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# Terraqueous Planet

## The Case for Oceanic Studies

HESTER BLUM

To measure distance at sea is to measure time on an interstellar scale. We demarcate the globe by temporally defined lines of longitude and latitude whose origins come from seafaring. The ocean is in permanent opposition to landmarks, inscriptions, and other localizing mechanisms presuming stasis; the imaginary lines that subdivide the globe were conceived as a way to abstract and solidify oceanic location in the face of the unstable surface of planetary terraqueous space. Fixing degrees and minutes and seconds—the ordinal terms of global location—has relied historically on the ability to measure a position relative to the sun and other stars. Before global positioning systems, this could only be done by means of accurate sea clocks, sextants, and charts that allowed mariners to plot their relative position among the poles of Greenwich, the stars, and the bobbing horizon. Thus, by definition, to know one's place at sea was to know one's place on the planet—even more, in the universe. And yet, in literary and philosophical history the nautical environment, despite covering more than 70 percent of the earth's surface, has been seen as a non-specific place, one outside of time, beyond time, or hostile to time. A “sea which will permit no records,” in Herman Melville's phrase,<sup>1</sup> could register as a medium both of generation and annihilation.

The presumed abstraction of time and space at sea, though, is a land-based perspective that emerges from an understanding of the planet as subdivided into political rather than ecoglobalist categories. How might our understanding of planetary time and space be reoriented—cast adrift—when considered from the vantage point of the earth's oceanic spaces? This essay meditates upon the planetary turn from the perspective of the coincident and complementary field of oceanic studies. Both positions share the fundamental presumption that the nation-state is an insufficient unit of comparative analysis. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak proposes, thinking about the planet allows for an understanding of ecological, cultural, and political relations as functioning independently of the state- or capital-based exchanges familiarly identified as globalism.<sup>2</sup> In Wai Chee Dimock's formulation, a planetary sense of deep time serves a similar purpose in dislocating our approach from nation-based temporalities.<sup>3</sup>

Along the same lines, oceanic studies seeks to reorient our critical perspective, finding capacious possibilities for new relational forms—dispersion, erosion, flotation, confluence, solvency—adapted from the constitutively unbounded examples provided by the ocean. And recent geophysical changes to the seas caused by global climate change demand critical attention as well, as part of a history of knowledge circulation plotted along sea routes. As Kären Wigan writes of what has also been called New Thalassology, “No longer outside time, the sea is being given a history, even as the history of the world is being retold from the perspective of the sea.”<sup>4</sup> Rather than viewing planetary exchange as something that takes place transnationally, between geographically abstracted states, oceanic studies unmoors our critical perspective from the boundaries of the nation. Planetary and oceanic shifts are invested, in part, in recognizing the artificiality and intellectual limitations of national, political, linguistic, physiological, or temporal boundaries in studying forms of literary and cultural influence and circulation.<sup>5</sup> A fundamental premise of oceanic studies is that such recognized patterns of nation- and capital-based relationality dissolve in the space and time of the sea.

In what follows, I consider the relationship between theories of oceanic studies and planetarity in terms of their mutual investment in recalibrating—even annihilating—the gauges of time and space. The science of latitude and longitude provides one critical vocabulary for understanding how space and time are weighed in a planetary balance. I also invoke several scenes of oceanic and planetary accounting in the works of Henry David Thoreau and Herman Melville, the U.S. writers who have arguably been the most identified with ecoglobalist and oceanic perspectives. Thoreau, for instance, surveys a body of water that had been imagined bottomless and finds that theories of the infinite in fact have greater explanatory power once the measurement of infinity has been countermanded. Melville, too, provides a model for thinking through comparative notions of planetary location in theorizing time as either horological (clock-based, locally relevant) or chronometrical (idealized, spiritual—that is, Greenwich Mean Time). Thus, I draw on these two American writers for their insistence on the necessity of materialist, labor-based practices when postulating philosophical understandings of time and space. This point, I contend, is urgent in our current planetary moment: metaphorizing earth and sea, abstracting them from the effects of human actors, has severe consequences both environmentally and politically. Oceanic studies is predicated on a belief in the sea’s imaginative and material resources. Both kinds are under constant threat, a contingency that helps account for the field’s present emergence at our moment of climate change.

### “The Whims of Tides and Mariners”

We must think of the sea and the ships that butt about it as emphatically embodied: even more so than in Michel Foucault’s now-familiar closing

proposal in his essay “Of Other Spaces,” where he writes that the ship has been not only “the great instrument of economic development . . . but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination.”<sup>6</sup> Granted, when considering reserves of the imagination, we must be mindful, too, of the gas and mineral sources that make the liquid and frozen seas the target of mining, extraction, and other ecological threats, especially in a period of global climate change propelled by human actions. These threats, for example, are producing new varieties of imperialist territorial claiming: in 2007 Russia—seeking to secure raw materials at the North Pole, an oceanic region with no land or stable ice—claimed not the sea or “pole” but the tectonic plate beneath the seafloor.<sup>7</sup> More recently, at the opposite pole, Russia also drilled into the sub-glacial Lake Vostok (over 13,000 feet under the Antarctic ice cap), the liquid contents of which are estimated to have been under ice and thus untouched for 25 million years. And Russia is, of course, not the only nation making new claims to oceanic spaces. The United States, Canada, China, Denmark, Britain, and Norway are among the other circumpolar nations seeking new access to resources in or beneath the water. In addition, global warming produces new access to planetary sea routes. The fabled Northwest Passage through the seas of the Canadian Arctic archipelago, which provides a northern sea route from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans, had been unsuccessfully—often fatally—sought for half a millennium. However, by 2009 the Arctic pack ice had been reduced to the point of open-water navigation through the Canadian and Russian Arctic. The ship of Foucault’s imagination thus produces economic development at the potential cost of the very reserves it traverses.

However, there is another aspect of the sea’s materiality that is overlooked in formulations such as Foucault’s and environmentalists’ discourse: the figure of the sailor, the laboring body that brings human presence to the ocean in the first place. The sailor is crucial to oceanic studies not just as the agent of maritime commerce, transit, and mythology, but also for his literal outlandishness: the sailor typifies the historic dissolution of the protections afforded by national affiliations in the space and time of the sea.<sup>8</sup> As the first intra-planetary travelers, sailors were imagined free from many of the constraints of social and political life. Yet they faced hostile environmental conditions as well as repressive hierarchical structures aboard ship, neither of which could be mediated by the protections of statehood or citizenship. The two regularities in the lives of seamen were the disciplinary practices of maritime navigation and time management: the taking of celestial readings, the keeping of the log, the maintenance of watches or shifts as clocked by the hour. The labor of mariners, in other words, was the metronome of humanized oceanic time.

And yet in the modern Western cultural imagination, seamen’s mobility accounts in part for their roughness, their dissolution, and their potential for agitation. In his preface to *On the Shores of Politics*, Jacques Rancière

recognizes the centrality of these aspects of sailors and identifies as well the reasons for their imaginative obliquity to the history of states:

The sea smells bad. This is not because of the mud, however. The sea smells of sailors, it smells of democracy. . . . Before taking us down into the famous cave, Socrates tells us a lot about triremes, incorrigible sailors and helpless pilots. Entering the cave we bid farewell to this fatal and seductive seascape. The cave is the sea transposed beneath the earth, bereft of its sparkling glamour: enclosure instead of open sea, men in chains instead of rows of oarsmen, the dullness of shadows on the wall instead of light reflected on waves. The procedure whereby the prisoner is released and offered conversion is preceded by another, by that first metaphoric act which consists in burying the sea, drying it up, stripping it of its reflections and changing their very nature. In response to these assaults we know, however, that the sea will take its revenge. For the paradox of the undertaking is that hauling politics onto the solid ground of knowledge and courage entails a return to the isles of refoundation; it means crossing the sea once more and surrendering the shepherds' resurrected city to the whims of tides and mariners.<sup>9</sup>

The oceanic counterpoint to Plato's famous cave analogy might change how we perceive both shadow and substance in the world, Rancière offers. Drying out the sea as a philosophical figure strands those odorous, boisterous aspects of the political world represented in his figure by seamen. And in invoking the "revenge" that the sea might seize in its response to being rendered peripheral by political and philosophical orders, Rancière underscores both the sea's inhumanity and its embodiment. (We will see this suggested in Melville's work as well.) The political world in Rancière's formulation cannot be accurately assessed from the vantage point of the stability and desiccation of the "solid ground of knowledge." Instead, we might take the bobbing, surging, unfixed shadows on the cave wall as an encouragement to understand political and planetary questions as similarly composed of a matter whose substance owes more to the ductility of the watery world than has been heretofore measured. Democracy requires an accord with the "fatal and seductive" aspects of the imaginative and material oceans.

The sea of Rancière's imagination is no longer figured as the world outside of hearth and self, or even at the margins of the planet understood in terms of political geography. His figure asks us not to assess the ocean from a position on land but to locate ourselves among the "whims of tides and mariners" in order to shape a new and different vision of the world. A land-based perspective takes its stability from what we might see as a kinesiological notion of proprioception: we understand our position in the world in relation to

stimuli generated from within the perceiving body itself.<sup>10</sup> In other words, in the kinesiological model a person's balance is derived not only from some intrinsic stability, or from contact with the floor, but from his or her visual, tactile, and other sensory awareness of and contact with the relative permanence of his or her surroundings. (This is why, for example, it is more difficult to balance with one's eyes closed.) The fluid environment disallows such comparative forms of understanding. In this sense, the "enclosure" of the cave in Rancière's Platonic figure comes as a stabilizing force that stands in contrast to the riotous a-referentiality of the sea. Absent the "sea legs" necessary to anchor one's vantage point and corporal positioning, an oceanic perspective takes disequilibrium as its state of being. As I maintain elsewhere in my work, critical positions premised on a planet organized by relations between states and capital circulation could profit from an embrace of disequilibrium and learn from the sea's ways of gauging interchanges that are both cosmic and measurable in some new form.

### "Not Continent but Insular"

Consider, as an instance of the longitudinal logic of oceanic studies, the familiar figure of the eco-materialist Thoreau at Walden Pond. The pond was both repository and wellspring for his imaginative project, his determination "to explore the private sea, the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean of one's being alone."<sup>11</sup> Throughout his writings, Thoreau is insistently mindful of the coincidence of the practical and poetic dimensions of natural spaces. In *Walden*, for instance, he writes of the pond, "when you look into it you see that earth is not continent but insular. This is as important as that it keeps butter cool" (391–92). Recognizing land as an "insular" plot, its existence contingent on water's recession (both locally and on a planetary scale), makes Thoreau's voyage of self-discovery reliant on an oceanic reorientation of geographic terms. That is, the act of setting the land in a relation to water rather than to an orienting pole allows him, instead, to create an imaginative "sea." Experiential knowledge of the pond, Thoreau proposes, produces imaginative capital; he is interested in the epistemological payload of the insularity of land as well as in the experiential knowledge of the pond.

The pond's ability to serve theoretically as Thoreau's ocean in miniature is not necessarily more important, however, than its mundane powers of butter-cooling. When Thoreau ventures out to survey the bottom of Walden Pond, which locals had long thought to be literally and figuratively unfathomable, he sensibly takes up "compass and chain and sounding line," finding it "remarkable how long men will believe in the bottomlessness of a pond without taking the trouble to sound it" (549). He records over one hundred readings, noting the variance in the pond's length and breadth, its coves and bars. The results of his labor are printed in *Walden* as a map—the only

illustration or diagram in the book—with all the various depth measurements provided and labels to mark the pond's dimensions. Thoreau's scientific documentation of Walden's foundation is not entirely clinical, nor is it intended to anesthetize any more ethereal contemplation of the pond's imaginative depths. In fact, Thoreau finds that “not an inch” of the pond's rather unusual depth “can be spared by the imagination.” He wonders, “What if all ponds were shallow? Would it not react on the minds of men? I am thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless” (551). An imagination capable of considering the infinite might find its reflection in deep waters. Yet Thoreau has taken the trouble to quantify the pond's dimensions, to expose the myth of its infinitude. Although factual accounting here could limit his range of interpretation, Thoreau argues that geophysical knowledge grants him broader ground for contemplation. A belief in bottomlessness or the infinite is a passive belief, borrowed from conventional thinking rather than one sounded independently; it is a belief without referent or logical scale. What Thoreau has done, instead, is to seize the physical fact of the pond's depth out of the realm of the unknowable, to mark it with his own intellectual and mechanical labor. The ability to fix a location, to establish a point of reference, frees the subject to contextualize, and then reproduce, any other readings from the perspective of the point thus fixed. In setting the pond in material relation to the world instead of retaining its symbolic value for abstraction, Thoreau thus rescues unknowability as a philosophical problem rather than an empirical one.

The notion of the earth as “insular” rather than “continent[al]” exemplifies the perspectival shift proposed by the planetary turn and oceanic studies alike. Just as the Copernican revolution outmoded a Ptolemaic model of the heavens by revealing the small, subject Earth to be peripheral to the Sun, an oceanic revolution—if of different proportion—repositions continental land as circumscribed, minimized, and mere island amid the waters that dominate the globe. From the earliest days of nautical travel, those venturing upon the deep faced an indefinitely proliferating unknown, one that reduced the once Ptolemaic earth to a receding spot of dark on the horizon. Columbus famously dealt with the existential horror that oceanic distance threatened in his men by keeping two logbooks for his 1492 voyages to the Americas. One book recorded the actual distance traveled, according to the navigational tools of the time. But as that distance became attenuated beyond what the expedition had expected, Columbus doctored a second, public logbook meant to be read by the crew, a log that radically shortchanged their daily advance and thus assuaged the men's fear that they would sail off the edge of the earth. Columbus judged nautical distance in balance with the psychic distance in space and time that could be reasonably understood by his frightened crew members adrift at sea: the tools of measurement at sea were therefore relational. Even though Columbus's move, unlike Thoreau's, falsified aqueous information in

order to deny the materiality of relation, both posit the unknown as something other than immediate or empirical.

But against which control might Columbus's men have observed the truth? At every moment, every coordinate, the maritime world of the ship lists, heaves, rolls, plunges, and rocks. Should an impulse to stability even obtain at sea? In the oceanic world, such celestial reflections resist metaphors in favor of a metaphysics that more closely resembles a better (albeit more abstract) physics. The Galilean utterance "and yet it moves" is a state of being in the space of the sea, particularly in its evocation of the measurement of the relative position of planetary bodies to one another. In Father Mapple's sermon at the beginning of *Moby-Dick*, Melville illustrates this very equivocality in the figure of Jonah, who has run to sea rather than submit to God's command to preach to the residents of Nineveh. The presumption behind his flight is, in part, that God's reach would hold no purchase at sea. In Melville's telling via Father Mapple (the seamen's chaplain), the divine light from which Jonah seeks obscurity is no blinding flash. Instead, it illuminates the oceanic contours of contingent systems of valuation. Here is Jonah in his cabin, looking at an actual lamp:

Screwed at its axis against the side, a swinging lamp slightly oscillates in Jonah's room; and the ship, heeling over towards the wharf with the weight of the last bales received, the lamp, flame and all, though in slight motion, still maintains a permanent obliquity with reference to the room; though, in truth, infallibly straight itself, it but made obvious the false, lying levels among which it hung. The lamp alarms and frightens Jonah; as lying in his berth his tormented eyes roll round the place, and this thus far successful fugitive finds no refuge for his restless glance. But that contradiction in the lamp more and more appals [*sic*] him. The floor, the ceiling, and the side, are all awry. "Oh! so my conscience hangs in me!" he groans, "straight upward, so it burns; but the chambers of my soul are all in crookedness!"<sup>12</sup>

Jonah's dilemma is something like this: aligning himself with the light of his conscience or God's commands will put him in "permanent obliquity" with the structure of the material world around him. Neither Jonah's eye nor the lamp can find repose; their spatial dislocation from truth becomes an unceasing movement for which every moment renders obsolete the movement that had preceded it. Melville makes material the process by which oceanic spaces force "awry" the referents with which one normally organizes a sense of the world.

Throughout *Moby-Dick* Melville stages similarly equivocal scenes of planetary orienteering. One of the more memorable passages in the novel takes on an added dimension when considered in terms of the oceanic forms of location. I refer here to the scene in "The Quarter-Deck" in which Ahab lays



out for the crew his true motivation for the voyage: not a general whale hunt, but his monomaniacal pursuit of the white whale that had devoured his leg. The only significant opposition that Ahab encounters comes from the first mate, Starbuck, whose worldview is shaped by his Christian belief; Starbuck finds blasphemous the idea of taking “vengeance on a dumb brute.” Ahab’s famous response reveals his own indifference to answering the questions that undergird causality. His desire is to obliterate causality without understanding it: “All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. . . . That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him” (163–64). Captain Ahab accepts that there is an unfathomable force that governs action in the world; yet the “unknown but still reasoning thing” that determines causality as embodied by the whale is for him only something to hate and destroy rather than to seek to understand in relation to Judeo-Christian ideology, or to zoology, or to eco-biology. Irrelevant to him, in other words, is the question of whether Moby Dick’s seeming malice toward Ahab originated with the whale, or with some broader, unseen force on whose behalf the whale acted. In accepting that the oceanic world provides no answers, only “inscrutable” agency against which to rail, Ahab provides a fatalistic (and ultimately fatal) counterpoint to Columbus and Jonah, who push against oceanic uncertainty by falling back on structures of thought borrowed from the relative stability of terrestrial philosophies.

### Chronometric and Horological Conceits

Neither Columbus’s nor Jonah’s experiences were exceptional; oceanic measurement is ever provisional. At its most speculative, we find the blind form of navigation known as “dead reckoning” (or “ded. [deduced] reckoning”), an unreliable method employed only when celestial referents are hidden and other navigational tools incapacitated, whether by weather or circumstance. Using dead reckoning, a sailor guesses a ship’s position based on probable drift in the time elapsed, as well as on any prior knowledge of the currents or conditions. Even more rigorous modalities of navigation are based on forms of conditional triangulation. Latitude, or one’s angle from the equator on a north-south axis, is determined by plotting the sun’s altitude either at noon or by the star Polaris by means of a tool such as an astrolabe or a sextant (pre-satellite-based global positioning systems in the age of sail). These readings are in turn compared with the celestial charts and navigational manuals produced by other, earlier voyagers. But this is an imperfect science. The swell of the waves, the haziness of the horizon, or atmospheric changes all make accurate readings an ideal rather than a reality. Determining longitude or one’s

distance on an east-west axis from the prime meridian that runs through Greenwich, England, is a more difficult proposition, requiring a measurement not just of space but also of time. (Even the Greenwich prime meridian is only a provisional convenience, for historically it faced challenges from a rival meridian in Paris.) Measuring both space and time is necessary given that the earth rotates fifteen degrees every hour, and calculations relative to the prime meridian must account for the temporal turn. Much like Columbus's two logbooks, navigators needed to keep two clocks: one set to a local time in which the sun at a 90-degree angle signified noon and one set to an unchanging Greenwich mean time. Before the invention of a more accurate sea clock by John Harrison in 1761, which kept time well over a much longer duration without adjustment, longitude was exceptionally difficult to calculate accurately by any specialists other than expert astronomers—to be sure, not by the average ship's navigator.

The prime meridian is invoked by Pascale Casanova as a way to locate literature in time and space. "Just as the *fictive* line known as the prime meridian, arbitrarily chosen for the determination of longitude, contributes to the *real* organization of the world and makes possible the measure of distances and the location of positions on the surface of the earth," she writes in *The World Republic of Letters*, "so what might be called the Greenwich meridian of literature makes it possible to estimate the relative aesthetic distance from the center of the world of letters of all those who belong to it."<sup>13</sup> For Casanova, this time extends latitudinally—measuring north and south, forward and backward in time. In Melville's novel *Pierre; or the Ambiguities*, however, spatiotemporal location has a longitudinal logic. The novel's title character had spent his youth imagining himself as the linear climax of his family's genealogical promise, but after a series of rash and incestuous actions force a rupture and disintegration of that familial line, he embraces a new temporal theory. An ephemeral, incomplete pamphlet Pierre encounters upon renouncing the family estate pronounces that all wisdom is "provisional." The pamphlet's own contingency is reinforced by beginning and abruptly terminating in the word "if" (as well as in its subtitle, "Being not so much the Portal, as part of the temporary Scaffold to the Portal of this new Philosophy").<sup>14</sup>

Pierre finds in the pamphlet a philosophy that both draws from and defines an oceanic, planetary perspective. It begins by stipulating that the human soul is irreconcilably distant and out of tune with divine truth, and gives names to those two poles by incorporating time-keeping nomenclature. By this theory, humans keep expedient "horological" or terrestrial time (say, Eastern Standard Time), while God keeps idealized "chronometrical" or celestial time (Greenwich mean time), one akin in its accuracy, we are told, to the chronometers crafted by John Harrison. In the following extended figure of a ship attempting to navigate while in China—taking readings with respect to the Greenwich time then 120 degrees or eight hours away—Melville asks the question of how one might live in one time knowing that the other exists:

But though the chronometer carried from Greenwich to China, should truly exhibit in China what the time may be at Greenwich at any moment; yet, though thereby it must necessarily contradict China time, it does by no means thence follow, that with respect to China, the China watches are at all out of the way. . . . Besides, of what use to the Chinaman would a Greenwich chronometer, keeping Greenwich time, be? Were he thereby to regulate his daily actions, he would be guilty of all manner of absurdities:—going to bed at noon, say, when his neighbors would be sitting down to dinner. . . . Nor does the God at the heavenly Greenwich expect common men to keep Greenwich wisdom in this remote Chinese world of ours; because such a thing were unprofitable for them here, and, indeed, a falsification of Himself, inasmuch as in that case, China time would be identical with Greenwich time, which would make Greenwich time wrong. (212)

This is not just a post-lapsarian observation or the realization that one's local or mundane existence can only be recognized as such in the knowledge of a universal or ideal time. In Melville's conception both the terrestrial and the celestial remain live, synchronic, and in relation, together constituting an oceanic third space in which the horologue and the chronometer triangulate an ever-askew subject position. And in the provisional truths established in the spatiotemporal logic of the pamphlet, we see not only the freighted time of Dimock's planetary conception, but also Spivak's alternative to globalism. That is, if the terms of globalism flatten all planetary distance—if such a notion makes Greenwich mean time or the logic of capital the universal standard—then an oceanic sense of planetarity allows for a protean understanding of space and time alike, one that rests uneasily on Rancière's "whims of tides and mariners." We can see in this as well Gilles Deleuze's identification of the characteristic "deterritorialization" of American literature, for which "everything is departure, becoming, passage, leap, daemon, relationship with the outside."<sup>15</sup>

China time versus Greenwich time, insular earth versus continent earth: both oceanic and planetary studies add a geometric and conceptual dimension to our standard practices of referentiality. By this I mean that if relations are normally plotted linearly, in a point-to-point trajectory, then the example of oceanic spatiotemporal accounting registers in a third if not fourth dimension, necessitating a celestial or interstellar connection in order to describe one's place in the world. An oceanic standard helps, too, to give new meaning to the figure of the "turn" in thinking of planetarity, as well as in the many turns of recent decades (the transnational, the linguistic, the temporal, the spatial, and the hemispheric, among many others). The fact that these reorientations are predicated on the use of the word "turn" suggests an orienting impulse, one that presumes routes whose transits have a continuity, a linearity, a cartography. To "turn" is to have had a path, a line of demarcation.

While the terminus of that turn might be unknown or imagined, it has an established trajectory, a traceable origin. And yet what a turn produces is a triangulation: the point from which one begins and the point at which one ends might be more closely located on the triangular axis. Nonetheless, the longer, perpendicular route is necessitated, even mandated, by imagining such intellectual routes as “turns.” One of the fundamental premises of the emerging field of oceanic studies is that such patterns of relationality dissolve in the space and time of the sea.

### Notes

1. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, vol. 6 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press; Chicago: Newberry Library, 1988), 60.

2. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Planetarity,” in *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 71–102.

3. See Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

4. Kären Wigan, introduction to “AHR Forum: Oceans of History,” *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 2006): 717. See also the “Theories and Methodologies” cluster on oceanic studies in *PMLA* 125, no. 3 (May 2010): 657–736.

5. In these terms we might locate oceanic studies at the critical intersection of a Spivakian notion of space and a Dimockian sense of time.

6. Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowicz, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 27.

7. I discuss Russia’s North Pole “land” grab in my article “John Cleves Symmes and the Planetary Reach of Polar Exploration,” *American Literature* 84, no. 2 (June 2012): 243–71.

8. I make this argument in more detail in my article “The Prospect of Oceanic Studies,” *PMLA* 125, no. 3 (May 2010): 670–77.

9. Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1995), 2.

10. This extends into a corporeal (and labor-aware) dimension of Dimock’s spatiotemporal concept. Pascale Casanova also writes that “literary space creates a present on the basis of which all positions can be measured, a point in relation to which all other points can be located” (*The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004], 88).

11. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, in *A Week, Walden, The Maine Woods, Cape Cod*, ed. Robert F. Sayre (New York: Library of America, 1985), 578. All references hereafter are to this edition and are noted parenthetically.

12. Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 44–45. All references hereafter are to this edition and are noted parenthetically.

13. Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 88 (emphasis in original).

14. Herman Melville, *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*, vol. 7 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press; Chicago: Newberry Library, 1971), 210–11. All references hereafter are to this edition and are noted parenthetically.

15. Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 36.