

Rich and Strange: New Perspectives on Indian Ocean Literatures

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During my fellowship stay at the Rachel Carson Center, I will work on a book project titled *Rich and Strange: New Perspectives on Indian Ocean Literatures*. In this study, I propose to explore the Indian Ocean as a theme and a method to read and interpret a range of literatures that have emerged from the Indian Ocean rim in the last one hundred years. Indian Ocean literatures offer representations and interpretations that often work in contradistinction to postcolonial and postmodern readings of twentieth-century literatures, problematizing the terracentrism of contemporary criticism and raising questions regarding the form, style, and tropes of social realism, a mode of writing that remains most dominant in global postcolonial narratives to this day. Furthermore, the Indian Ocean helps to think beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, which is the foundational *topos* of Anglophone literary traditions especially of the Global South. The focus in Indian Ocean narratives, I argue, is on the ocean's mobility and heteromorphism as it moves from inland and national to the coastal. From this perspective, it becomes evident that Indian Ocean literatures also contribute substantially to the global conversation among historians, geographers, geologists, and social scientists around the world on the fate of the planet and the burdens of climate change brought on by anthropogenic activity.