Through Oceans Darkly: Sea Literature and the Nautical Gothic

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Why identify a *nautical* Gothic? On the surface, as it were, intersections between the Gothic and the sea are so visible that the main question is why they are so rarely examined. Ships can be isolating, claustrophobic structures; ocean depths conceal monsters, secrets, bodies; the sea and its weather provide storms, sunsets, and remote locales for sublime and terrifying experiences; deep water is a useful metaphor for the interiority of the self; the ocean's precarious surface interfaces between life and death, chaos and order, self and other. And the list could go on.

In nautical and maritime writing, however, Gothic conventions are often transformed, offering opportunities for rethinking or extending the scope of the Gothic in literary culture, as well as for how we might read some of its best-known fictions. Recent scholarship calls for recognition that the sea is more than just 'the backdrop to the stage on which the real action is seen to take place – that is, the land – or […] as the means of connection between activities taking place at coasts and in their interiors'.[1] Treating nautical Gothic as a straightforward transposition of landward Gothic concerns to maritime settings would yield a fairly limited account of it – and also do a disservice to the role of the sea in global history and ecology. So, while the articles in this special issue tackle nautical tropes in Gothic literary texts, they also do much more, repositioning the sea at the heart of their historical and analytical enquiry.

'A sort of nautical gothic'

A nautical Gothic lens focuses on how the sea is represented in Gothic literature – and on how it is represented Gothically in literature (including non-fiction). As a mode, style, or mood, it takes many forms and many kinds of text may swerve through it. In 1986, Dennis Berthold used the term to distinguish between the fantastic and the realistic in sea writing: in Byron's *Don Juan* (1819), he writes, 'the reader wanders about in a maritime fantasy. This is the stuff of which [Edgar Allan Poe's] Pym is made, a sort of nautical gothic which later writers, more experienced with ships and sailing, would strive to correct.'[2] By a 'sort of' nautical Gothic, Berthold suggests its incompatibility with nautical realities; Gothic registers offer erroneous versions of the maritime that require to be 'corrected'. That Gothic narratives do often have strong elements of romance, supernatural and fantasy (Poe had almost no first-hand knowledge of sailing)[3] need not divorce them entirely from meaningful expression of nautical experience, nor mean that sea literature cannot veer and back through the Gothic at times. Margaret Cohen demonstrates how James Fenimore Cooper's *The Red Rover* (1827), for example, employs detailed accounts of seamanship to Gothic effect, showing how productive it can be to consider nautical realism and the Gothic together.[4]

Seafaring itself – or at least its representations in writing – often has strikingly Gothic dimensions. 'The ship,' wrote one late-nineteenth-century sailor, invoking the vertigo of nightmares to describe movement through heavy seas, 'appears on occasions to be falling long distances through hideous space.'[5] And Gothic seas need not even be storm-fuelled: 'There is,' wrote another sailor fifty years previously,

something in the first gray streaks stretching along the eastern horizon and throwing an indistinct light upon the face of the deep, which combines with the boundlessness and unknown depth of the sea around, and gives one a feeling of loneliness, of dread, and of melancholy foreboding, which nothing else in nature can.[6]

These words belong to Richard Henry Dana, Jr., whose 1840 memoir *Two Years Before the Mast* formed part of the nineteenth-century Atlantic world's vibrant written culture. Dana's language evokes the sea's Gothic potential; as a thing of nature, its unknowable ambiguity, unsoundable deeps, and ominous affect are clearly signalled, and so are its inherent contradictions: the ocean space is boundless yet oppressive, illuminated yet indiscernible, all surface yet all depth.

Synergies between the Gothic and writing about the sea are further illustrated in Robert Foulke's essay 'The Literature of Voyaging'. 'The thoughtful seafarer,' Foulke writes,

is enclosed irrevocably in the finite world of the ship with time on his hands. He must spend much of that time standing watch – literally *watching* and waiting for something, *or nothing*, to happen. His world demands keen senses because he lives on an unstable element that keeps his home in constant motion, sometimes soothing him with a false sense of security, sometimes threatening to destroy him. Although his vision is bounded by a horizon and contains a seascape of monotonous regularity, what he sees can change rapidly and unpredictably. His sense of space suggests infinity and solitude, on the one hand, and prison-like confinement in small compartments, on the other; it contains in its restless motions lurking possibilities of total disorientation: in a knockdown walls become floors, doors become hatches.[7]

Writing about sea voyages, Foulke nowhere addresses the Gothic, but nonetheless the passage uses an uneasy Gothic register, drawing on the instabilities and contradictions of ocean voyaging. It is instructive to read this passage alongside an outline of Gothic locations in Fred Botting's *Gothic*. The settings of Gothic narratives, he explains, 'manifest disturbance and ambivalence in spatial terms as movements between inside and out' while 'castles, abbeys and ruins' are

Not only places of defence, but also of incarceration and power [...] located in isolated spots, areas beyond reason, law and civilised authority [...] Conjoining ideas of home and prison, protection and fear, old buildings in Gothic fiction are never secure or free from shadows, disorientation or danger.[8]

'Landscapes,' Botting continues (naming only mountains and forests specifically), 'stress isolation and wilderness, evoking vulnerability, exposure, and insecurity. [...] Nature appears hostile, untamed and threatening; again, darkness, obscurity and barely contained malevolent energy reinforce atmospheres of disorientation and fear.'[9] Replace 'buildings' with 'ships' and 'landscapes' with 'seas', and the quoted lines still stand (or float). Given that Botting

does *not* mention ships or the sea, we have only to compare his words to Foulke's to start wondering why the nautical has been so invisible in discussions of the Gothic. Confinement, suspense, instability, insecurity, threat, unpredictability, isolation, imprisonment, obscurity, and disorientation resonate between both passages as the Gothic and the sea bob along together.

To date, landscapes and buildings tend to do rather better in Gothic criticism than ships and the sea. A 'maritime Gothic' has been identified by Coral Ann Howells; the Gothic qualities of canonical sea literature like *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* are recognised; and sea 'monster' texts like *Jaws* and *Moby-Dick* have been examined.[10] This welcome body of scholarship is still small, however. General discussions of sea, oceanic, nautical, maritime, or any other kind of watery Gothic are not to be found in the recent companion volumes *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic* or *The Gothic World*, while the introductions to *Dark Cartographies* and *EcoGothic* are silent on the subject of the sea despite attention to it in contributing chapters.[11]

Emphasising landward contexts is to an extent understandable considering that sublime landscapes are important to the Gothic and that most Gothic fiction – or simply most fiction – *is* set on land in wild, rural, or built environments. Land-based concerns are embedded, for example, in the title of Robert Mighall's *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares*, entirely appropriately for its purposes, while also compelling me to ask: what might an *oceanography* of Gothic fiction look like? What would be different if we should *chart* history's nightmares rather than map them?

The social, political and economic histories, and therefore the literature, of maritime nations like those of Europe and the Americas are, too, highly dependent on the sea. While obviously central to, say, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Moby-Dick* (1851), or *Treasure Island* (1883), the sea also drives some powerful narrative turbines in *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Great Expectations* (1861), and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891). Elleke Boehmer's remark that imperial representations were 'curiously invisible and yet ubiquitous' in Victorian literature could also be applied to the sea, the means of building and sustaining that imperial network.[12] In postcolonial Gothic, '[n]owhere has the Gothic mode crossed oceans more powerfully or in more of a sharp dialogue between the postcolonial and the English Gothic' than in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), writes Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, while leaving the perspective of those oceans unplumbed.[13]

Increasingly, critics have begun to draw out the role of the sea in a number of texts we might think of as *non-sea*-literature.[14] Gothic literary criticism can and should do likewise. After all, most canonical Gothic novels include at least one significant sea voyage, shipwreck, or ocean storm. Consider Robert Walton's ice-bound ship in *Frankenstein* (1818), Dracula's voyages to and from England, the wreck that casts the Spaniard on Melmoth's shore, Louis and Claudia's escape by ship to Europe at the pivotal centre of *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), the underwater incarceration of Rebecca de Winter's body, or the coastal sunsets, storms, and nautical poetry that litter *The Castle of Udolpho* (1794).[15] To explore why such moments in such texts are worth paying attention to, let's turn to Wilkie Collins's *Armadale* (1864-6).

Armadale is mostly set in England, but the events that launch the plot take place via a series of voyages to and from Barbados and Madeira. Years later, a reckless midnight cruise

strands Allan and Midwinter aboard the wreck of the timber-ship in which Allan's father drowned when Midwinter's father locked him in his cabin. In *Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction,* Mighall discusses the tormented night Midwinter spends on the wreck without mentioning that 'the scene of the crime' was a sailing vessel, even though, as Mariaconcetta Costantini points out, Collins 'wove consistent metaphors of shipwreck and drifting' into his novel.[16] A *geo*graphy of the Gothic is rightly more concerned with 'scene' than medium. So why might it matter that the murder, 'the event that will haunt the next generation of Allan Armadales', took place aboard a ship?[17]

As Mighall argues, this night triggers the psychological crisis of ancestral guilt that dogs the sensitive Midwinter thereafter in his relations with (the other) Allan. Its impact is intensified by his being stranded off-shore aboard 'the Wreck', surrounded by swift and dangerous water. Shipwrecks had strong mortal resonances in Victorian culture, and the frequency of wreck and thus drowning (or worse) in transatlantic voyaging in turn facilitates Midwinter's father's homicide. Wrecks themselves have distinct carceral qualities (especially when living bodies are fatally trapped), and as Midwinter exclaims, 'Nothing is horrible *out* of this ship. Everything is horrible *in* it.'[18] Symbolically, ships are liminal spaces, between life and death, inside and outside, while the sea can hide terrors beneath a continually shifting yet apparently timeless surface. The timber-ship and its secrets should have vanished unmarked into the depths, but instead are sustained by the sea, the repository of the past, as the hulk is towed to the Solway for dismantling and for Allan and Midwinter to find twenty years later.

Mighall argues that the structure and trajectory of *Armadale* resist the conventional determinism of the Gothic curse narrative. The sea – a quintessentially indeterminable medium – is not incidental to that argument but tied to Midwinter's psychological state. As dawn breaks, Midwinter realises his sense of fatality was wrong:

> the sea began to murmur wakefully in the morning light. Even the cold bubbling of the broken water changed its cheerless note and softened on the ear… How darkly his forebodings had distrusted the coming time – and how harmlessly that time had come![19]

Here, the constantly changing sea has transformative power. The Wreck is linked to his agonising over the past, while the changeable sea suggests an uncertain but not predetermined future; as a character, Costantini suggests, Midwinter himself 'incorporates different ideas of change and diversity'.[20]

Gothic perspectives, then, need not remain landlocked but are poised for launch. To return to *Gothic*, once Botting's discussion does leave the shore, via Herman Melville, it begins to hint at the innovative qualities of nautical texts. Melville, Botting explains, 'plots the entanglement of romance and psychology with *new* commercial and social motifs where sublimity and terror are associated with threatening *new* spaces, frontiers and attitudes' and is seen as 'departing in *different* directions in his use of romance and Gothic forms' (my emphases).[21] Reading his fiction as transformative thus gives Melville a crucial role in the development of nautical Gothic. *Moby-Dick*, accordingly,

plots a different journey in which the sublime is associated with the power of a marine nature (the sea and the great whale that inhabits it) lying beyond the mastery of humans. The mirror of this sublime and unconquerable vastness, the novel suggests, is found in the darkness of the human mind.[22]

Here, the psychological symbolism of the sea unites with its ecological significance: the untameable ocean's challenge to dominant discourses of human mastery over 'nature'. This reading requires recognition of the sea as environment and medium as well as metaphorical device, and, in doing so, shifts us towards an oceanic critical perspective.

Oceanic studies and Gothic

Recent critiques of conventional interpretative approaches to literature of the sea challenge land-bias, in which the sea is subordinate to the priorities of the land or treated as a watery version of it. Instead, argue Bernhard Klein and Gisa Mackenthum, 'the ocean itself needs to be analysed as a deeply historical location whose transformative power is not merely psychological or metaphorical – as its frequent use as a literary motif might suggest – but material and very real'.[23] Revising the sea as a space, medium, and environment in its own right can help to recover both the role of the sea in cultural history, and the involvement of people with the sea – often overlooked in the aesthetic construction of a primal, timeless ocean.

As John Mack and Margaret Cohen both argue, the aestheticisation of the sea in Western art and literature conceptually separated it from history and work. For Mack,

> The predominant Western view of the sea might be characterised as that of a quintessential wilderness, a void without community other than that temporarily established on boats […] and a space without ruins or other witness to the events which may have taken place on its surface.[24]

When perceived as a trackless void, the sea possesses no meaning of its own but receives the projections of land-based concerns. Through the aesthetic of the sublime, the Gothic itself participated in how the sea came to be construed as 'a symbolic and metaphorical narrative device rather than a real place'.[25] Consider the following passage from Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* (1790):

> the dawn appeared […] darting a feeble ray over the surface of the waters, which rolled in solemn soundings upon the distant shores. Fiery beams now marked the clouds, and the east glowed with increasing radiance, till the sun rose at once above the waves, and illuminating them with a flood of splendour, diffused gaiety and gladness around. The bold concave of the heavens, uniting with the vast expanse of the ocean, formed a *coup d'oeil*, striking and sublime magnificence of the scenery inspired Julia with delight.[26]

Viewing the dawn on the water (which shortly precedes a violent tempest) is a sublime experience for Julia, emphasising the ocean's (and sky's) size, splendour, and solemnity alongside an uplifting and expansive emotional affect. As Cian Duffy contends, the 'natural

sublime' is something highly subjective;[27] attention here is on Julia rather than the oceanic qualities of the scene itself.

That the sublime was characteristically a European concept generally absent from American landscape writing helps draw attention to its constructedness, and thus to the gap between it and the material reality of the sea. What Cohen calls 'the sublimation of the sea' influences the way we still imagine the ocean. In relation to seafaring, the sublime was 'incompatible with everyday experience and eroded by familiarity', yet 'the aesthetic of the sublime would yield the wild ocean, a terrifying domain of uncontained nature, which remained the vision of the ocean that springs to mind when we think of this realm today.'[28] The persistent influence of this kind of ocean imaginary has arguably inhibited thinking about it as a cultural, social space.

The nautical Gothic, I suggest, has potential to restore some of 'the useful, textured knowledge that disappears in the smooth, evacuated sea achieved by the Enlightenment sublime.'[29] Cohen calls for recognition that

> what seems like an elemental ocean, deriving from nature, is in fact a socially constructed ocean, one purged of knowledge that comes from hands-on practice, along with dirty bilge water and people at work.[30]

Cohen is not alone in this view. Helen Rozwadowski argues similarly that while the sea is still often perceived as timeless, inhuman, impervious, trackless, and empty of history, it is really full of it.[31] This special issue responds to calls for historicised thinking about the ocean, understanding nautical Gothic as a project that recognises the sea's distinctive material, conceptual, and social characteristics and the intersections between those and its metaphorical and narrative uses.

Allowing the sea to re-orientate how we look at texts is rewarding. From the perspective of what Hester Blum calls 'oceanic studies', the sea becomes more than

> a theme or organizing metaphor with which to widen a landlocked critical prospect: in its geophysical, historical, and imaginative properties, the sea instead provides a new epistemology – a new dimension – for thinking about surfaces, depths, and the extra-terrestrial dimensions of planetary resources and relations.[32]

For Blum, the sea is not just a tool for existing modes of thought but, by 'shoving off from land- and nation-based perspectives', may yield 'new critical locations from which to investigate questions of affiliation, citizenship, economic exchange, mobility, rights, and sovereignty.[33] New 'oceanic forms of relation' become possible when the medium of the sea (for example as liquid and unstable) is taken as a critical position in itself rather than a metaphor for something else.

Blum's oceanic perspective 'moves beyond methodologies and frameworks imported from other discourses and takes the sea as a proprioceptive point of inquiry'.[34] She illustrates this prospect with the example of sailor Robert Adams, whose 1817 account of captivity in North Africa yields additional readings when considered foremost in the context of his profession rather than primarily his race. For Mack, similarly, '[a]ttention to the sea thus challenges the

otherwise reifying conceptions of nations and continents'.[35] The revisionary perspectives of oceanic studies translate readily to the Gothic, as Jimmy Packham and David Punter demonstrate in this issue. The Gothic, too, is good at challenging reifying perspectives, prising open fractures in dominant narratives, and embracing what is unspeakable or transgressive. Gothic thinking already possesses oceanic qualities, equipping it for the kind of critical position posited by Blum.

In *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1980), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick uses some strikingly oceanic language while preparing to push beyond psychological models. She notes that while 'this group of conventions has been the center of critical attempts to value the Gothic for its portrayal of "depth," a shift of focus shows that even here the strongest energies inhere in the surface.'[36] Sedgwick points to crucial relationships in the Gothic between insides and outsides, appearance and concealment; the 'within' cannot do without the 'without', while violence and horror occur at the interface, 'evoked in the very breach of the imprisoning wall'.[37] Sedgwick observes that separations are undermined when 'a fixation on symmetrical, doubled spaces is drained by something more threatening': interesting things can occur at moments of merging and destabilisation.[38]

Such concerns, with surface and depths, the threshold and breaches of it, or the collapse of binaries, speak analogously to oceanic thinking. As Packham and Punter suggest, 'to think about oceanic depths is to already be thinking in Gothic terms'. The unique frame of the nautical Gothic consists in what is not simply translated from a land-bound Gothic frame, but is transformed by the oceanic context. Temporal and spatial arrangements, maritime and marine environments, and the human experiences of being in these times, spaces and materialities are distinct. Unlike (most of) the land, the medium of the ocean is unfixed and unstable, while a ship has literal capacities to overturn or disorientate.

The terrors of the sea can take distinct forms with no land-based equivalent. As Julia Mix Barrington, in this issue, points out, the temporality of voyaging is characterised more by monotony and repetition than by suspense or shock, and produces its own horrors. In a memoir of his 1890s youth sailing on the windjammer *Pride of Wales*, Lt. Col. Henry Hughes dwells on the unique 'terrors of calm' as the ship is becalmed for six days mid-voyage to Rio de Janeiro. In the paralysis of the doldrums, the ocean transforms into something not a million miles away from Coleridge's Ancient Mariner's shrinking boards, 'slimy sea', 'bloody sun', and 'hot and copper sky'.[39] Hughes describes 'an oily barren waste, bereft of colour or character, heaving listlessly in huge crestless billows', causing a grim and torturous experience:

> The heat of the sun was unbearable during most of the day; and after the fourth day I was [...] beginning to feel sick from the constant reflection of a relentless sun on this mirrored expanse. One's half-closed eyes ached, the decks were so hot, except when deck wash rushed to and fro, that the pitch bubbled out of the seams.[40]

The beauty of sunshine mirrored on water here becomes an oppressive, baking hot nightmare inflicting both psychological and physical stress. The Mariner, too,

> […] closed my lids, and kept them close,

And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay dead like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.[41]

Hughes's account of his (far from uncommon) experience of being becalmed offer a kind of literalisation of the Mariner's fictional and symbolic horrors, which, then, strike us powerfully not least because they are remarkably real. The heat, calm, and thirst expressed by the poem were part of the lived realities of the Age of Sail, during which, as Carl Thompson has explored, the horrors and consequences of voyage disasters often became powerfully mythologised.[42]

Unlike the Mariner's 'painted ship', however, there is no static idling for the *Pride of Wales* but rather constant motion. The 'queer storms of the doldrums' present a situation unique to the ocean which from a land-based perspective appears paradoxical.[43] The listlessly billowing waves may seem benign, but a sailing ship depends on the wind for stability: 'The roll of a ship, when ungoverned by wind resistance, is unmercifully violent', Hughes notes, as, in the struggle to furl sails, the sailors are 'hurled through the air many times a minute, poised on a slender stretch of rope attached to a flimsy spar.'[44] Here, the ocean's violence inheres not in the intensity of a storm, but in the lack of it. The terrors of calm, by eliminating the familiar *surface* terrors of wind, storm clouds, and breaking waves, emphasise the ocean itself; the constant dynamism and power of its 'heaving' waters derive from its depth, tides, and fetch rather than from the weather.

Many sorts of nautical Gothic
By the twentieth century the Age of Sail had given way to steam power and iron ships (a transition which spiked in the 1880s and 90s), and the whaling industry was soon in sharp decline. Other changes followed, such as the way improved navigation and nutrition, along with steam and the building of the Panama and Suez canals, reduced both the danger and the frequency of voyages around Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope.[45] However, new versions of old tropes emerge to fill the gaps.

Les Powles, in his memoir of a solo voyage aboard the 34 ft. sloop *Solitaire* in 1976, describes a near-miss with a tanker:

I had been standing in the hatch keeping watch in poor visibility, when, hearing nothing, I saw a ghost-like bow loom out of the dawn mist. At first I thought she was cutting across *Solitaire*'s bows but she was already turning. Looking up I could see her two anchors ready to drop on us. A mass of rust and rivets, she swept down our side and back into the fog. Never had I been so glad to see a ship disappear.[46]

The fog transforms the tanker into a ghost ship, one that presents a very real threat. 'You haven't the chance of a cat in hell of getting out of the way of a powerful vessel bearing down on you,' wrote another solo sailor, Elizabeth Leeson; 'I have never overcome the fear of traffic at sea'.[47] The terror of the moment is accentuated by the vertigo of Powles's upward

glance at the anchors, while the size and rust of the hull evokes a ship from the past, barely real and vanishing into the fog whence it came.

This is a ghost ship for the twentieth century, a new danger generated by steam power, large metal ships, their accompanying speed, and increasingly busy shipping lanes. There was no directly equivalent discrepancy of size and power between sailing craft in the previous century, while these days, radar, radio and GPS navigation mitigate against (though certainly do not eliminate) the risks of leisure craft entering shipping lanes and the problems of fog. The Gothic trope of the ghost ship is no more timeless than any other ghost. Historically situated, it becomes legible not by separating but by blending Gothic expression with nautical reality, in which I include the materialities and social practices of shipping and yachting as well as the unique conditions of the sea (such as its weather and the physical properties of salt water that both enable and limit vessel manoeuvrability).

Modern uses of the sea (including opportunities for warfare, scientific investigation, oil drilling, or industrialised fishing) affect the ocean as an imagined space. Increasing interest in the ocean as a space of exploration and strange sea-creatures, for example, coincided with the rise of popular cinema; films such as *Jaws* (1975), the numerous *Godzilla* films, *The Abyss* (1989) and *Pacific Rim* (2013) exploit the mystery and terror of animal or alien threats from the unknowable ocean deep. Ghost ships may now be freighters or liners, as in *Ghost Ship* (2002), while leisure craft like yachts become the location of horror adventures or psychological thrillers like *Dead Calm* (1989) or *Open Water* (2003). These examples take some by now familiar nautical Gothic themes (dangerous unknown regions and creatures, concealment, isolation, depths vs. surface, claustrophobia, disorientation) and relocate them in new contexts of leisure, science, technophilia, and global commerce.

However, there are good reasons for starting to talk about nautical Gothic on a nineteenth-century and literary stage. The nineteenth century saw 'an efflorescence of maritime writing, both published and unpublished, by working sailors and whalers, professional writers, ships' officers, and scientists who set sail,' and sailing itself was a highly literate profession (Blum suggests up to ninety percent).[48] The profession was also very multi-ethnic, as crew came and went at different ports around the globe, although the social and ethnic diversity of writing by working sailors merits more examination (as does writing by women sailors). In terms of quantity, most nautical literature is Anglo-American, with many seafaring countries, as John Mack explains, historically emphasising an oral rather than written culture. The Western conception of the sea as lonely wilderness is a very 'different sea' from the ones of many Pacific cultures, often 'energised, motivated and inhabited by spirit entities' which reduce 'any dimension of loneliness and isolation'.[49] The Gothic seas explored in this issue, then, are moored to a particular, if broad, cultural tradition and its imaginaries, allowing these articles to enter into conversation.

The mid-nineteenth century was when the open ocean became a destination as well as a conduit: 'a workplace, a leisure area, a stage for adventure, and a natural environment'.[50] Nonetheless, the twenty-first century moment makes it particularly urgent to recognise the history of the sea. Philip Steinberg points out that the 'one sea' we now know the oceans comprise is a relatively new idea (for most of global history seas were partially and coastally perceived and charted).[51] In 2017, the familiarity of seeing the world's oceans through aerial and satellite photography conveys a sense of the ocean as holistic, but also reifies it as non-

human and timeless, rather than as a socially constructed, vulnerable, and rapidly changing.[52] Far from unchangeable, however, the ocean registers damaging effects of climate change, consumerism, and globalisation.[53]

Two documentaries using nautical Gothic styles highlight relevant issues: Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel's immersive documentary *Leviathan* (2012), based on a North Atlantic fishing voyage, is uneasy, visceral, and disorienting in its visuals and sound world; Allan Sekula and Noël Burch's *The Forgotten Space* (2012) explores maritime work to expose its near-invisible spectrality in narratives of global economy. These documentaries illustrate how a 'burgeoning sense of an environmental crisis of the ocean is emerging hand in hand with the dawning recognition that our everyday lives affect, and are influenced by, the ocean.'[54] EcoGothic, like other ecological criticism, has much to contribute to these conversations. Costantini's and Bowers's articles in this issue pick up the ecocritical agenda in relation to Arctic and Antarctic spaces.

The articles in this special issue explore how nautical contexts can inform understandings of Gothic texts, and vice versa. Jimmy Packham and David Punter's article probes how nautical Gothic can help to advance oceanic studies, and reconsiders ways of thinking about surface and depth in Gothic sea poetry, including Tennyson's 'The Kraken' (1830) and Poe's 'The City in the Sea' (1845). This poetry responds to the medium of the sea through form as well as subject; the ocean deep enables the poems to offer radical reimaginings of knowledge, time, space, and history that slip the moorings of their traditional terrestrial qualities.

Jessica Roberson's and Jen Baker's articles explore how sea literature engages with nineteenth-century cultural concerns and offers fresh perspectives on moral debates and social practices. In 'Sea-changed', Roberson demonstrates the intersections between the customs, practicalities, and symbolism of sea-burial through its representation in the poetry of Felicia Hemans. Sea-burials lacked permanent memorials, a void filled by material culture to maintain a sense of relationship between the living and the lost. Importantly, Roberson makes the point that the intangibility of sea-burial puts at risk the memories of marginalised figures such as women and the slaves of the Middle Passage, absences which poetry may help to reinstate, offering the titular 'sea-change' in how we think about the sea and history. Baker examines the nautical Gothic mode deployed by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps in her short story 'Kentucky's Ghost' to intervene into debates over the treatment of children and the morality of seafaring as a profession, by blending nautical folklore with a tale of divine retribution. Baker's analysis demonstrates the close entanglement of the sea's symbolic, metaphorical significance with the material realities of seafaring, including, in this case, historical cases of child stowaways and their abuse by corrupt ships' officers.

Julia Mix Barrington's article 'Phantom Bark' likewise calls attention to how the sea demands a rethinking of spatiality and temporality, through the prominent nautical Gothic trope of the ghost ship. In the *Flying Dutchman* legend, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', and 'Benito Cereno', Mix Barrington argues that the ghost ship forms a unique chronotope that reveals both the connectivity and the divisions or disjunctions of the seas. Structured by monotony, repetition, and the urge to connect past with present and dead with living, the ghost ship chronotope makes visible the unsettling realities of seafaring and of an ocean world concealed by the dominant narrative of transatlantic connectivity.

So far, these articles attend to what happens mid-voyage, showing how the qualities of the deep sea shape each narrative as well as their representation of cultural concerns. Katherine Bowers's article shifts attention from transatlantic journeys to polar seas, examining the different oceanic imaginary of Arctic and Antarctic regions. Geographically and oceanographically different spaces, in literature the two regions conflate to form a 'polar Gothic', in which human psychological and physical limits are tested. John Franklin's final expedition (1845), for example, influenced how polar regions were imagined thereafter; polar space, Bowers argues, 'pushes beyond the bounds of the civilized mind, and, in so doing, becomes gothic space.'

The sea monster is another prominent nautical Gothic figure, often combining history and folklore, marine biology, metaphorical significance and narrative function. Tony Alcalá examines the sea monsters of H. P. Lovecraft, which inherit the influences of evolutionary Darwinism along with ideas of the sublime and the grotesque. These monsters speak to the unknowableness of the deep ocean, its capacity to generate unthinkable, inhuman horrors, which, beyond the comprehension of human mind or knowledge, challenge notions of anthropocentricity. Mariaconcetta Costantini, too, identifies the ecological work of sea monsters, in twenty-first century American novels that recreate the mythological Leviathan figure. In Dan Simmons's *The Terror* (2007) and Tim Curran's *Leviathan* (2013), marine monsters 'give flesh to a wide range of spiritual, socio-political, ethical and ecological anxieties'. Her discussion emphasises important environmental notes of how we take responsibility for fragile spaces like the Arctic, and links concerns of the nineteenth century with those of the present.

In this special issue, we begin to establish some of characteristics and attributes of a literary nautical Gothic, while (gladly) making no claims for comprehensive or exhaustive examination of it. These articles, we hope, will help to tug the Gothic out into open waters, where future studies can extend, transpose, and question our approaches and conclusions, and make visible a variety of other voices and forms of nautical Gothic. The nautical Gothics of the global south, of postcolonialism, of oral traditions and on screens small and large are only some of the future horizons towards which this dark ship might steer.

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[1] John Mack, *The Sea: A cultural history* (London, Reaktion Books, 2013), p. 19.

[2] Dennis Berthold, 'Cape Horn Passages: Literary Conventions and Nautical Realities', in Patricia Ann Carlson (ed.), *Literature and Lore of the Sea* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1986), pp. 40-57 at p. 46.

[3] David Dowling, 'The Sea', in Kevin Hayes (ed.), *Edgar Allan Poe in Context* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 32-40.

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[17] Mighall, *Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction,* pp. 124-25.

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[46] Les Powles, *Solitaire Spirit: Three times around the world single-handed* (London, Adlard Coles Nautical, 2012), p. 99.

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[52] Helen Rozwadowski, 'Ocean Time, Human Time'. Edinburgh University, June 12, 2017.

[53] See, for example, the NERC and DEFRA-funded UK Ocean Acidification Research Programme, www.oceanacidification.org.uk, or the work of charities such as Greenpeace (www.greenpeace.org) or the Plastic Ocean Foundation (www.plasticoceans.org).

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