



Angles

New Perspectives on the Anglophone World

9 | 2019

Reinventing the Sea

Video introduction to issue 9

Geetha Ganapathy-Doré and Ludmila Volná



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/angles/777>

DOI: 10.4000/angles.777

ISSN: 2274-2042

Publisher

Société des Anglicistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur

Electronic reference

Geetha Ganapathy-Doré and Ludmila Volná, « Video introduction to issue 9 », *Angles* [Online], 9 | 2019, Online since 01 November 2019, connection on 24 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/angles/777> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/angles.777>

This text was automatically generated on 24 September 2020.



Angles est mise à disposition selon les termes de la Licence Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International.

Video introduction to issue 9

Geetha Ganapathy-Doré and Ludmila Volná

This media file cannot be displayed. Please refer to the online document <http://journals.openedition.org/angles/777>

Transcript:

- 1 I am Geetha Ganapathy-Doré. I am the current president of the Society for Activities and Research on the Indian World (SARI). I am Ludmila Volná. I am currently one of Vice-Presidents of the Society for Activities and Research on the Indian World. Welcome to this special issue on “Reinventing the Sea”.
- 2 Most of the papers collected in this issue were first presented at the SARI conference on *Reinventing the Sea, Precarity, Epistemology and Narratives* held in June 2017. We, as guest editors of *Angles*, would like to particularly thank Prof. Cornelius Crowley and Dr. Corinne Alexandre-Garner of Paris Nanterre University for their support and contribution to the success of the conference.
- 3 The sea remains a symbol of what is vast, deep, mysterious and dangerous, and appears in our collective songs, myths, literature and art. Global economy and trade rely upon maritime routes and networks for keeping goods and ideas in circulation.
- 4 The conference was based on the premise that the sea is being reinvented everywhere as a means to resist and survive, as a strategic frontier to be redesigned, but also as home.
- 5 We think that a good introduction to the different and complex issues examined in this particular issue of *Angles* are illustrated by Derek Walcott’s poem “Sea is History”:
The Sea Is History
Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is History.
- 6 This issue has articles from authors:
 1. who deal with sea as history.

2. from authors who explore the sea as a metaphor in literature, studying the impact on language and culture of sea crossings, especially during colonial times.
 3. and from authors who take up postcolonial texts dealing with environmental crises and climate change, and discuss the resulting phenomena of migration and neglect of human rights.
- 7 Let's start with facts and history.
- 8 Oceans cover 71% of the Earth's surface and contain 97% of the Earth's water. The Chevalier de Jaucourt who wrote the entry on "Ocean" for Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* in the 18th century observed that dividing the ocean into seas was a cognitive strategy to come to grips with the unknown.
- 9 One way to reinvent the ocean, as Philip Steinberg points out, is not to consider it as a space outside human beings who tend settle inside, i.e., on the land, but to look upon it as a mobile and dynamic space that is central to the flows of modern society.
- 10 Even before the Renaissance, when the centre of the world shifted to Europe, Greek and Roman travellers of the ancient world had known India and Sri Lanka. But unlike their Renaissance counterparts, Ancients had no maps. In the first article of this issue, Jean-Marie Kowalski argues that their knowledge and representations of the maritime spaces of India and Sri Lanka were "odological," i.e. thinking about space in linear terms like, for example, lists of towns along the coasts, rather than "cartographical."
- 11 In the 21st century, the world is slowly moving away from the Mercator projection where the developed Global North appears bigger than reality, and moving towards adopting the Peters Projection which shows the relative size of different countries in a more accurate manner. In the same way, while the Azimuthal polar projection depicted on the 1945 UN flag places the North pole at the centre, in the postcolonial era, attempts are made to represent the world with the south at the top, or centered on the Pacific, rather than the Atlantic.
- 12 These changes highlight the importance of areas such as the Indian Ocean which is often overlooked as a key area in history.
- 13 Ingrid Sankey invites history and geography teachers to treat the Indian Ocean world as a zone of dynamic interaction between peoples to enable the students to learn about past histories and present territories in a refreshingly south-up perspective.
- 14 Joëlle Weeks's article returns to the colonial past and the Island of Sands (now called Tromelin Island) in the Indian Ocean where 80 Malagasy slaves were abandoned by a ship belonging to the French East India Company in 1761. It took fifteen years for First Officer Tromelin to rescue the surviving seven women and lone child. Joëlle Weeks's article about this minor episode on the margins of the empire highlights a place of memory not only for the forgotten slaves, but also for slavery as a traumatic event of human history. Her contribution sheds light on a particularly harrowing episode of the slave trade which has received too little attention from history books.
- 15 Literature has also contributed to discussing the importance and reinventions of the sea. Ludmila Volná proposes an original reading of Salman Rushdie's metanarrative story on story-telling written in the form of a children's book, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. She explores the depths of the sea metaphor with the help of Hindu mythology. For Hindus, water represents the dream world of Maya. For Ludmila Volná, the story's villain creates a totalitarian system that wants to silence storytellers.

- 16 In another contribution, Ahmed Mulla turns to Amitav Ghosh's novel *Sea of Poppies* which recounts the story Indian indentured labourers who replaced African slaves in British plantation colonies. The Indians believed that crossing of black waters (*kala pani*) imperiled their selves and their culture. Ahmed Mulla sustains that the process of social, cultural and linguistic creolization of the migrant Indian labourers started in the heterotopic space of the ship.
- 17 Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru also studied texts by Amitav Ghosh, one a novel, *The Hungry Tide*, and the other, an essay, *The Great Derangement, on climate change*. If colonialism functioned on the basis of an assumption of European superiority over non-European civilizations, non-European forms of knowledge now seem to prevail over western knowledge.
- 18 Ghosh's interest in climate change and the destruction caused by man can also be compared with natural catastrophes, such as the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004. In her contribution, Geetha Ganapathy-Doré studies three different narratives written by women authors that depict this cataclysmic moment in Sri Lanka. Whether it is an intensely personal trauma narrative, or a humanitarian narrative of suffering told from the outsider's point of view, or a narrative of mourning that purports to denounce the violation of human rights, the narratives she studies from and about Sri Lanka have a ripple effect on England and old hierarchies of power. They testify to the shift from the psychological to the ecological orientation of reality in the contemporary world of precarious lives.
- 19 The last contribution to this issue completes the sea-centred perspective of this issue. If we began this introduction by quoting a poem from Derek Walcott, we will conclude with Malati Mathur's article on poetry written about the Pacific. Mathur discusses Alec Derwent Hope's "Man Friday" and Christopher Brennan's "Each Day I See the Long Ships Coming Into Port." Hope's reframing of Daniel Defoe's famous novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, gives voice to the silenced slave, and pictures the sea as both a dividing barrier leading to exile and a welcoming bosom into the embrace of which 'to return' is 'to go home'. In Christopher Brennan's poem, on the contrary, Mathur argues that the ship carrying the narrator symbolizes prophecy, anticipation and a reaching out to other cultures. Brennan chooses to record the shaping of Australia by the migrant's experience.
- 20 Malati Mathur is a poet herself, and we would like to repeat her concluding words to end this introduction on 'Reinventing Sea':
- The sea can never be possessed. It can only possess and possess absolutely.
- 21 We hope you enjoy the articles.

ABSTRACTS

This video introduces the thematic contributions on 'Reinventing the Sea'.

La vidéo présente les contributions thématiques sur « Réinventer la mer ».

INDEX

Keywords: sea, ocean, literature, colonial history, Indian Ocean, creolization, cartography, water, climate change

Mots-clés: mer, océan, littérature, histoire coloniale, histoire antique, Océan Indien, créolisation, cartographie, eau, changement climatique

AUTHORS

GEETHA GANAPATHY-DORÉ

Guest editor of Issue 9. Research accredited Associate Professor of English at the Faculty of Law, Social and Political Sciences at Sorbonne Paris Nord University. She is attached to the *Centre de Recherches Anglophones* of the University of Paris Nanterre, and is associate member of IDPS at Sorbonne Paris Nord University. She is currently president of the Society for Activities and Research on the Indian World (SARI), and is the author of *The Postcolonial Indian Novel in English*. She has edited and co-edited several books among which figure *On the Move, The Journey of Refugees in New Literatures in English and Heritage* and *Ruptures in Indian Literature, Culture and Cinema*. Contact: geethagd[at]hotmail.com

LUDMILA VOLNÁ

Guest editor of Issue 9. Lecturer in English at Charles University, Prague. She is an associate member of ERIAC at Rouen Normandie University and of IMAGER Research Centre at Paris Est-Créteil University. She is currently a Vice-President of the Society for Activities and Research on the Indian World (SARI), and the non-India membership representative at IACLALS (Delhi). She has published a large number of articles on Indian Writing in English and edited several books, among which *Children of Midnight: Contemporary Indian Novel in English* and *Indian Birth and Western Rebirths of the Jataka Tales*. Contact: ludmila.volna[at]free.fr