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*A*cross a number of domains, the Indian Ocean has moved to the fore. For international relations experts and foreign policy commentators, the Indian Ocean world represents a strategic arena where the forces shaping a post-American world intersect most visibly. These include the rise of India and China as major economic powers and Sino-Indian competition over oil sea-lanes and African markets and minerals. In a recent book *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power*, security analyst Robert Kaplan describes the Indian Ocean as a zone "where global power dynamics will be revealed."[1] It is the "coming strategic arena of the twenty-first century."[2]

Within the academy, as transnational and oceanic forms of analysis become more prominent, the Indian Ocean attracts attention, especially as a domain that offers rich possibilities for working beyond the templates of the nation-state and area studies. Importantly, the Indian Ocean makes visible a range of lateral networks that fall within the Third World or Global South. It is hence of particular relevance to those pursuing post–area studies scholarship and has much to say to the themes of this special issue on comparative literature across Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.

This article seeks to demonstrate the ways in which the idea of the Indian Ocean might be deployed in pursuing such objectives. It surveys current trends within Indian Ocean scholarship and suggests how these might be used to illuminate questions of comparative literary history across Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. The article examines themes of print culture across these three regions as well as aspects of anglophone literatures between South Asia and Africa.

Indian Ocean Universalisms

In an address delivered to the Arab Writers League Conference in Cairo in March 2008, Amitav Ghosh spoke about his early work in the context of the ideals of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).[3] He begins by discussing his stint in Egypt doing the fieldwork from which *In an Antique Land* emerged.[4] His decision to go to Egypt was informed by what he calls xenophilia: "the love of the other, the affinity for strangers."[5]

1. Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, 2010), 13.

2. Robert D. Kaplan, "Center Stage for the Twenty-First Century: Power Plays in the Indian Ocean," *Foreign Affairs* 88 (2009): 16.

3. See Amitav Ghosh, "Confessions of a Xenophile," *Chimurenga* 14 (2009): 35–41.

4. See Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler's Tale* (London: Vintage, 1994).

5. Ghosh, "Confessions," 37.

Ghosh links this xenophilia back to the spirit of Non-Alignment. In the field of culture, he notes, this spirit "represented an attempt to restore and recommence the exchanges and conversations that had been interrupted by the long centuries of European imperial dominance." Such conversations "linked Yemen and China, Indonesia and East Africa—and most significant for me, India and the Middle East."[6] Given these interests, Egypt proved especially attractive to Ghosh.

In an Antique Land returns to these interrupted conversations whose geography is largely coterminous with the Indian Ocean. The book dramatizes these themes by contrasting the ancient cosmopolitan of the Indian Ocean world with the narrowness of the modern nation-state. This contrast also serves to underline the layered and contradictory forms of sovereignty and belonging that characterizes many Indian Ocean littoral zones, drawn outward by older networks of transnational trade and inward by the demands of the postcolonial nation-state.

Ghosh's comments provide a useful point of entry into some of the major concerns of Indian Ocean scholarship. Shaped by Braudelian debates on the Mediterranean and world-systems theories, the heart of this initial work has been on the early modern Indian Ocean trade networks rooted in a grammar of monsoons and trade winds, port cities and littorals, ships and seafaring, religion and commerce.[7]

A point often made is that these networks operated without the backing of a state and with relatively low levels of violence. Engseng Ho observes: "The Portuguese, Dutch, and English in the Indian Ocean were strange new traders who brought their states with them. They created militarized trading-post empires in the Indian Ocean, following Venetian and Genoese precedents in the Mediterranean, and were wont to do business at the point of a gun. Hadramis and other non-Europeans—such as Gujaratis, Bohras, Chettiars, Buginese, and Malays—did not. Rather than elbow their way in, they comported themselves to local arrangements wherever they went."[8] T. N. Harper puts the point succinctly: "The globalization of European imperialism was an extension of the nation state. The globalism [of diasporas] was not."[9]

Ho also makes the point that the encounter between these trading diasporas and European imperial diasporas cannot be construed as an encounter of colonizer and colonized, strong and weak, global and local. Rather, both sides harbored universal ambitions. The group with whom Ho is concerned, the Hadramis from Yemen, are sayyids whose grand religious ambitions tangle with the hubris of European imperial formations.[10] This idea has prompted a rich vein of scholarship on the Indian Ocean as a zone of universalisms that stretch into the colonial era. Whether rooted in pan-Islamism, Hindu reformism, pan-Buddhism, ideas of Greater India, or ideals of imperial citizenship, the Indian Ocean offers a rich archive of transnational forms of imagination.[11]

This idea of the Indian Ocean as productive of universalisms has generated much work relevant to comparative literary scholars. Harper and Mark Ravinder Frost have traced the idea of a series of colonial public sphere/s rooted in the port cities of the Indian Ocean, many of which housed diasporic populations.[12]

6. Ibid., 37, 38.

7. An excellent overview of this scholarship is Markus P. M. Vink, "Indian Ocean Studies and the 'New Thalassology,'" *Journal of Global History* 2 (2007): 41–62. For major overviews of the Indian Ocean, see K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Ashin Das Gupta, *Malabar in Asian Trade, 1740–1800* and *Malabar in Asian Trade, 1740–1800*, in *India and the Indian Ocean World: Trade and Politics* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2003). On port cities and littorals, see Michael N. Pearson, "Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems," *Journal of World History* 17 (2006): 353–73; and Michael N. Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders: The Swahili Coast, India, and Portugal in the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). On long-distance trade, see Gupta, *India*; and Patricia Risso, *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995). On the Portuguese presence, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

8. Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), xxi.

9. T. N. Harper, "Empire, Diaspora, and the Languages of Globalism, 1850–1914," in *Globalization in World History*, ed. A. G. Hopkins (London: Pimlico, 2002), 158.

10. See Engseng Ho, "Empire through Diasporic Eyes: A View from the Other Boat," *Comparative Study of Society and History* 46 (2004): 210–46.

11. See Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Harper, "Empire," 141–66; and Mark Ravinder Frost, "'Wider Opportunities': Religious Revival, Nationalist Awakening, and the Global Dimension in Colombo, 1870–1920," *Modern Asian Studies* 36 (2002): 937–67.

12. See Harper, "Empire"; Frost, "'Wider Opportunities'"; Mark Ravinder Frost, "Asia's Maritime Networks and the Colonial Public Sphere, 1840–1920," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 6 (2004): 63–94; and Mark Ravinder Frost, "In Search of Cosmopolitan Discourse: A Historical Journey across the Indian

As Frost notes: "Entrepots like Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Rangoon and Singapore witnessed the emergence of a non-European, western educated professional class that serviced the requirements of expanding international commercial interests and the simultaneous growth of the imperial state."[13] These groups shared similar projects of social, political, and religious reforms and exchanged ideas, personnel, publications, and equipment. Positioned as "nodal points in an imperial network of steamer routes, telegraph lines and railways," these "information ports"[14] functioned as relay stations for ideas, texts, commodities, and people.[15]

This view of the Indian Ocean public sphere/s has proved fertile in terms of understanding different aspects of print culture.[16] Tracing the circulation of print technology and culture in the Indian Ocean world presents a complex picture that suggests different trajectories for global histories of print. These routes include Sufi networks, madrassas, pilgrims, students, and middlemen[17] working at the interstices of different "imperial assemblages," as Seema Alavi terms it.[18]

Other print networks involve diasporic routes across the Indian Ocean that produce novel printing endeavors drawing on Indian, African, and Christian-mission printing expertise.[19] While these networks span South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and Europe, many are centered on the Indian Ocean. Invariably such printing ventures are invested in ideals of social reform and religious philanthropy and do not conform to the model of print capitalism.[20] Greater attention to print culture trajectories in the Indian Ocean will illuminate new global histories of print.

The publications emerging from these networks constitute experimental transnational textual forms that seek to bring new kinds of audiences into being.[21] This experimental work becomes especially visible in the newspapers that emerge from the port cities and seek to address an Indian Ocean public. The most famous of these is Gandhi's *Indian Opinion*, initially published in four languages (Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil, and English) but then reverting to Gujarati and English.

As the title implies, the newspaper sought to create a transoceanic public through which an experimental idea of India as a transnational entity could take shape. Toward this end, the paper deploys a range of different genres that can accustom readers to transnational modes of thinking and reading. Some, like the letter, the clipping, or quotation excerpted from newspapers around the Indian Ocean Rim, enact notions of circulation that embody an idea of Greater India. The Indian Ocean travelogue, which reports on the port-to-port journeys of notables like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who visited South Africa in 1912, habituates readers to an oceanic geography. In other instances, genres straddle different languages in the newspaper. Readers of the Gujarati column are referred to parts of the English section of the paper and vice versa. Given that many Gujarati-speaking readers couldn't read English, nor English-speaking readers Gujarati, such cross-

Ocean from Singapore to South Africa, 1870–1920," in *Eyes across the Water: Navigating the Indian Ocean*, ed. Pamila Gupta, Isabel Hofmeyr, and Michael Pearson (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2010), 75–108.

13. Frost, "'Wider Opportunities,'" 937.

14. Juan R. I. Cole, "Printing and Urban Islam in the Mediterranean World, 1890–1920," in *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, ed. Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C. A. Bayly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 344.

15. See Frost, "'Wider Opportunities,'" 937–39.

16. See Isabel Hofmeyr, Preben Kaarsholm, and Bodil Folke Frederiksen, "Introduction: Print Cultures, Nationalisms and Publics in the Indian Ocean," in *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 81 (2011): 1–22.

17. See Anne K. Bang, "Authority and Piety, Writing and Print: A Preliminary Study of the Circulation of Islamic Texts in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Zanzibar," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 81 (2011): 89–107; and Preben Kaarsholm, "Transnational Islam and Public Sphere Dynamics in KwaZulu-Natal: Rethinking South Africa's Place in the Indian Ocean World," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 81 (2011): 103–31.

18. See Seema Alavi, "'Fugitive Mullahs and Outlawed Fanatics': Indian Muslims in Nineteenth Century Trans-Asiatic Imperial Rivalries," *Modern Asian Studies* 45 (2011): 1337–82.

19. See Hofmeyr et al., "Introduction."

20. See Isabel Hofmeyr, "Gandhi's Printing Press: Print Cultures of the Indian Ocean," in *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas*, ed. Sugata Bose and Kris Manjapra (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 112–30.

21. See Isabel Hofmeyr, "Indian Ocean Lives and Letters," *English in Africa: Book History in Africa* 35 (2008): 11–25; Thembisa Waetjen and Goolam Vahed, "The Diaspora at Home: *Indian Views* and the Making of Zuleikha Mayat's Public Voice"; James R. Brennan, "Politics and Business in Indian Newspapers in Colonial Tanganika"; and Bodil Folke Frederiksen, "Print, Newspapers, and Audiences in Colonial Kenya: African and Indian Improvement, Protest, and Connections," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 81 (2011): 23–41; 42–67; 155–72.

reference becomes a symbolic activity where one participates in the idea of another language even if one can't actually read it.[22]

The textual fields established in and between these periodicals will enable us to understand the trajectories of Indian nationalism in new ways. Take Gandhi's seminal work *Hind Swaraj*, produced in 1909 as he returned from London to Johannesburg.[23] Written in Gujarati and then translated into English, the book is a key statement of Gandhi's political philosophy and his thinking on industrialization and violence. The standard interpretations of the text regard its major addressees as the Indian "revolutionaries," whose methods Gandhi abhorred as a mirror image of colonial violence.[24] However, if one examines the early editions of the text, it becomes apparent that he also had another group of addressees in mind, namely readers of *Indian Opinion*.[25] This perspective from the periodical press reminds us of the oft-made point that Gandhi's Indian nationalism was shaped as much in South Africa and the Indian Ocean as in India itself.[26]

Crosscutting Diasporas

One important theme in Indian Ocean scholarship has been a revision of older ways of thinking about diaspora that tend to single out only one group for analysis. Not only does this reproduce older racial categories of empire (*Indian, African, Chinese*), it privileges movement outward—from India to Africa, Fiji, or the Caribbean. What the reverse flows might be, or what such outward flows mean for politics back on the mainland, are themes that have only recently started to attract attention. The older diasporic scholarship sees the center and its

indentured peripheries as discrete: the scholarship traces the transfer of Indian cultural forms outward and looks at how these are or aren't changed in their new locations. This position is, however, starting to change with work on indentured labor as a key issue in shaping Indian nationalism on the subcontinent demonstrates.[27]

This trend toward integration has been strengthened by a growing body of work focusing on British India as a subempire. This has opened the way for ideas of imperial revisionism to be applied to British India and its indentured peripheries in order to grasp them intellectually as one integrated space.[28]

The question of crosscutting diasporas is also important in complicating our ideas of colonial and postcolonial histories, which tend to be turned into binary stories of colonizer versus colonized, white versus black. As Jon Soske's important work on Africans and Indians in Natal indicates, most communities under imperial rule find themselves living alongside other colonized groups, what Soske calls "the also-colonized other." Any substantial historiography requires a simultaneous grasp of all groups involved avoiding the patterns of the past that produced "African" or "Indian" history in South Africa as two discrete domains.[29]

Such desegregating approaches help us think about crosscutting transnational interactions in more productive ways. Thinking about Africa and India in relation to Gandhi helps us appreciate the ways in which he deploys the figure of the African as a boundary for his imagination of India. Like all Congress moderates, Gandhi initially envisaged India as being a dominion within empire. In this schema, India and empire share a boundary that is marked

22. See Hofmeyr, "Gandhi's Printing Press."

23. See Isabel Hofmeyr, "Violent Texts, Vulnerable Readers: *Hind Swaraj* and Its South African Audiences," *Public Culture* 23 (2011): 285–97.

24. See Anthony J. Parel, introduction to Mahatma Gandhi, *"Hind Swaraj" and Other Writings*, ed. Anthony J. Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xiii–lxii.

25. See Hofmeyr, "Violent Texts."

26. See Claude Markovits, *The Un-Gandhian Gandhi: The Life and Afterlife of the Mahatma* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003), 78–84.

27. See John Kelly, *A Politics of Virtue: Hinduism, Sexuality, and Countercolonial Discourse in Fiji* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); and Tejaswini Niranjana, "Alter/Native Modernities—'Left to the Imagination': Indian Nationalism and Female Sexuality in Trinidad," *Public Culture* 11 (1999): 223–43.

28. See Bose, *Hundred Horizons*; and Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

29. See Jon Soske, "'Wash Me Black Again': African Nationalism, the Indian Diaspora, and KwaZulu Natal, 1944–1960" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2009). This work resonates with another strand of Indian Ocean scholarship that questions any automatic link between transoceanic trade and cosmopolitanism. Edward Simpson notes: "Human movement in the Indian Ocean fragments space and divides people" (Edward Simpson, "Sailors that do not Sail: Hinduism, Anthropology, and Parochialism in the Western Indian Ocean," in *Journeys and Dwellings: Indian Ocean Themes in South Asia*, ed. Helen Basu [Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2008], 92). Kai Kresse and Edward Simpson argue that "movement and migration . . . tended to create new or modified divisions in the population both at home and away rather than creating a unified oceanic society" (Kai Kresse and Edward Simpson, eds., *Struggling with History: Islam and Cosmopolitanism in the Western Indian Ocean* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2008], 13).

by the "native," the figure who stands beyond the pale of civilization. Gandhi's South African writings seek out situations in which this arrangement can be dramatized. His prison writings especially use the figure of the African prisoner as a way to underline the unity of Indian prisoners both political and criminal (although the latter are always in danger of being seduced by the African prisoners who offer them tobacco and marijuana). Together this band of Indian prisoners offers an image of a miniature nation-in-formation.[30]

A further advantage of a desegregated approach is the way it can deracialize and hence extend our understanding of categories like slave, indentured laborer, and settler. In the popular imagination (and in some academic writings), the slave is imagined as African, the indentured laborer as Indian, and the settler as white. There were, however, Indian slaves just as there were African indentured laborers. The category of settler was likewise one claimed by Indians in parts of Africa who often presented themselves as better and more hardworking than their white counterparts. Indeed, Gandhi often said that Indians in East Africa made better settlers than the whites as they did not have the Bible and did not drink.[31]

The Indian Ocean is also important in complicating our views of slavery, which are theorized on the basis of the Atlantic experience. While plantation slavery was evident in parts of the Indian Ocean world (especially the Mascarenes), other forms of slavery were evident in the Indian Ocean arena. In the Atlantic world, slavery was starkly racialized and the boundary between slave and free unequivocally drawn. In the Indian Ocean world, slavery was not racialized and there was some mobility between the states of being slave and free.[32]

This stress on unfree labor forms an important theme in Indian Ocean history. As work by scholars like Clare Anderson, Kerry Ward, and Nigel Worden indicates, the Indian Ocean witnessed extensive movements of slaves, political exiles, prisoners of war, indentured laborers, soldiers, and prisoners.[33] The Indian Ocean became a zone of penal experiment with a range of colonial powers trying out different forms and types of penal settlement. Indeed, the Indian Ocean constitutes a necklace of island prisons stretching from Robben Island in the Atlantic to the Andamans.

This focus on islands also constitutes an important node in the scholarship on the Indian Ocean, including work on Islam, slavery, indenture, and trade, and compressed histories of creolization in the Indian Ocean. Islands also play a significant conceptual role in oceanic history, constituting an anticontinental geography that relativizes the territorial obsession of much nation-state focused history.[34]

Bandung Revisionism

Another important strand of work on lateral transnationalisms within the Indian Ocean is what I would term *Bandung revisionism*. On one level, this work seeks to revisit Bandung and non-alignment and produce new histories of these moments.[35] On a second and, for us, more pertinent level, this work reengages with older ideas of non-alignment and Afro-Asian solidarity not to reintroduce them as working political concepts but as a way of posing revisionist questions to the present-day realities of the Global South.

30. See Isabel Hofmeyr, "The Idea of 'Africa' in Indian Nationalism: Reporting the Diaspora in *The Modern Review*, 1907–1929," *South African Historical Journal* 57 (2007): 60–81.

31. See Isabel Hofmeyr, "The Black Atlantic Meets the Indian Ocean: Forging New Paradigms of Transnationalism for the Global South—Literary and Cultural Perspectives," *Social Dynamics* 33 (2007): 3–32.

32. See Gwyn Campbell, "Introduction: Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour in the Indian Ocean World," in *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*, ed. Gwyn Campbell (London: Frank Cass, 2004), vii-xxxii.

33. See Gwyn Campbell, "The East African Slave Trade, 1861–1895: The 'Southern' Complex," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22 (1989): 1–2; Clare Anderson, *Convicts in the Indian Ocean: Transportation from South Asia to Mauritius, 1815–53* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Nigel Worden, "New Approaches to VOC History in South Africa," *South African Historical Journal* 59 (2007): 3–18.

34. See Pamila Gupta, "Island-ness in the Indian Ocean," in *Eyes across the Water: Navigating the Indian Ocean*, ed. Pamila Gupta, Isabel Hofmeyr, and Michael Pearson (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2010).

35. See Antoinette Burton, "Cold War Cosmopolitanism: The Education of Santha Rama Rau in the Age of Bandung, 1945–1954," *Radical History Review* 95 (2006): 149–72; Antoinette Burton, Augusto Espiritu, and Fanon Che Wilkins, "Introduction: The Fate of Nationalisms in the Age of Bandung," *Radical History Review* 95 (2006): 145–48; Christopher J. Lee, ed., *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010); and See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya, eds., *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference for International Order* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008).

In his analysis of the Bandung moment, Christopher Lee directs our attention to the hitherto unrecognized diversity of forms of transnational political community that emerge within the purview of the Bandung nations (largely the Indian Ocean arena). These involve the constellations of political community (and non-community) that have "cut across the Asian-African divide for the twentieth and early twenty-first century" and that transcend the political geographies and the imagination of the nation-state. While Lee's focus is the latter half of the twentieth century, these ideas can be pushed backward with a view to examining the "variety, complexity and wide ranging geographies of Afro-Asian relations during the last century" and their "multiple histories of connection" and contradiction.[36]

This stress on contradiction is important and takes us away from the pitfalls of both anticolonial and colonial approaches, the former producing romantic accounts with too much African-Indian solidarity, the latter too little.[37] Instead, we need to examine relations of both conflict and cooperation as ongoing themes in colonial and postcolonial histories. Also key is a grasp of the inequalities between Africa and India. Antoinette Burton has termed this a "semi-imperialism" relationship.[38] These fault lines are likely to become more significant as the new world order takes shape.

Some Literary Implications of the Indian Ocean Scholarship

Analytically the Indian Ocean obliges us to extend our axes of investigation and hence has implications for literary scholars. Not only does it present an ideal vantage point for pursuing productive postnational and post–area studies, it also offers rich ways to conceptualize lateral transnationalisms within a previously Third World space. It is hence an ideal arena from which to discuss transnationalisms within the Global South.

Much contemporary work on transnationalism operates on North-South axes and invokes older categories of empire and nation, of the dominating global and the resistant local. These categories—domination and resistance, colonizer and colonized—arise from postindependence revisions of colonial history. The Indian Ocean requires us to take a much longer perspective, which necessarily complicates any simple binaries.

This complicating orientation is apparent in two iconic Indian Ocean writers.

Ghosh's *In an Antique Land* provides a layered archive of the different forms of sovereignty that accumulate around the Indian Ocean littoral. His recent novel *Sea of Poppies* likewise explores a world of oceanic belongings as lascars, indentured workers, slaves, and runaways encounter each other.[39]

Abdulrazak Gurnah's work on Zanzibar similarly charts a series of overlapping transnational vectors: old trading diasporas, Muslim networks, slavery, waning British imperialism, Zanzibari independence and the African-Arab violence that followed it, Cold War politics, and international regulation of refugees.[40] In keeping with Indian Ocean themes, these transnational systems are compacted in one island space.

These novels all turn to the past to highlight the ambiguities of belonging that the Indian Ocean sustains. A new wave of literary forms looks to the future to track the bizarre and unexpected cultural forms that emerge as a new post-American world takes shape in the Indian Ocean. What might these "semi-imperialisms" and new inequalities in this arena mean in cultural terms? One recent experiment was a special issue of the South African literary magazine *Chimurenga* on African Asian conversations. The parodic and satirical intentions of the editors, Ntone Edjabe and Achal Prabhala, emerge from the call for papers that presaged the special issue.

36. Lee, *Making a World*, 27.

37. See Vijay Gupta, ed., *Dhanyavaad India: A Tribute to the Heroes and Heroines of India Who Supported the Liberation Struggle of South Africa* (New Delhi: High Commission of the Republic of South Africa in India, 1997).

38. Burton, "Cold War," 151.

39. See Amitov Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).

40. These include Abdulrazak Gurnah, *By the Sea* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005); and Abdulrazak Gurnah, *Paradise* (New York: New Press, 1994).

India is the world's favourite market: 50 million engineers to a backdrop of an ancient culture. Africa is the world's favourite cause: 50 million problems, and such fascinating Wildlife. Put them together and we should have an opera of cinematic proportions. Instead, what we see is mere stock footage; what we hear, the dull drone of conventional foolishnesses volleyed across the Indian Ocean.

Could it be true that the Mandrax currently hobbling pre-teen South Africa is entirely manufactured in India? Why does the Hausa film look like a low-budget Hindi potboiler? How is it that so many Nigerian footballers play for Bangladesh? Who decided that the lost tribes of Shiva built the foundations of Great Zimbabwe? And were they on Mandrax?

Today, there are all kinds of lines criss-crossing the Indian Ocean and they're just as likely to be drawn by governments and tourists as pirates and preachers. . . . The lines we are interested in are any and none of these and more: all we want is a new conversation.[41]

The collection makes a concerted attempt to unseat older romantic discourses on Afro-Asian solidarity through the solvent of parody and satire. As I have discussed in detail elsewhere, several stories cluster around and revisit themes of non-alignment, Afro-Asian solidarity, and the Cold War through nostalgia or satire.[42]

This stress on satire and parody as a way of unsettling the old and making the new visible is important. As the size and shape of African/Asian interactions changes, the resultant cultural forms can be startling. Take, for example, a South African film, *Mr. Bones*, which has been circulating in India. The film comes from Leon Schuster, the king of South African slapstick. The film tells a story of a "white" boy who falls from an airplane and grows up in a "tribe" and becomes a witch doctor. Translated into a range of Indian languages, this primitivist slapstick has been a runaway success in cinemas and on TV. On the face of it, this success may seem unremarkable: slapstick stereotypes travel easily. Yet how would one begin to make sense of this

phenomenon? South-South slapstick, after all, seems a contradiction in terms, and there seems little place for Leon Schuster in the morally elevated discourses of the South.

By seizing the challenge and contradiction inherent in relations across the Indian Ocean, the *Chimurenga* special issue opens new analytical pathways. These enable us to think beyond the tired pieties of older ideologies that have lost much of their purchase while also capturing new cultural forms as they are taking shape in a rapidly changing world order. These new directions demonstrate that the Indian Ocean is indeed a complicating sea. ᔐ

41. *Chimurenga*, call for papers, special issue on African Asian conversations, 27 October 2008,www .myspace.com/whonoknowgoknow/blog/444129691.

42. See Isabel Hofmeyr, "Indian Ocean Genres," in *Literature, Geography, Translation: Studies in World Writing*, ed. David Watson, Stefan Helgesson, and Cecilia Alvstad (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011).