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Reinventing the Sea: Precarity, Epistemology, Narratives

ABSTRACTS

DAHAB, Elizabeth F. California State University Long Beach, USA.
"Burial at Sea: Reconciliation and Bereavement in Wajdi Mouawad's *Littoral (Tideline)*"
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Littoral (*Tideline*), a play by the celebrated Lebanese-Québécois playwright Wajdi Mouawad was staged in Limoges in 1998 and in Festival d'Avignon in1999. It is about a son who travels far to bury his father at sea in a war ravaged unnamed location. No place, no village, no country is ever mentioned. One can definitely surmise that the action in *Littoral* takes place anywhere where war has occurred and where there is a coastline. It could be in the Indian Ocean or the Arabian Sea. The communal sense of bereavement, the quintessential leitmotif of the play, ties in with the figure of the father himself, a figure that acquires the added symbolic status of a collective patriarch. The universality of the image of the father, against the backdrop of the leitmotif of the play, is explicitly signified by one of the protagonists. The nameless country is perhaps a sure way to reach various international audiences who can identify with the dramaturgy, an assumption substantiated by the fact that *Littoral* has been translated in several European countries, as well as Mexico. The sea as a burial place is symbolic insofar as it is the washer of all human affairs, the purifier that takes away the suffering and the havoc of human vicissitudes. In the words of the ending of the play, when the father is buried at sea, his cadaver speaks:

> Il y a le littoral et la grande mer, qui emporte tout
>
> Et qui m'emporte ailleurs,
>
> Qui m'emporte, qui m'emporte, qui m'emporte

My talk will deal with the poetics of bearing witness, remembrance, and reconciliation against the backdrop of the sea as harbinger of forgiveness and rest.

DATTARAY, Debashree. Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India.
"A Sea For Encounters: Changing Epistemologies in T.S. Pilla's *Chemmeen"*
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Within the context of the "modern", Indian literary traditions are often articulated as an instance of unbroken continuity or that of colonial rupture. In this context, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's seminal award-winning novel *Chemmeen* (1955, *The Prawn*) articulates the dilemma of a nebulous "nation" as embodied within the fishermen community in the coastal state of Kerala in southern India. The narrative of Karuthamma, a Hindu fisherwoman and Pareekutti, a Muslim fish wholesaler is interspersed with the pervasive myth of Katalamma (Sea – Mother) and her codes on chastity and borders signifying transcendence in art and life. The ever-changing and endless sea becomes symptomatic of a community in transition. Through *Chemmeen,* Thakazhi foregrounds a textual and human displacement which in turn reinvents concepts of "community" and "gender", divulging the ambiguities of the "modern" in the Indian context. This paper would explore how Thakazhi uses the symbol of the sea to invoke the creative possibilities of coastal life in Kerala, which bypasses Eurocentric linear narratives of achievement and progress. The text itself compels one to rethink the contours of pedagogical proclivities and intellectual production.

DRAGA ALEXANDRU, Maria-Sabina. University of Bucharest, Romania.
"A Sea of Violence and Love: Precarity, Eco-Fiction and the American Factor in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*"
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This paper will interrogate a set of popular tropes and clichés that have become characteristic of the emerging genre of eco-fiction (such as impending threat in forms such as ecological disaster, endangered nature as a force in its own right which protects and threatens the human being, or the uselessness of science and technology when facing the unleashed forces of nature) in a reading of Amitav Ghosh's 2004 novel *The Hungry Tide*. I will examine the novel's use of such tropes with hindsight, in the light of Ghosh's 2016 non-fiction book *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, where the author's interest in ecology, climate change and the agency of fiction with respect to ensuing threats to human civilization becomes manifest. Using Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's concept of "green postcolonialism", I will argue that the two books share a deep concern with the ways in which the relationship between nature and culture, which has changed dramatically in the recent decades, mirrors a changing in the relationship between the "West" and the "East". Thus, if colonialism functioned on the basis of an assumption of superiority with respect to non-European civilizations, it is now non-European forms of knowledge, formerly considered "primitive", that prevail over western knowledge when it comes to facing nature's revolt against various kinds of prolonged human aggression.

GANAPATHY-DORE, Geetha. Université Paris 13 Sorbonne Paris Cité, France.
"Sonali Deraniyagala's *Wave* (2013), Philippa Hawley's *There is No Sea in Salford* (2013) and Minoli Salgado's *A Little Dust in the Eyes* (2014): A Study of Tsunami Narratives"
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The ancient Tamil epic *Silappatikaram* describes the flourishing portal city of Puhar and *Manimekalai* tells the story of how it was engulfed by the sea. The Sri Lankan chronicles *Thupavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* speak of another that was to have swallowed the kingdom of Kelani Tissa. The brave princess Vihara Mahadevi appeased the anger of nature that was intended for her father who had ill treated a Buddhist monk by sacrificing herself. Surprisingly she survived. Almost two thousand years later, a daughter of the Island survives the Tsunami of 2004 while tragically losing her parents, her husband and two sons. Sonali Deraniyagala's story is about coping with loss and grief and surviving shuttles between two Islands – England and Sri Lanka. The love of Sri Lanka surfaces in the humanitarian approach of Dr. Philippa Hawley, a physician who had performed her internship in Sri Lanka. The doctor-narrator Penny tries to re-establish contact with Kiri de Souza who was working as a nurse in the hospital where she did her internship in Sri Lanka and had a married a Tamil doctor and settled in England. A story of liberation from cancer and domestic violence ensues that is enlarged and translated into a story of solidarity with the vulnerable in Sri Lanka. Minoli Salgado's *A Little Dust in the Eyes* evokes the close relationship between Renu and Savi, two cousins separated by civil war. During this compulsive trip to Sri Lanka with a view to coming to grips with her childhood, Savi is not able to retrieve anything but is helplessly swept away in the fatal swell of the sea. The aim of the paper is to first look at what type of narrative that insiders and outsiders choose to write about the tsunami, then analyze what these tsunami narratives tell us about gender, family, ethnic, and race relations in times of personal, political and natural catastrophes before finally exploring how a pathway to peace is found across the geography of pain in these intimations of mortality.

KRISHNA, Anchitha. IIT Madras, India.
"Voices from the silent shores: A study of *Matsyaganddhi* by M.Sajitha"
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Matsyaganddhi (2002) is a one -act monologue by M.Sajitha, one of the popular theatre artists from Kerala. Through this powerful monologue by an *araya* (fisher folk community in Kerala) woman, she expresses the angst and anxiety of the fisher folk community in the globalized world. Being a woman from one of the marginalized communities in Kerala, the unnamed fisherwoman in the play narrates how the new regimes of power have taken away their life, livelihood and their sea. The play uses myths and age-old beliefs to explore the present condition of the fisher folk community and gives voice to their unheard miseries and broken promises made to them by those in power. The advent of globalization has negatively impacted their community life as it had affected the bio-diversity in the sea. The play juxtaposes the life forms in the sea and the fisher folk community to highlight their interconnectedness and embeddedness in their environment. It is essentially a

narrative on the "disturbed *oikos*" where the organic connection to one's home space (oikos) is lost and shows how those spaces are damaged and radically altered in a globalized world. The paper examines the play through the themes of environmental consciousness and environmental justice and how the relation between the women and the environment contribute to our understanding of the relation between ecological violations and violence upon women.

Bibliography:

Sajitha M., 'Matsyaganddhi', *Golden Threshold*, Ranjith Krishnan K.R and Rajalekshmi K.L ed., Chennai: Orient Blackswan, 2014.

LAHIRI, Debasish. University of Calcutta, India.
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The salt of the estranging sea. – If sweet water flows in all the rivers, from where does the sea take its salt? The sea sunders, but only by acknowledging the suture of tears, the lint of loss and its power to surmount the summit of intimacy in the Utopia, that grand state of immanence, philosophy's afterlife.

Precarity applies to a specific subjectivity, the lived experience of ambient insecurity. Zeus and Poseidon were both refugees. And the wrath of Time can be a frontier too far even for the strongest wings. My proposal looks at a misreading of the well received and thus unquestioned map of origins of the history of ideas, both in the West and the East, expressed through the poetry of habitus and trespassing, to find the connections of convivial traditions and the desolation of song-making in the wake of time, like a tuning fork in a glass of water.

From the vision of Samudra Manthan (the churning of the seas) in the Indian imaginary to the travails of Odysseus, from the dejection of Polyphemus to the ragged claws beneath Eliot's silent seas, from Rimbaud's drunken boat to Tagore's sea-changes, and many more instances to boot, I will try to demonstrate and reinterpret many crucial ways in which the sea of poetry has flowed, hiding reefs and making bays, missing from the navigation charts of Argus-eyed power.

MEHTA, Brinda J. Mills College Oakland, CA, USA.
"Historicizing the Sea in *Kala Pani* Narratives"
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This presentation focuses on the importance of seascapes in the *kala pani* literature of Indian indenture. While the term *kala pani* refers to the taboo crossing of large expanses of water according to traditional Hindu social and cultural codes, *kala pani* literature chronicles the exilic consciousness of Indo-Caribbean writers and their negotiation of identity, cultural subjectivity, their sense of belonging/non-belonging in the adopted lands, and their social marginalization. The sea is an important site of what Véronique Braggard calls "transoceanic dialogues" between and across the diasporas of indenture to create literary discourse and theory. I will pay particular attention to the ways in which Indo-Caribbean women writers, such as Ramabai Espinet, Leelawatee Manoo-Rahming (Trinidad), Laure Moutoussamy (Guadeloupe), and Gauitra Bahadur (Guyana) problematize "seascapes" in their writings to highlight the maternal routes of indenture in novels, poetry and biography. How do these writers inscribe the rich historicity of Indian women in text by focusing on the gendered aspects of migration? How do their gender concerns provide the framework for what I call a "jahaji bahin/ship sister poetics" as a framework for Indo-Caribbean feminist articulations? This literature engenders a complex mapping of woman-centered experiences that both complicate and diversifie Indo-Caribbean-ness from gendered and mixed-race (Moutoussamy) perspectives.

MOHAN, Anupama. Presidency University, Kolkata, India.
"Maritime Transmodernities and the Ibis Trilogy"
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Keywords: Anthropocene; subalternity; sea; pidgin; transmodernity.

The term trans-modernity was coined by Latin American philosopher, Enrique Dussel, who uses it in order to demarcate European modernity as one variant of a larger, global modernity whose enunciation both predates and exceeds the ambit of Eurocentrism. Dussel's corrective reminds us of the need to nourish multiple chronotopes and narratives of modernity, a project that poses serious questions for postcolonial scholars for whom the specifically colonial space/moment has provided an abiding locus of engagement. With the Ibis Trilogy (2008-2015), Amitav Ghosh reflects the two metrics of change – scale and velocity – that force us today to rethink the

very scope and nature of postcolonial studies as a field intersecting with emergent global concerns such as the anthropocene, a theme that Ghosh has turned to not just in his fiction but also in his most recent *The Great Derangement* (2016), a collection of non-fiction essays on the theme of climate change.

Ghosh remains an atypical member of the postcolonial club (as it were) because of his insistent focus upon the sea (rather than land) in many works as the loci for viewing/understanding the historical and cultural encounters between the West and the non-West. Indeed, where much postcolonial writing remains centred upon issues of land, dispossession, and diaspora, Ghosh has shown a remarkable dissidence in his interests in the sea, and in what I call "maritime transmodernities" in order to launch his critique of both Eurocentrism and its equally problematic *agon*, academic postcolonialism.

Through a close reading of the littoral, coastal, and marine in the three novels that comprise the Ibis Trilogy, I hope to show the ways in which Ghosh's interest has subtly shifted from land and territorial structures for articulating and critiquing contemporary political events (*The Calcutta Chromosome*, 1995; *The Shadow Lines*, 1998) to the sea and to maritime frameworks for understanding the deeper, more genealogically complex currents of human interaction across time and space, a move that marks such works as *In An Antique Land*, 1992; *The Hungry Tide*, 2004; and the Ibis Trilogy. What does such a shift mean for postcolonial studies, which remains, in some ways, focused upon and encumbered by land movements for territorial justice? How do the twin foci – on land and sea – come together in terms of contemporary "problems" as "refugeeism" while also being the bulwark of a certain kind of celebratory humanism in the form of "multiculturalism"? Where does the novel (or fiction, in general) find itself in terms of such conflicted representation? These are some questions that I will explore in my paper.

MUKHERJEE, Pradipta. Vidyasagar College for Women, Kolkata, India.
"Cartographies of Nation, Testimonies of Disclocation: Indian Partition Films"
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The 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent led to the creation of the sovereign nation-states of India and Pakistan. Partition marks a moment of rupture within Indian national history, a rupture that had a more searing, corporeal dimension, experienced as the mutilation of the national body. The sea is the apposite metaphor for this great estrangement. How did the masses cope with this dislocation that ushered in a sea-change in their lives? How did they negotiate this lived experience of loss, this trauma of uprooting?

Films as cultural texts have deepened our understanding of the relationship between historical trauma, collective memory and cultural processes. For the Bengali filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak, memory of partition reached a level of obsession. The paper provides insights into cinematic texts that foreground frameworks of loss – loss of a homeland, loss of family or a syncretic past that reframes Indian identity, history or what partition means in the dialectical present. The paper traces the psychosocial matrix of lived reality in the cinema of M.S. Sathyu and Shyam Benegal.

The paper attempts a nuanced understanding of this cataclysmic experience: how partition shaped postcolonial nation-states, their societies and migrant/diasporic subjectivities. Mapping the diverse cartographies of partition-related uncertainties, the paper would examine the trope behind constructions of religious divides, refocusing South Asian history and observing the reframing of contesting historiographies in post-90's partition films.

MULLA, Ahmed. Université de la Réunion, France.
"A mosaic on the move: different processes of creolisation in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*"
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While the East India Company makes huge benefits from the opium trade between its Indian dominion and China in the 1830s, many people in the colony, Indians and Europeans alike, are hopeless about their future. Ruined by the compulsory cultivation of opium which comes to the detriment of a traditional agriculture that guaranteed self-reliance, or condemned by social prejudices, men and women are left with no other option than to seek a future elsewhere. Forced to share a confined place during a lengthy boat trip to an unknown destination in the Indian Ocean, people of opposite social and cultural backgrounds have to adjust to the unwritten laws of a community formed by chance. The characters of Amitav Ghosh's historical novel, *Sea of Poppies*, belong to the early waves of indentured workers that travelled throughout the Indian Ocean in the hope of a less arduous

future. Notwithstanding their individual fate, Ghosh's narrative definitely shows that the ship constitutes a transitory "society" where each one has to re-negotiate his or her relationship to diversity.

MUND, Subhendu. BJB College Bhubaneswar, IIT Bhubaneswar, India.
"Coloniser Colonised: Odisha's Maritime History, Odia Collective Memory and Identity Politics"
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Archaeological and textual evidences confirm that Odisha (eastern India), known as *Kalinga* in the Ancient Age had a rich maritime tradition and had even established "colonies" in a number of islands/countries on the Bay of Bengal which was known as *Kalingadresu*. Much more than historical evidence and textual references, the "past glory" has remained vibrantly alive in the "collective memory" (Maurice Halbwachs) of the Odia people and is manifest in folklore, legends, folk rituals and festivals, even mainstream literature.

The narratives, real and imaginary, of the maritime achievements became instrumental during the colonial era in re-constructing their identity on the face of threats to their language and culture. On the national level the maritime past of India became an anti-colonial nationalist strategy with a section of scholars trying to re-write the history. In 1926, historian Kalidas Nag (1892-1966) formed the "Greater India Society" in Calcutta which sought to include the ancient "Indian Colonies" as integral parts of "Greater India". Eminent historians like Ramesh Chandra Majumdar (1888-1980) published a number of books (e.g. several volumes of *Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East,* 1927>) and research papers on the subject.

In my paper I intend to examine the Odia/Indian maritime narratives and their significance in nationalist/subnationalist identity politics.

NAUMANN, Michel. Université de Cergy, France.
"The Three Seas of Globalization"
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The first globalization started in the 10th century around the Indian Ocean as a result of China's prosperous economy and Moslem dynamic attitudes towards trade, work and success. It involved almost the whole world (Swahili Africa, Ethiopia, the Volga trade routes, Venice...). India, of course, was its centre and an economic giant. This historical phase ended with the Chinese prohibition of long distance voyages for Chinese boats.

The second globalization started in 1492 and was based on the Atlantic. It soon was dominated by the triangular trade that gave an impulse to the West and produced the Industrial revolution.

The third globalization has started around the sea of China but this stage might be short as Africa and Latin America could join China to change and perhaps unify the world.

SANKEY, Ingrid. Université catholique de Lille, France.
"Teaching Global History and Geography Using the Indian Ocean as a Unit of Analysis"
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The units of analysis historians and geographers use dictate what questions are asked, what stories are told and eventually what patterns emerge. Units of analysis are framing tools that help scholars to identify global patterns. Thus, by focusing on seas and ocean basins, one can bring out more clearly the processes of interaction that link peoples living in the various regions around a sea and ocean basin. Using the Mediterranean Sea as a framework for his study of the reign of Philippe II of Spain, Fernand Braudel wrote: "I contemplated the Mediterranean, tête à tête, for years on end and my vision of History took its definitive form without my being entirely aware of it, partly as a direct intellectual response to a spectacle – the Mediterranean – which no traditional historical account seemed capable of encompassing."

Nowadays, as Global History emerges as a new historical paradigm, and as a form of "global geography" is being taught in French lycées, the Indian Ocean framework, like the Mediterranean Sea decades ago, is commonly used to explain the early development of global trade networks and regional cross-cultural interactions in what is commonly referred to as the "Ancient World", as opposed to the "New World" "discovered" by Christopher Columbus in 1492.

This paper will therefore deal with this recent and unprecedented use of the Indian Ocean as a global framework for historical and geographical analysis in teaching and research fields and with why teaching about

the Indian Ocean world as a zone of dynamic interaction between peoples makes more pedagogical, historical and geographical meaning than teaching about it through traditionally delineated national or continental units in a globalized world.

It will also discuss the limitations of the use of such a broad unit of analysis and the potential consequences regarding a teleological bias leading historians and teachers to try and integrate the human past into a comprehensive big picture that emphasizes the shared experiences of all humans sometimes at the expense of a somewhat traditional historiography focusing on the idea that the human past is marked by important differences between peoples across space and time.

To conclude, we shall discuss how global historians and geographers are attempting to reconcile the idea of an increasing integration at the global scale with that of proliferating difference at the local and regional scales and how they can build and teach a global historical and geographical narrative of the past and of our contemporary world that may help students understand the growing complexities and challenges of Globalization, including global environmental issues such as the building of a sustainable future for all.

SEN, Suddhaseel. IIT Bombay, India.
Connecting Rāma Sētu to the Hooghly: British Colonialism and Michael Madhusudan Datta's *Mēghnādavadha-Kāvya*
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Michael Madhusudan Datta's epic poem *Mēghnādavadha-Kāvya* (1861), a retelling of the ancient Indian epic *Rāmāyana* from the point of view of the defeated Sri Lankans rather than that of the Hindu god Rāma, has often been considered one of the earliest works of modern, vernacular-language Indian literature, produced as a result of colonial education. Critical opinion about it has been sharply divided. Is it an essentially derivative work by one of Macaulay's spiritual children? Is it a result of Madhusudan's conversion from Hinduism to Christianity? Or is it one that is founded on an incipient nationalist spirit that gained strength among Indians especially after the Revolt of 1857? In my paper, I read closely two key moments in Madhusudan's epic, both of which centre on images of the sea between India and Sri Lanka connected by the Rāma Sētu (or Adam's Bridge, an archipelago of limestone shoals). In stark contrast to the territorial nationalisms of mainstream India, Madhusudan's epic turns to the more primordial shared history of the subcontinent through the sea and the Sētu and powerfully connects the defeat of the Sri Lankans at the hands of the foreign invaders across the Rāma Sētu, with the immersion of the goddess Durgā into the waters of the Ganges (Hooghly) at the end of the five-day Durgā *Pūjā* (worship). By connecting the Rāma Sētu to the Hooghly, I argue that Madhsudan connected the defeated Lankans of mythic time with the colonized Bengalis of real time, thereby creating an epic celebrating heroism in defeat, one that subverts not only the *Rāmāyana* but also the conventions of the European epic that Madhusudan learnt through his colonial education. For such subversive purposes, the turn to the sea and the bridge remained a powerful experiment in thinking beyond the limited and limiting imaginaries of land and territorial national formation.

SENGUPTA, Bhaskar. Rabindra Bharati University, Jadavpur University, India.
"Sinking of the coastline of deltaic West Bengal and endangered marine flora and fauna due to discharge of toxic effluent carried by river Ganges"
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The sea and the deltaic West Bengal on the eastern fringe of India along with neighbouring Bangladesh are heavily endangered due to soil settlement caused by random pumping of ground water and rise of sea level due to global warming and climate change. In addition to this, the discharge of toxic effluent and heavy metals in the river Ganges to the sea has destroyed the flora and fauna in that area. Some initiatives are being taken to save the disaster. The presentation proposes to discuss the seriousness of the situation along with the remedial efforts which are being adopted.

SENGUPTA, JAYITA. Independent scholar, India.
"Sea: Mythological/Mythical Dimensions in Indian Imagination"
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This presentation will discuss how the sea-symbolism has haunted the Hindu mythological imagination as well as the Tibetan Buddhist imagination in the Indian Himalayan belt. While there is an interlaced relationship

between the two cultures, there are also certain specificities relating to art and literature. When we consider Hindu mythology, the visual imagination would depict the God of the sea, Varuna, as the White man wearing a golden armour and riding a sea-dragon or "makara" ("chu-srin" in Tibetan). Hindu mythology has an interesting story related to the origin of Varuna. Again *Matsya Purana*, itself is a genre of literature which survives in the modern era in numerous versions and Indian languages. The myth also has various representations in art and sculpture. In the Tibetan Buddhist myth, the sea plays a dominant role. As colour symbolism in thangka paintings it is suggestive of rest, calmness, constructive thinking. Sea signification is white in colour and is indicative of the power to remove delusion and instill wisdom. Again, among the eight auspicious symbols or the *astamangala* in Tantric Buddhism, the conch shell and the lotus are the two. The right turning conch-shell has a certain signification, so do the golden fishes, the dragons of Mara, the coral branch, the "naga" or the serpent, the scorpion. Sea iconography relates to precarity and human psychology and archetypes. This research article while referring to these narratives of the sea and sea creatures would attempt to analyse the psychological dimension of the Indian cultural imagination. Lastly it would take a short story by Intizar Husain, "The Boat", which interlaces the Hindu, Christian and Islamic cultural imagination together in a narrative where people flee their homelands under certain circumstances for an alternative, uncertain destiny, through tumultuous seas in a boat or a Noah's ark. This paper would relate Jungian idea of archetypes with Barthesian signification for attempting a semiotic-psychoanalysis of the mythological/ mythical narratives in art and literature.

SÖDER, Hans-Peter. University of Munich, Germany.
"Water and Culture(s): An Exploration of the Mythic Dimensions of the Sea"
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As one of the four elements, water is often perceived solely in terms of its physical and biological properties. However, water is not only a natural resource, but also a mythic one. It has connected people and their worlds since time immemorial. From the rivers of Babylon to the Ganges, birth and re-birth, story-telling and spirituality all are unthinkable without water. My paper will dwell on the spiritual properties of water in order to show its importance in transnational discourse.

UNDERWOOD, Dhana. Independent scholar, UK.
"Reinventing the Sea: Precarity, Epistemology, Narratives"
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The ocean lends itself easily to a variety of symbols and metaphors. It is this vast expanse of water that divides land, and thus man, but which in a conflictual dualism, also unites them. The great colonizations, adventures, travels and human curiosity have all pushed man to seek an elsewhere. My paper will explore Amitav Ghosh's trilogy, *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011) and *Flood of Fire* (2015), studying characters from the Indian subcontinent and Asia who lived in the colonial era of the nineteenth century and were ready to travel on the seas, in spite of all obstacles, from one country to another, whether for commerce, adventure, escaping injustice, persecution or for a better life. Centuries later, the echo resurfaces and in human imagination, the ocean has always been the ostensibly potential way of escaping from murderous wars or persecutions and of forging a new life

VARGHESE, Donel. IITBombay, India.
"Through the Native Eyes: The Story of *Varthamanapusthakam* and the Historical Journey to Rome"
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While crossing the *Kala pani* (black waters) was considered by many communities in India as perilous to their culture, a community in Kerala in the late eighteenth century pinned their hopes for freedom of faith on two individuals' perilous journey to Rome. *Varthamanapusthakam,* regarded as the first travelogue written in any of the Indian languages, describes this historical journey undertaken by Mar Joseph Kariattil and Paremakkel Thoma Kathanar (the author of the travelogue) from Kerala to Rome via Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon. Though the book is often hailed as one of the earliest instances where the call for freedom from foreign domination is echoed, the role of the journey per se is neglected even today. The existing scholarship on the book is mainly tilted towards restating the postcolonial angle. This paper attempts to look at the fascinating account of the journey itself as recounted by Paremakkal Thoma Kathanar. The book provides interesting vantage points into the ways in which sea/ocean was recognised and negotiated by the travellers at that point in time.

VOLNÁ, Ludmila. ERIAC Université de Rouen Normandie, Charles University, France/Czech Republic.
"Salman Rushdie's Sea World: Haroun and the Sea of Stories"
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Similarly to works by other Indian writers, water as symbol plays a crucial role in a number of Salman Rushdie's novels or its parts, the imagery being rooted in the Hindu world view. Protagonists who find themselves immersed in water bodies, be it, for example, in *Midnight's Children* or *The Satanic Verses,* are not the same people when they come out (if they do). This is true also for both Rushdie's works for children, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* and *Luka and the Fire of Life.* In the former the author introduces different *worlds*, worlds that are interconnected, nevertheless, each with a *reality* of its own. The child protagonist Haroun travels from the world of apparent everyday reality (represented by the planet Earth) to a Moon world called Kahani. The journey to and on the sea waters that cover a large majority of Kahani becomes, as symbolizing a healing force of the imaginary through story and dream, a representation of an entirely different dimension of reality. The paper purports to present an analysis of this literary material as departing from the Hindu world view, and of the ways in which Rushdie works with and develops different aspects of the representations of the sea.

WEEKS, Joëlle. Université Paris I - Panthéon Sorbonne, France.
"Sea Passage to India in the 18th Century. Geopolitics - Trade - Ideology - Utopia."
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This paper will focus essentially on the role and status of the ports of calls European trading companies occupied to ensure their safe passage to India, ranging from basic havens to settlements or factories. Their economic role on the trade routes was vital as a source of food and water ships crews needed to get fresh supplies and cure their sick.

They were also politically essential and constituted a source of rivalry between the Dutch, Portuguese, English and French. Ideologically, they reflected the relation with local populations and exploitation of natural resources - the demise of the dodo on Mauritius being a case in point as well as the transplantation of precious spices on the same Mauritius by the French naturalist Poivre - from the well protected Dutch factories in Indonesia. Utopian schemes were sometimes enacted on these tiny islands either picked randomly or as safe havens after shipwrecks or again selected as a space where societies would be born anew for new pilgrims and outcasts. A large body of literature, be it travel accounts, logbooks or fiction, emerged on those topics both in France and Britain foregrounding revolutionary ideas in 18th century Europe.

ZAIDI, Nishat. Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India.
"Oceanic Encounter with the 'Other' in Select Travel Narratives of Early Muslim Travellers to the West"
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Many Muslim travellers travelled to Britain by sea in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Their voyages were undertaken for diverse reasons, ranging from personal promotion, tourism and pleasure to enlightenment and social service but embedded in all these was perception in which ocean-crossing was synonymous with movement towards civilization. The fluvial ocean in these narratives brings the travellers face to face with a world of alterity, a world where their ideas of normative are constantly challenged and redefined. The present paper aims to study travel narratives of select Muslim travellers - Mirza Ihtisamuddin (1766), Mirza Abu Talib (1799), Yusuf Kambalposh (1836), and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1866) - that explore the varied ways in which these travellers encountered otherness as they embarked the ship to set sail to England. 'Otherness' experienced by travellers was not necessarily binaristic between the coloniser and the colonised, but was rather multidirectional as these travellers travelled through the Middle East and Africa. There were multiple sites of contestation and cooperation implied in it. In all this the ocean is experienced by these travellers not only as a space that facilitated movement by its fluidity, but also as a space that was constituted by and constitutive of the movement. Also the paper would avoid anglocentric analysis of these encounters which rob the colonised subject of all agency in favour of a more nuanced analysis of these representations that is alert to the complexities of these representations.