

Telling the Story of Oceans and Archives: Rethinking the Novel Form

The novel as a genre has usually been credited with travelling well. Be it as part of Macmillan's Colonial Library transporting British classics to educate Indian readers, or as object lessons disseminated in Francophone Africa, the novel seems to be the ever present marker of colonial encounters. The ideological stakes of these colonial encounters have long been recognized—many scholars examine the novel as an instrument of power—but there is still much to be written about the complex political and aesthetic negotiations that shaped novelistic genres in specific colonial/post-colonial literary cultures and across transoceanic literary networks. How does looking closely at the local development of novelistic genres expand our sense of the novel as a literary form? How does attention to the novel's global movement enhance our understanding of the novel's political history?

This special issue will situate this interrogation at the juncture of two distinct yet related fields: transoceanic studies and archival studies. The transoceanic paradigm connecting Europe and its former colonies has been integral not just to the dissemination of the novel, but to the contours of the genre itself, and nowhere is this history of engagement better documented than in colonial archives (Joshi, *In Another Country*). By attending to the archives documenting political and commercial networks that connected the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, we acquire a better understanding of how the novel travelled, and what happened to the genre during these perambulations. And by locating the novel in colonial maritime travel archives, we illuminate the genre's material and literary historical connections to the ocean, which has historically been a conduit for global systems connecting—willingly and unwillingly—people, ideas, and places.

We welcome contributions that explore exemplary texts, literary-historical inflection points, historical trajectories, or transnational dynamics in Anglophone and Anglophone-adjacent novelistic traditions. We particularly look forward to submissions that place these questions within the context of the long 19th century. In challenging Eurocentrism, this special issue will prioritize contributions from and about the Global South, which we define as encompassing the indigenous North.

Among the topics that contributors might explore are the following:

- Maritime histories in engagement with novelistic traditions
- Archival histories of the novel's production, dissemination, or reception
- Pacific, Atlantic, or Indian oceanic world in relation to novel history
- Primary source materials in the literary history of the novel
- The novel form, epistolarity, and transoceanic correspondence

Oral narrative (or other non-written narrative) and longform prose as novelistic genres

Translations and transmedial adaptations of novels

Strategies for decolonizing the novel

Aesthetic experimentation and the limits of the novel as a form

Submission information:

Please send an abstract (500 - 700 words) and a short author bio by February 15, 2025 to Sunayani Bhattacharya (sb40@stmarys-ca.edu) and Lanya Lamouria (llamouria@missouristate.edu). Final papers (6000 - 8000 words) due August 1, 2025.