at Ferryside, is attached to the home where she had played out her role as wife and mother.[76]

What both *The Loving Spirit* and *Frenchman's Creek* have in common, then, is that du Maurier constructs Cornwall as a space within which escape from social constructions of gender might be possible. Both Dona and Janet enter the space of the sea in an attempt to outrun the social

[73] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 129.

[74] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 165.

[75] See Silvia Rodgers, 'Feminine Power at Sea', Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, *Royal Anthropological Institute News*, 64 (1984): 1–4, for a discussion of the anthropological reasons for referring to ships as female.

[76] Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, p. 403.

rules that determine their confinement on land. Cornwall's relationship to England and the fluid qualities of that coastal site suggest it as a space in which such an escape might just be possible. Yet that same space, specifically the site of the ship, in the very moment of its potential as enabling emancipation, shows itself to be also a governable site where the social construction of gender applies just as much as it does on land. In *Frenchman's Creek* Dona facilitates this function of the site, closing down the potential of the space generated by her own internalised gendered morality, which has taught her that desiring is inseparable from wantonness. We may want to see Janet's transcendence into the body of the ship as the fulfilment of her desire to be free, escaping land for a life at sea. Yet the site of the ship is never extra-social and she is never outside of a gendered identity or a gendered body.

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Travelling Across Worlds and Texts in A. S. Byatt's Sea Narratives

Barbara Franchi

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.
I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife.

(John Masefield, 'Sea Fever', in Poems, 4th edn. (London, Melbourne and Toronto: Heinemann, 1961), pp. 899–900, ll. 5–10.)

In March 2013 *The Guardian* published 'Sea Story', contemporary novelist A. S. Byatt's latest piece of short fiction; an ecological tale, the narrative focuses on the destructive impact of human activities on the sea

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environment.[1] Its protagonist Harold comes from the Yorkshire fishing town of Filey: by playing on the beach at daytime and falling asleep to the lullaby of John Masefield's 'Sea Fever', he establishes a symbiotic relationship with the sea since his early years.[2]

The sea is the purpose and direction of his existence, so much so that he leaves the Yorkshire coast only briefly to study English literature at Oxford. Here he falls in love with Laura, a marine biologist who, after their brief encounter, embarks on a Greenpeace expedition to study Caribbean fish. Not brave enough to follow her, Harold writes her a love letter in a plastic bottle, which ends up enmeshed in the Caribbean vortex of plastic debris, and kills the animals who mistakenly take it for food. As if to atone for his detrimental attempts to reach her, Harold eventually finds his own way to take action against the destruction of his vital environment: he will follow his vocation as a poet of the sea, and spend his free time on his beloved Filey beach, collecting the deadly trash brought ashore by the waves. Through this didactic tale Byatt explores the power of writing against the environmental crisis: for the world, the sea is depicted as a lost dream, poisoned by industry, selfishness and global travel; for the solitary hero, however, it still proves a faithful companion and a source of artistic inspiration.

Such symbiotic relations between humans and nature, exemplified by the image of a journey across seas of water and literature, are central in two of Byatt's best-known fictions, namely *Angels and Insects* (1992) and *The Biographer's Tale* (2000). In particular, the neo-Victorian diptych *Angels and Insects* is a veritable ocean of sea images which takes the reader on a journey through ancient and nineteenth-century myths of the sea, eventually concluding with a celebration of the infinite, boundless power of literature as the ultimate sea of signification. Through the juxtaposition between two male characters, the English scientist William Adamson and the cosmopolitan Captain Arturo Papagay, the narrative creates a dichotomy between two geographical opposites, the North and the South, as well as between colonial and postcolonial approaches to the sea. The role of mythology and intertextuality becomes the more important, in that the figure of Odysseus, the tireless navigator of ancient Greek origin who reappears under different avatars across the history of European literature, is the major symbol of the seas of stories that are spun in the diptych,

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[1] A. S. Byatt, 'Sea Story', *The Guardian*, 15 March 2013, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/mar/15/as-byatt-short-story-sea [accessed 28 November 2014].

[2] Byatt, 'Sea Story', n.p.

while also representing a crucial cultural reference for the two male characters examined here.

The Biographer's Tale, conversely, is a story of formation, an anti-academic *Bildungsroman* and a journey of self-discovery where the protagonist, the postgraduate student Phineas G. Nanson, shifts away from the disillusionments of critical theory and academic biographies, towards environmental activism and the writing of his own story. Throughout the novel, sea images are key metaphors for Phineas's quest for a place in the world: in particular, the trope of the Maelstrom, the North European vortex of destruction, rebirth and eternal return, is a recurring theme deployed to signify both watery and textual dimensions of the sea. By navigating across seas of water, texts and (scarce) material evidence, Phineas eventually manages to find a productive purpose in life, in the very failure of his academic project. The seas he crosses are not innocent: they make him question the essence of academic research, bound to remain a sterile tracing of the footsteps of great figures of a past, but they also stand as powerful reminders of the same geographical divisions between North and South which occur in *Angels and Insects*.

Intertextuality is one of the most defining features of A. S. Byatt's fiction throughout. Her texts notably integrate a number of literary and artistic references, in a plurality of nuances and crossovers between readers, narrators and writer which Celia Wallhead terms 'polyphony': every Byattian narrative is built as 'an interplay of several texts, permitting the presence of multiple points of view and voices'.[3] Similarly, the seas represented in the narratives analysed here are spaces created by numerous layers of intertextual connections across texts, time and space. Through such interpolated voices, Byatt's fiction does not aim to lose the reader amidst the seas of water and of stories; rather, the intertextual presences serve to raise important questions such as: how does Byatt deploy intertextuality to represent geographical oppositions, colonialism and imperialism? What is the role of writing (and reading) in these fictions?

This chapter examines the intersection between the sea as a space of cultural distance and encounter, and the sea as a place of narration and intertextual links, in 'Morpho Eugenia' and 'The Conjugial Angel', the two novellas forming *Angels and Insects*, and *The Biographer's Tale*. Firstly, I will examine how *Angels and Insects* juxtaposes a colonial sea of discovery, domination and geographical opposition to a postcolonial

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[3] Celia Wallhead, *A. S. Byatt: Essays on the Short Fiction* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 61.

ocean of cross-cultural encounter: special attention will be given to the ancient myth of Odysseus, a major trope across the diptych. Subsequently, I will focus on the role of the intricate sea of literature and mediumship to connect the living and the dead in 'The Conjugial Angel'. Finally, in the third section, I will argue how *The Biographer's Tale* takes the two elements of cross-cultural encounter and literature as a conversation between the living and the dead (authors) to the extreme. While the Maelstrom of useless academic research leads geographical oppositions to a dead end, Phineas's successful quest for himself will provide fresh, positive and productive redefinitions of the boundaries between geographical antipodes, and of the role of writing in shaping one's *Bildung*.

EMPIRE AGAINST ODYSSEUS: WILLIAM ADAMSON AND CAPTAIN PAPAGAY

Angels and Insects is a collection formed by 'Morpho Eugenia' and 'The Conjugial Angel', two historical novellas concerned with Victorian epistemology: published 2 years after Byatt's greatest literary success, the Man Booker Prize-winning *Possession: A Romance*,[4] the diptych represents Byatt's second major exploration of Victorian culture and its legacies on the contemporary.[5]

Byatt represents the past with an aim to be true to the historical time in question, while also asking her contemporary readers to see the past as a metaphor for present concerns. In particular, *Angels and Insects* is constructed around one of the crucial crises of Victorian England, namely the tension between science and religion, or evolutionary theories and spiritualism, which followed the publication of Darwin's *On The Origin of Species* (1859). Sally Shuttleworth maintains that the diptych '[e]xplores Victorian preoccupations with life behind the veil [...]. The pursuit of

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[4] A. S. Byatt, *Possession: A Romance* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990), winner of the 1990 Man Booker Prize. The story of two literary scholars who, in the 1980s, uncover a hidden romance between two fictional Victorian poets, *Possession* is a gripping and clever novel alternating the twentieth-century narrative with documents from and about the nineteenth-century events.

[5] Prior to *Possession: A Romance*, Byatt had published the neo-Victorian short story 'Precipice-Encurled', based on an episode of the poet Robert Browning's life. Although clearly anticipating Byatt's concerns with Victorian culture, which she then fully developed in her subsequent fiction, this short story will not be discussed here. See 'Precipice-Encurled', in A. S. Byatt, *Sugar and Other Stories* (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 185–214.

natural history and of spirit-rappings were both motivated by a desire to extend the boundaries of knowledge, to broaden apprehension beyond the confines of daily life.'[6] The veil stands for the hypocrisies, such as imperialism and the class system, constraining Victorian society, which Byatt criticises in her novellas. In addition, in an age of crisis when humanity seems to have lost ground under its feet, this image cannot but recall Arthur Schopenhauer and his famous 'Maya's veil': an image to indicate that the world is an illusion, perceived through a vision limited by a veil figuratively covering our eyes. When lifted or peeked through, the veil is able to give one a fuller knowledge of the world beyond mere appearance. In the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) Schopenhauer explains how

> If that veil of Maya, the *principium individuationis*, is lifted from the eyes of a man to such an extent that he no longer makes the egoistical distinction between himself and the person of others, […] [i]t is no longer the changing weal and woe of his person that he has in view, but, as he sees through the *principium individuationis*, everything lies equally near [and, we could add, clear], to him.[7]

Schopenhauer speaks of the necessity to see clearly, through and beyond the veil of illusions and superficiality, in order to achieve a noble goal: common good for humanity. His position recalls the hubristic desire shared by two male characters of *Angels and Insects* which leads them to cross the oceans of the globe in order to achieve just such a common good. In particular, the hero of 'Morpho Eugenia', the scientist William Adamson, stands for the imperial, Victorian sea, whereas Captain Arturo Papagay, a fearless sailor experiencing the sea on the edge between life and death, and, appropriately, the only character appearing in both novellas, represents the timeless sea of mythology.

William is a Darwinian entomologist who has travelled the world for scientific discoveries and, upon returning to England in 1859, the year of Darwin's ground-breaking publication, comes to live in the aristocratic

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[6] Sally Shuttleworth, 'Writing Natural History: "Morpho Eugenia"', in Alexa Alfer and Michael J. Noble, eds, *Essays on the Fiction of A. S. Byatt: Imagining the Real* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 147–60, p. 152.

[7] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, ed. Christopher Janaway, Judith Norman and Alistair Welchman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 405.

family of his patrons, the Alabasters. A Victorian man crossing and conquering the sea and the lands beyond it, William has studied and classified insects in the Brazilian tropical forest for his and the Empire's profit: unafraid of the inevitable inconveniences of a life in the Amazons, he has spent 10 years 'of danger and hardship and solitude' and, a true explorer committed to his mission, he has lived without any sort of comfort so that he sees even a pair of shoes or 'clean, soft English beds as the heart of some earthly Bower of Bliss'.[8] William endures all the difficulties expected by such scientific enterprises because, although not militarily, he wants to own his precious discoveries, as best exemplified by his god-like power to give names to the new species of insects he finds. Morpho Eugenia, the butterfly giving the story its title, for instance, is said to be named by William (although not after Eugenia Alabaster, who is eventually going to be his beautiful and equally deceitful wife). In addition, Harald Alabaster, William's sponsor and father-in-law, promises support for another expedition if his name will be given to a new species: 'I might perhaps hope that some monstrous toad or savage-seeming beetle in the jungle floor might immortalise me—Bufo amazoniensis haraldii—Cheops nigrissimum alabastri.'[9]

In her essay 'True Stories and the Facts of Fiction', Byatt explains how her interest in Victorian science, spurred by Victorian novels on the scientific debates of the time, encouraged her to write *Angels and Insects* in the first place. She also defines the naming process of insects as 'a strange and innocent form of colonialism—the Englishman wandering through the Virgin Forest in pursuit of creatures called Menelaus and Helen, Apollo and the Heliconiae, and all the Danaides'.[10] The attribution of Greek names to South American butterflies is certainly fascinating, though I do not consider it innocent: William, as a Victorian man, is performing scientific and linguistic colonialism on an 'Other' land, seen in terms of what Homi Bhabha terms the ambiguous '*difference that is almost the same, but not quite*'.[11] Byatt clearly sticks to her realistic aims, but it is regrettable that she did not problematise the issue of imposing a European name on a non-European animal.

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[8] A. S. Byatt, *Angels and Insects* (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 5, 8.

[9] Byatt, *Angels and Insects*, p. 18.

[10] A. S. Byatt, 'True Stories and the Facts in Fiction', in Alexa Alfer and Michael J. Noble, eds, *Essays on the Fiction of A. S. Byatt. Imagining the Real* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 175–200, p. 194.

[11] Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', *October*, *Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis*, 28 (1984): 125–33, p. 126. Italics in the original text.

William embodies the 'North–South dichotomy', a recurrent feature in Byatt's fiction standing for the difficulty that Byatt's Anglocentric characters have in surmounting cultural differences, and in establishing productive intercultural relationships with fellow human beings from a non-English background. Dense in geographic, socio-political, religious and linguistic connotations, the North–South dichotomy is more complex in 'Morpho Eugenia' than in any other Byattian text because it reflects the imperial division, and distinction, between rulers and ruled, masters and slaves, and between same and Others identified by Bhabha. Moreover, if Gayatri Spivak underlined that '[i]t should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering […] imperialism', then 'Morpho Eugenia' makes the vital connection between British aristocratic domesticity in the North and imperial exploitation, conveniently located in the distant, exotic South, evident.[12]

Within this frame, I read Byatt's hero not only as a linguistic colonialist over the local animals, but also as an imperialist, in particular in his attitude towards the Amazonian tribes, emerging from the accounts about his travels he gives to the Alabaster family. On the one hand, William finds the encounter with the native communities useful: they made him realise how, through travel, 'all beliefs come to seem more—more relative, more tenuous. […] And it led me to wonder what do I not reflect upon, of what important facts am I ignorant in my picture of the world?'[13] Yet, his ideas on Amazonian women suggest a different picture: 'Out there, no woman may touch a snake. They run to ask you to kill one for them. I have been fetched considerable distances to do so.'[14] As a white Englishman, he seems convinced of the superiority of his civilising mission, and he dismisses the Amazonians through the stereotypes of the naive and childish savages in need of the colonialist's help.

The fact that William partially shows an open-minded attitude towards the Other, combined with a strongly dominating attitude towards his work, exposes his position as ambiguously between the Victorian, the colonial and the imperialist, and the neo-Victorian, the postcolonial and the cultural relativist, thus anticipating some of the features which characterise Phineas Nanson, the protagonist of *The Biographer's Tale*. Also, the shift

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[12] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', in *Critical Inquiry*, 12:1 (1985): 243–61, p. 243.

[13] Byatt, *Angels and Insects*, p. 117.

[14] Byatt, *Angels and Insects*, p. 30.

occurring in William between his Northernness, his Englishness, and his openness to the Other connects him to the character who, in *Angels and Insects*, has a symbiotic relationship with the sea, beyond the boundaries of North and South, life and death: Captain Arturo Papagay. The antonym of the colonial project symbolised by William, Papagay is 'one of those apparently insignificant characters who hover on the fringes of a story, yet come to assume significance in a global reading': his marginality underlines how his role is to provide the narrative with a way out of the hierarchies of the Victorian sea.[15] Judith Fletcher convincingly argues how Homer's *Odyssey* is an 'understated […] narrative template' in the diptych and that, through the Captain, in the 'Conjugal Angel' 'Odysseus returns home, as if what was started in *Morpho Eugenia* can now be completed'.[16] I agree with Fletcher's reading, since the Captain's incredible adventures are more relatable to a mythical, immortal hero than to a Victorian seaman: he says himself to have been 'Twice wrecked, […] [o]nce cast away' and, quite astonishingly, he has always miraculously survived.[17]

For this reason, he cannot be treated as a merely human character but, instead, as a mythical, immortal figure out of time and place. The Captain's similarities with Odysseus are patent; however, as Fletcher has failed to see, his mythical ancestor is not exclusively Homer's version of the hero. In fact, Byatt has him pronouncing 'infin che'l mar fu sopra noi richiuso', which is Odysseus's last line in the story he tells Dante and Virgil about his death, in Canto XXVI of Dante's *Inferno*.[18] The first volume of *The Divine Comedy*, the *Inferno* has Dante (the character) travelling across Hell, guided by the Latin poet Virgil.[19]

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[15] Wallhead, *Essays on the Short Fiction*, p. 48.

[16] Judith Fletcher, 'The Odyssey Rewoven: A. S. Byatt's *Angels and Insects*', *Classical and Modern Literature*, 19:3 (1999): 217–31, p. 217.

[17] Byatt, *Angels and Insects*, p. 289, Italian in the original text; a very good translation reads: 'the waters broke above our heads, and closed', in *The Inferno of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Ciaran Carson (New York: New York Review of Books, 2002), p. 185, l. 142.

[18] Byatt, *Angels and Insects*, p. 169; Dante Alighieri, Canto XXVI, in *Inferno*, ed. Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio (Florence: Le Monnier, 1988), p. 391, l. 142.

[19] *The Divine Comedy* is Italian poet Dante Alighieri's (1265–1321) monumental epic poem, dense with allegories and Christian theology. Written approximately between 1308 and 1321, it follows a Florentine man (the poet's alter ego) journeying across the three realms of afterlife (Hell, Purgatory and Heaven) to atone for his errors and to convey this experience to the rest of humanity as a warning.

In Canto XXVI, they encounter the ancient Greek hero in the form of a bi-headed flame, in the circle of false counsellors.[20] Dante's version of the Odyssean myth differs from its Greek pretext: in the *Inferno*, the hero admits how, after his decade-long peregrinations across the Mediterranean (depicted in the *Odyssey*), he decided to embark on a final voyage. Because he persuaded his companions to follow him in his concluding adventure, Odysseus is condemned to burn forever in Hell: his sin lies therefore in his hubristic desire to challenge the boundaries of human nature, but most of all in his rhetoric ability in convincing others, his fellow men, to fulfil their curiosity instead of accepting the social order of the world.[21]

Odysseus's hubris in Dante's text, which drove him to lift Maya's veil and see what was beyond the end of the known world out of a desire for knowledge, is also Captain Papagay's hubris in Byatt's rendering. However, the two characters differ in their final aims. In Dante's *Inferno*, Odysseus famously declares:

> Remember who you are, what you were made for:
>   not to live like brutes, but for the quest
>   of knowledge and the good.[22]

Despite the overt admiration that Dante (the author and the character) expresses for Odysseus and his insatiable curiosity, the fact that the Greek hero is placed in Hell underlines how defying the subaltern position of humanity to a greater order is considered a worse fault than pursuing knowledge at all costs. Similarly to Dante's Odysseus, in Byatt the

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[20] In the circle of false counsellors, sinners are deprived of their bodies and, reduced to souls, are condemned to burn for eternity. They are thus punished by divine justice because of their ardour and zeal in persuading others to commit evil, hence the fire imagery.

[21] In medieval Christian theology, the world was perceived following the Ptolemaic conception, namely that the earth was flat, created by God, and ended after the Western extremities of the Mediterranean Sea, known as the Pillars of Hercules.

[22] Dante, *The Inferno of Dante Alighieri*, p. 184, ll. 118–20. The original Italian reads: 'Considerate la vostra semenza: / fatti non foste per viver come bruti / ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza.' Dante, *Inferno*, ed. Bosco and Reggio, p. 389, ll. 118–20. Hill and Mazzotta, among others, have stressed how this passage is the primary inspiration for Tennyson's own 1833 poem 'Ulysses'. See *Tennyson's Poetry*, 2nd edn., ed. Robert W. Hill, Jr. (New York: Norton, 1999), p. 82, and Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Michael Palma and ed. Giuseppe Mazzotta (New York: Norton, 2008), p. 98.

Captain's hubris pushes him to go further and to challenge nature, fate, fortune, and all natural and supernatural entities, but without being condemned in the end. Contrary to Dante, Byatt eventually rewards him by giving him the chance to survive and to come back to his beloved wife.

Byatt describes Papagay as 'a master mariner of mixed racial origin', with 'a rich, mixed smile, white teeth in a golden-brown face, laughing dark eyes': his very appearance stands in stark contrast to the difference between William's Northern, imperial attitude and the Other nature of Amazonian tribes. In addition, the Captain's travels have covered so many different places that it is through his stories that he has courted and won the heart of his wife, the English medium Lilias Papagay.[23] Considering his prominent position within the imperial administration, it is tempting to read the Captain as an integrated non-Englishman, 'a reformed, recognizable Other' who mocks, through imitation and acculturation, the colonial power's culture.[24] However, this interpretation alone is not sufficient, as his postmodern and post-racial nature is in itself a mockery of the hierarchical values of imperial trade and cultural encounters. Arturo clearly risks his life every day in his voyages at sea, and he remains the captain of a British ship whose name, *Calypsos*, is significant both within the Odyssean and the imperial tradition.[25] Nonetheless, in the end he survives and manages to return home, not because he owns the sea in imperial terms, but thanks to his mythical ancestry: for him, the common good to be obtained beyond Maya's veil, beyond the known world, is different from that of the flag under which he serves: he travels and defies death solely for himself and his wife. Instead of a ruling and conquering mariner, he is a pilgrim devoted to the sea, an undying Odysseus whose home is not England, but the seas he crosses to encounter new stories, goods and civilisations.

[23] Byatt, *Angels and Insects*, pp. 168, 160.

[24] Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', p. 126.

[25] In the *Odyssey*, Calypso is a nymph who detains Odysseus in a cave on a Mediterranean island for several years before releasing him to his journey home and his destiny. Calypso is also a music and dance tradition from Trinidad and Tobago which testifies to the multicultural environment and the colonial history of the Caribbean archipelago: sung both in English and patois, Calypso's main influences are music of the West African slave communities and French music.

Literature and Memory as Mediums
in 'The Conjugial Angel'

As a writer for whom '[w]riting is reading and reading is writing', Byatt constructs her second novella around a clever stream of intertextuality, to symbolise the connection that literature creates between the living and the dead.[26] Focusing on a spiritualist group in Margate in the 1870s, 'The Conjugial Angel', as the counterpart of 'Morpho Eugenia', focuses on two women and their search for their spiritual, or 'conjugial' counterpart. On the one hand, Lilias Papagay, the Captain's wife, has turned to mediumship for consolation and for a living, and is convinced she has become a widow. She has even taken in another medium as a lodger, the young and talented Sophy Sheekhy. Quite the opposite is the case for Emily Tennyson Jesse, the Laureate poet's sister who, in real life, was engaged to the very Arthur Hallam later to be immortalised by Alfred Tennyson in *In Memoriam*. Past memories of Hallam, shared by the middle-aged Emily and her brother Alfred, who also briefly appears as a character, and marked by the recurring presence of stanzas from the elegy (given in the text) stand for the tragic and deadly water continuously oscillating between the living and the dead.

Byatt quotes excerpts from the letter Henry Elton, Hallam's uncle, wrote to Tennyson to inform him about Arthur's death: '*Your friend, Sir, and my much loved Nephew, Arthur Hallam, is no more […] He died at Vienna on his return from Buda, by Apoplexy, and I believe his Remains come by Sea from Trieste.*'[27] The fact that Hallam's corpse is transported via water is interesting in that it attributes a new role to the sea, namely that of a medium which literally brings the dead to their beloved ones. The sea of Odysseus's infinite possibilities thus becomes a way to transport dead bodies, and stands for the ultimate metaphor of what the Italian Romantic poet Ugo Foscolo called 'Celestial / […] communion with the cherished dead'.[28] Foscolo refers here to the special relationship between living and dead which tombs, memorials and monuments bring to us, and Byatt

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[26] A. S. Byatt, *Passions of the Mind: Selected Writings* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1991), p. xiv.

[27] Byatt, *Angels and Insects*, p. 187. Quoted from 'Henry Elton to Alfred Tennyson', in Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon, Jr., eds, *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson: Volume 1, 1821–1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 93 [1 October 1833].

[28] Ugo Foscolo, *The Sepulchres*, in John Lindon, 'Englishing Foscolo's *Sepolcri* (with a bicentenary translation)', *The Italianist*, 28:1 (2008): 162–76, p. 170, ll. 29–30.

writes this novella as a wonderful genealogy of literary monuments. Lord Alfred Tennyson and his *In Memoriam* are the most patent monument of this kind; the poet is also a further connection with Dante, who stands for the second literary monument in the text.

Both Emily and Alfred remember reading and discussing the *Vita Nuova* and the *Comedy* with Hallam, and through the evocation of Dante a problematic, triangular relationship among the three young persons is implied.[29] Emily was not always allowed to share the literary and philosophical discussions of the two men, and Byatt hints at a possible homosexual relationship between Arthur and Alfred, epitomised, once again, by literary *Doppelgangers*. Alfred

> wanted Arthur to be like the Beatrice of Dante's Paradise. […] And quickly, quickly, the life of the poem itself slipped into the truth of qualification. […] But it was not Beatrice, but the doomed lovers, Paolo and Francesca, whose intertwined souls in their glimmering hellish flame had roused such pity, such sensuous pleasure, in generations of Dante's readers.[30]

So, the literary ancestry of Byatt's characters includes Dante and Beatrice, but most of all the famous and tragic romance of Paolo and Francesca who, in Canto V of the *Inferno* tell of how they were killed while reading another famous and tragic romance, that of Lancelot and Guinevere. Byatt thus identifies a pattern, a path of loss, tragedy and creativity which connects both past and, for the Victorian time of narration, contemporary relationships.

I read the references to the *Comedy* and the *Vita Nuova* therefore within Byatt's aim of representing continuity, a conjugal relation, between the famous (but dead) lovers Dante and Beatrice, Paolo and Francesca, and the (for Byatt and us, her contemporary readers, the equally long-dead) Alfred Tennyson, Arthur Hallam and Emily Tennyson Jesse. Through the legacy that the literary relations trace between writers and readers, 'Byatt is examining precisely what it means for a writer and their work to exist "in some uneasy relation to the afterlife" of prior texts'.[31] The narrative thus

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[29] The *Vita Nuova* is a collection of Dante's poetry in which the poet tells the story of his love for Beatrice, from his early passion to his grief over her premature death. For further contextual information, see Barbara Reynold's excellent 'Introduction' to the text, in Dante, *Vita Nuova*, 3rd edn., trans. Barbara Reynolds (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. xiii–xxix.

[30] Byatt, *Angels and Insects*, p. 267.

[31] Andrew Williamson, '"The Dead Man Touch'd Me From the Past": Reading as Mourning, Mourning as Reading in A. S. Byatt's "The Conjugial Angel"', *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 1:1 (2008): 110–37, p. 115.

creates an ironic relationship between the power of mediums to evoke the spirits of past men and women, and the power of literary filiation in connecting the dead with the living.

Since literature, unlike human mediums, has the power to eternalise for far more generations to come than a spiritualist séance, the writer Byatt ultimately represents the living medium herself. She cleverly describes her medium Lilias Papagay as a lover of stories who even tries to write a novel, and as 'an intelligent, questioning kind of woman, the kind who, in an earlier age, would have been a theologically minded nun, and in a later one would have had university training in philosophy or psychology or medicine'.[32] According to Kathleen Coyne Kelly, by depicting the 'artist as medium […] Byatt is once again having her postmodern cake: she imagines "mediums" within the novella while she is the "medium" who creates the novella.'[33] So, if death in 'The Conjugial Angel' is a natural though tragic presence separating and disjoining human beings, it is necessarily interwoven with seas of memory, writing and imagination.

Byatt's novellas are not classifiable as postmodern *tout court*, though, since the pastiche, the intertextual play and the interweaving of several layers of narration serve to celebrate the power of writing, significantly juxtaposed to the colonial element underlying the diptych. The postmodern dimension of *Angels and Insects*, therefore, is functional in conveying a crucial discourse: if boundaries between North and South, as well as between the realm of the living and the dead, exist and are hard to overcome, literature represents the best possibility to create dialogue instead of divisions.

The Vertiginous Closing of the Circle: *The Biographer's Tale*

This sea of myths and literary references, home to the immortal Captain, is a major feature also in Byatt's second sea narrative analysed here, *The Biographer's Tale*, an anti-academic novel of formation narrating the process of development, acculturation and social integration of a contemporary postgraduate student. Disillusioned by literary research, Phineas G. Nanson will eventually find his way outside of academia. As the title suggests, writing, literature and in particular the art of biography are the

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[32] Byatt, *Angels and Insects*, p. 170.
[33] Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *A. S. Byatt* (New York: Twayne, 1996), p. 107.

central issues explored by *The Biographer's Tale* as well as the points around which Phineas's existence, narrated in the first person, is constructed.

At first disappointed by post-structuralism, Phineas feels that he needs 'a life full of *things*. [...] Full of facts'; he therefore abandons his doctoral thesis and turns instead to writing the biography of a fictitious scholar, Scholes Destry-Scholes.[34] This new task proves more interesting and challenging than literary theory, if only for the fact that it gives Phineas the excitement of working with real objects and manuscripts dense with historical value. In the end, however, this project is as unsuccessful as his previous one, in that it leads to a complete lack of certainty, and a significant amount of '*almost* solid evidence', which is not sufficient for the production of the complete, authoritative biography he would like to write.[35] The scarcity of his findings resembles more a postmodern puzzle or a 'mosaic-making' process than well-structured biographical research, and ironically symbolises the protagonist's impossibility of escaping the very constrictions he thought he had left for good.[36] He eventually finds himself in vertiginous chaos: 'everything in the text intentionally appears fragmented, open-ended, and incomplete, down to the central symbol of the "Maelstrom" that is searched for, and variously fictionalised', coveted, sought, and when (and if) finally reached, it gives one either death or rebirth.[37]

The Maelstrom itself makes its appearance quite early in Phineas's research: he discovers that Destry-Scholes died in the vortex, in the Norwegian Sea, some 30 years earlier. Intrigued by this anecdotal information, Phineas suddenly sees the vortex in the middle of London: 'I was in one of those little streets around Bond Street, when I saw the Maelstrom.'[38] A miniature paper reproduction in a Travel Agency's window where he will eventually find a part-time job, this encounter with the vortex is primarily ironic, lending the passage a humorous tone. This moment is also significant because it underlines how Phineas's attempts to forsake academia and abstractness leads inevitably to other worlds and new adventures made of paper. When deciding to interrupt his research, Phineas comes to realise how 'one of the few facts I had about Scholes Destry-Scholes was that he had perhaps drowned in the Maelstrom': he ended up right where he had

[34] A. S. Byatt, *The Biographer's Tale* (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 4.

[35] Byatt, *The Biographer's Tale*, p. 149.

[36] Byatt, *The Biographer's Tale*, p. 2.

[37] Carla Rodríguez Gonzáles, 'A Dialogue with Literary Theory: A. S. Byatt's *The Biographer's Tale*', *English Studies*, 89:4 (2008): 447–60, p. 449.

[38] Byatt, *The Biographer's Tale*, p. 105.

started, as if he had been floating within a paper funnel to no purpose.[39] It is through this circular movement that the Maelstrom creates a series of powerful connections between biographer, biographee and the latter's own subjects of research, in a vertiginous accumulation of cross-textual parallels which resemble the shape of the vortex itself.

The image of the vortex involves at least three characters and their texts, embedded within the main narrative: Destry-Scholes, who operates as the link between the other two, could be positioned at the bottom of the vortex, where he is thought to have died. The walls of the vortex, conversely, see his research subjects, especially Linnaeus, whose own travel accounts and his desire to see the Maelstrom are what inspired Destry-Scholes to travel north in the first place, and to start writing a fictive biography of the Swedish taxonomist. Finally, Scholes's own aspiring biographer Phineas is a figure floating towards the opening of the vortex, swimming and struggling not to be overhauled by the layers of paper, stories and people below him. The hero eventually gives his farewell to biography and academia by reaching the very spot himself:

> Tomorrow […] we shall take an accompanied boat trip to the island of Mosken, and take a look—from a safe distance—at the Moskenes Current, the Maelstrom. I suppose this is why I have been unable to resist the urge to start scribbling again (did I say that Destry-Scholes's fabrication of Linnaeus's fabrication of his visit to the Maelstrom was a pastiche of Edgar Allan Poe?). I shall look at the current—I can imagine its heaving and racing and rushing and suck, but what I shall see will be different—and I shall know no more than I know now about the whereabouts of Destry-Scholes.[40]

This passage highlights how the metatextual and intertextual references connect the three characters of Phineas, Destry-Scholes and Linnaeus to one another, while inserting them within an even larger literary community constructed around the vortex. In a different passage of the novel, Poe's Maelstrom, which is mentioned above, is compared to 'the same hole as Dante's Ulysses went down'.[41] So, the Maelstrom also re-evokes the mythical motif of Odysseus, in very similar terms to those previously discussed with regards to *Angels and Insects*: it symbolises a desire for defying boundaries, to the end of the world. Whereas Destry-Scholes's

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[39] Byatt, *The Biographer's Tale*, p. 246.
[40] Byatt, *The Biographer's Tale*, p. 256.
[41] Byatt, *The Biographer's Tale*, p. 248.

death in the funnel parallels Odysseus's hubristic enterprise in Dante, the role of Phineas, as a scholar, mirrors those of the medium Lilias Papagay and Tennyson, who capture voices from the afterlife (such as Dante's, Hallam's and the Captain's, all evoked either through their texts or during séances), and try to convey them to their audiences or onto paper.

The vortex stands for a series of binary oppositions within the text: in fact, it has 'itself become a multiple signifier—of the natural and the artificial, of the real and the mythic, of the deadly and the beautiful, and of the compelling force of narrative itself'.[42] However, Phineas seeing the Maelstrom is also the interruption of the system of literary filiations in which he had sought to orientate himself: he comes to realise that this vortex of biographical information (or, rather, lack of it) has brought him back to where he started, in a circular movement which made him only understand that writing a biography based on facts and truth is impossible. By detaching himself, physically and mentally, from the Maelstrom where Destry-Scholes drowned, Phineas distances himself from Odysseus's model, hence from the self-referential dimension of literature as well. Unlike Captain Papagay in *Angels and Insects*, he is not an immortal hero, but an ordinary young man finding his destiny as 'an advocate for the threatened natural world', and an autobiographer.[43] His status as a hero is then to be found in his ability to overcome the North–South dichotomy which has precluded the Victorian and imperialist William from a fuller understanding and integration within the South. As Annegret Maack suggests, 'Phineas has to learn that […] he is working on his own life story': it is outside of intertextual repetition and referencing that he is thus able to complete his process of formation, which he has already written down, in the form of an autobiography, *The Biographer's Tale*.[44]

Wallhead convincingly argues how '*The Biographer's Tale* is Phineas's *Bildungsroman*, an account of the process whereby he is transformed from an innocent into a writer'.[45] In the wake of the heroes and heroines from the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* tradition, Phineas accomplishes his *Bildung* through writing the self, himself, and through a rediscovery

[42] Jane Campbell, *A. S. Byatt and the Heliotropic Imagination* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004), p. 228.

[43] Campbell, *Heliotropic Imagination*, p. 216.

[44] Annegret Maack, 'Analogy and Contiguity: A. S. Byatt's *The Biographer's Tale*', *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate*, 13:3 (2003/4): 276–88, p. 283.

[45] Celia Wallhead, 'Metaphors for the Self in A. S. Byatt's *The Biographer's Tale*', *Language and Literature*, 12:4 (2003): 291–308, p. 293.

of material reality made of the insects, smells, noises and pages encountered through his own experiences.[46] The Maelstrom eventually ceases to be the luring, dangerous point of no return (although it had been so for Destry-Scholes), and becomes the source of a new form of writing and of a new existence instead. According to Maack, 'The maelstrom in which Destry-Scholes presumably drowned, which Linnaeus never reached, is the destination of Phineas's own journey, and it is an image for the novel at hand.'[47] I agree with this reading, in that the Maelstrom has positive, creative connotations for Phineas while for Destry-Scholes it was exclusively a point of no return. It is only by confronting the Maelstrom that Phineas is able to start over again, turn the vortex into a flow of writing and reshape his existence away from authors long dead.

Phineas's process of formation, however, cannot be complete without his coming to terms with the geographical dichotomy explored in the text: on the one hand, the Maelstrom is in the North, in cold and desolate Scandinavia, which, like England (in particular through its tedious academic world), is the symbol of intellectual sterility and useless research. The South, conversely, becomes for Phineas the land of opportunities, where he is free to express his own desire for 'things' while also rediscovering his passion for writing. The opposition between North and South portrayed in *Angels and Insects* is therefore rearticulated and challenged in *The Biographer's Tale*: the North is the source of Phineas's biographical endeavours, but it also symbolises the dangerous and dead ends of fruitless, self-referential research. As an Englishman, the North is his birthplace, but it is by moving South, to Turkey, that he ultimately finds himself, away from his native cultural background. In the postmodern and postcolonial world of the late twentieth century, his identity and sense of belonging are not necessarily defined by his Englishness and his academic training; instead, it is by detaching himself from his Northern origins and choosing the South, that Phineas is able to redefine the meaning of home, as the place where he can be himself and fulfil his ambitions.

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[46] The best introduction to the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* tradition is Franco Moretti's *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (New York: Verso, 1989). Conversely, Susan Fraiman's *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) provides fascinating insights into the female *Bildungsroman* as a genre of collective possibilities and failures, in opposition to the solipsistic, individual quest Moretti identifies. Both Moretti's and Fraiman's readings of the *Bildungsroman* very much resonate with Phineas's own path, marked by a series of abortive attempts which eventually lead him to the possibility of fulfilment.

[47] Maack, 'Analogy and Contiguity', p. 284.

Phineas's encounters with two antithetical women, the English radiographer Vera Alphage and the Swedish biologist Fulla Biefeld, who also provide material for his research, are crucial in his challenge of the North–South dichotomy. It is thanks to Vera and Fulla that he eventually decides to become a research assistant on pollination projects and finds his true vocation in writing the story of his own life. Interestingly, the two women influencing Phineas are both scientists who interpret the world through the frame of taxonomic classifications and stand in contrast with Phineas's literary interests. Yet, apart from their similar scientific approach, Vera and Fulla could not differ more: the first is reserved and solitary, whereas the second is friendly and warm-hearted. The cold, solitary Englishwoman Vera represents the North, whereas the talkative and self-conscious Swedish woman Fulla comes from the North, but has also the animosity and warmth of the South. The two women's geographical locations are associated to Phineas through his (and Destry-Scholes's) research interests: Vera is the niece of the scholar Destry-Scholes whose biography Phineas attempts to write, while Fulla is an authority on Linnaeus, one of Destry-Scholes's potential biographees. Vera and Fulla are also geographically determined by their relationship to Phineas, who stands as a balance between the two, and the journeys they undertake with him in the two endings the narrative provides: Vera becomes even more Northern than Fulla in the first conclusion, through the journey to the Lofoten Islands she undertakes with Phineas to search for the Maelstrom in which Destry-Scholes allegedly died.

Yet, it is necessary to analyse the last scene or the second ending of the novel, where Phineas is in Turkey with Fulla. The couple are researching the pollinators of tulips, the national flower of Turkey, and anemones. Fulla's skin has become bronzed by the sun and she feels at home on the Anatolian hillside. In addition, her name links her to the goddesses of the Earth and Fertility which can be found in the North as in the South, in Germanic tradition as well as in Mediterranean cultures and worldwide. Phineas explains how:

> I have just time to remember that Fulla is the name of a minor goddess—a handmaid of Frigga, who kept the jewels of the Queen of Heaven, and spent her time tending woodland and forests, fruit trees and hives, cloudberries, blackberries and golden apples.[48]

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[48] Byatt, *The Biographer's Tale*, p. 260.

Fulla is thus assimilated into the supernatural, transnational dimension of Captain Papagay in *Angels and Insects*. Her appearance and her work transform her into a modern version of the divinity whose name she bears: if in mythologies the goddesses of the Earth were in charge of the harvests and the changing of the seasons, in our contemporary world biologists who study how pollination affects natural environments represent the evolution of such ancient models.

Wallhead maintains that Phineas's shifting between Vera and Fulla proves that he cannot choose one lover and wants to keep both, thus paralleling the invented Victorian scholar whose biography was written by Destry-Scholes, Sir Elmer Bole, who had 'two complementary wives', one in England and one in Turkey.[49] However, such an interpretation is not complete: the fact that the very last page has Phineas interrupting his writing after describing his work with Fulla seems to me that he has chosen her after all. By preferring the biologist over the radiologist, hence life over dead things, Phineas becomes part of the cross-cultural world embodied by Fulla and stands for the only character in Byatt who abandons, consciously, his Northernness for a more global, less nationally limited, perspective. Phineas's failure as a biographer is also his non-failure as a character, who is at times a caring and admiring partner, an active and environmentally-conscious researcher, an author and a fully formed literary persona.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to show how, in Byatt's sea narratives, ships and shipwrecks, explorations of Northern and Southern seas, and the voices of sea currents and Maelstroms are intricate and infinite webs of intertextuality, functional to the writing processes of the self through stories. If *Angels and Insects* portrays the opposition between imperialism and post-racialism, the self-discovery process undertaken by Phineas in *The Biographer's Tale* represents the (un)fruitfulness of seas of stories and narrations. The closure of this novel declares the end of academic research and the beginning of a new, practical way of life—and of a new way of writing. Biography becomes *autobiography*, a writing of the self and an examination of one's complex interiority and its vertiginous convolutions: for its concrete, quasi-scientific approach, autobiography acquires the same essence of the 'things' that Phineas longs for and gives him a mean-

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[49] Wallhead, 'Metaphors for the Self', p. 303.

ing, a scope, an aim worth pursuing. Moreover, as a writer and an ecological activist, he anticipates the figure of Harold, the sea poet in 'Sea Story', who contributes to the preservation of biodiversity in the sea through his practical work and his own verses: as in the short story, in *The Biographer's Tale* the writing of literature does not only have the power to bring the living back to life, but it also becomes a call for action, for the survival of a polluted planet.

A crucial point in both *Angels and Insects* and *The Biographer's Tale* is therefore represented by the characters' ability to turn the sea of literature into a sea of life. By claiming and finding his own self, when and only as long as the myths and the idolised authors are dead, Phineas, in *The Biographer's Tale* manages to create his own place in the world beyond the page and beyond the shadow of those being written about. Conversely, in *Angels and Insects* William Adamson is destined to drown, just like Destry-Scholes, not in the Maelstrom but in the Southern Seas on his way to the Amazons. His one-sided, colonial attitude, which ties him to the Victorian myth of the sea he embodies, condemns him to leave his taxonomy unfinished and his existence to be a sea journey with no return.

The supernatural Captain Papagay from the diptych, once again, stands as the balance point between the opposed attitudes represented by Phineas and William. On the one hand, Papagay returns to his wife, so we might infer that he starts a new life made of things, like Phineas. On the other hand, however, the fact that he is the last descendant of an ancient genealogy constructed around the mythical Odyssean sea leaves him on the threshold between a happy ending and the infinite possibilities of setting off again, on new journeys and adventures and of writing new stories. Consider the closing passage of 'The Conjugial Angel', where the Captain's final reunion with his wife is described:

> And Sophy Sheekhy stood under the lamp, watching the two of them becoming more and more entangled in one, as they clutched and babbled. And she thought of all the people in the world whose arms are aching and empty to hold the dead, and of how in stories, and *very occasionally in sober facts*, the cold and the sea give back what they have taken, or appear to have taken […] [emphasis added].[50]

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[50] Byatt, *Angels and Insects*, p. 290.

Despite Captain Papagay's sensual return, the text ends with yet another reference to literature: his return home, like the conclusion of Phineas's *Bildung* in *The Biographer's Tale*, stands also for new beginnings, be they in the eternal ocean of intercultural encounter, or in a Northern vortex, or beyond. For Captain Papagay, for Phineas and for Harold, who manage to combine the dimension of real things, objects and animals with the creative imagination, there will always be new seas to explore and new stories to tell.

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Unveiling the Anthropo(s)cene: Burning Seas, Cinema of Mourning and the Globalisation of Apocalypse

Sayandeb Chowdhury

> *Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood/Clean from my hand?*
> *No; this my hand will rather/The multitudinous seas incarnadine,/*
> *Making the green one red.*
>
> William Shakespeare, Macbeth

In 1995, the Grand Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival went to Theo Angelopoulos's haunting epic *Ulysses' Gaze*—now considered a major classic of late modern European cinema. In the opening scene of this film, a placid, pale blue nineteenth-century topsail schooner floats leisurely somewhere off the coast of Greece. This uncut long take—often habitual with Angelopoulos—connects the dying, mid-twentieth-century minutes of a forgotten Greek filmmaker with 'A', an emigrant film director, who undertakes an Ulyssian journey across the war-torn, war-tense landscape

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of post-Communist Balkans. His journey plots the film. In the same year, continents apart, a despondent, estranged couple, short of hope in a violent world, retreats to the sea somewhere on the eastern coast of India hoping, mistakenly, that the sea would offer them one last chance at reconciliation, only to be pulverised by an apocalyptic dénouement. This is the story of Aparna Sen's *Yugant*.[1] Widely different in languages and culture and perhaps also as works of art, the two films mourn the dying of light in a planet tiptoeing on the edge of irreparable transformation. Both end on a note of miserable tragedy, undone by catastrophic losses. The films manage to provoke an intellectual and contemplative claim towards understanding ecologically immanent spaces—the Danube in *Ulysses' Gaze*, the Bay of Bengal in *Yugant*—as symptomatically under the weight and weather of fin-de-siècle triumphalism of the 'end-of-history' version of global capitalism.

In fact by the mid-1990s, world cinema, in a major way, was already responding to the doom-and-bust of globalisation. A critique of globalisation as a universalist rhetoric—full of bullying Americana and unmindful of localisms —was already emerging from various zeitgeist perspectives. Fukuyama and the World Bank, the GATT treaty, contestations over natural resources, spectres of ecological catastrophe, Communism's retreat from the global public, the Yugoslav Wars and the restive Gulf region, and the multinational nature of market-driven corporate profiteering, were together signifying lasting changes to the global economic and political order. On the one hand was the all-pervasive authority of multinational empires; on the other, the spectacular hyper-technologisation of civilisation. Cultural practices too, had to strategise their responses. The pair of films above should be seen as representative of two very different practices but merging at the common apex as powerful tragedies, tragedies that connect disparate corners of this new, epistemic epoch. In other words, these two films, along with several others of that period—*The Truman Show*, *Ermo*, *Underground*, *Happy Together*, *From The East*, *Irma Vep*, *Lessons of Darkness*, *Goodbye Lenin* and *Babel*—should be seen not just as responses to the effects of globalisation but also as connected by their collective sense of displacement, loss and mourning.

What draws me to the film in question, Sen's *Yugant*, is not only its self-conscious participation in the ongoing discourses on globalisation, either in India or in the West. What draws me rather is the film's early

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[1] 'Yugant' literally means end of an era. The official English title of the film is *What the Sea Said*.

and prophetic exposition of the idea of the Anthropocene, to which the sciences and critical humanities disciplines have only recently turned.[2] An Indian independent filmmaker of considerable repute, Aparna Sen's two early films, *36 Chowringhee Lane* (1981) and *Parama* (1984), with their evocation of the margins of middle-class life in Calcutta, were also seen as sharpened instruments of provocation. Rightly so, they are now considered significant milestones of their time.[3] With the exception of two tele-films, Sen made just one feature film *Yugant*, between *Parama* in 1984 and her first commercial success, *Paromitar Ek Din* (*House of Memories*) in 2000. The latter is a watershed in her career thanks to its receiving an enthusiastic popular response and it marks the beginning of a comfortable and prolific period.

Yugant hence arrived at a period that could be called a relative low point in her career. An unfailing narrative of the sea, *Yugant* traces its descent by exploring the topographic, ecological and cultural possibilities inherent in anthropologically non-denominational spaces like the beach and the sea. The film's popular and critical response has remained, likewise, muted. But the intellectual, polemical value of the film has only increased over the years, thanks to its surprisingly prescient and apocalyptic visualisation of a brutal world order and because it finds increasing traction in an afterlife that resists generic distinctions.

This chapter will attempt to revisit the film from a 20-year distance and evaluate its cultural and polemical value as one of the earliest responses to both globalisation and the Anthropocene from the Global South. To that end, the discussion will be less concerned with the aesthetics, techniques and cinematic richness of the film and more with its discursive strategy as a narrative of the sea, its cultural effect and its contextual nonconformity.

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[2] The Anthropocene has been defined as rapid, anthropogenic changes to the climate, land, oceans and biosphere signifying the possibility of a new geological epoch that is defined by human action and capacity to bring major and irretrievable shifts of unseen scale, magnitude and significance to the environment, particularly in the context of the Earth's geological history. For a detailed understanding of the concept, see Jan Zalasiewicz, Mark Williams, Alan Haywood and Michael Ellis, 'The Anthropocene: A New Epoch of Geological Time?' *Philosophical Transactions: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences*, 369:1938 (2011): 835–41.

[3] For further discussions on Sen's cinema, see Sayandeb Chowdhury, 'Postal Failure: Aparna Sen's 'The Japanese Wife' Disappoints', *Moving Arts Journal*, published online 19 May 2010. http://www.themovingarts.com/postal-failure-aparna-sens-the-japanese-wife-disappoints/[accessed January 20, 2015].

The Film in Which the Sea Catches Fire

Yugant sets the tone with a quote from the *adiparba* or the opening chapters of the epic *The Mahabharata*: 'The end of the days of glory are over,' Bedavyasa says to the mourning Satyabati, 'the planet is past its prime. Now, days of sin are going to come.'[4] The title of the film and its contemporary evocation of *end of time* are hence evidently indicated through the invocation of the epic, which is a mediation on life, time, death and eternity, as all epics invariably are.

Yugant is set in the early years of the 1990s, months into the Gulf War. An estranged couple meet several months after their separation at a faraway, forlorn beach on the Indian east coast. This is the same beach and rest house that the couple had honeymooned in 17 years previously. They have in recent years fallen apart, grown increasingly strangers to each other and have left Calcutta, their conjugal city, to settle in Bombay and Cuttack respectively. The man, Deepak, a late-forties advertising executive, is quietly aware of what he calls the superficiality of his profession and is mildly fatalistic about the continuity of life on an increasingly fragile planet. He lets a streak of existential torment run through his veins. He has always been a phlegmatic observer of the business of life, managing to tread softly even on his own trials, especially with his wife. When he arrives at the beach house we find him even more unencumbered, having left his comfortable job as a reputed copywriter to concentrate on finishing his work of fiction. In short, he has learnt, over the years, to let go.

The woman, Anusuya, has gone the other way. When we meet her, she is a noted performer of the traditional Odissi classical dance form, running her own academy, whose current fame rests on years of struggle and prudent compromises that come naturally to an artiste seeking patronage for her art. From a youthful woman of the past, she has grown into a hardened professional who is deeply committed to her craft; unhesitant in exploiting contentious ideas as long as they can be put to use in her art.

In the opening scene, as Deepu picks up Anu, as they refer to each other, from the railway station and head towards the beachside guest house, the fragile, edgy nature of the relationship is hinted at, while we are sensitised to the heaviness of lapsed time between their last visit to this town, their days of living together and the forced acceptance of their current state of isolation. Anu and Deepu seem to have made the plan of

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[4] *Yugant*; 00:48–00:54.

re-invoking the idyll of their honeymooning past to make one last attempt at salvaging their present. Yet, they have reached a period in life in which they cannot overemphasise their hope of reconciliation. They can only hint at their own conditions to understand if there is still room for the two of them together in each of their lives. The film's Bergmanesque disposition is obvious and defines the film's premise.

The narrative never explicitly reveals either the final circumstances of their separation or the pre-conditions of their present assignment. Hence the couple do not reveal any desired outcome from the seaside return. What we see instead is a gradual unravelling of their relationship over a period of time: a relationship of two urbane, educated, admirably sensitive human beings who have grown apart from each other over the years, unable to find a common, conjugal space of habitation. The narrative uncouples the couple from any extended familial surroundings and resists any temptation to expand into a social drama that contextualises their conjugality. Even in the flashback scenes, when their strained conjugality is dissected, the narrative foregoes the obligatory choric voices. The only other significant presence is that of Anu's brother, an eco-activist, who is murdered by a capital-political cartel in a neighbouring state while resisting the building of a riverine dam. Even if this is not a unique premise, it is certainly rare in Bengali, albeit Indian cinema, to de-socialise and de-populate conjugality and instead examine it as a consensual coda of two individuals' temper, temptation and torment.

The film is structurally, though not chronologically, divided into the present moment of estrangement, the near past of conjugality and the identifiably innocent past of romance. The middle section is punctuated with discord and diatribe, precocious abortions, sudden setting-in of impotency, agitations over mutually exclusive ambitions, steady disintegration of relationship, gradual usurpation of entrenched middle-class moorings and so on. The sea connects the cinematic present time with memories of the honeymoon, both having been spent at the same beach resort. As they arrive at their destination in the present, the couple expects the sea's powers to wash away the distance that has ballooned between them. The expectation is not articulated till the end, but only hinted at, not least through the fact that the same sparse beach was their honeymooning destination 17 years ago. As the day in the present unfolds, the film travels to the past to hint at a distant and innocent time when the sea, as a narrative and scopic motif, provided the equivalent of a romantic idyll. The sea's easy resonance with a sense of the romance is explored through

flashbacks of Anu's leisurely bathing, her impulsive choreography on the beach and their bonding over a swept-away conch listening to the sounds of the sea inside it. In these scenes of the past, Deepu remains at a distance from the sea, anxious about Anu's easy charity with the ocean while himself being intimidated by its expanse.

But as the present day unfolds, it becomes clear that the sea has failed to either calm or seduce them. They stay at a distance from the water's edge, merely watching its apparent, immanent immutability. Later in the day, Deepu is startled by Anu's matter-of-fact abandonment of the sea's charm, a rejection he initially blames upon Anu's reconfiguration of herself into a humourless, asexual workaholic. But Deepu is also attuned to a dystopian possibility: what if the sea itself has changed?

Anu and Deepu, conditioned as individuals and not only as socialised subjects, consider themselves as citizens of a global republic and, precisely because they are so, they are deeply concerned about the fate of the planet more than anything else. They have one ear ready for the elements and halfway into the film there is unfailing realisation of a stealth that seems to be gathering beneath the calm of the sea. The primordial sea, in continuous ebb and tide from the beginning of time on this planet, seems to have changed in the two decades since they have last been to this coastal settlement. The Gulf War is raging in the background and Deepu more than once hints at the possibility of it having triggered an unprecedented ecological uncanny. But we do not yet get to know the nature of the sea's sickness.

Instead, the narrative is punctuated by scenes of televised broadcasting (or pictures in print) of an ever more debilitating war in the Gulf and the resultant oil spill. Throughout the film we see television sets beaming the war in the background—silently, unprotested, undeterred—into the living rooms. Could it be that the sea, 17 years since they last came, has not only lost its transcendental powers of healing but is hopelessly corrupted by oil that has transmigrated across the seas? Could it be that the war has corrupted everything that is pure and primordial?

By the evening, after a day of expected and habitual discord and unable to find any bankable testimony to their collective well-being, Anu and Deepu are resigned to take a final walk on the beach before they retire for the day. This is also the evening when the local fishing community is celebrating the 'eternal return' of the goddess of wealth and fertility. An elderly fisherman explains to Deepu that mythically speaking, the goddess is said to be returning on such a day as a giant tortoise, signifying

her incorruptible bond with the planet of plenty. If anyone chances upon such an animal on a night like this, he/she is guaranteed to be healed of all earthly suffering.

As the evening sun sets, Anu and Deepu, dressed in pristine white, take a long walk on the beach. At a distance, the lights flicker from the revelry of the fertility festival. Slowly but surely, the two individuals fully wake up to the transformed state of the planet. Deepu, by now certain of the sea's contamination, expresses his consternation about it being stealthily pregnant with oil from the Gulf. This being the Indian east coast and not the west, the latter connected by sea with the Gulf, Anu rubbishes Deepu's fears as geographically unfounded. In resignation he murmurs: 'You are talking about geography, Anu, about geographical boundaries. But violence, violence has no boundaries.'[5]

As if to reinforce the finality of their realisation, they find that their life too has been hopelessly infiltrated by certain violence, violence unlikely to be vanquished by any prospect of either mythical or rational yearning for a better world. In a scene bordering on the surreal, a giant Galapagos tortoise is found ambling in the half-light of the stars, at the far end of the beach, momentarily unsettling Anu and Deepu's feelings of resignation. They are deeply moved but are unable to comprehend if the sight signifies any hope of even momentarily salvaging the finality of either their own condition or that of the planet.

Some miles away, the elderly fisherman, in the midst of drunken revelry of the young, expresses a dark premonition. 'I do not like the sea tonight,' he says, 'the water is heavy […] I haven't seen this sea ever in my life.'[6] Moments later, unable to discern any sympathetic emotion from his wife for having left his job and finding himself once again incapable of making love to her on the stark and empty beach, Deepak uncharacteristically walks into the seductive, overwhelming darkness of the nocturnal sea. At that moment, an angry young member of the fishing community, in a state of drunken disbelief at the premonition of his elderly kin, throws a torch into the sea. In an instant of climactic and catastrophic dénouement, hinting at the globules of oil hidden under its alabaster foam, the sea catches fire, leaving Deepu irretrievably lost in its vast embrace. Focusing on the face of Anu's reverberant, pulsating howl, the end titles start rolling in.

[5] *Yugant*; 110:24–110:30.
[6] *Yugant*; 114:60–115:10.

Had it not been for the dark, brilliant finale, *Yugant* would have been another celluloid post-mortem of urban life and conjugality under late modernity. But the apocalyptic ending of Sen's film gives it a completely different register. Against their prayers to help them overcome the endemic solipsism of urban conjugality and the faith entrusted by the local fishing community, we see the corrupted sea consuming the last vestiges of their disoriented lives, reinforcing Deepu's fears conclusively. Sen is bringing the potential violence of a conjugal relationship, a relationship of apparent equals, into sharp focus but only when it is set against the violence committed against the planet. Hence in the final scenes, through a spectral prophesy of the elderly fisherman in which stories of mythological hauntings permeate the narrative of human survival through the ages, Sen is able to displace both science and mythology by making human greed and malevolence the usurpers of everything sacred and timeless.

It would not be unjustified to read the film as an allegory of globalisation and the Anthropocene through the symbolic corruption of the sea caused by the climate destruction of oil-based imperialism. By choosing the site of the east coast beach, the film makes the sea both the motif and echo of early spectres of globalisation's arrival, its alleged stealth and furtive vehemence and the fear of effective erasure of all conceivable mythologies of self and technologies of self-preservation. The Gulf War, which famously made CNN a household name and brought war into sitting rooms as a new form of real-time entertainment, only stood as a physical deployment of globalisation's secret but real mission.

The film forces us to think about the Anthropocene as a post-humanist, ecologically disturbing period in which oil furtively travels subterranean lengths and symbolically burns any remaining trace of mythopoeic desire that the sea would have otherwise hoped to preserve. At the same time it also connects the spectre and unrestraint of the sea to an intellectual history of both globalisation and the Anthropocene, especially in distant cultures.

Yugant, as previously stated, literally means the end of an era; of history. In the context of this chapter's claim, *Yugant* could be interpreted as signifying the end of the Holocene. The lapsed time between the honeymoon of the couple and their doomed present could be hence interpreted as in-between, anthropogenic time, a period when humans have conclusively affected planetary functions. In other words, from the relative innocence of the past, we seem to have decisively entered, through this film, into the Anthropo(s)cene.

Beyond the Clichés

Yugant can draw significant traction from its unique vantage as an early critique of Anthropocene. But there is a degree of critical discomfort in trying to associate one film with epochal responsibilities; it often leads to hyperbolising its achievements. Academic film and cultural studies disciplines are usually more comfortable looking at a collective—a period, an oeuvre, a genre—to present a thesis. *Yugant* resists any forceful collapse into a generic disposition: it challenges the existing framework of discourse in its immediate cultural context as Bengali cinema. Neither can it be said to have reflected any major disruption in the context of Indian/national cinema. Also, it has been rendered subsequently somewhat invisible in conventional feminist scholarship on Aparna Sen's repertoire. I would rather see *Yugant* as primarily a narrative of the sea—the sea as a condition of de-territorialisation, even statelessness—tragically foregrounding a plea for collective well-being. Further, the real appeal of the film is retrospective, its value in understanding its apocalyptic vision as prescient and unambiguously post-*humanist*. To that end, the film's real cultural claim is to have anticipated some of the key emerging debates within eco-feminism and, as its logical extension, of the *post*-globalisation anxiety around the Anthropocene.

The sense of inevitability within which *Yugant* operates is vital in understanding its immediate cultural climate. After all, as a Bengali-language film it is naturally predisposed towards factoring in a more specific response to globalisation than may be available to it as an Indian film. In her critique of globalisation, Sen could have easily given into more available debates that were in circulation in Bengal. The region, which has historically demonstrated that it has a ready ear for global debates, especially those coloured by leftist ideologies, was a fertile ground for dialogue on globalisation in the mid-1990s. This was further bolstered by the governing administration in Bengal, the Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPI-M), which was at the height of its elective power and yet substantially at odds with a growing sensibility that saw it as left over from the 'ancien régime' of European communism. The threats of globalisation as perceived by the petulant political Left were hence as much about the debate as they were about its own survival. So rather than reasoned debates, the political public were fed with a pedantic and paranoid cocktail that proposed an easy interchangeability between globalisation and neo-imperialism, and demonised India's economic liberalisation which had

declared its five-decade welfare model null and void. The political Left in the 1990s made one last attempt to unite all these opposing forces as presenting different facets of globalisation.[7]

Sen's film was the first major cultural response to this climate in Bengal but in a persistently non-ideological, non-hysterical way. Sen steps into the debates around globalisation from what was considered the least important of its vantage points: ecology. Along the way, she also avoids, commendably, the usual othering of the West as a diabolic force, promulgating the fragile relationship of the couple as a motif for the fragility of the planet itself, both only minutes away from the final moment of catastrophe. *Yugant* hence clinically foregrounds a *moment* of invasion in a specific time in the historical consciousness of Bengal. Politically speaking, the cultural economy of globalisation as a marauding force was to find easy resonance among a spectatorship fed with its spectre of new colonisation. Sen doubtlessly responds to this, but without stepping into the available clichés. By steadily avoiding the traps of political economy and by invoking the reason of an all-consuming ecology, Sen's film de-territorialises and complicates the political dialectic on globalisation. The film, unleashed on a cinematic audience unprepared for such tragedy, provoked disquiet and confusion, but little empathy or understanding. One can argue in fact that its popular and cultural reception was clouded by its anti-idiomatic agency and its sheer audaciousness.

If the film's subversion of its immediate cultural sphere was political, *Yugant*'s negating of the national was ontological. After all, a cinema on globalisation should ideally exist only by negating the national. But then what is exactly a national cinema? Though accepted easily as a category, it has never been understood unambiguously. As Andrew Higson writes in his article 'The Concept of National Cinema',

> To identify a national cinema is first of all to specify a coherence and a unity; it is to proclaim a unique identity and a stable set of meanings. The process of identification is thus invariably a hegemonising, mythologizing process, involving both the production and assignation of a particular set of meanings, and the attempt to contain, or prevent the potential proliferation of other meanings. At the same time, the concept of a national cinema has almost invariably been mobilized as a strategy of cultural (and economic)

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[7] For more on how globalisation was received through the vernacular in Global South, see Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay, *The Rumor of Globalization: Desecrating the Global from Vernacular Margins* (London: Hurst, 2013).

resistance; a means of asserting national autonomy in the face of (usually) Hollywood's international domination.[8]

Even if one were to agree, albeit sceptically, to the idea of a national cinema, it became increasingly ungainly after the 1990s when it was clear that mobility of goods, financing and people were going to irretrievably change first, the idea of a nationally produced cinema, and second, a cinema in which territorial specificities were in distinctive service of the function of cinematic narrative.

In India, the implications of dismembering a 'national cinema' perspective were further complicated. The fluidity of contesting national identities and the difficulty of constructing a nationally codifiable cinematic culture has always been central to India's problematic relation with national cinemas, a relation further undermined by the fluid flows of technological and cultural mobility. As film scholar Ravi S. Vasudevan says, the question of a national cinema has always been a rather indistinct term in India. In his article 'Geographies of the Cinematic Public: Notes on Regional, National and Global Histories of Indian Cinema', he writes,

> There is an element of territorial fatalism inflicted by state building as it puts together diverse cultural and linguistic formations within a somewhat forced political and administrative integrity. This has had substantial effects on the terms of cultural flow and the networks of commercial enterprise.[9]

Though the national would border on the notional in India, at the same time the problem of national cinema is not interchangeable with culturally defining a nation. So while technologically there was an increasing awareness of the decentered nature of cinematic output, culturally the 1990s saw a dominant cinematic account in which nation seemed to reoccupy the space that free-flowing technology had cut open. Resultantly, Hindi-language, especially Bollywood cinema, was increasingly posing a redefinition of the Indian national territory as central to India's cultural reclamation. Another group of films may not have shared such a conformist position, but in them too it became increasingly important to foreground India as a cultural if not entirely national space. A third possibility,

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[8] Andrew Higson, 'The Concept of National Cinema', *Screen*, 30:4 (1989): 36–47, p. 37.
[9] Ravi S. Vasudevan, 'Geographies of the Cinematic Public: Notes on Regional, National and Global Histories of Indian Cinema', *Journal of the Moving Image* (Department of Film Studies, Jadavpur University) (2010): 94–117, p. 95.

especially in the regional ('art') cinemas, was to see the changing global order as an obdurate evil force affecting recondite national/local livelihoods. In fact, the element of globalisation made Indian cinemas renew their acquaintance with a reinvigorated *national* consciousness that had been missing since at least the founding days of its independent statehood in the 1940s. Nation was suddenly a very important category on the face of what seemed the 'twilight of the nation-state'.[10]

Yugant eschews any realisable form of imagined, masculinist nationhood; and it does not compete for alternate visualities of the nation. The film's decontextualised individuation of conjugality pitted against a global, *post*-humanist threat of ecological disaster segregates it from a vague territorial–cultural claim of Indianness or any strategic orthodoxy. Also, by altercating the sea as a synecdochic space (as against the pulls of 'territory'), it subverts any forced 'nationisation' of crisis. By consciously waylaying the *national–territorial* for the global, the film invokes *both* the inevitability of globalisation while also scrutinising its marauding affects. It is precisely because it avoids the easy traps of both rightist revivalism and leftist victimhood that it stands excepted from all the available notions of national cinema, either in generic slipperiness or in the new-found cultural dogma.

But even if there could be an element of conjecture about *Yugant*'s cultural and national irreducibility, there seems to be a consensus when it comes to whether it can be considered a feminist film. The answer is in the negative: Aparna Sen's films have been read as constitutive of a 'cinema of women in India', or for their 'polyvocal' feminist concerns. There is general critical agreement that Sen's cinematic lens is pressed into a social order with strong feminist links or is naturally populated by powerful female subjects. Resultantly, her films continue to be evaluated, sometimes exclusively, in terms of her feminist concerns—in spite of her protestations to the contrary.[11] In a recent paper, Mantra Roy and Aparajita Sengupta have made detailed enquiries into her position. They write,

> We argue here that Sen responds to the women's movements in India through the 1970s and 1980s by nuancing the identity of the Indian woman through a pluralistic and polyvocal feminist lens, in the sense that her women are not merely products of the feminist movements in India—their

[10] See Prem Shankar Jha, *The Twilight of the Nation State: Globalisation, Chaos and War* (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 2006).

[11] Susmita Gupta, 'The Cinema of Women', *The Telegraph* (Calcutta), 29 September 1985.

sense of agency might have been influenced by the social climate, but their negotiation of that agency is unique to their specific circumstances. […] Moreover, Sen's films demonstrate that women's identities are informed by circumstances and choices that are not always necessarily tied to patriarchy.[12]

There is little scope here to provide a detailed critique of the contention above, primarily because the observation holds weight and secondly because it is beyond the scope of the chapter which, after all, is not about Aparna Sen's repertoire. Even if there could be some disagreement about giving her entire oeuvre the certainty of a generic temper, one can still read her body of work, from Violet Stoneham (in *36 Chowringhee Lane*) and the eponymous *Parama* to the films she made after *Yugant* including *House of Memories*, *Mr & Mrs Iyer* (2002) and *15 Park Avenue* (2005), as unequivocally interested in foregrounding a perspective which was critically aware of its gendered vantage point.

However, such interrogations of her cinema, which have tried to read her work through feminist theory, agency and articulation, are lukewarm in their assessment of *Yugant*. Roy and Sengupta's article for example pauses to individually scrutinise all of her major works up to *15 Park Avenue* as varying degrees of interpretation on the theme of feminism.[13] But *Yugant* receives almost no mention in the discussion. Another paper by Brinda Bose, published earlier, does mention *Yugant* but is unsure of its position in the canon. Bose writes,

> The film [*Yugant*] is not just about a marriage; it is about a contemporary marriage in which both partners pursue full-time careers while their relationship disintegrates. What has surprised (feminist?) viewers is that, if there is a partner perceived to be at fault in this marriage, it appears to be the woman, who is over-ambitious in her profession, and over-dedicated to her art, to the point of being corrupt and ruthless [….] A simple question remains, then: why is it possible (indeed laudable) for a married man to be professionally over-ambitious, when, for a woman, it degenerates into something that causes a broken relationship?[14]

[12] Mantra Roy and Aparajita Sengupta, 'Women and Emergent Agency in the Cinema of Aparna Sen', *South Asian Popular Culture*, 12:2 (2014): 53–71, p. 56.

[13] They leave out *Parama* because they refer to Geetha Ramanathan's article as already having dealt with it substantively. See Geetha Ramanathan, 'Aesthetics as Woman: Aparna Sen's *Parama*', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 17:1 (2000): 63–73.

[14] Brinda Bose, 'Sex, Lies and the Genderscape: The Cinema of Aparna Sen', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 8:3 (1997): 319–26, p. 326.

Even though she does not relegate it outside Sen's canon like Roy and Sengupta, Bose seems to have somewhat misread the entire context of the film as a chronicle of competitive careerism. She is interested only in the relative lack of sympathy of the woman filmmaker for her professionally ambitious female protagonist, who over the years had seemed to have attained a degree of cruelty to make her art matter. Had this been only the case, the film would not have been set on a faraway beach and under the unmistakable signs of climatic violence. Also, in all of her first three films including *Yugant*, Sen had been forthright about the effortless cruelty and selfishness of the middle class, including women. One part of the couple who misuse the trust of the lonely Stoneham or the indifferent women in *Parama* are no more or less women than their male counterparts. So there is nothing unique or unintelligible in Sen's refusal to create any moral high ground for Anu in *Yugant*. Bose's interpretation of *Yugant* is hence contentious, if not false.

So, as far as Sen's cinema is concerned, we must be cautious in evaluating her corpus. It is neither uncritically feminist nor is it negligent of the richness that a critical feminism framework can throw up. But even then *Yugant* avoids the safety net of peddling either soft or hard feminism: Anu has no better claim to be a feminist role model than Deepu has to being a chauvinist stereotype. In fact, here, Sen's gendered vantage is *not* lensed to either of them but to the planet itself. If there is one unmistakable victim of violence in *Yugant* it is the planet. Violence against the planet—rendered synecdochically here as the sea—is not a social or legal outrage but a cataclysmic one. Deepu's disquiet at the state of the sea and his wife's unapologetic disengagement is rubbished by Anu as signs of his infantile stasis. 'Grow up Deepu,' she had urged, 'people do not stay the same forever.'[15] But for Deepu, the connection is unmistakable and comprehensibly metaphysical. 'You are growing old Anu, old like this ageing planet [...] you too are past your prime', Deepu says towards the climactic scenes.[16]

The film preserves its appreciation for the natural ambiguity of a gendered subject only when it is transferred to the planet itself, while also provoking the thought that the apocalypse, when it finally arrives, is not going to cherry-pick its victims as man, woman or non-human. The film focuses away from individual female subjectivity towards an interrogation of the *potency* of violence. Hence Anu's doom cannot be measured unless against the greater threat of annihilation. Similarly, even if Deepu can be seen as indulgent of his dystopian prognosis about life's longevity on earth, he

[15] *Yugant*; 92:02–92:10.
[16] *Yugant*; 115:15.

cannot be burdened with the offense of patriarchal mismanagement of earth's resources. Instead, the agency of violence is transferred from men to the *species* itself, if at all, blunting individuation for collective culpability. To that end, if there is a gendered subject in the film, it is not Anu, but the planet itself and Anu is no more or less culpable of 'exploiting' the planet's misery than Deepu. Extermination, in *Yugant*, is hence secular, blind and brute. Orthodox feminist theory will be dissatisfied at this proclamation, to which the articles mentioned above stand testimony. At the same time, there is little doubt that on this unique and shared planet of ours there cannot be a more universal feminist interpretation of equality than that which *Yugant* proffers. In this sense, *Yugant*'s isolation from the canon sits comfortably with its message.

By steering away from the victimhood of feminism, reverse nationalism and derivative socialism, all of which could have been easy entrapments as far as her context was concerned, Sen's film foregrounds an ecological critique of identity politics and all its wanton segregation of demographics, interests and rights. If anything, the film's *post*-humanist context is actually pleading for a return to a broader, even monolithic humanism without being blind to its usual shortcomings. As a tour de force, *Yugant* hence stands in relative solitude while being surprisingly in agreement with the possibilities that critical humanities can bring to the climate change table.

Yugant as Cinema of the Sea

One way to draw attention to *Yugant*'s power as a sea narrative is to situate it in a critical relationship with the canonical cultural appreciation of the sea, which can be traced to the very beginning of Western literature, with Homer's *Odyssey* if not his *Iliad*. This encompasses a vast body of literature of adventure, mobility, morality, discovery, identity and colonising impetus of the white Western male subject. Margaret Cohen's detailed study of the novel form's historical relationship with the sea, for example, draws from Georg Lukács's interpretation of the *Odyssey* as symptom of mankind's 'transcendental homelessness', as well as its critique by Adorno and Horkheimer, whose Odysseus betrays the modern idea of homesickness. They, writes Cohen, 'placed Odysseus at the threshold of the modern novel in his abstraction from the physical world and nature, calling him *homo œconomicus*, for whom all reasonable things are alike: hence the Odyssey is already a Robinsonade.'[17]

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[17] Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 2.

Either way, till well into the nineteenth century, the novel form did not go too far from foregrounding man's essential heroism and capacity of survival which more often than not is achieved through a physical or intellectual mastering of the sea's disconcerting vastness. More recent critical histories of colonisation would want to see the subjugation of the sea in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a history of travel, trade and exploitation of distant cultures by Western powers who were quickly acquiring the mastery of the instruments of control. In such literature too, the sea stands essentially as a symbol of control and mobility, merely extending the role it was assigned to play in the earlier forms of representation.

The first break came with the Modernists, who managed to include the sea within their avant-garde formalist experiments with space, language and interiority. From Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies* to Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* to W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*, the sea is an evocative allegory that impregnates language, memory and history. On the other hand, post-colonial literature of the sea, like J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, or Amitav Ghosh's *The Sea of Poppies* historicises the sea instead of considering it as a topographical imposition on man's ever more ambitious pursuit of new lands and knowledge. To that extent, these works of literature move beyond the earlier, Odyssean framework.

Cinematic studies of the sea, however, have been more complex given cinema's inherent propensity to visually frame and map its proverbial uncontainability. Peter Greenaway's adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* or Godard's post-modern adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey* in *Contempt* can add substantively to the original text because of their visual and scopic ontology. A number of films in the last 50 years—from Truffaut's *400 Blows*, Bergman's *Persona*, Antonioni's *L'Avventura*, Fellini's *La Doce Vita*, Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice*, Amenábar's *The Sea Inside*—continue with high modernity's intensification of the sea as a recurring motif of paranoia, *différance*, surrender, immanence and strength.

In one way, *Yugant*'s appeal and its autonomy as a film rest on its ability to maximise the potential of such a language that is unique to cinema. *Yugant* can be said to have appropriated this cultural memory of the sea as a complex motif of opposing factors: homelessness and homesickness, exteriority and interiority, contentment and enormity, helplessness and mastery. There is substantive power in the film even if *Yugant* is considered as an additional cultural work about the sea's continuing role as a signifier of

the human condition. Not just about the sea, *Yugant* also effectively narratives the beach's role as a marginal space of isolation, exclusivity and immanence. Here too, it shares proximity to a wide range of cinematic motifs. As Brady Hammond and Sean Redmond write in their brief introduction to a special issue of the journal *Continuum* on 'cinema at the shoreline':

> In cinema one can consider the beach to be a powerful transformative meeting and resting place. It is very often a liminal heterotopia of illusion and compensation (Foucault, 1986) where capitalist time is unwound, and the sense of belonging, lost in the urban world, is newly found. This utopian world of the beach often stands in stark contrast and opposition to the mean city streets, the banality of suburbia and the commodified, relentless time of liquid modernity.[18]

To that end, *Yugant*'s symbolic location of the sea and beach as a liminal, ecumenical destination of a despondent couple fleeing as much from themselves as from a world of forged social transactions, is entirely comprehensible. But to stop at that would be to understand only half the story. For it is at the same sea and the beach that the film registers its shocking epiphany.

From Globalisation to the Anthropocene

Yugant's power as a critique is vastly accentuated by this final possibility, which is to understand the sea as a-civilisational space, as a space of statelessness and hence the most vulnerable to climatic change and mutability. In other words, *Yugant* seems to be proposing that by embodying the globalisation of violence, the sea itself can turn into an apparatus of erasure, both as a geographic space as well as a symbolic one.

By moving out of typically culture-specific needs of cinematic narrative but without losing out on the atmospherics of globalisation, Sen manages to construct a sea narrative that is both specific to its time and yet movingly clairvoyant. In his study of how cinema 'maps' spaces, Tom Conley in *Cartographic Cinema* makes a pertinent point. He writes: 'A film, like a topographic projection, can be understood as images that locates and patterns the imagination of its spectators. When it takes hold, a film encour-

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[18] Brady Hammond and Sean Redmond, 'This is the Sea: Cinema at the Shoreline', *Continuum*: *Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 27:5 (2013): 601–2, p. 601.

ages its public to think of the world in concert with its own articulation of space.'[19] Indeed *Yugant* forces us to think spatially, articulating the sea as that which stands for both itself and then also the world: as both an international and yet indeterminate ecological space. By invoking the sea as both the motif and metaphor, *Yugant* manages to use the sea as both a moving object and a static carrier, which is a brilliant strategy for a film on globalisation. We can further this idea if we consider the sea as a chronotope: a Bakhtinian category to understand how narratives, literary or otherwise, parcel out the conceptions of space and time from within their narrative framework. In their paper 'Global Subjects in Motion: Strategies for Representing Globalization in Film', Caitlin Manning and Julie Shackford-Bradley underlined a range of theoretical positions to understand how films from various corners of the globe (Iran, China, Germany) 'break through to global audiences even as they critique and resist the master narrative of globalization'.[20] They propose an understanding of a certain kind of cinema which is global in its reach, unapologetic in using new technological apparatuses and is yet critical of the idea of globalisation. Through Frederic Jameson's idea of 'cognitive maps' and Arjun Appadurai's idea of the 'scapes' of globalisation, the scholars discuss the 'multi-chronotopic' potential of cinema to demystify globalisation. In the films they discuss, they argue that 'people seem to inhabit different eras and chronotopes simultaneously as they contend with the flows and disjunctures of globalization, traversing complex and shifting scapes of ideas, images, and desires'.[21]

Yugant, I would like to propose, operates as a similar chronotope to posit a moment of arrival of globalisation through the unmissable synecdoche of the sea, which stands in both as part and signifier of a larger malice that has infiltrated a planet hurtling towards an ever-imminent possibility of self-destruction. The geographical impossibility of oil travelling from the Gulf to the Indian east coast is nullified by the spectre of a shifting geopolitical order which normalises violence on the planet as collateral and necessary to that shift. Oil travelling far distances and impregnating the multitudinous seas, to 'turn it incarnadine', and everything

[19] Tom Conley, *Cartographic Cinema* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 1.

[20] Caitlin Manning and Julie Shackford-Bradley, 'Global Subjects in Motion: Strategies for Representing Globalization in Film', *Journal of Film and Video*, 62:3 (2010): 36–52, p. 37.

[21] Manning and Shackford-Bradley, 'Global Subjects in Motion', p. 37.

that is dependent on its vitality—life forms, livelihoods and tormented relationships—is a possibility only when we engage with the invisibility and stealth of the threats to the planet's well-being. The threat to ecology is as transnational as the claims of a free-market globalised economy, hence its reach and furtive violence is total and inescapable, as inescapable as globalisation itself. *Yugant*'s power is hence not just to understand globalisation as a period in history in whose margins it is already operating but also to understand it as an ontological category, which has transformed the very nature of being human.

This is precisely where it is worthwhile to invoke the film's power as a register of the Anthropo(s)cene. Noel Castree writes in a recent article,

> 'The Anthropocene,' once a little-known neologism coined by two senior geoscientists (Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer), has become something of a buzzword as it enters its mid-teens. It describes an Earth's surface so transformed by human activities that the biophysical conditions of the Holocene epoch (roughly the last 11,000 years) have been compromised. In Mark Levene's apt assessment, '[t]he term […] has yet to become standard currency, though there has been sufficient acclamation from a wide range of scientific and non-scientific disciplines to suggest its durability.'[22]

By collating the *scene* into the *cene* and vice versa, I would want to not only highlight the semantic similarity but also the scopic possibility of how a cultural text, operating from within its own generic propensities, might open up to the geospatial order. In other words, in the *scene*, the cultural proximity of a film like *Yugant* to the *cene* of biophysical periodisation may be aptly collapsed. This argument can be extended only if we turn to recent responses of critical humanities to the question of the Anthropocene. Here, there is no one better than historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, whose recent work can be said to be the most systematic response from the humanities disciplines on the Anthropocene. Chakrabarty claims that if agreed upon in real terms, the Anthropocene can pose serious challenges to history in particular and critical humanities in general. In a widely influential thesis he writes,

> Scholars writing on the current climate-change crisis are indeed saying some-thing significantly different from what environmental historians have said

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[22] Noel Castree, 'The Anthropocene and the Environmental Humanities: Extending the Conversation', *Environmental Humanities*, 5 (2014): 233–60, p. 233.

so far. In unwittingly destroying the artificial but time-honored distinction between natural and human histories, climate scientists posit that the human being has become something much larger than the simple biological agent that he or she always has been.[23]

To that end, Anthropocene, as interpreted by Chakrabarty and others, will be both the climactic point of enlightenment humanism that has claimed unprecedented and unquestioned supremacy of human agency, while also its moment of tragic and irreversible dénouement. Anthropocene can hence be interpreted in terms of the farthest reach of the species that can be achieved within the moral and natural space of the planet while being its precise point of absolute irreversibility.

The primordial sea in *Yugant* could be seen a 'natural selection' of the Anthropocene to announce its arrival. The immutability and expanse of the sea is the carrier of civilisation's most potent ambitions and symbolises man's gradual mastering of the planet. The subversion of the sea is hence Anthropocene's biggest publicity. Hence it is this epochal, epic sense of the transmigration of violence committed upon the planet, a violence that plays out its part in faraway, domestic theatres with equal force, which makes *Yugant* a brooding and prophetic meditation on climatic/climactic catastrophe. If we are to seriously consider man's capacity to bring in unprecedented and prodigious changes to the Earth's atmospheric conditions as the beginning of the Anthropocene, *Yugant*'s chronotopic unveiling of the *scene* of arrival of the Anthropocene cannot be over-emphasised. Even a cursory understanding of the world in the last two decades will show how gainfully and hopelessly right *Yugant* has been about the globalisation of violence and it's all-consuming, barbaric powers of anthropomorphic extermination.

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[23] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Climate of History: Four Theses', *Critical Inquiry*, 35:2 (2009): 197–222, p. 206.

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The Tolerant Coast

Isaac Land

'Bureaucrats hate ports', wrote Robert Hughes. 'They are too open to influence, too polyglot, too hard to control; they have too much life.'[1] He enumerated three examples of countries that rejected their 'natural capital' on the coast and constructed an artificial inland one at great expense from scratch: Brazil, Turkey and Hughes's own homeland of Australia. Thus, Rio de Janeiro, Istanbul and Sydney were passed over in favour of Brasilia, Ankara and Canberra respectively. As an art historian, Hughes's main focus in *The Shock of the New* was on the ultramodern architecture of planned cities, but his axiom that political elites would 'hate' a port bears closer examination.

To the familiar terrestrial–maritime dichotomy, we should add the opposition of inland and coastal realms. This opposition has not attracted much academic attention, but it is so familiar that shorthand expressions of it pass unnoticed in everyday language. The 'west coast' of the United States is regarded not just as a region, but as a state of mind, so much so that the term 'left coast' is sometimes substituted for it. Jokes about

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[1] Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New: The Hundred-Year History of Modern Art, Its Rise, Its Dazzling Achievement, Its Fall* (New York: Knopf, 1981), p. 209.

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a snobbish person with 'bicoastal personality disorder' who disdains the 'flyover people' in between the east and west coast do not require explanation. The assumption that coasts are naturally vibrant, open and innovative is so ingrained that a book arguing for Chicago's dynamic impact on twentieth-century American life takes *The Third Coast* for its title, as the most efficient way to suggest the thesis.[2] Ian Buruma has asserted that he belongs to a pluralistic 'Europe of the ports' (Venice–Lisbon–Amsterdam–London) rather than to continental Europe.[3]

Investigating the history and influence of ideas about the coast is also a way to complicate what we receive as a sea narrative. Narratives of the tolerant coast concern themselves not with exploration, or epic adventure, or even with leisure and recreation, but with a certain hard-to-define quality of daily lived experience. Narratives of the tolerant coast can serve many different agendas. At the outset of the first volume of his *Alexandria Quartet* (1957), Lawrence Durrell presented the Levantine city as a spectacle:

> Five races, five languages, a dozen creeds: five fleets turning through their greasy reflections behind the harbour bar. But there are more than five sexes and only demotic Greek seems to distinguish among them. The sexual provender which lies to hand is staggering in its variety and profusion.[4]

Later in the novel, a character holds forth on the unique character of Alexandrian culture:

> Historians always present syncretism as something which grew out of a mixture of warring intellectual principles; that hardly states the problem. It is not even a question of mixed races and tongues. It is the national peculiarity of the Alexandrians to seek a reconciliation between the two deepest psychological traits of which they are conscious. That is why we are hysterics and extremists. That is why we are the incomparable lovers we are.[5]

This Orientalist formulation almost displaces the coastal context in favour of a 'national peculiarity'. Durrell's tolerant coast features primarily as a

[2] Thomas Dyja, *The Third Coast: When Chicago Built the American Dream* (New York: Penguin, 2014).

[3] Ian Buruma, *Voltaire's Coconuts: Or Anglomania in Europe* (London: Phoenix, 2000).

[4] Lawrence Durrell, *Justine* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1957), p. 14.

[5] Durrell, *Justine*, p. 98.

permissive space for introspection, self-exploration and self-expression for expatriates such as himself.

At the end of Amos Oz's *In the Land of Israel* (1993), the author comes to rest in the port town of Ashdod. For Oz, the atmosphere in Ashdod is exhilaratingly open and restful after his verbal sparring matches with Palestinians and Zionist settlers in the West Bank. The entry of the sea into Oz's memoir is announced with a vivid descriptive passage: 'A bright sea-blue washes over the broad avenues […] A ship bellows from the direction of the port and the birds answer […] Ashdod is a city on a human scale on the Mediterranean coast.'[6] Oz's choice of imagery evoked the trope of a tolerant port, contrasting it with the arid, inland and inflexible West Bank, yet deploying this trope in the context of Ashdod was problematic. Although it was coastal, Ashdod was a mono-ethnic community with no notable Palestinian presence and no visibly disputed territory. To celebrate Ashdod was to fantasise about life in an Israel without conflicts, rather than suggesting a different outcome to the really existing problems of coexistence. Nonetheless, Oz's imagery of a recognisable future Israel that had somehow normalised its presence in the region resonated with many Jewish Israelis in the 1990s. At the height of the peace process associated with the Oslo Accords, 'Mediterraneanism' became a fashionable concept, finding expression in cuisine, music and politics.[7] It is possible, then, to write about the tolerant coast as a kind of utopia.

It is also possible (and more common) to write in a nostalgic mode, displacing the tolerant coast into the past. Elegiac treatments of 'formerly tolerant port cities' are a standby of journalism about the Middle East.[8] In a similar vein, Arjun Appadurai has written about the ongoing tension between Bombay, presented as 'the historical space of commerce and cosmopolitanism', and its renamed and less welcoming successor Mumbai, construed as a city without such a heritage.[9] The existence of troubled, post-cosmopolitan coastal cities goes unacknowledged in a recent book,

[6] Amos Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, trans. Maurie Golberg-Bartura (Orlando: Harvest, 1993), p. 221.

[7] Alexandra Nocke, *The Place of the Mediterranean in Modern Israeli Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[8] For example: 'In Egypt, an old beacon of tolerance flickers', *Washington Post*, 13 May 2006; Fouad Ajami, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs: A Generation's Odyssey* (New York: Vintage, 1999); Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430–1950* (New York: Vintage, 2006).

[9] Arjun Appadurai, 'Spectral Housing and Urban Cleansing: Notes on Millennial Mumbai', *Public Culture*, 12:3 (Fall 2000): 627–51.

Blue Mind, which proposes that human beings are simply more cheerful and compromising whenever they are near water, and adduces studies of brain scans and neurological feedback to support the point.[10] Humanists and social scientists will be more comfortable with cultural explanations.

It is difficult, however, to find a clear exposition of why we think tolerant coasts would come into being in the first place, or why life in ports would have a different tenor than what goes on elsewhere. The historian Michael Pearson, in his wide-ranging study *The Indian Ocean* (2003), has gone further than most. Using everyday religious practice as a source of examples, Pearson argues that littoral societies have markedly different attitudes from their more parochial neighbours inland. Concerned for the safety of their voyage, sailors in the Indian Ocean were happy to collect blessings from any and all sources.[11] Converts to Islam retained symbols, relics and devotional practices from their previous faith, just as converts to Christianity in India managed to retain notions of caste.[12] The erosion of Islamic orthodoxy grew so severe that several generations of clergy, calling themselves not missionaries but 'rectifiers', sailed from Yemen to rein in the laxity and syncretic habits of the Comoros and other islands.[13]

How to account for this striking pattern? Pearson quotes Ross Dunn on the 'cosmopolitan frame of mind' of Muslims in East Africa, Southern India and Malaysia and adds: 'This was reinforced by the coastal location and the fact that most of them were traders, and so had to be aware of distant markets and people and places.'[14] Here are two more quotations that Pearson reproduces with approval: 'Port functions, *more than anything else*, make a city cosmopolitan…' [my italics] and '[…] experience, that best of masters, has gone far to unteach the lessons of ignorance, intolerance, and national aversion'.[15]

Pearson's expertise was confined to the Indian Ocean, but these are bold, general statements to make in a world that includes ports such as Beirut and Belfast. To his credit, Pearson made an effort to spell out how

[10] Wallace J. Nichols, *Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do* (New York: Little, Brown, 2014).

[11] Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 39–40.

[12] Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, p. 173.

[13] Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, p. 170.

[14] Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, p. 77.

[15] Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, p. 32. See also Michael Pearson, 'Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems', *Journal of World History*, 17:4 (2006): 353–73.

he thought the process worked, offering potential critics some purchase for challenging his propositions. The trope of the tolerant coast appears in many academic contexts, but usually in less self-conscious ways. Martin Lewis and Kären Wigen founded the interdisciplinary Oceans Connect project out of a conviction that the sea facilitated transnational hybridity and cosmopolitanism. Thus, ports worked against what they called 'the myth of continents'.[16] Michel Foucault concluded his short essay 'Of Other Spaces' with this arresting statement: 'In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.'[17] Such formulations accept the tolerant coast as a premise, rather than inviting debate.

A wiser practice might be to adopt a term that builds in some critical distance from the outset. Calling the phenomenon 'coastal exceptionalism' would be a good place to start. First, on the model of 'American exceptionalism', the term suspends judgment about whether coasts *are* exceptional, conceding only that many people believe them to be so. Second, coastal exceptionalism highlights the sharp difference from the literature on cosmopolitanism produced in recent years by philosophers such as Will Kymlicka and Kwame Anthony Appiah.[18] If cosmopolitan behaviour is ascribed to the coast, then it may not be a universal or universally implementable ideal, but a quirk of locality that perhaps cannot be replicated (except in another port or coastal location). Third, without pre-judging the specific details, coastal exceptionalism invites us to ask some basic questions about any particular coast: is it exceptional at all? Exceptional how? Exceptional when? Exceptional in what ways? Exceptional why?

This chapter is, necessarily, a tentative first exploration of the problems involved with asking such questions. Many narratives of the tolerant coast in fact begin by rejecting such lines of inquiry, offering circular reasoning in place of explanation: 'That's how things were done in Odessa' or 'this could only have happened in California'.[19] I focus here on two

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[16] Martin W. Lewis and Kären Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[17] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias' (1967), *Diacritics*, 16:1 (1986): 22–7, p. 27.

[18] Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

[19] Robert A. Rothstein, 'How It Was Sung in Odessa: At the Intersection of Russian and Yiddish Folk Culture', *Slavic Review*, 60:4 (Winter 2001): 781–801, notes a number of

unusual cases in which a coastal zone of exception has been examined explicitly and in some depth. Narratives of the Levant and of Silicon Valley invariably take the existence of a tolerant coast as their starting point, but quickly complicate the picture. Each offers an opportunity to question the exact relationship between permissiveness, diversity and innovation. Both narratives also engage, in different ways, with the arresting question of the tolerant coast's fragility. The Levant region lost sight of its past traditions of tolerance so abruptly and so decisively that it has provoked introspection, dissection and thoughtful commentary. Narratives of Silicon Valley tend to be more celebratory, yet the tolerant policies of companies like Apple, Pixar and Disney have underscored the extent to which elite professional enclaves on the coast can be out of step with the norms and values of inland regions. Although some observers have argued that the personal computer was an expression of the 1960s counterculture in California, others have proposed ways to replicate the ideal innovation incubator inside a corporate research campus without waiting for a fertile, diverse urban milieu to spontaneously emerge. I close with some thoughts on the neoliberal dream of reproducing little Californias by decree anywhere in the world, even on the coast of a dictatorship.

Coastal Exceptionalism in Kahanoff's 'A Generation of Levantines'

Jacqueline Shohet Kahanoff (1917–1979) was born in Cairo, Egypt to Sephardic Jewish parents, one of Iraqi origin and the other from Tunisia. The language spoken at home was French. She grew up in Cairo and Alexandria but did not learn even elementary Arabic. She socialised only with the francophone and anglophone children of Egypt's Jewish and Christian minorities, and imbibed a heady mix of avant-garde literature and socialist publications at school, all of a European orientation. After the outbreak of the Second World War, she married and left Egypt for the United States, where she attended Columbia University and published a short story in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Following a divorce, she visited Europe and went on to spend the second half of her life in Israel, where she wrote for women's magazines as well as the *Jerusalem Post*. In Israel, she was best known for her writings on the challenges facing the country's disgruntled and growing population of Sephardic Jewish immigrants,

proverbs and book titles in this vein.

but she was also an outspoken feminist and a disseminator of what today would be called postcolonial literature (for example, she edited an anthology of *Modern African Writing* that appeared in Hebrew in 1963).[20]

The four essays known as 'A Generation of Levantines' were all published in the Israeli magazine *Keshet* (*Rainbow*) in 1959. Never confident in written Hebrew, Kahanoff composed the essays in English before submitting them for translation into Hebrew by the magazine's editor. They blend autobiography and anecdote with political and cultural analysis. The first two, 'Childhood in Egypt' and 'Europe from Afar', are primarily a narrative of Kahanoff's personal coming-of-age experiences, while the second two essays, 'Rebel, My Brother' and 'Israel: Ambivalent Levantine' set particular incidents that she witnessed in the much larger context of nationalist and anti-colonial liberation movements, the Arab–Israeli wars and conflicts within Israeli Jewish society between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Reflecting back on her work in 1968, she admitted that her approach had lacked a 'formal structure', but suggested that her mosaic or prismatic mode of exposition was true to the 'many facets and complexities of the Levant'.[21]

What, according to Kahanoff, was a Levantine? Perhaps intentionally, she offered many partial definitions for a category that she believed 'shunned uniformity' as a matter of principle.[22] Geographically, Levantines hailed from a region centred in the port towns of the eastern Mediterranean, although on an individual basis she ascribed Levantine values to people whose birthplaces ranged from Tunisia to landlocked Kurdistan. The Levantine flourished at points of intersection, 'a potentially successful crossbreed of two or more cultures' accustomed from birth to oscillating back and forth and regarding a situation from multiple points of view.[23] In 'Europe from Afar', she wrote that 'as Levantines, we instinctively search for fruitful compromises' between the claims of Europe and Arab nationalists.[24]

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[20] For a general overview of Kahanoff's life and legacy, see Jacqueline Shohet Kahanoff, *Mongrels or Marvels: The Levantine Writings of Jacqueline Shohet Kahanoff*, ed. Deborah A. Starr and Sasson Somekh, 'Editor's Introduction' (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. xi–xxix. For unfamiliarity with Arabic, see p. xiv.

[21] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, p. 243.

[22] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, p. 181.

[23] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, p. 198.

[24] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, p. 106.

Cosmopolitanism is sometimes defined as 'a relaxed openness' to difference or the mere practice of sharing urban space without comment or complaint.[25] Kahanoff went well beyond this, asserting that a Levantine would 'know that a person, however worthless, counts more than principles, however sacred'.[26] Truly Levantine moments would be those of personal connection in spite of difference. In 'Rebel, My Brother', Kahanoff related how her parents sheltered Ahmed Ben Bella, an insurgent who would later go on to lead the Algerian Republic. On the run from the French intelligence services, he went by the name of Khalil and passed himself off as a humble 'merchant of offal', albeit a mysteriously well-read and politically informed one. Kahanoff's mother's family was of Tunisian origin and the family was known to be sympathetic to the Tunisian and Algerian nationalist causes. At a more practical level, his Jewish hosts provided the French-speaking Ben Bella with one of the few hospitable francophone households he could have found in his period of Egyptian exile. 'Rebel, My Brother' took special notice of the young Algerian's enthusiasm for Menachem Begin's memoir, *The Revolt* (1951). Ben Bella told his hosts that he admired Israel, a nation of the 'avant-garde', and the tactics of Jewish insurgents like Begin. Kahanoff's parents followed Ben Bella's subsequent career with anxiety and pride, as if he had been their son.[27] These choices, affinities, dialogues and ultimately bonds of affection went well beyond a relaxed attitude or a bystander's shrug.

With its indifference to the conventional pieties of sect, ethnicity and ideology, was the Levantine then a syncretic identity? Perhaps because Kahanoff wrote 'A Generation of Levantines' for a Jewish Israeli readership, she took pains to emphasise that mixing it up in a Levantine milieu for centuries had not eroded the ability of Greeks, for example, to maintain a distinct and proud identity. She argued for a 'somewhat different concept of Jewishness' that broke with a 'modern passion for a monolithic unity, or for a type of unity which excludes all variation'.[28] Nationalists of both

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[25] Caroline Humphrey and Vera Skvirskaja, 'Introduction', in *Post-Cosmopolitan Cities: Explorations of Urban Coexistence* (New York: Berghahn, 2012), p. 14.

[26] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, p. 107; Kahanoff's individualism here foreshadows recent theorists of superdiversity who move beyond seeing multiculturalism as merely a problem of managing 'community relations' in the aggregate. Steven Vertovec, 'Super-diversity and its Implications', in *Anthropology of Migration and Multiculturalism: New Directions*, ed. Steven Vertovec (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 65–95.

[27] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, pp. 177–92.

[28] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, pp. 200, 211.

the Arab and Israeli varieties had made levantinisation a pejorative term, but the lived experience of minorities (including Maronites and Copts) proved that the region possessed a whole spectrum of groups capable of resisting any attempt to impose a monolithic unity. In 'Israel: Ambivalent Levantine', she proposed that Sephardic Jewish migrants, based on their life experiences as one minority among many in a Levantine context, were uniquely well-positioned to help Israel chart a course of coexistence with its Arab neighbours.

Kahanoff, certainly, emerged from her Levantine upbringing with a doggedly pluralistic outlook. It is less clear whether she was a typical child of the Levant. Philip Mansel, in his history of three Levantine ports— Alexandria, Smyrna and Beirut—remarked that 'in a crisis, nationality could fall like a sword'.[29] In 1922, Smyrna's large Greek population was burned out and driven into the sea by a victorious Turkish army in a humanitarian catastrophe that drew considerable international attention. Most scholars would shy away from Mansel's predilection for colourful metaphors (he also likens these cities to sleeping volcanoes and ticking time bombs), but in an important article entitled 'Antagonistic Tolerance', Robert M. Hayden has offered a reminder that long periods of cheek-by-jowl coexistence do not preclude fierce sectarian rivalries, jealousies and resentments.[30] In 'Childhood in Egypt', Kahanoff herself acknowledged some of the barriers that one simply did not cross. She enjoyed the colourful spectacle of Greek Easter eggs, but imagined that her schoolyard chums would all wind up in separate, sectarian heavens.[31] 'Arabs were more numerous than other people, and poorer' and Jewish girls sometimes 'became mistresses of Moslems, but never their wives'.[32] In 'To Live and Die a Copt', Kahanoff admitted that 'the minorities were Egypt's intellectual mainstay, but their formal, exclusively European culture put up a barrier between them and the Egyptian populace'.[33] This paralleled

[29] Philip Mansel, *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean* (London: John Murray, 2010), p. 137.

[30] Robert M. Hayden, 'Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites in South Asia and the Balkans', *Current Anthropology*, 43:2 (April 2002): 205–31. I am indebted to Catherine Baker for this reference; see also the discussion of 'friendly enmity' in Ash Amin, 'Ethnicity and the Multicultural City: Living with Diversity', *Environment and Planning A*, 34:6 (June 2002): 959–80.

[31] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, p. 2.

[32] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, pp. 1, 101.

[33] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, p. 133.

the divide in Smyrna between the disadvantaged Turks and everyone else. Also as in Smyrna, Kahanoff observed how Christian hostility to Jews 'prevented the consolidation of a minority "Levantine" culture' that might have counterbalanced the worst whims of the majority.[34] Kahanoff both celebrated the potential of Levantine values and admitted the shortcomings of her childhood's 'frail little world, seemingly so perfect, but in reality so rotten that it had to fall apart'.[35]

Caroline Humphrey and Vera Skvirskaja have noted that cosmopolitanism ebbs and flows, within cities and across regions, responding to different pressures and changing opportunities over time (including eruptions of anti-cosmopolitanism).[36] This sensitivity to historical conjuncture suggests a different way of reading some of Kahanoff's anecdotes. The Greeks of her Egyptian childhood would have included refugees from the great fire of Smyrna. From another account, we know that one survivor burned her shoes upon arrival in Alexandria because they had trod upon so many corpses.[37] These were not just any Levantine Greeks; they had a recent and vivid experience with intolerance to inform and motivate their cosmopolitan *ethos.* Likewise, Kahanoff described 'Turkish princesses' and the daughters of pashas among her schoolmates in Egypt, a presence resulting in part from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.[38] Recent migrants and refugees will be aware of their insecurity and quick to make bold conciliatory gestures, even to unlikely allies. The hunted fugitive Ben Bella's admiration for the state of Israel may have been sincere, but if he feigned enthusiasm to please his Jewish host family, it would have been perfectly understandable. The transformation of Smyrna, Salonica and Istanbul into mono-ethnic communities, and the wars of independence in French North Africa, each conspired in turn to reshape Alexandria and Cairo into more emphatically 'Levantine' places. (Beirut's economy and 'global city' image would peak in the 1960s, at a time when it was the last of the old Levantine ports left to carry on the tradition.[39]) When Kahanoff entitled her essays 'A Generation of Levantines', she seems to have been drawing attention to the decay of a golden age, but she did not fully engage with

[34] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, p. 134.

[35] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, p. 112.

[36] Humphrey and Skvirskaja, 'Introduction', pp. 1–17.

[37] Mansel, *Levant*, pp. 214–21.

[38] Kahanoff, *Mongrels*, pp. 1, 100.

[39] Mansel, *Levant*, p. 314.

the ways in which the golden age of her youth may have represented a short and particular interval.

Taking a longer view, the zones of exception that Kahanoff called the Levant had been fostered and permitted by generations of Ottoman rulers seeking to attract a necessary mix of skills and trades. Legal concepts like 'extraterritoriality' and 'capitulations' would take on extremely negative connotations as European imperialism reached its intrusive height in the mid to late nineteenth century, but originally the idea of carving out semi-autonomous districts where foreigners and minorities could police their own people while carrying on their business activities had been an attractive compromise, with precedents in the Ottoman concept of *millet*. Greeks, Jews and Armenians supplied necessary skill sets for long-distance trade as linguists, money lenders, speculators, ship owners, commercial agents and stockbrokers. A mystique surrounded long-distance trade, and it was more efficient to invite foreigners in who had mastered these black arts than to wait for local talent to gradually emerge and catch up. The Levantine port cities boasted of their 'anything goes' atmosphere, but the Ottoman emperors reaped considerable benefits, rather on the principle of an apiary that contains stinging bees but which also produces honey that cannot be obtained any other way. There is a tension between conceptualising the tolerant coast as a spontaneously self-organising movement from below, versus a provisional zone of freedom created and fostered by an attentive state power. This tension appears again in discussions of Silicon Valley.

CALIFORNIA GLOBAL: COASTAL EXCEPTIONALISM IN THE SILICON VALLEY NARRATIVE

The historian Kevin Starr opened his book on California in the 1990s, *Coast of Dreams*, with a post-industrial landscape: a lone surfer masters the waves. California continued to possess some of the world's most active ports in this period, but by choosing the surfer rather than a flotilla of cargo ships and a harbour full of cranes, Starr captured many of the values and aspirations of the era. This lone surfer happens to be a woman, who has developed a double career as a surfer and as a fashion model. She encapsulates the sophisticated pursuit of leisure, but also the cultivation and display of the body, 'freedom' in terms of lifestyle choices and a refusal to accept conventionally-imposed limits. In an entrepreneurial, neoliberal context, exemplified by California's Silicon Valley, that same openness takes on an array of other meanings: openness to nimble innovation, openness

to capitalism's creative destruction and openness to talent from whatever quarter. Later in Starr's book, we learn about the Hindu priest in Silicon Valley who was kept quite busy by 'Hindu high-technology executives [requiring] traditional blessing ceremonies invoking the assistance of the wealth goddess Lakshmi at the opening of new companies'; the priest was paid 'in both cash and stock options'.[40] Silicon Valley drew talent from so many different language groups that a single real estate firm had to recruit speakers of forty different languages just to cater to buyers' needs.[41]

In her influential monograph *The Global City*, Saskia Sassen has argued that the post-industrial economy has called forth a new kind of 'strategic territory' in which sub-national entities (cities and regions) replace nation-states as the 'key articulators'.[42] Sassen emphasises the 'place-ness' of these global cities, noting that 'capital even if dematerialised is not simply hyper-mobile [and] trade and investment and information flows are not only about flows'. Information-age activities could be headquartered anywhere on the planet, but they do need to be clustered together: 'the nature of its service depends on proximity to other specialists' which supplies 'the social infrastructure for global connectivity'.[43] Silicon Valley, California is an excellent example of the kind of 'global city' enclave predicted by Sassen. It participates in a worldwide bidding war for top talent, anticipating that the business environment may be drastically transformed every decade or so and victory will belong to the company that identifies 'the next big thing' before its competitors.

It is also possible to complicate Sassen's picture by noting that the global city is more than a site of advanced production. Producer, production and post-industrial cosmopolitanism are quite deliberately confounded to form a 'desirable urban brand'.[44] Silicon Valley's proximity to San Francisco is not accidental. Part of the marketing of Silicon Valley's products has always been about their countercultural character. The German designer Hartmut Esslinger, hired by Apple Computer to create a 'consistent design language' for all of their products, selected a look that he called 'California

[40] Kevin Starr, *Coast of Dreams: California on the Edge, 1990–2003* (New York: Knopf, 2003), p. 14.

[41] Starr, *Coast*, p. 275.

[42] Saskia Sassen, 'The Global City: Introducing a Concept', *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 11:2 (Winter/Spring 2005): 27–43, p. 27.

[43] Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, 2nd edn. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 350, 120.

[44] Humphrey and Skvirskaja, 'Introduction', p. 3.

global', inspired by 'Hollywood and music, a bit of rebellion, and natural sex appeal'. From 1983 onward, every Apple product would be branded as 'Designed in California'.[45] Steve Jobs himself, as the public face of the brand, never lost an opportunity to evoke the countercultural roots of his company. Quizzed by a class of Stanford undergraduates about the future of business shortly after he achieved international fame with Apple Computer, Jobs brushed off the questions and challenged the students: 'how many of you are virgins? How many of you have taken LSD?'[46] When John Markoff interviewed him, Jobs remarked that 'taking LSD was one of the two or three most important things he had done in his life'.[47] The early chapters of Walter Isaacson's biography of Jobs are replete with references to eccentric vegetarian and fruitarian diets, spiritual quests, primal scream therapy, Bob Dylan albums and LSD trips. These anecdotes may well have been genuine, yet they should also be read in the context of this statement by Oracle CEO Larry Ellison: 'Steve created the only lifestyle brand in the tech industry. There are cars people are proud to have—Porsche, Ferrari, Prius—because what I drive says something about me. People feel the same way about an Apple product.'[48] This is not a precise equivalent of Lawrence Durrell's description of Alexandria, but many of the same elements are present: a link is posited between sexual self-expression, spiritual quests and intellectual innovation, even if, in this bourgeois bohemia, we are to replace syncretism with a search for synergy.

Narratives of the birth of the personal computer are saturated with coastal exceptionalism. As early as 1966, *Look* magazine ran a special issue: 'California: A New Game with New Rules'. The 'new game' was multivalent: sexual, social, entrepreneurial. In *What the Dormouse Said: How the 60s Counterculture Shaped the Personal Computer Industry*, John Markoff has described the events and personalities concentrated in a remarkably small area, a five-mile radius near Stanford University, known as the Mid-Peninsula before it became better known as Silicon Valley. This location was coastal in a literal sense (one participant reminisced how office parties at one lab consisted quite routinely of grabbing sleeping bags, driving down to the nearby beach and dropping acid) but it is

[45] Walter Isaacson, *Steve Jobs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), pp. 132–3.

[46] Isaacson, *Jobs*, p. 106.

[47] John Markoff, *What the Dormouse Said: How the 60s Counterculture Shaped the Personal Computer Industry* (New York: Viking, 2005), p. xix.

[48] Isaacson, *Jobs*, p. 332.

also represented as culturally coastal in the senses that we have come to associate with California.

Yet Silicon Valley was also the home of the Hewlett-Packard Corporation and a busy hive of defence contractors working at the behest of the US government. Early computers were too expensive for anyone but the largest institutional customers. All of the people discussed in *What the Dormouse Said* worked on military projects. Markoff returns throughout *Dormouse* to a central conflict between the advocates of a top–down approach to computing, allowing the machines to remain large, expensive objects under the control of government or the largest companies, and visionaries like Douglas Englebart, who saw a future for small, user-friendly computers as a kind of personal assistant, a method 'for presenting and communicating information' and a 'bicycle for the mind' with an almost infinite variety of uses and applications.[49]

It may seem improbable that this project won funding from the US government, but the Pentagon needed a command and control system that could monitor threats and manage air defences in real time in the event of a nuclear war. Hence, they could envision an immediate, practical application for enhanced computing speed, superior graphic displays, instant networking between workstations and intuitive, well-designed user interfaces. Still, at a time when computers were gigantic and so rare that programmers had to queue up for limited time on a shared machine, the notion of a $500 computer that would fit in a suitcase, or slip comfortably into a coat pocket, was radical and unsettling.[50]

The openness of Englebart's lab to unqualified visitors was representative of its key values. The counterculture icon Ken Kesey got a demonstration; the teenage Steve Jobs was another who was not turned away.[51] Indeed, several of the programmers who later played a major role in launching the personal computer hobbyist movement considered opening doors to the young and uninitiated as one of their most important tasks. Bob Albrecht, a renegade programmer who was rebuked for 'turning children loose on computers' quit his government job and found a vocation teaching high school kids to code.[52] What emerged from this playful approach was a Californian synthesis, with one foot in the realm of technology and

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[49] Markoff, *Dormouse*, pp. 163, 231.

[50] Markoff, *Dormouse*, p. 237.

[51] Markoff, *Dormouse*, pp. 94, 165.

[52] Markoff, *Dormouse*, p. 181.

the other in the world of entertainment. Some of the very first practical applications of personal computing were simple video games and interactive graphics displays; *Dormouse* relates the birth of companies like Adobe (whose best-selling product remains Photoshop) and Atari (a pioneer in the computer gaming industry).[53] Stewart Brand authored a famous *Rolling Stone* article about computer games, 'Spacewar: Fanatic Life and Symbolic Death among the Computer Bums', that appeared on 7 December 1972.

As far-reaching as these technological innovations were, it is possible to argue that one of Englebart's most influential creations was a 'Californian' way of doing business, featuring a fundamentally new approach to diversity in the workplace. His lab had perplexed visitors from the Pentagon with its relaxed dress code, pets at work and a mix of recreational pursuits on-site. By the 1990s, Silicon Valley companies in the hot pursuit of talent had institutionalised the casual and flexible workplace once improvised by the sixties counterculture. During the dot com boom, one company allowed a programmer to bring his eight-foot python to the office; an animation studio accommodated an employee who felt he worked best in the nude with a 'late-late shift'.[54] The reward for flexibility was to recruit, and retain, exceptional individuals who might otherwise work for one's business competitor. Silicon Valley now attracted high achievers from around the world. Sabeer Bhatia arrived almost penniless from Bangalore, India, but he had received a passing score on Caltech's 'Transfer Exam', a test so difficult that 'even most students with a math SAT score of 800 [a perfect score] will do abysmally'.[55] Bhatia was just one of many new arrivals from South Asia. The influx of talent from far-flung origins and the widest possible range of lifestyles forced more profound adjustments. Health insurance companies found that they could no longer avoid covering acupuncture as a legitimate, mainstream medical expense.[56] There is, perhaps, a workable analogy to the Ottoman attitudes that forged the tolerant Levant. Certain kinds of strangers, with their concomitant puzzling, strange, or even arguably offensive behaviour, are to be overlooked as the price of doing business. Programmers and animators, like the financiers of an earlier time, possessed mastery of a dark art.

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[53] Markoff, *Dormouse*, p. 145.

[54] Starr, *Coast*, p. 275.

[55] Po Bronson, *The Nudist on the Late Shift and Other True Tales of Silicon Valley* (New York: Random House, 1999), p. 82.

[56] Starr, *Coast*, p. 391.

In the mid-1990s, Disney began providing what was called (bracketed in quotation marks, as something unfamiliar) 'domestic partner benefits'. This was a decade before same-sex marriage became a major political issue. The *Wall Street Journal* announced the new development with a headline that acknowledged the historic nature of this move by a major corporation: 'Benefits Office at Disney Broadens Definition of Family'.[57] The policy change brought Disney in line with other Hollywood studios, but it remained enough of an outlier nationally that socially conservative Christians launched a boycott of Disney parks, films and products, underscoring California's left coast reputation.[58]

It is not easy, of course, to disentangle all of the factors involved in California's tolerant attitude and accommodating practices. Just because a diverse workforce was good for business does not mean that ideological frameworks did not shape these decisions as well. Visible diversity of one sort (say, a polyglot and multicultural environment) may make an increase in other forms of diversity less surprising or alarming. As with Kahanoff's Levantine cities, people who have made a conscious choice to live in a cosmopolitan location will in turn make further decisions that reinforce those values where they live. Marginalised groups may feel safer in asserting their presence and activists are likely to be emboldened. Each of these effects amplifies the others. California's reputation for tolerance, once established, would have a snowballing effect. Moreover, Silicon Valley and California's entertainment industry went beyond a neutral policy towards difference and diversity in the workplace; as David Brooks has argued, in the aggressive search for the next new thing, America's new 'bourgeois bohemians' actively promoted a corporate culture that could be called 'add weirdness and stir'.[59]

Steve Jobs's design of the Pixar headquarters exemplifies the reasoning behind this approach. While the studio basked in the worldwide fame associated with the *Toy Story* series, Jobs focused his attention on a 'showcase headquarters' that would 'encourage random encounters' in the workplace. Jobs argued that 'creativity comes from spontaneous meetings, from random discussions […] the magic that's sparked by serendipity'.

[57] *Wall Street Journal*, 6 October 1995.

[58] 'Disney's Health Policy for Gay Employees Angers Religious Right in Florida', *New York Times*, 29 November 1995; 'Baptists Vote Boycott of Disney, Calling Positions "Immoral"', *Wall Street Journal*, 19 June 1997.

[59] David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), pp. 103–39.

In keeping with his larger vision about productive dialogue between the sciences and the humanities, he wanted software engineers, graphic designers and animators to encounter each other on a regular basis. To that end, Jobs insisted that every element in the building lead workers toward the central atrium, to the point that he originally insisted that the only bathrooms at Pixar would be located on either side of the atrium.[60]

Given Jobs's own favoured explanation for the emergence of Silicon Valley as a world-beating centre of innovation, the Pixar headquarters design marked an interesting milestone in the evolution of its corporate culture. Rather than relying on a dynamic and diverse urban setting, where the Grateful Dead rubbed elbows with defence contractors, Jobs sought to engineer serendipity by mixing work, play, art and science, within a business setting that had affinities to a college campus. Installing toys, video games and cafes inside one's place of business encouraged employees to get their creative 'reset' or stimulation without ever really leaving the office.

The Pixar experiment, seeking to harness the energy of the counter-culture without its messy and less efficient elements, also has important implications for governments that would like to replicate such successes on a larger scale. The potential benefits of cloning Silicon Valley can hardly be overstated. This small region has now excelled at the high-stakes game of innovation for several decades in a row. In 2006, the *Wall Street Journal* surveyed the geographical distribution of patent applications across the United States. San Jose, a Silicon Valley town, led the nation with 3,911 patents in the previous year. 'The state of California', the article continued, 'accounts for about 15% of the patents issued in the United States; Texas and New York together make up about 8%.'[61] Even allowing for California's size and considerable population, then, these numbers are very striking. It is not surprising that other countries seek to spin off their own versions of such a lucrative zone of exception (Scotland has its 'Silicon Glen').

Creating an evocative name, of course, is no guarantee of success. This begs the question of whether 'bourgeois bohemia' can—as it were—breed in captivity. In recent decades a variety of regimes around the world have actively sought to establish zones of exception by decree, and in a hurry, along the principles of neoliberal faith in capitalism as 'creative destruction' and the synergy between free thought and free trade. Most have

been on the coast. Deng Xiaoping's China aimed to reproduce the economic and technical vitality of Japan and its small 'Tiger' neighbours (such as South Korea and Taiwan) without undermining the Communist Party's monopoly of state power. The result was the New Economic Zones of the 1980s, small districts located on or near the coast and, after 1997, a strained but profitable relationship with a semi-autonomous Hong Kong. Not everyone gets the formula quite right. For example, under the Suharto dictatorship, Indonesia's free trade zone on a tiny island next to Singapore backfired; rather than becoming an incubator for brilliant entrepreneurial schemes, it became Singapore's red light district. Even the Islamic Republic of Iran has established a zone of exception on an island in the Gulf, to date appealing only to arms dealers and to tourists from the Persian-speaking diaspora.[62]

Such examples may seem a bit remote from Silicon Valley, which likes to boast about its spontaneity and anarchic unruliness. Yet surely, given the FBI surveillance of all manner of dissidents in the 1960s and the prevalence of security checks on government contractors, the Pentagon was not uninformed about the state of affairs in northern California. The Silicon Valley narrative of *Dormouse* may be revised one day when the pertinent US government files are declassified. It would be particularly interesting to know how the Pentagon responded to concerns from the FBI about Douglas Englebart's team and its flirtations with the anti-war movement and the drug culture, not to mention the open-door policy that allowed random civilians to visit a cutting-edge research facility. It may turn out that the emergence of the personal computer was a more closely managed and supervised process than many of the Silicon Valley participants would like to admit.

Conclusion

There is a long-standing pattern in which the state *tolerates tolerance*, safely at arm's length in zones of exception, in the expectation of particular benefits. For most of human history, tolerant coasts came as a package deal. The alchemy of these special zones was poorly understood and tampering with them seemed ill-advised. In recent decades, however, the differ-

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[62] The experiments in Indonesia and Iran are discussed in Godfrey Baldacchino, *Island Enclaves: Offshoring Strategies, Creative Governance, and Subnational Island Jurisdictions* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010). I am indebted to Daniel Swan for alerting me to the Island Studies literature.

ent elements of the tolerant coast have been teased apart. With container shipping and cheap jet travel, the army of diverse personnel once characteristic of urban waterfronts has evaporated. Today's ships, ever larger and more efficient, require just a handful of sailors each. Today's port facilities are little more than automated warehouses that happen to be adjacent to water. Meanwhile the passengers (and those who handle them) have largely removed themselves to airports.[63] Finance and communication hubs persist, but they can direct all of the components of the system from the other side of the planet if necessary, without the aid of local agents and representatives. Ports, then, are no longer especially 'polyglot' or 'open to influence' in the senses that Hughes suggested. The need for stimulating, provocative environments to foster profitable forms of leisure and creativity does remain. In that spirit, today's bureaucrats and political elites are more likely to be envying someone else's tolerant coast and taking steps to foster one of their own, than hating its untidiness. This is perhaps the most striking way that Robert Hughes's axiom does not apply to our own century. Governments in possession of anything resembling a tolerant coast are eager to market its (putative) benefits. As Philip Mansel noted about the Levant, however, there is something inherently unstable about plutocratic coastal enclaves that remain estranged from an alienated inland majority. If the neoliberal enclaves that we call 'global cities' collapse in our own era, that will say more about bitter socio-economic polarisation than it does about the ineffable fragility of a tolerant public sphere.

Saskia Sassen forecast, accurately, that 'given the importance of speed' in the information-age economy, 'proven talent is an added value, [so] the structure of rewards is likely to experience rapid increases'. The global city would be characterised by *both* superdiversity *and* a heightening of 'spatial and socio-economic inequality'.[64] Are we ready to celebrate the tolerant coast only when it is contributing to productivity at the highest economic and creative levels? Vera Skvirskaja has warned that the term 'cosmopolitan' has a long history of elitism and arrogance attached to it.[65] The Levant and Silicon Valley are two of the most touted and well-documented examples

[63] Some have argued that 'airport cities' will be the new hubs of innovation and cosmopolitan dynamism: John D. Kasarda and Greg Lindsay, *Aerotropolis: The Way We'll Live Next* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2011).

[64] Sassen, 'Global City', p. 30.

[65] Vera Skvirskaja, 'At the City's Social Margins: Selective Cosmopolitans in Odessa', in Humphrey and Skvirskaja eds, *Post-Cosmopolitan Cities*, pp. 94–119, especially p. 96. See also Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon, 2000).

of the tolerant coast, yet if we are looking for people who can cope with multiple languages and cross-cultural communication, many of our most promising candidates will be among the proletarians and the marginalised, who have had little choice but to adapt and become fluent. In today's world, that might be a cab driver, an underage sex worker trafficked across borders, or a migrant trapped in a low-wage job who stays because he must send remittances home. These forms of cosmopolitan labour, however, do not take place in a designated creativity or finance zone, or even in a marketable 'diversity district' with suitable ethnic restaurants to attract tourists and admiring journalists. As a visitor to Beirut in the 1960s was told: 'Nothing is forbidden except an empty pocket, in which case nothing is forgiven.'[66] If cities market their tolerant coast in a bidding war to capture investment, create synergy and boost the prices of luxury real estate, then shanty town cosmopolitanism will appear in the narrative (if at all) as a necessary evil. As Kwame Anthony Appiah has remarked, 'The real challenge to cosmopolitanism isn't the belief that other people don't matter at all; it's the belief that they don't matter very much.'[67]

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[66] Mansel, *Levant*, p. 314.

[67] Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, p. 153.

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