

ABSTRACTS AND BIOS

(in the order of appearance)

Regina Schober

The World Wide Sea: Oceanic Metaphors, Concepts of Knowledge and Transnational America in the Information Age

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'I have swam through libraries and sailed through oceans', Ishmael declares in *Moby Dick*, comparing the accumulation of knowledge to traveling the vast and boundless space of the sea. The ocean has always been related to human curiosity as well as anxiety towards (yet) unknown terrains, reflecting the restless desire to travel, explore, and seek the 'truth'. As Elizabeth Bishop notes, the sea 'is like what we imagine knowledge to be, dark, salt, clear, moving, utterly free, drawn from the cold hard mouth of the world, derived from the rocky breasts forever, flowing and drawn'. In view of the massive proliferation of information and knowledge in the digital age, it is thus not surprising that the sea has become one of the leading metaphors for the Internet, the mythical space in which knowledge is stored, generated, and from which it emerges. Whether we navigate or surf on the World Wide Web, whether we immerse in data flows, or participate in swarm intelligence, nautical/sea imagery has been central in conceptualizing the Internet from the beginning on, suggesting notions of openness, infinity, shapelessness as well as creativity, diversity, and fluidity. In my paper I investigate the cultural and ideological functions of sea imagery in relation to new digital information technology, as manifest in American literature and culture, accounting for ascriptions of the Internet as a 'particularly American technology'. From the creation of the term 'cyberspace' (*cyber*=Greek for steersman) in William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), to the crowdsourced YouTube film collaboration *Life in a Day* (2011) with its extensive sea imagery to Google's recent underwater mapping project 'SeaView', I seek to unravel the diverse web of connotations, implications, and allusions at play in conceptualizing the Internet in relation to maritime imagery. Against the backdrop of traditional concepts and models of knowledge, I thus intend to explore the heuristic potential and cultural propositions of the sea metaphor

in America's creative engagement and critical negotiation with the new worlds of the 'Information Age', taking into consideration its transnational and potentially posthuman future.

Regina Schober is Assistant Professor at the American Studies Department of Mannheim University. She obtained a Ph.D. at the University of Hannover, entitled Unexpected Chords: Musico-Poetic Intermediality in Amy Lowell's Poetry and Poetics in 2009 (summa cum laude). Her teaching and research interests include literature and culture of American Romanticism and Modernism, Intermediality, the American Grotesque, and Network Aesthetics. Her current research project (habilitation thesis) examines the network paradigm in American literature and culture from the 19th to the 21st century.

Alicja Bemben

History as an Ocean

'But there is a huge difference between writing a historical novel and writing history. If I may put it like this: history is like a river, and the historian is writing about the ways the river flows and the currents and cross-currents in the river. But, within this river, there are also fish, and [...] I am interested in the fish. The novelist's approach to the past, through the eyes of characters, is substantially different from the approach of the historian'. This quotation might seem to have been taken from some pre-narrative-turn text whose author appears to profess the conviction that the scientific status of history and the fictional character of literature is what makes these two modes of writing about the past essentially different. In fact, these words come from Amitav Ghosh, a contemporary historian, social anthropologist, historical fiction writer who, more than forty years after the Linguistic Turn, seems to advocate a new version of 'wie es eigentlich gewesen' and literature opposition. Starting with Dipesh Chakrabarty's arguments in favor of 'regional and global configurations in modern history', I would like to use them to criticize Ghosh's idea of history as a river and put forward a thesis that history is like an ocean and if we understand it as such, then the boundary between writing a historical novel and history might be considered conventional and possible to be blurred. In order to justify this thesis I intend to provide a series of arguments supported mainly by Hayden White's philosophy of history presented in *Metahistory* and Hans-Georg Gadamer's theory of understanding from *Truth and Method*. In conclusion, I point to idiosyncrasies of the ocean-like perspective on history as a construct alternative to this proposed by Amitav Ghosh.

Alicja Bemben is a Ph.D. student in the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures at the University of Silesia. Her research interests include philosophy of history, historiography and writings work of Robert Graves. She is a member of the Robert Graves Society, and participated, among others, in [Re]visions of History in Language and Fiction, Robert Graves and Modernism, and TimeLing conferences.

Jolanta Szymkowska-Bartyzel

From the American Wild West to Bojszowy:
Józef Kłyk's Westerns as Social Rituals

Józef Kłyk is an over 60 year old amateur film maker from Silesia region of Poland who for over 30 years has directed over 50 westerns. All his western movies are made with 16mm Russian camera and the shooting is done on location in or near the village of Bojszowo, with the use of local people as actors and film crew. Kłyk's films are a primer on the icons and symbols of the American Wild West: cowboys, Indians, saloons and 'Wanted' signs. In his film stories the Author invokes the history of the American West and the history of Silesian villagers who in 1854 left for Texas and founded Panna Maria. The paper aims to examine the incorporation of the concept of this classical American film genre with its main distinguishing features in amateur production of the Polish director. It will focus on the ritual character of the genre movie and demonstrate how Kłyk's western production is used by local community of the village of Bojszowo for ritual purposes. Reconstruction of village and rebuilding the history of Polish emigrants in Panna Maria within the form of film genre serve basic social function of expressing, fixing and reinforcing the shared values and beliefs of a community.

Jolanta Szymkowska-Bartyzel, Ph.D., is a lecturer at the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora, Jagiellonian University (Krakow, Poland). She is one of the founders and editors of Ad Americam: Journal of American Studies. Her scholarly interests focus on the history and reception of American popular culture in Poland. She published the book titled Amerykański mit – polski konsument, czyli reklamowe oblicza Ameryki [American Myth – Polish Customer, or Commercial Faces of America] about American myths and cultural motifs used for persuasive purposes in TV commercials. She is also an author of a number of articles on American popular culture, Americanization and mass media communication.

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Justyna Fruzińska

The Young Men and the Sea: Sea/Ocean as a Space of Maturation?

The sea (or ocean) in American literature and culture is marked by a distinctive ambiguity. On the one hand, and quite expectedly, the sea voyage can be a maturation experience: such is the case of Humphrey Van Weyden, the protagonist of London's *The Sea Wolf*; such is also the interpretation that the Disney Company chooses to present in its animated adaptation of R.L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. However, it is also a space of the opposite experience: one that accommodates remarkably immature characters. Be it in the person of captain Delano in Melville's 'Benito Cereno', or the eponymous Billy Budd, it is a site welcoming naïve and escapist heroes, those who do not want to or cannot adapt to the demands of land society.

Justyna Fruzińska is a Ph.D. Candidate at the Department of American Literature and Culture of the University of Łódź, Poland. An award-win-

ning poet herself, she specializes in literary translations from Hebrew and English into Polish. She was one of the authors of the anthology of poetry *Na grani* [On the Perch] (SPP Oł, Łódź 2008). Her debut volume of poetry came out in 2008 under the title *Wiesz dobrze czego się boimy* [You Know Full Well of What We Are Afraid] (Stowarzyszenie Literackie im. K.K. Baczyńskiego, Łódź 2008).

Pilar Martínez Benedí

Revolving the Vortex; or, Working through Trauma at Sea

Even as sea writing in antebellum America might have aspired to literary exploration—and possession, the ocean, as Hester Blum has noted, is a 'landscape than cannot be tangibly possessed'. The of its waters gives the sea a formless, elusive quality, and its apparently material surface hides unfathomable and ultimately ungraspable depths. The view from the masthead, moreover, offered sailors a vast barren, monotonous panorama: rather than discovery, this vantage point showed nothing—only watery emptiness. On the other hand, sea voyages were inherently circular—they ended where they had started. Whaling voyages, in particular, were non-linear and non-teleological. Or, rather, their telos—the whale—was in perpetual motion, and the whaleship circumnavigated the slippery oceanic landscape in his chase. The concern with how these ontological features of seafaring reflect, and are reflected by, the epistemology of sea narratives will broadly frame my paper. In particular, I propose to look at the final vortex in *Moby-Dick* as an image that happily captures these aspects of seafaring—and of sea writing: elusiveness and circuitousness, and, at once, to point at how such aspects, and their blending, eloquently embody psychic trauma. A sea vortex—'a circular movement of water with a vacuum at the center', in Paul Brotdkorb's words—echoes the spiral-like experience of working-through trauma; the ceaseless revolving around an event that cannot be known, since it was not grasped as it occurred, according to Cathy Caruth's formulation. In turn, I will contend, this vortical image is an apt trope for *Moby-Dick's* own circuitous form, visually replicating the convoluted process of working through its narrator's trauma. Therefore, I will explore the ways in which, in his meandering, digressive tale, Ishmael—and, with him, the reader—seems to be revolving the vortex in order to gain mastery over the unclaimed experience of his lonely survival.

Pilar Martínez Benedí holds a J.D. from the University of Zaragoza (2000) and a M.A. in English from the 'Sapienza' University of Rome (2012). She is currently enrolled in the PhD program in English at 'La Sapienza', where she studies the representations of trauma in 19th century American Literature.

Valeria Gennero

Pearl S. Buck and the Forgotten Holocaust of the Two-Ocean War

During the Second World War, Pearl S. Buck was both a successful novelist and an influential political organizer, involved in well-known

campaigns against racism and imperialism. In January 1942 she published *Dragon Seed*, a novel which described the Japanese sack of Nanking in 1937 and engaged the issues of nationalism and male violence from a gendered perspective. Buck wrote the novel before the United States entered the war: she hoped to promote American awareness of the Chinese fight for freedom, knowing that the tragic events which took place in Nanking after the fall of the city were virtually unknown in the United States. I argue that, despite its original propagandistic intent, *Dragon Seed* succeeds—as Buck’s novels often do—in problematizing the notion of national identity, foregrounding the sexual politics of war.

Valeria Gennero teaches American Literature at the University of Bergamo (Italy). She has published books on Djuna Barnes, Pearl S. Buck and Feminist Literary Theory.

Jacek Mydla

United by the Ocean? The Romantic Conan Doyle and the Transatlantic Sherlock Holmes

Biographers describe Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as a ‘Briton enchanted by America’. His letter ‘England and America’ has been called a ‘plea for Britons to understand the American point of view’. ACD entertained utopian (which is not to say, silly) ideas about the English-speaking part of the world, which made him make efforts to overcome mutual prejudices and to bring the English and the American nations together in terms of friendship. This despite the fact that he had reasons to feel sore due to literary piracies committed against him by American publishers. ACD’s fascination with America—which was for him, in his own words, a land ‘full of romance’ shows in his greatest and enduring literary achievement: the Sherlock Holmes stories. Already the first of them, ‘A Study in Scarlet’, which in 1887 gave literary life to the now world-famous consulting detective, is set for a significant part of the plot in the U.S. But ‘transatlantic’ motifs occur also in other stories, most famously in ‘The Five Orange Pips’ (1891), ‘The Yellow Face’ (1893), and ‘The Dancing Men’ (1903). Besides this, a number of other stories contain the motifs and tropes of sea/ocean/voyaging as leading ones, e.g. The story with a ‘whaling’ motif: ‘The Black Peter’. For ACD America was a land on which he projected, as the ‘American’ and ‘voyaging’ stories make evident, his major political and ideological concerns, such as those with justice and equality. In the paper, special attention is paid to the way in which in some of the stories the ocean (also: a sea and a river) features as something like a protagonist, even as one who administers justice and settles other types of account.

Jacek Mydla is Associate Professor at the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures (University of Silesia, Katowice and Sosnowiec, Poland). Currently, he is Director of the Institute. He conducts research and lectures in the history of British literature, specifically British drama (Shakespeare through romanticism), Gothic fiction and drama, and theory of narrative. His book-length publications are: The Dramatic Potential of Time

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in Shakespeare and *Spectres of Shakespeare, a study of appropriations of Shakespeare's drama by early English Gothic authors and playwrights*. Also, recently he has published a collection of essays on the dynamics of human time in Shakespeare. In his recent articles, in *Polish and English*, Mydla has been concerned with romantic drama (e.g. Scottish playwright Joanna Baillie), aspects of British empiricism in the eighteenth century, and the supernatural in fiction.

Hitomi Nabae

Creolization in Lafcadio Hearn's New Orleans and Martinique Writings

The word *tsunami*, now commonly used throughout the world, was, according to the OED, first used in the 1897 story 'A Living God' written by Lafcadio Hearn. He wrote this story in Japan soon after reading the breaking news about the tsunami that had killed more than 20,000 people in North Japan. Having been trained as a journalist for twenty years in America, it was no wonder that he responded so quickly to such a catastrophe. Moreover, his first novel was also about oceanic catastrophe: a decade earlier in New Orleans he had written *Chita*, a story about the Gulf storm of 1856 which had swept away a resort island and swallowed up its inhabitants and vacationers. While Hearn obviously utilizes the catastrophe to dramatize the miraculous moment of survival, he also experiments with his narrative voice to render reality more powerfully. These two stories of oceanic catastrophe well illustrate how he turns journalistic realism into legendary myth by framing it within cross-cultural allegories, which arguably is an essential technique that he consciously crafted and developed so as to effectively address the multi-cultural readers of the world.

Hitomi Nabae, Professor of American Literature and Comparative Literature at the Department of English Studies of the Kobe City University of Foreign Studies, holds the degree of Ph.D. in English from Stanford, as well as M.A. and B.A. from Kobe College, Nishinomiya, Japan. She is an author of a number of monographs, book chapters and journal articles (in English and in Japanese) dedicated to life and work of Lafcadio Hearn, Henry James, Walt Whitman and American women poets, as well as problem-oriented studies within the field of American literary and cultural studies.

Claudia Ioana Doroholschi

The 'Oceanic feeling' in Stephen Crane's *The Open Boat* and S.T. Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

Stephen Crane's *The Open Boat* is a fictionalized account of the writer's experience of surviving the shipwreck of the *Commodore*, a steamboat on which he was heading for Cuba to act as a war correspondent. The present paper explores Crane's account of the encounter between man and sea, setting it against the background of Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which Crane's story echoes on several occasions, at key points in the plot. It examines the two texts in the light of the con-

cept of 'oceanic feeling', as defined by Romain Rolland and Sigmund Freud, who both use the metaphor of the ocean as a site of the sublime to speak of a sense of oneness, of connectedness between man and world. While in Coleridge's poem the Mariner first loses and subsequently recovers a mystical connection with nature, Crane's short story seems to decode the events in a psychological rather than mystical key. Thus, it seems to suggest that a sense of oneness with nature is not the result of any transcendent connection between man and his surroundings, but merely a projection of the subject's emotions onto an indifferent nature.

Claudia Ioana Doroholschi is a lecturer at the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at the West University of Timișoara, Romania, where she teaches English and American literature, as well as writing courses. Her Ph.D. focused on the literature and visual arts of the 1890s. Her publications include articles and studies on Late Victorian as well as contemporary literature, and she has also been involved in a number of creative writing projects.

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