

oceans

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Feminist analysis of gendered subjects unlocks a myriad of interdisciplinary debates, encounters and tensions. Oceans as feminist subject are equally and simultaneously comforting and disconcerting. The gendered subject (m/f), once theorised via a binary, hierarchies and description of dichotomy, then shifts and mutates into a fluid, connected, wet space of micro- and macro-organisms that are interconnected. To engage oceans as an interdisciplinary subject for study and of study, a methodology and an encounter, surfaces a rich series of historical, literary, creative, philosophical, geographical, decolonial, environmental, deconstructive and posthuman feminist crosscurrents. At the same time, oceans challenge and change feminist research, the sites and forms of knowledge production and, not to mention, the ground beneath your feet. This themed issue, on *Oceans*, navigates the terrain of the known and unknown through the unsettling of positionality, identity, location, trade routes, settler-colonial frames and subjectivities.

Straddling the 2019–2020–2021 long year of COVID-19, when a tumultuous reimagining of how humans connect, relate, love, work, live with non-human organisms and survive was a constant, *Oceans* was brought to the page—and as editors we thank our authors for their perseverance and commitment in achieving that. *Oceans* is an act of care, and labour, that marks a series of disruptive transitions, globally and at home. It seems fitting, then, that the focus is oceans: a subject in motion that is difficult to know or even to imagine in totality. Our authors come from vastly diverse disciplines, write across continents and traverse different planetary trajectories with different styles and motifs, yet the collection frames a series of remarkably consistent feminist themes, from queer subjects to naming settler colonialism, from the power of art and creative methodologies to the posthuman encounters in the late Anthropocene. Our authors cross the Pacific, write from Cape Cod to Sydney, swim the African coast, convene on the West Coast of Turtle Island and traverse the colonial trade routes from India to the Caribbean, while engaging interspecies, the shoreline, weaving, recycling, poetry, the aquarium, literature, performance art, feminist activism, the collective, queer lives, climate change and the brutality of settler colonialism in a series of evocative, rich and innovative feminist writings. Race, gender, class, caste, sexuality and ableism surface as both intellectual and lived experiences connected and unravelled through feminist imaginaries and oceanic encounters. We provide a short reflection on each article—and the joy they brought us as editors—in this introduction and encourage you to immerse yourself in the content.

The opening article, ‘Ocean weaves: reconfigurations of climate justice in Oceania’ (2022, this issue) by Jaimey Hamilton Faris, engages with the work of three artist-activists living and working in the Pacific. Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, Mary Babcock and Kaili Chun use different practices of weaving and work from

different positions of power (Indigenous or settler-ally) to articulate feminist decolonial critiques of the US's historical and ongoing presence and impact in Oceania, and they do so as part of a much wider network of Indigenous and feminist activists using weaving in their climate justice work. For Hamilton Faris, their work serves as an apt response to the top-down, extractivist, development logic-driven climate mitigation and adaptation policy that dominates in Oceania—and which seeks to dominate the 'feminine chaos' of the ocean. The artists offer instead a response to climate change that sees the ocean as a space of (environmental) relation, which centres Indigenous voices and cultural environmental practices, and through which practices of care are threaded through conversations, materials, attention to environmental relation and community-building efforts. In Hamilton Faris's (*ibid.*, original emphasis) analysis, weaving functions as 'model methodologies of intercultural climatic justice', and 'necessarily difficult ongoing *material practice*' in response to the climate emergency.

In their article titled 'Wild swimming methodologies for decolonial feminist justice-to-come scholarship' (2022, this issue), Tamara Shefer and Vivienne Bozalek draw on sea swimming/writing retreats and the fluid 'swim-think-read-write' practice that has grown out of these to propose embodied sea swimming as a powerful methodology for knowledge-making. Shefer and Bozalek (*ibid.*) write in the context of higher education in South Africa, where both authors live and work, and where as white, middle-class academics they acknowledge that their scholarship *and* experiences of sea swimming are 'powerfully shaped by fraught political contexts of privilege and subjugation', as well as by the racist, patriarchal and exclusionary neoliberalism of contemporary higher education. They situate their wild swimming methodologies as a means of disrupting and reconceptualising scholarship—and by extension, academia—in three ways: as a hauntological, 're-storying' project for justice-to-come scholarship, uncovering silenced narratives of subjugation and opening up space for alternative and diverse stories to be told and recognised; as conversing with, and contributing to, eco-critical feminist scholarship and its engagement with the need to work towards more just and liveable relations with the ocean; and as part of the movement for slow scholarship.

In 'Watery archives: transoceanic narratives in Andil Gosine's *Our Holy Waters, and Mine*' (2022, this issue), Subhalakshi Gooptu takes Andil Gosine's art installation as her focus to think through the trans-oceanic exchanges, mobilities and connections that mark the aftermath of Indo-Caribbean histories of indentureship and diaspora. Drawing on Indo-Caribbean feminist theorists, scholarship on feminist and queer archival practices and feminist blue humanities thinking on the ocean, Gooptu reads Gosine's disruptive artistic practice as a way to make present the complex intersections of sexuality, race and caste that are too often silenced in the archive. Tracing its watery routes from the River Ganges across the Indian and Atlantic Oceans through to the Hudson River, Gosine's personal diasporic history becomes a way to both register and resist the afterlife of colonialism and the limits of geographic, national and ethnic roots. Oceanic exchanges are both the space of destruction and loss and the source of potential new identities.

Caroline Emily Rae's 'Uncanny waters' (2022, this issue) draws on the oceanic resistance to fixed origins and stable binaries to consider literary representations of human-ocean relations in fictions of North Atlantic coastal regions in Newfoundland, Devonshire and the Scottish islands. Rae places the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny in conversation with the feminist blue humanities concepts of a 'more-than-human hydrocommons' (Neimanis, 2017) and 'transcorporeality' (Alaimo, 2012), in order to argue for 'uncanny water' as an environmentally and ethically conscious framework for destabilising humanist certainties in the time of climate emergency. In these fictions, the uncanny emerges in

particular encounters with aqueous others who trouble the certainties of the North Atlantic as knowable and controllable, while also registering how colonialist and capitalist relations of power are sedimented in the ocean's materiality. These uncanny encounters can be read as having what Rae (2022) calls a 'de-terra-torializing' effect, a feeling out-of-place that offers the opportunity to reorient subjectivity towards being and becoming with water.

In Gianni Tien and Elizabeth Burmann's 'Thinking-with decorator crabs: oceanic feminism and material remediation in the multispecies aquarium' (2022, this issue), the text moves between the aquarium and the ocean to reflect on how interspecies encounters are often mediated through technologies for seeing, or being with, non-human animals. Tien and Burmann articulate and frame feminist entanglements which ponder the feminist practices of care that loosen the preoccupation with humanist frames for engagement. Through this inquiry, inspired by the authors' care of decorator crabs and their learning through that encounter, Tien and Burmann articulate a cross-disciplinary space that identifies oceanic encounters, whether on land or in watery worlds, whether discursive or material, as an important location for new forms of feminist knowledge. In the process, Tien and Burmann engage directly with the history of the aquarium as colonial division between human and non-human actors, and argue for a feminist understanding of the aquarium as mediating, and remediating, feminist knowledge that does not need to be understood through mastery and surveillance. The layered meanings and experiential research design challenge one's encounter with feminist subjects, notions of agency and ownership, as well as perceptions of ongoingness that interlock and resonate across the themed issue.

The Open Space section of *Oceans* attests to the importance of *Feminist Review's* commitment to writing outside of Western scholarly frames and dictates. Celina Stifjell's 'Submersive mermaid tales: speculative storytelling for oceanic futures' (2022, this issue) engages the mermaid as queer feminist motif, while exploring the genderqueer and posthuman convergences in mer-subjectivities. Stifjell's encounter uses the ocean's literary and mythical population of mer-people to question Enlightenment ontologies and the arrogance of human-centred concepts of the political, ethical and cultural. Her writing is followed by katya holtz's 'hope at the end of the world: lessons from the ocean' (2022, this issue)—a free-form submission at once not academic, not fiction, and incisive and contemplative in equal measure. holtz's encounter with feminist and queer subjects commences with her pronouns and incorporates the ocean, to name us as hydrocommons made vital as the impact of climate change unravels before us. The flow of text then breaks for the encounter with Melisa Ɖtuğrul's poem, 'frequencies' (2022, this issue). Here she explores noise, submersion and flow—the affective resonance of the ocean and the affective encounter with the cacophony of the early twentieth-first century, where the flows of information create complex encounters. Dear reader, sit a while with the poem, feel its frequencies, frequent it again and again. Basma Lahbib's 'Waves of sisterhood' (2022, this issue) returns us to *terra firma* and evokes the ocean as a literary device to name and describe the racist frames that intersect and disrupt feminist collectives but which, ultimately, give voice to new spaces of organising, new times for speaking and new frames of feminist care. The themed issue concludes with a further intervention into the neoliberal obsession with the individual as point of reference and as a central category of inquiry. In 'Wrack writing (selections)', the Piddock Clam Collective (2022) offer oceanic words without ego, without identity or label, and, in opposition to calls to name and frame positionality through identity politics, they conjure into being an interspecies collective encounter with the wrack. The wrack: the space between land and sea. The wrack seems a fitting space to conclude a themed issue on *Oceans*, at once touching land, simultaneously terra

and aqua, sensorial, unsettling. The Piddock Clam Collective write into history/ies, your knowledge of species, human and non-human, in the wrack and the futures imagined, unreal and intimately connected to the wrack's history, interwoven in the wrack's kin.

author biographies

Gina Heathcote is a Professor of Gender Studies and International Law at SOAS University of London. Her recent publications include *Feminist Dialogues on International Law: Successes, Tensions, Futures* (Oxford University Press, 2019) and, co-authored with Sara Bertotti, Emily Jone and Sheri Labenski, *The Law of War and Peace: A Gender Analysis Volume One* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

Irene Gedalof taught women's studies and sociology at London Metropolitan University until her retirement in 2018. She was a member of the Feminist Review Collective between 2004 and 2020, and co-edited numerous issues including 'Birth' (93, 2009), 'Recalling the Scent of Memory' (100, 2012), 'The Politics of Austerity' (109, 2015) and 'Environment' (118, 2018). Her most recent publications are *Narratives of Difference in an Age of Austerity* (Palgrave, 2018) and 'In the wake of the hostile environment: migration, reproduction and the Windrush scandal' (*Feminist Theory*, 2022).

Joanna Pares Hoare worked for the Feminist Review Collective as Editorial Assistant on *Feminist Review* from 2007 to 2009, and then as Assistant Editor from 2013 to 2016. She was a member of the Collective from 2016 to 2020. Her book *Gender, Activism and International Development Intervention in Kyrgyzstan* was published by Brill in 2021.

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