Sea More Blue: Toward a Blue Ecopoetics
An Introduction

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.37536/ECOZONA.2026.17.1.6138

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The ocean is the last dream in the morning before noise from the street comes in.
(Barbara Kingsolver, *The Lacuna* 49)

As signaled by the One Ocean Science Congress held in Nice in June 2025 that brought together all the participants of the third United Nations Ocean Conference, many programs have been initiated in France and worldwide that focus on ocean and aquatic life. Indeed, in the past two decades, it has become evident that the future of humankind is inextricably tied to the health of the Ocean, which covers about 71% of the Earth's surface. In addition, studies have shown that human activity is largely responsible for causing global warming, rising sea levels, the warming and acidification of sea water, the bleaching of coral reefs, the dwindling of fish populations, and for the increasing number of marine species going extinct or endangered. Meanwhile, it has been revealed that, with an average depth of 3,700 m, the Ocean constitutes 99% of the global volume where life can develop on the planet. Moreover, the Ocean itself is held to be home to 50% of all biodiversity on Earth, only 10% of which has been documented by scientists (Boeuf). In addition, the Ocean has been shown to absorb 30% of carbon emissions whereas the plankton that thrives in the Ocean produces half of the world's oxygen. In consequence, scientists, philosophers, academics, and artists have come to acknowledge that the future life of Planet Aqua (Rifkin) is now fully connected to our capacity to think, feel, and act in "bluer" ways, i.e. in ways that remain mindful of our embeddedness in the Ocean and

in all bodies of water on Earth, including our own bodies composed primarily of water.

The past two decades have led to the emergence of the "blue humanities" (Gillis), a cross-disciplinary field of studies focused on oceanic and watery places, which has also been called "blue cultural studies" (Mentz), or "critical ocean studies" (Deloughrey). In the wake of Gillis, Mentz, and Deloughrey's efforts to turn their attention to wet matters, other scholars such as Stacy Alaimo, Dan Brayton, Sydney Dobrin, Roberto Casati, Margaret Cohen, Søren Frank, Melody Jue, and Astrida Neimanis, to name just those few, have engaged in a "blue turn," or "oceanic turn," encouraging a new way of thinking and reading literature and arts now called "blue ecocriticism" (Dobrin). Pushing for ways of reading that are specifically ecopoetic (Bate, Knickerbocker) and blue—i.e. that pay close attention to the relationships between the nature and forms of watery milieux and life, and the forms and nature of our very artistic practices and languages (Meillon and Spill)—the Sea More Blue program, first launched from Perpignan and now based at the University of Angers, France, has initiated research exploring a "blue ecopoetics" (Meillon). Hence, the large-scale EASLCE symposium held in Perpignan in June 2024 was on the topic of cross-disciplinary approaches to blue ecopoetics. If the iconic blue color of the sea has been subject to many debates, and while Elizabeth Deloughrey, drawing from Zoe Brent, Mads Barbesgaard, and Carsten Pedersen, has taken issue with the "blue fix" that goes hand in hand with "the commodification of the ocean and its resources" and with "states and corporate actors […] working together to create a neoliberal blue economy" ("Mining"), our call for a "blueing" of our bodyminds nevertheless serves to draw attention to those works of art and literature that immerse us in watery worlds in ways that might radically alter our representations and ways of inhabiting the world. Following the tenth bi-annual EASLCE symposium that took place by the Mediterranean in Perpignan in June 2024, this special *Ecozon@* issue brings together a selection of publications taking up some of the questions raised by the Sea More Blue interdisciplinary research program. The overall aim is to venture into largely uncharted dimensions of experience and knowledge to discover and promote urgently needed ways of blueing our perception, worldviews, and ways of life. To "see more blue" and keep our oceans, seas, and rivers thriving in the long run, we must seek inspiration from the exuberant creativeness and circulation of matter, beings, and narratives through one dynamic body of water, both around the globe and since the beginning of life on our symbiotic planet.

While Margaret Cohen first diagnosed a generalized "hydrophasia," or rampant tendency to forget the sea which is characteristic of twentieth-century critical writings (*Novel*, "Terraqueous" 658), Dan Brayton and Sidney Dobrin have on their end revealed that literary academia specifically suffered from "a collective case of 'ocean deficit disorder'" (Brayton 6-7). Delving into the "terrestrial bias" affecting the field of ecocriticism, Sidney Dobrin has examined the "implicit land-based prejudice" and "land-leaning exceptionalism," or "a cultural embrace of the terrestrial as the driving environmental ideology," which appears for instance in the language

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used by Greg Garrard or Timothy Morton (Dobrin 3), as well as in the dearth of papers in the field concerned with oceanic matters. Indeed, as Dobrin has computed, only 2% of contributions published in *ISLE* between 2010 and 2020 have to do with the Ocean (38). As for those studies that did previously address nautical literature, Dobrin argues that they generally remain very anthropocentric, telling stories of conquest, of mastery, exploration, and exploitation. Hence the "blue ecocriticism" Sidney Dobrin advocates, which seeks to "expand the ecocritical lens to more attentive inclusions of matters oceanic, given both the tremendous corpus of literary and textual representations of ocean that contribute to cultural imaginaries and the vital role of ocean in global ecologies and environmental crises" (8).

Prior to the publication of Dobrin's book *Blue Ecocriticism*, Serenella Iovino had edited a 2013 *Ecozon@* issue devoted to Mediterranean ecocriticism. In her substantial introduction, Serenella Iovino pinpoints how "[sea] ecocriticism and blue cultural studies are […] instrumental to amend our human and terrestrial exceptionalism" (10). As Iovino moreover argues in a statement that can be extended to all seas, oceans, and waterways, "the Mediterranean is never a static setting or a fixed identity, but a cooperative agency which materially interferes in cultural production" (Iovino 7). Indeed, just like the Mediterranean, the larger Ocean can be apprehended as "a vast archive," to take up Predrag Matvejevic's coinage alongside Iovino, as well as "a material figure of complexity for ecocriticism [… which], between the longue durée of geo-physical settings and the manifold cultural narratives, […] acquires its unique 'form' through its developing stories: co-emerging stories of changing ecosystems, interplays of migrations and extinctions, bio-political encounters, microecologies of culture, and macroecologies of memory" (8). In her contribution to the same pioneer blue issue of *Ecozon@*, Serpil Oppermann also showed early interest in a "poetics of marine life," here studied in Turkish writings by Cevat Şakir ("Enchanted" 102), and which she would later expound in her study of the "aquatic eloquence" prompting us to "[read] storied waters" (*Blue* 13).

While Dobrin's assessment of the terrestrial bias inherent in early ecocriticism is thoroughly documented and coherent with the worldview of our anthropocentric earth-dwelling species, it must nevertheless be recalled that one of the earliest definitions of ecocriticism formulated in 1996 by Cherly Glotfelty as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" actually did potentially make room for the Ocean, for waterways, and for the water cycle: "Ecocriticism," wrote Glotfelty, "expands the notion of 'the world' to include the entire ecosphere" since it must be acknowledged that "literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather plays a part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter and *ideas* interact" (xix). It is certainly true that Glotfelty's focus and language, like that of her contemporaries, essentially revolved around places inhabitable by humans, as visible for example in her definition of ecocriticism as a reading stance with "one foot in literature and the other *on land*" (xix; our emphasis). Yet, as it is, Glotfelty's wide take on ecocriticism paved

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the way for the later emergence of material ecocriticism, while at least potentially encompassing the Ocean in her recognition of an "immensely complex global system."

In any case, the "blue turn" was inaugurated in 2000 with the publication of Nicholas Hordern and Peregrine Purcell's history book on humans in the Mediterranean, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. Hordern and Purcell called for a "New Thalassology" (718), a term revived nine years later by Steve Mentz in *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean*:

> My efforts self-consciously join what is sometimes called a "new thalassology" (from the Greek *thalassos*, the sea) that is rewriting the cultural history of the sea. Following the call to "historicize the oceans" expressed through projects like Duke University's "Oceans Connect" initiative, historians, scientists, and cultural scholars since the 1990s have been mapping the physical and cultural shapes of the oceans in world history. From the Atlantic to the Mediterranean to the Pacific, oceans have become orienting principles for the humanities and sciences. (xi)

Mentz thus insists that, "because late-twentieth-century culture has frayed our connections to the sea," we need "a poetic history of the oceans" to read into "the largest and least-known space on the planet, a moving body of more-than-human power and instability" (ix). What is inherent in the blue humanities—as reflected in the various approaches to blue literature included in this *Ecozon@* issue—is the need to bring together several critical currents that flow together into the story and evolution of the Ocean. Mentz, for instance, first highlighted the intersection between "globalization, postcolonialism, and environmentalism" as critical currents infused into "the new maritime humanities." Widening the scope, Mentz later added ecocriticism as well as the history of science and technology as necessary critical discourses, in conversation with the above, to consider the advent of "Blue Cultural Studies" ("Toward" 997). Essentially, Mentz calls for "a way of looking at terrestrial literary culture from an offshore perspective, as if we could align ourselves with the watery element" (*Bottom* 99). Meanwhile, he writes, "the sea […] destabilizes our fantasies of sustainable growth and a harmonious relationship between human culture and the natural world. […] An oceanic perspective speaks to our emerging sense that crisis, not stability, defines the world in which we live now" (*Bottom* xii).

Following a similar direction, Stacy Alaimo insists on the need to draw from the sciences, which blue scholars must more than ever rely upon considering the natural inaccessibility of underwater worlds to humans. As a result of our human limitations, we indeed depend on science and technology that intervene as mediators between human and aquatic worlds that otherwise remain mostly out of reach to us ("Science" 429). As a matter of fact, even though we cannot likely evolve to return to the sea, or as Rachel Carson has put it, "re-enter the ocean as the seals and whales [have] done," blue ecocriticism and ecopoetics also turn to the possibilities offered by literature and the arts as way for humans "to explore and investigate even its most remote parts, so that he might re-enter it mentally and imaginatively" (Carson, *Sea* 16). In fact, and taking our cue from Melody Jue, this issue is part of a collective effort to reveal how, for Rachel Carson as well as for many writers, "narrative [can be] a prosthetic technology" (Jue, *Wild* 21). Furthermore, as Stacy Alaimo argues, "[the] fact

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that most of the ocean cannot be encountered directly by terrestrial humans means that the ocean and many of its species spark disciplinary, methodological, ontological, and epistemic questions and quandaries" ("Science" 429).

In *Wild Blue Media*, Melody Jue raises essential questions as to the "conceptual displacement" that occurs when submerging theory under water, and how this might "[denaturalize] Western habits of thought and perception" (19). In addition, we ecopoeticians are concerned with what happens to language and artistic composition in works of art that immerse us into watery worlds. Indeed, as writers and artists craft works offering poetic echoes of water and Ocean, narratological standards and stylistic devices are likely to get tinkered with, especially when it comes to submerging focalization or relaying the perspective of marine creatures. Widening at once the range of our representations and our circle of compassion to include aquatic existences and perceptions, these works populated by more-than-human creatures may help delineate some of the contours of the "sea ethic" which Carl Safina has envisioned. Drawing from Aldo Leopold's ecocentric notion of a community including people that are interdependent with the land and their many co-dwellers, Safina seeks "a sea ethic" that will "extend [our] awareness [of the value of interrelationships and our total dependence on a functioning world] to below the high-tide line."

As Mentz has pointed out, Shakespeare, Melville, Conrad, and many others "[have written] the sea as opaque, inhospitable, and alluring, a dynamic reservoir of estrangement and enchantment. Full of unexpected depths and surges, it peeks out from odd corners of [their writings] before retreating like the tide" (*Bottom* ix). Calling attention elsewhere to the different states of water, changing from ice and liquid bodies into liquid vapor, Mentz contemplates an "ecopoetics of water" that might look into all kinds of water and pay attention to the agency of water imprinted in the writing itself. Going back to *Moby-Dick*, which he describes as "American literature's most sustained hymn to oceanic excess" ("Ice" 185), Mentz maintains that "[for] environmental scholars and water-critics […], the physical impress of water's qualities exerts a shaping function. Thinking and writing about water," he goes on, "assumes watery shapes–which often means variable shapes, ones that accommodate themselves to the vessels at hand, or shapes that, like humidity, make themselves felt but not seen" ("Ice" 186). This blue issue of *Ecozon@* thus aligns with Mentz's and Serpil Oppermann's respective invitations to develop an "ecopoetics of water" as well as "arts of attentiveness to recognize the expressive potentials of water itself and its narrative agencies" (*Blue* 13). The blue ecopoetics for which we have been advocating indeed adheres with Mentz's defense of "a blue humanities that responds to water's material complexity and imaginative polyphony" (Mentz, "Ice" 193). Moreover, our selection of papers in this *Ecozon@* issue reflects the fundamental ambivalence that characterizes the complex, often paradoxical ways in which humans relate to water. As Mentz puts it: "Water triggers meditation but refuses easy comprehension. Water asks for closeness but threatens with alterity. The challenge of writing about water, from ocean histories to sea poetry to the blue or oceanic humanities, requires scholars and thinkers to balance the oppositional forces of lure and dependence, alterity and

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need" ("Ice" 186). In other words, blue ecopoetics necessarily navigates opposing currents that concur at once to a disenchantment and a re-enchantment of the Ocean—an aspect that is visible in the different types of realism and the mythopoeia which artists will resort to, and which contributors to this issue purposefully address.

To look specifically into the complexity, both wonderful and awful, of ways in which marine matter and forms are animate, agential, and entangled with our human activities, bodies, and discourses, this blue *Ecozon@* issue aims to foster the braiding of various approaches to blue ecopoetics, humanities, and sciences. Tapping into the blue currents of the earth that run all the way through our own veins and lachrymal systems and make bodies of water of different kinds porous to one another, the guest editors for this special issue have encouraged papers taking account of the permeability and fluidity, the pull and lability, and intermingling of the different categories, research fields, epistemologies, and cultural productions that have previously been designated different academic fields. We have welcomed papers that tease out the blue implications of narratives, performances, practices, and artistic productions that can help restore the partly broken bonds between sea and land creatures, ecosystems, places, and various forms of discourses. Most contributors specifically look at ecopoet(h)ic productions that creatively challenge or reinvent our imaginaries and our narratives of becoming with the sea. Consequently, some of the contributions here included engage with an oceanic, posthuman worldview in which, as Astrida Neimanis has put it, various "bodies of water" are subsumed into "a more-than-human hydrocommons:"

> For us humans, the flow and flush of waters sustain our own bodies, but also connect them to other bodies, to other worlds beyond our human selves. Indeed, bodies of water undo the idea that bodies are necessarily or only human. […] Our watery relations within (or more accurately: *as*) a more-than-human hydrocommons thus present a challenge to anthropocentrism, and the privileging of the human as the sole or primary site of embodiment. Referring to the always hybrid assemblage of matters that constitutes watery embodiment, we might say that we have never been (only) human […]. This is not to forsake our inescapable humanness, but to suggest that the human is always also more-than-human. (Neimanis 2)

It follows that taking account of the watery nature of the world entails a sense of ecological responsibility toward the Ocean. As a result, a blue ecopoet(h)ics is likely to be attentive to the "global networks of harm" that are entangled within oceanic planetary interconnections (Alaimo, *Exposed* 122), as well as to the "slow violence" (Nixon) affecting those of us that are the most affected by water pollution and by the many threats jeopardizing the health of the Ocean.

The four contributions in Part One engage with the oceanic turn by examining works that spur us to (re)discover marine worlds that have long been obscured by land-based paradigms. The first two papers deal with very recent novels, one in French, and one in English. In her Francophone contribution, Dominique Ninanne explores the tempestuous, swelling style developed by Belgian author Véronique Bergen in her novel *Écume* (2023), which is meant as a critical rereading of Melville's *Moby-Dick*. Ninanne shows that Bergen's novel urges readers to rethink their

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relationship with the Ocean by condemning the marine ecocide of the Anthropocene. Ninanne reveals how Bergen seems to equate Ahab's hubris and discourse with Melville's; thus, Bergen's take on *Moby-Dick* problematically appears to have missed out on some of the complexities if its dialogic dimension. Indeed, the discourse Bergen places in her characters' mouths conflate different diegetic planes, whereas from a literary perspective, Ahab's discourse cannot be confused with Ishmael's—the first-person narrator of Melville's tale—and even less so with the writer's. Thus, when Bergen's characters incriminate both Ahab and Melville's stances toward the Ocean and toward the white sperm whale, as if they might read as one and the same, they seem to overlook the fact that, while Ahab, the tragic character, is assuredly after the whale to hunt and kill it, Melville's quest is really an ecopoetic one—having to do with figuring out ways of writing the Ocean and the whale, and eventually acknowledging the sheer impossibility of ever capturing the whole of either the Ocean or the whale. It is therefore quite relevant to note that, as Ninanne demonstrates, Bergen's reading of Melville's text was initially conditioned by the French translation produced by Jean Giono, Lucien Jacques, and Joan Smith, rather than the more complete ad faithful translation later produced by Philippe Jaworski. Indeed, as Samuel Otter has observed, while "the archetypal captain and white whale and their inexorable fates have become part of world culture," the reception of Melville's text, which "contains much more than its plot," has in fact been greatly influenced by the various editions which publishers have issued, some "[stripping] away what they [considered] its excrescences" (68). The same can be said of the many translations and adaptations of *Moby-Dick* that have played a great part in its dissemination worldwide and in popular culture. As it is, many of those versions have unfortunately excised Melville's heterological text, cutting out many of the "elaborate verbal patterns including etymology, philosophy, anatomy, cetology, theology, cartography, allegory, drama, and poetry" (68) which give the original its narrative thickness, its ecopoetic slipperiness, if not its "formlessness," as Samuel Otter puts it (69), or again its foaming, as Tom Nurmi explores in his ecopoetic reading of Melville's forms and foams. Indeed, the very reason why Melville's text is seminal from the point of view of the Blue Humanities, and more specifically for a blue ecopoetics, is precisely because, as Hester Blum argues, *Moby-Dick* consistently acknowledges "the sea [as] a medium inherently resistant to inscription and other forms of fixity or possession" (23). In any case, as Bergen endeavors to write in a poetic language capable of producing echoes of the Ocean, a language that "perfoms the sea," as per Ninanne, her French *ecopoeisis* surfaces in the wake of Melville's own experimentations with style and novelistic discourse. Meanwhile, as Ninanne cogently demonstrates, Bergen's *Écume*—the title of which translates to "foam"—calls awareness to the trans-corporeality intermeshing human and other-than-human bodies, specifically in the light of our shared watery natures.

Tackling another recently published novel that questions our rapport with the Ocean and which has received surprisingly little attention so far, Gian Maria Di Cristofaro then proposes an ecocritical reading of Richard Powers's *Playground*

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(2024), the title of which may ring a bell with Mentz's observation that "by turning the sea from a vision of chaos into a playground, the modern world has lost part of its cultural history" ("Toward" 998). As Di Cristofaro shows, having challenged the notion of human exceptionalism and having invited us to revise completely how we think of trees and forests in *The Overstory*, Powers has now written a blue novel, the discursive strategies of which once again take issues with many human presumptions about the world and our right place within it, this time focusing on oceanic life. According to Di Cristofaro, Powers's "blue anti exceptionalism" literally plunges readers beneath the Ocean to reveal the extraordinary creatures that inhabit it. Delving into Powers's anthropomorphic approach, Di Cristofaro moreover explores the means through which Powers seeks to spark empathy for nonhuman critters while foregrounding nonetheless the intrinsic alterity of underwater beings. Identifying ocean lifeforms as "alien kin" (Morizot 71), or one might say, water others, Powers achieves what Di Cristofaro calls the "ecological sublime," that is a mix of "awe and unknowability" that invites us to "embrace that otherness from a non-binary perspective, to abolish the human/non-human dualism the classic sublimes carries on." While Powers's dense novel will no doubt prompt many more critical responses, Di Cristofaro's paper represents a welcome investigation into a blue ecocritical focus on one of today's most widely read novelists.

Turning to a different medium to explore underwater worlds, Christelle Colin introduces new imaginaries of Galician aquatic culture through cinema. By comparing the animated film *De profundis* (2007), by Miguelanxo Prado, with the feature film *Sica* (2023), by Carla Subirana, Colin probes the aesthetic strategies these two directors utilize when filming the sea. Whether through contemplation and sensory immersion in *De profundis* or through poetic realism mingled with maritime sociology in *Sica*, both films lead, according to Colin, to an "ecopoetics of the deep." Moreover, they invent contemporary ecological mythologies that tap into local tradition and simultaneously engage the ecological and philosophical challenges of the Anthropocene.

Looking for ways to attune humans to the specificities of underwater soundscapes, Irène Mopin and Noémie Favennec-Brun then present their research-creation project titled *(S)e(a)scape*. Inducing immersion into a marine soundscape, this project, as they explain, allows audiences to "hear the oceans," thus rendering tangible a dimension of marine ecosystems that is vital to their balance even though it rarely appears in our cultural imaginaries. Positioned at the intersection of performing arts, marine acoustics, and ecopedagogy, *(S)e(a)scape* aims to open new forms of perception and new relationships with aquatic worlds in order to foster a sensitive and lasting ecological awareness of our entanglements with the sea.

In an effort to shift perspectives by heeding alternative and original viewpoints on our assumptions about human bodies and non-human bodies of water, the second part of this special blue issue gathers contributions addressing gender issues and the queerness of water. Indeed, the three articles that follow offer insights into the fluidity and nonbinary qualities reflected in the changing states of aquatic milieux and in the

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lifeforms that dwell in watery worlds. Drawing on multimedia works by photographer Carmela García (*Paradise*, 2000) and video artist Tania Candiani (*Tidal Choreography*, 2023) that depict immersed female bodies, Pascale Peyraga explores how blue art can question the way we inhabit the world. Tapping into theory by Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, Peyraga scrutinizes the feminist "biotopias" or "micro-utopias" that help these women artists strive for a reconciliation with nature, each developing her own *hydropoiesis*. In the most radical of these two approaches, one artist even recomposes bodies of water that dissolve into the intertidal zone, or ecotone, in which the choreography is anchored.

Barbara Barrow then examines Deborah Levy's novel *Hot Milk* (2016) from the perspective of queer ecologies and hydrofeminism. Barrow's contribution demonstrates how this novel opens up possibilities for "swimming with the trouble," as it follows the story of her female protagonist Sofia. Characterized as a swimmer, Sofia is transformed by her stinging encounter with jellyfish while she attempts to heal her mother, Rose, and opens up to new forms of sensuality and sexuality. In conversation with Hélène Cixous's *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976), Barrow shows that Levy's novel rewrites the idea of the "sea cure" by raising the central question of what happens to such a cure when the Ocean itself is sick. As Barrow reveals, "the novel troubles an idealized cultural and literary trope of the restorative seaside by depicting, instead, watery communities of both human and marine life reckoning with anthropogenic harm," and themselves requiring healing.

In the next contribution, Margarida Vale de Gato also invites a shift in perspective typical of queer ecology and ecofeminism. Vale de Gato studies aquatic specter figures as reworked by the surrealist artists Dorothea Tanning and Leonor Fini, who reshape the maritime Gothic tradition of Edgar Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym*. Thus, tropes such as shipwrecks and whirlpools, once linked to the depths of the unconscious, come to represent the reemergence of repressed ideas and oppressed bodies. Thus, as Vale de Gato demonstrates, Tanning and Fini have produced compelling artworks that deal with transformation as they hybridize human and animal features, meanwhile staging experiences linked to pubescence, pregnancy, or nursing in ways that eventually "[feminize] the maritime gothic." Moreover, this contribution provides a timely discussion which may resonate with the Leonora Carrington exhibit currently going on at the Musée du Luxembourg, in Paris (February-July 2026), as Vale de Gato also touches upon some of Leonora Carrington's surrealist paintings that speak to the works of Poe, Jules Verne, and Max Ernst.

Part three of this issue brings together contributions focusing on works that cast humans experiencing unmediated contact with water via sea and ocean praxes. As part of an ethnographic study, Agnese Martini first analyzes how fishermen from the Venice lagoon consider those creatures perceived as monstrous—microalgae, Sea Walnut ctenophores and blue crabs—, which have been proliferating because of pollution, overfishing, and global warming. Calling on "ferality" and "otherness," Martini underscores how hard it is for humans to do away with a perspective that is

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anthropocentric, utilitarian, and extractive so as to shift toward a posthuman perspective. Relying on Donna Haraway's notion of mutual "response-abilities," Martini explores the "entanglements, risks, and possibilities generated by monstrous human/non-human encounters," insisting on "how the 'monsters' in fishermen's stories show their agency, challenge anthropocentric narratives, and compel us to reimagine new ways of becoming-with the aquatic more-than-human world."

Drawing attention to the autobiographical writings of biologists and divers through a linguistic perspective, Julia Ori then braids scientific and narratological concerns as she looks into the work of Anne Collet and François Sarano. Unravelling the different modalities of their first-person narratives respectively titled *Danse avec les baleines* (which translates to "Dancing with Whales," 1998) and *Le retour de Moby Dick, ou ce que les cachalots nous enseignent sur les océans et les hommes* (in English, "The Return of Moby Dick, or What Sperm Whales Can Teach Us about Oceans and Men," 2017), Julia Ori's piece deals with the literary strategies Collet and Sarano wield as they tell the true stories of their encounters with such charismatic megafauna in ways that depart from the more arid standards and claims to objectivity of scientific writing. While Sarano's title explicitly sparks a conversation with Melville's fictional masterpiece, Ori's main interest lies in the use of the first person in these two narratives that intermingle personal experience and commitment with a scientific observation of marine mammals. She thus examines how such cetological literature strives to convey a sense of wonder by recounting embodied experiences that are anchored in "situated knowledges" (Haraway).

Staying with embodied practices of the Ocean and their poetic potential, Noémie Mil Homens Cavaco then introduces a collection of poems by Argentinian writer and swimmer Alicia Genovese titled *Aguas* (2013). Drawing on Niall Binns's concepts of rootedness and uprooting, Mil Homens examines how Genovese's poetry of swimming can transform the modern view of water as inert matter. Indeed, Genovese's work presents several forms of sensory and ontological reconnection with water, an element which, Mil Homen shows, the poems transfigure into a "complete poetic reality."

Switching to dance, Caroline Granger's paper then studies how direct contact with marine milieux, whether from the shore or through full submersion, has trickled down into the creative processes of several choreographers such as Isadora Duncan, Amy Greenfield, Babette Mangolte, and Marine Chesnais. By focusing on breath and on works created by free diving dancers, Granger specifically analyzes how these choreographies move away from land-based perspectives. In the end, Granger contends, these dancers perform a bodily language that strives for a form of interspecies composition by means of which one might experience a kind of becoming-other (Abram), dancing at the threshold between worlds inhabited by marine and human mammals.

Finally, the volume closes with two articles that adopt a more somber, critical, and explicitly political view of the historical and conflict-ridden realities tied to seas and oceans. These contributions examine literary and artistic works shaped by

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imaginaries that reveal the processes through which both the Ocean—still too often treated as a lawless zone—and the freshwater systems that feed it upstream function as spaces saturated with power and counter power. Through her reading of *Barrage sur le Nil* by Christian Jacq (1994), *La Verticale du fleuve* by Clara Arnaud (2023), and *Mémoires sauvées de l'eau* by Nina Leger (2024), Charlotte Ladevèze investigates contemporary French literature where she traces the emergence of a critical attention to the transformation of rivers into energy infrastructure through hydroelectric dams. As she demonstrates, such fictions narrate a shift in paradigms whereby rivers that were once regarded as milieux were suddenly reconceptualized as machines. Placed within the long history of hydraulic modernity, the texts under study reveal the growing energy abstraction that has reduced waterways to mere resources and then to calculable variables. These texts also expose how fraught such a reduction is, together with the hubris underlying attempts to govern natural flows. Meanwhile, Charlote Ladevèze shows, dam literature "emerges as a privileged site for thinking through the dynamics of acceleration and the forms of infrastructural dependency characteristic of the Anthropocene."

Last but not least, Matthias Klestil addresses another form of maritime violence by revisiting the history of slavery and the Black Atlantic from a literary perspective. Klestil examines relationships with the Atlantic Ocean in nineteenth-century African American literature through the lens of elemental ecocriticism—an approach that focuses on "elemental places, forces, and phenomena of the surrounding and sensuous world" (Macauley). This paper represents a pioneering step toward integrating African American corpora into the Blue Humanities, which can help disentangle the ways in which the invention of Blackness might be tied to the experience of Blueness. As Klestil demonstrates, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and the writings of Charlotte Forten, which include diaries and published letters, go beyond a simple reiteration of picturesque images of the old ocean as they also translate ambivalent feelings tied to formative experiences of the sea. In so doing, Klestil insists, these texts suggest "a long African American tradition of being with the sea (beyond the history of the Middle Passage) from which to learn and which may also help challenge persisting stereotypes of African American environmental disinterestedness today." Moreover, even though they are steeped in widely different experiences of Blackness and of the sea, these writings by Frederick Douglass and Charlote Forten develop strategies of elemental resistance to slavery and racism that convey a sense of individual agency while they also gesture toward possibilities for the creation of new collectivities.

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 ISSN 2171-9594