Futurizing *Geo-tropicality*: Blue (Infra)structuralism and the Indian Ocean in Romesh Gunesekera's *Reef*

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Abstract

This article attempts to futurize the notion of "geo-tropicality" by means of negotiating the nuanced correspondences between blue (infra)structuralism and coastal development in the context of the Indian Ocean and Sri Lanka's coast. Whereas Eurocentric colonial discourses view tropicality in terms of the straightjacket of exoticism, geo-tropicality is onto-politically resubjected to the processes of decoloniality and futurization—a combined grammatology that entails a sort of epistemic unfolding of tropicality in alignment with the *smooth politics* on the *plane of exteriority* so as to herald the terrible enunciations of climate change and biodiversity loss. It is by working out geo-tropicality as an epistemic lens that this article puts the spotlight on what the futurity of tropicality holds in store for a *New Earth*, taking substantial recourse to Romesh Gunesekera's novel *Reef*. Finally, it argues for systematic dismissal of structured and stratified understandings of the Tropics which stands premised on the micropolitics of alliance.

Keywords: Futurity, Geo-tropicality, Blue Humanities, Indian Ocean, Blue (Infra)structuralism, Coastal Development, Gunesekera, Sri Lanka

Introduction

In "Tropical Landscapes and Nature-Culture Entanglements: Reading Tropicality via Avatar", Anita Lundberg, Hannah Regis and John Agbonifo reflect:

> Natural elements and cultural shaping by humans—past, present and future—means landscapes reflect living entanglements of people, materiality, space and place.
>
> The tropics is commonly defined in geographical terms…. Yet it is far more than geographic and needs to be understood through the imaginary of tropicality. Tropicality refers to how the tropics are construed as the exoticised environmental Other of the temperate Western world as this is informed by art and culture, and imperial and scientific practices.
>
> During the age of exploration and colonialism, the tropics were viewed as vast landscapes of raw material—ripe for exploitation. The massive extractivist industries of mining and logging were entwined with those of slavery and plantationscapes. Thus, destruction of the tropics was an integral facet of a drive for cultivation—equated with civilisation. (2022, p. 2)

This rich excerpt sums up the distinctive features of colonial tropicality characterized by the nuanced interactions and intersections between Nature and Culture. However, the intellectual debates concerning the fluid dynamics of tropicality in postcolonial times undergo a series of onto-epistemological alterations in *pro rata* with the changing socio-political, climatic, cultural, and economic situations. In short, colonial exoticization of tropical landscapes—including plants, animals, and people—was intended to make socio-political and cultural interventions into tropical zones to exploit the distinctive possibilities of tropicality in favor of the colonizers. Yet, the colonial politics of exoticization can also plausibly be called into question to argue that the tropical zones cease to work as the peripheral Other of the West. This disjunctive potential of tropicality can be brought out with the help of geophilosophical thinking that "takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth…. Territory and earth are two components with two zones of indiscernibility—deterritorialization (from territory to the earth) and reterritorialization (from earth to territory)" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, pp. 85-86).

In this context, one may be reminded of the epistemic coinage of "geo-tropicality" enunciated by Saswat Samay Das, Abhisek Ghosal, and Ananya Roy Pratihar, who weave the epistemic strands of geo-tropicality with the ontic transhistoricality of

Kashmir in "Earth(ing) Kashmir: Geo-Tropicality as a Means of Thinking beyond Stratified Geopolitics". As they state:

> It will perhaps not be an exaggeration to say that the representationality of Kashmir's geo-tropicality…reflects a kind of dialectical interplay between colonial exoticization and postcolonial political re-territorialization around its mimicry of linear progressivist colonial logic. (2022, p. 31)

The authors argue that geo-tropicality could be reckoned as an epistemic framework to transcend the pulls of stratified geopolitics by means of which Kashmir's geotrauma is mapped. Whereas Das, Ghosal, and Pratihar contextualize geo-tropicality in the context of Kashmir, this article calls for futurizing[1] the notion of geo-tropicality through examining the nuanced correspondences between blue (infra)structuralism and coastal development. Decolonial interventions into the onto-epistemic configuration of tropicality in terms of futurizing geo-tropicality foreground how the Indian Ocean and Sri Lanka's coast become a space for future thinking in general, and through which to decenter "the temperate west as the locus or producer of knowledge" (Lundberg et al., 2023, p. 2). Pitted against this context, this article draws theoretical inputs from the seminal works by Deleuze and Guattari and some leading blue humanities scholars, along with contextual insights from Romesh Gunesekera's novel *Reef*, which provides key literary interventions into the project of futurizing geo-tropicality enabling readers to grasp the multifaceted roles of the Indian Ocean in the wake of g(l)ocal nonhumanism.[2]

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[1] In *On Futurity: Malabou, Nancy and Derrida*, Jean Paul Martinon states: "futurity constitutes the present space of the future, what can be seen today as the future" (2007, p. 2), thereby implying that there is an ontological difference between *le futur* and *avenir*—whereas the former suggests the traditional understanding of distant future, the latter is "what disjoints or unhinges the movement in question. It is what provokes understanding, what allows the movement or the event to take another direction, another juncture, growth or proportion. As such, *à-venir* cannot be identified as "contemporary", but always non-contemporary, unexpected. This secret disjuncture is therefore what stirs the spatiotemporal. It is what provokes "the spacing (and) temporizing" of writing or reading" (2007, pp. 3-4). Additionally, in the Preface to *The Future of Hegel*, Jacques Derrida holds: "The future, what is yet to come in the future, is not simply reducible to what is imminent in the future…as we have been from the beginning, of a 'history of the future'" (2005, p. xxix). Considering these standpoints on futurity, futurization is conceptualized as an epistemic attempt to infuse singularities of disjuncture into the spatio-temporalization of an eventuality, aiming at releasing it from the clutches of fixity. In short, futurization seeks to liberate an eventuality from being caught up by structures and strictures of sedentariness.

[2] In "Posthuman Systems", Simone Bignall and Rosi Braidotti observe: "The uncertain future faced by all of humanity—and by nonhuman life—in the contemporary era of ecological crisis that prominently defines the Anthropocene is both a unifying factor, and a prospect of uneven fallout that threatens to engulf more precarious life-forms more quickly, or more completely, than others" (2019, p. 3). The authors argue that it is of paramount importance to strike an onto-epistemic departure from the Anthropocene to take the measure of how nonhuman lifeforms undergo co-intensive becomings while encountering the conditions of transcorporeality. As proclaimed by Stacy Alaimo in *Bodily Natures*: "Imagining human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from "the environment" trans-corporeality reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures" (2010, p. 2).

Blue (Infra)structuralism, Ecoprecarity, and Coastal Development

> The core intellectual challenge of the blue humanities explores how water functions in and across multiple scales…. Making sense of disorienting movements across scales and spaces captures the pleasure and ambition of the blue humanities. (Mentz, 2024, pp. xiii-xiv)

In this paper, the blue humanities are discussed in relation to climate change and its manifestation in the tropics. In their work "Tropical Imaginaries and Climate Crisis: Embracing Relational Climate Discourses", Anita Lundberg, André Vasques Vital, and Shruti Das announce that:

> Heat waves and wave-inundated islands, prolonged droughts and rainforest fires, tropical storms and monsoon deluges, melting glaciers and flooded rivers—although climate change is global, it is not experienced everywhere the same. Climate change has pronounced effects in the Tropics. (2021, p. 2)

The authors argue that even though climate change is a global phenomenon its impact is not homogenous across the world. Contrasted to the fairly temperate climate of the West, tropical zones ceaselessly receive distinctive impinges of intense climatic effects and must therefore make a series of geokinetic adjustments to effectively deal with climate change.[3] The Indian Ocean occupies a wide expanse of the tropics and constantly bolsters geo-tropicality to take on the challenges of climate change.[4] Futurizing geo-tropicality may in this regard be worked out as a decolonial strategy to enfold the decolonial might of the Indian Ocean in order to contend that tropical oceanic ecologies play instrumental roles in anticipating changes that influence the manifestations of climate change across the world.[5] In other words, futurizing geo-tropicality cannot be experienced without resorting to blue (infra)structural thinking,

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[3] In "Climate Change Goes Live, or Capturing Life? For a Blue Media Studies", Bogna M. Konior draws a relation between climate change and blue mediation: "the capture and mediation of life itself is crucial to the blue humanities at the present moment when the ocean is increasingly defined by extinction, an ongoing crisis that nevertheless cannot be captured as a "live" media event" (2019, p. 48). In other words, the politics of blue mediation could be resorted to in order to explain the emergent faces of climate change.

[4] In *Thinking Through Climate Change: A Philosophy of Energy in the Anthropocene*, Adam Briggle calls for inventing "a new energy from a new faith in humanity" (2021, p. 251) as a strategic tool to tide over the immediate impact of climate change. As the transductive and geokinetic movements of energy are the condition for one's being, energy thinking could reasonably be resorted to encounter climatic challenges in the future.

[5] In "Exploring the "unknown": Indian Ocean Materiality as method", Vivian Y. Choi argues: "Indian Ocean's dynamics have global implications as a harbinger of climate change…the Indian Ocean as an ever-shifting, heterogeneous formation and space" (2020, p. 228). This critical reflection uncovers how the Indian Ocean at times stages the terrible impact of climate change and at once heralds the 'faces' and 'surfaces' of futurity. An understanding of geo-tropicality cannot epistemologically be divested of the Indian Ocean which co-evolves with the heterogeneities of tropical entanglements.

which works in tune with "smooth" becomings of the ocean. Here, blue (infra)structural thinking refers to the act of thinking through densely entangled marine and coastal ecological frameworks, whereas "smooth" becoming of the Indian Ocean is indicative of its seamless travel through fluid and mediated marine ecologies. In "Blue (Infra)structuralism: Blue Postcoloniality, New Earth and the Ethics of "Desiring-Production", Abhisek Ghosal and Bhaskarjyoti Ghosal argue that blue (infra)structuralism "seeks to account for the 'smooth space'[6] that an ocean embodies" (2023, p. 207).

Blue (infra)structural thinking seeks to focus on the deterritorial capacities of the Indian Ocean, which is governed by the ceaseless interplay between flows and folds of intensities. Blue (infra)structural thinking seeks "to explicate the 'co-becomings' of diverse marine ecologies conditioned by global capitalism. Blue (infra)structuralism also stands capable of laying out the micropolitics of the ocean embodied by the subtle 'co-becomings' of marine ecologies that have got turned out as a new site for neoliberal exploitation" (Ghosal & Ghosal, 2023, p. 208). Therefore, an epistemic grafting of geo-tropicality with blue (infra)structural thinking results in both deterritorializing the former and bringing out decolonial capacities of the Indian Ocean in interrogating neoliberal *semio-exotic* discourses. The actual becomings of the Indian Ocean following the geokinetic unfolding of the Earth act to deflate the lofty exoticism of Eurocentric discourses, which seek to render tropicality as a zone of reducibility.

In *Blue Humanities: Storied Waterscapes in the Anthropocene*, Serpil Oppermann contends:

> Blue humanities scholars entertain the propositions that the main problems and insecurities in aquatic ecosystems are ineluctably social and cultural; that the political systems mired within the capitalist logic are responsible for the damage inflicted on the planet's major waterways; and that the possibilities for any hopeful change are socially and culturally situated. (2023, p. 1)

She argues that blue humanities thinking seeks to critically examine human engagements with water, conditioned by sociopolitical and cultural forces. Global capitalism in the form of neoliberalism puts oceanic ecological resources in jeopardy either by carrying out blue trafficking[7] or by sponsoring transnational exploitations of

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[6] In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari explain how smooth space stands different from striated space: whereas the former is "a field without conduits or channels" (1987, p. 371) in which "the points are subordinated to the trajectory" (1987, p. 478), the latter suggests how "lines or trajectories tend to be subordinated to points" (1987, p. 478).
[7] In *Remapping Energopolitics*, Abhisek Ghosal enunciates that blue trafficking "runs by the logic of neoliberal dispossession of oceans" and "is a vicious neoliberal capitalist enterprise" (2024, p. 49).

oceanic ecologies, thereby subscribing to the manipulative practices of global tourism. In "Storied Seas and Living Metaphors in the Blue Humanities", Serpil Oppermann provocatively argues that the seas' meanings "always remain in the interstice between the discursive and the real" (2019, p. 446).[8] This suggests that blue humanities thinking calls for an epistemic shift from the "fields of thought to seas of circulation" according to Susanne Ferwerda in "blue Humanities and the Color of Colonialism" (2024, p.3). In short, one may take recourse to blue humanities thinking to be critical of the global capitalist interventions into marine ecological resources. Here, it needs to be noted that the ocean plays a crucial role in the production of meaning; thus, it can neither be subjected to semiotic analysis of global capitalists nor be fully understood in terms of rigid materiality. Any epistemic attempt to figure out the materiality of the ocean in terms of rigid ecocritical referents is bound to end up in failure since the aquatic materiality of the ocean is wedded to the quanta of deterritorialization. In fact, whereas in "Introduction: Science Studies and Blue Humanities", Stacy Alaimo explains why blue humanities scholars need to take up questions like "How do questions of scale, temporality, materiality, and mediation emerge in aquatic zones and modes?" (2019, p. 431), in "Toward a Blue Humanity", Ian Buchanan and Celina Jeffery call for restoring our "sense of connectedness" (2019, p. 12). Epistemic recontextualization of geo-tropicality in the context of the Indian Ocean can therefore be understood as a useful method for decoding how the Indian Ocean time and again unsettles the vested neoliberal projects through its ceaseless becomings. In short, instead of figuring out the Indian Ocean as a zone of reducibility, the futurization of geo-tropicality potentially opens up the decolonial epistemic expanse of the Indian Ocean, which subtly challenges the oppressive structures of neoliberal violence acted out by global capitalists.

This violence is addressed in *Ecoprecarity: Vulnerable Lives in Literature and Culture*, where Pramod K. Nayer lays out the discursive traits of ecoprecarity in the aftermath of climate change:

> Ecoprecarity, then, is about precarious lives, those of humans and other life forms, within specific geographical and 'Natural' settings. It is about the erosion of species boundaries and new forms of species alignment, about the nature of Nature and the nature of life in a world of potentially combinatory lifeforms. (2019, p. 11)

The "intertwined set of discourses of fragility, vulnerability, power relations across species and imminent extinction is what I term 'ecoprecarity'" (2019, p. 6). Nayer

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[8] In fact, Donna Harraway in *When the Species Meet* holds: "To be one is always to become with many" (2008, p. 4). The ocean actually embodies becoming which "is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance" (1987, p. 238). In fact, a becoming is "a block of co-existence" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 292).

contends that the phenomenon of ecoprecarity "emerges over time" and finds reflections as "the consequence of processes and practices" (2019, p. 9). In short, it is understood to be a social ontology for vulnerability that cuts across human and more-than-human worlds. The conditions of ecoprecarity are constantly altering in tandem with the incremental augmentation of planetary crises and are redolent of different facets of vulnerability. Nayer argues that ecoprecarity "is the vulnerability of all lifeforms, their attendant ecosystems and relations between and across lifeforms/species…ecoprecarity as a concept refuses this anthropocentrism" (2019, p. 14). In short, Nayer attempts to establish ecoprecarity as an epistemic lens through which he argues: "all lifeforms are affected by ecological changes" (2019, p. 14), even though ecological changes are not homogenous across human and nonhuman worlds. In this regard, the futurization of geo-tropicality may be understood as a decolonial attempt to expose the futility of normative discourses on the conditions of ecoprecarity. In other words, due to innumerable instances of blue trafficking and other illicit commercial enterprises, the Indian Ocean is at risk, and the conditions of ecoprecarity experienced by the Indian Ocean alter in connection with changing reflections of climate change. The Indian Ocean ceaselessly grapples with neoliberal semiotic seizures and silently underscores the material-discursive relevance of geo-tropicality. In order to futurize geo-tropicality, one may consider the epistemic agency of geo-tropicality to explore the vulnerability of the Indian Ocean so as to subject neoliberal activities to a strong decolonial critique. The futurization of geo-tropicality is thus of profound significance to figure out how the Indian Ocean proleptically signals the conditions of ecoprecarity which is going to plague the rest of the world in the future. Political attempts to territorialize the deterritorial movements of the Indian Ocean enunciated by blue (infra)structural becomings fall flat since the Indian Ocean constantly calls anthropocentric overtures into question, thereby refocusing human attention to unchecked coastal developments. Instead of viewing the Indian Ocean as a reservoir of human waste (including residues of cultural, political, social, and economic struggles), it is of immense importance to look at it as a rich repository of decolonial knowledge—a close study of which may help us understand its shaping and reshaping potentials. This is perspective is evoked in "The Sea as Archive: Impressions of Qui Se Souvient De La Mer" by Donna Honarpisheh:

> [the sea offers] a way to think history outside the structures of evental or national narratives of war, revolution, and progress. Instead, the sea posits a cyclical rhythm of time, but it is no mere repetitive drive; it inheres the possibility of renewal, as well as a mythical power and at times, a messianic possibility for what is yet to come. (2019, p. 94)

> [the blue archive] is not simply a relic of the past but a material and psychic opening to a messianic futurity. (2019, p. 98)

Honarpisheh emphasizes that the ocean is not just a repository of human waste, but it brings forth references from the past to shape the future. Similarly, Abhisek Ghosal in *Remapping Energopolitics*, analyzes the concept of the blue archive to argue that an ocean is a living repository storing the residues of human cultural exercises and political struggles:

> blue archive stands wedded to the "quanta of deterritorialization" and therefore gets continuously built up in terms of "flowing", "folding" and "circulating". Blue archive actually stands mediated through marine ecologies and is characterized by poroplasticity, processuality, and "trans(in)fusion".… Blue archive actually works against itself, showing denials and refusals to any sort of spatio-temporal territorialization. (2024, pp. 44-45)

Futurizing geo-tropicality in terms of enfolding the Indian Ocean is a modest decolonial attempt at problematizing the limited understandings of tropicality in terms of exoticism and to underscore the archival potentials of the Indian Ocean in calling structured and stratified neoliberal politics into question. Like an archive, the Indian Ocean does not just carry residual excesses of politico-cultural struggles but also works as a decolonial reference to the futurity of geo-tropicality. As the Indian Ocean stands in the relational interplay between making and unmaking, it actually embodies the deterritorial becomings of geo-tropicality which flows, folds, and circulates commensurate with the Earth. Isabel Hofmeyr in "The Complicating Sea: The Indian Ocean as Method", emphasizes the shaping and reshaping power of the Indian Ocean under the aegis of decoloniality: "the Indian Ocean world represents a strategic arena where the forces shaping a post-American world intersect most visibly" (2012, p. 584). Following Hofmeyr, it could be argued that an epistemic extension of geo-tropicality to the Indian Ocean functions as a decolonial strategy to let social, political, cultural, and commercial forces interact in varied combinations, resulting in the disjunctive productivity of the Tropics.

Blue (infra)structural inroads into the epistemic refashioning of geo-tropicality act to refocus the governmental field of vision on the unchecked coastal developments that are happening at the cost of adjacent nonhuman worlds. The boom in the global tourism industry reaches coastal territories through waterways, which intensify prevailing ecoprecarities across coastal areas and render coastal populations increasingly vulnerable. Subtle territorial inroads of neoliberal culture through the global expansion of the tourism industry impact the ordinary lifestyles and livelihoods of coastal people so much so that they are forced to work in tune with the desires of global tourists. Due to the neoliberal inroads of global capitalism into the otherwise poised relationship between coastal people and adjacent marine ecologies, the

nonhuman worlds traversing marine and terrestrial zones stand at risk. In *Environmental Planning for Oceans and Coasts: Methods, Tools and Technologies*, Michelle Eva Portman pertinently observes:

> The two most fundamental environmental issues of our time are indeed climate change and extinctions, with the latter framed more professionally as "biodiversity loss". These two issues are interconnected and complex. Oceans and coasts exemplify such complexity. As the interface between land and sea, the coast is the staging ground for numerous changes—from diurnal tidal fluctuations to what can be catastrophic results of seasonal erosion. Irrespective of sea level rise, increased and intensified storm activity and the loss of biodiversity through the destruction of habitat by coastal development, the coast is ever changing. (2016, p. 4)

Thus, an intensive study of coastal ecology is of profound import to comprehend how anthropocentric activities are responsible for climate change and biodiversity loss. As coastal ecology is reflective of destruction of marine ecologies at large, proper administrative monitoring is needed to check unbridled coastal development occurring at the cost of coastal-oceanic balance. Anthropocentric activities expedite the transformability of the coast, which impacts the co-relational becomings of human and nonhuman worlds. A close study of the geo-tropicality of the Indian Ocean is therefore required to understand how the ocean anticipates the dangers of climate change and biodiversity loss, owing to neoliberal human-centric development projects.[9] For instance, in "Deep-Sea Mining: Current Status and Future Considerations" Rahul Sharma comments on the dire and dreadful impact of deep-sea mining on marine ecologies: ". . . the areas likely to be affected by deep-sea mining would range from the surface and water column due to particles discharged (accidently or otherwise) during lifting, at-sea processing, and transportation (2018, p. 14)—an instance of unchecked human activity which impacts marine lifeforms and coastal lives alike. One may also be reminded of the declining states of coral reefs which, under challenging living conditions, start to disappear—an important marine ecological change that is a consequence of the uncontrolled exploitation of coastal environments. In *The Coastlines of the World with Google Earth Understanding our Environment*, Anja M. Scheffers, Sander R. Scheffers, and Dieter H. Kelletat contend, "Coral reef growth depends on a number of environmental factors, and the two most important factors include sunlight (for symbiont photosynthesis), and enough space to expand" (2012, p. 198). Unchecked coastal developments make it immeasurably difficult for

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[9] In "Tourism Development in Sri Lanka: The Case of Ethukala and Unawatuna", Stefan Gössling notes: "Tourism causes socio-economic and ecological changes that can negatively influence a tourist destination" (2000, p. 104), thereby suggesting the pejorative effects of unchecked human developments in the garb of global tourism.

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coral reefs to grow naturally, and the steady destruction of coral reefs experienced in the Indian Ocean is an alarming signal for the rest of the world inasmuch as it proleptically points at a growing imbalance between coastal and oceanic ecologies. Futuring geo-tropicality is therefore inclusive of blue (infra)structural frameworks, conditions of ecoprecarity, and unchecked coastal development—an epistemic juxtaposition of these seemingly (dis)connected forces factors in the fuller comprehension of the future-shaping abilities of geo-tropicality.

Romesh Gunesekera's *Reef*

Romesh Gunesekera's novel *Reef* (1994), set in Sri Lanka, is a rich literary commentary on the impact of late global capitalism/neoliberalism on marine life which stand largely vulnerable in the face of global tourism and climate change. Garbed in the fashion of culinary fiction, *Reef* relates the tale of Mr. Ranjan Salgado, a marine biologist, who shows considerable interest in Sri Lankan cuisine and hires a personal cook named Triton. Although much of the plot revolves round Mr. Salgado's culinary engagements with Sri Lankan cuisine and his non-heteronormative fascinations with Triton, a significant amount of the story is dedicated to documenting the gradual disappearance of marine ecological resources due to malicious human activities. Abhisek Ghosal in "Precarious Oceans and Vulnerability: Micropolitics of Care in Romesh Gunesekera's *Reef*" attempts to bring out some unsettling concerns of blue humanities thinking, through the novel, calling for critique of contemporary forms of neoliberalism "to restore the 'micropolitics of care'" (2024, p. 82) so that new equations of human 'negotiations' with the Indian Ocean can be worked out to keep the daunting forces of precarity at bay, while enunciating the vulnerability of the Indian Ocean anew. Thus, apart from a literary exploration of Sri Lankan culinary dishes, *Reef* exemplifies the future-shaping capacities of geo-tropicality in the wide expanse of the Indian Ocean. *Reef* exposes how Mr. Salgado finds interest in studying "mosquitoes, swamps, sea corals and the whole bloated universe" (1994, p. 24) and "transformation of water into rock—the cycle of light, plankton, coral and limestone—the yield of beach to ocean" (1994, p. 24). Being a marine biologist by profession, Mr. Salgado thoughtfully remarks: "Coral grows about as fast as your fingernails, but how fast it is disappearing? Nobody knows!" (1994, pp. 47-48). The novel reveals that because of the indiscriminate 'bombing', 'mining' and 'netting', Sri Lanka's coral reefs are seriously vulnerable to human threats—an alarming foreboding that the Indian Ocean rings to the rest of the world. Mr Salgado notices:

> You see, this polyp is really very delicate. It has survived aeons, but even a small change in the immediate environment—even if you pee on the reef—could kill it. Then the whole thing will go. And if the structure is destroyed, the sea will rush in. The sand will go. The beach

> will disappear…. You see, it is only the skin of the reef that is alive. It
> is real flesh: immoral…. Mister Salgado threw up his hands, 'But who
> cares?' (1994, p. 48)

Unchecked human development including the dissemination of global tourism across the Sri Lankan coastal areas have terribly impacted the balance between the coast and ocean, which results in the gradual disappearance of coral reefs—a natural barrier that could withstand marine calamities to some extent. Insensible human activities destroy coral reefs which take 'aeons' to grow. This quoted excerpt also points at how the Indian Ocean gradually encroaches the coastal areas because of the disappearance of coral reefs and it strikes hard at coastal ecological structures. What is alarming is that nobody finds it worthwhile to take into account the way coral reefs are destroyed by unchecked human activities. Mr. Salgado has subtly critiqued the gross inattention of local governments in taking suitable measures to properly deal with the natural correspondences between the Sri Lankan coasts and the Indian Ocean. At this point, one may take recourse to the notion of geo-tropicality to argue that the Indian Ocean plays a significant role in demonstrating vicious human activities being carried out against marine ecologies and asks coastal people to stay prepared for sudden marine calamities. An in-depth study of geo-tropicality can help figure out the growing vulnerability of the Indian Ocean while reckoning the declining balance between the coast and the ocean and subsequently hold local government and irresponsible global tourists accountable. Following the concerns of blue humanities thinking, one is compelled to call the insidious inroads of global tourism into question, for it unquestionably leaves ruinous impacts on marine ecologies and coastal lives. At one point in the novel, Mr. Salgado lashes out:

> All they see is pockets full of foreign money. Coming by the plane-
> load. Don't they realize what will happen? They will ruin us. They will
> turn us all into servants. Sell our children…our country really needs to
> be cleansed, radically. There is no alternative. We have to destroy in
> order to create. Understand? Like the sea...He let go of me and stared
> at the ocean turning itself inside out…. (1994, p. 111)

This picture of global tourism conditioned by the rise of global capitalism is brought out by the Indian Ocean—which, when read through the notion of geo-tropicality reveals the sheer vulnerability of marine ecologies in the face of neoliberal precarities. Needless to say, the Indian Ocean stands replete with marine bio-diversities—the existences of these marine species are constantly challenged by neoliberal onslaughts. Geo-tropicality, pertaining to the Indian Ocean, speaks of the growing relevance of more-than-human perspectives in figuring out human challenges to densely interconnected marine ecologies. In "Introduction: Deleuze and the

Non/Human", Jon Roffe and Hannah Stark underline the profound significance of the nonhuman in calling out the limits of the Anthropocene: "the nonhuman turn has staged the critique of anthropocentrism through engaging with entities that have traditionally been devalued in our systems of meaning and cultural practices: animals, objects, plants, nonhuman nature, etc…. The nonhuman turn invites us to re-interrogate these perceived oppositions" (2015, p. 3). Similarly, distinctive characteristics of geo-tropicality foreground nonhuman ways of looking into neoliberal activities of human beings who do not take care of marine lifeforms and constantly subject the Indian Ocean to vested interests.

Mr. Salgado is overtly critical of the engagement of impoverished locals in the acts of blue trafficking of marine lifeforms and therefore underlines how geo-tropicality of the Indian Ocean is time and again subjected to neoliberal exploitations:

> 'Someone has caught a dolphin,' the crab-seller said. 'They got a dolphin?' 'Yes, they will kill it quickly, very good money. Someone's lucky day'…. 'Killing…' she shook her head to herself. 'Why dolphins?' What next?' Outside a man was filling an unmarked van with baskets of dead fish, small pieces of bleached white coral marked the municipal parking lot. (1994, p. 118)

Illicit markets in endangered marine lifeforms, like dolphin, highlight the immense importance of taking care of the daily needs of locals so that they are not forced to engage in illegal commercial enterprises. The illicit selling of dolphins in the nearby coastal markets is suggestive of the lackadaisical attitude of local government towards implementing appropriate measures to put an end to such trade. This apathetic attitude of local government is sarcastically mocked, for these unchecked neoliberal activities severely impact the micropolitical becomings of the Indian Ocean. The critical lens of geo-tropicality may here be used to argue that the nuanced interactions and intersections among economic, political, cultural, and social forces have bearings on neoliberal precarities which seek to condition the micropolitical becomings of the Indian Ocean. *Reef* exposes the vicious march of neoliberal precarities urging locals to take note of the happenings in the Indian Ocean so as to make sense of what is to come 'next'. So, geo-tropicality through the hydro-materiality of the Indian Ocean exemplifies how the ocean tries to unsettle neoliberal attempts to structure its densely mediated becomings, and to send out warnings to coastal people residing in other parts of the world. Geo-tropicality stands empowered by the geokinetic becomings of the Earth, thus calling the structured operations of neoliberal politics into question in coastal zones.

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Although Mr. Salgado is a marine biologist by profession, he makes a compromise with his ethical standards and gives in to the neoliberal politics of being super rich when he expresses his desire of setting up a marine park in the middle of the Indian Ocean:

> I used to think that in a month or two, the next year, I would have a chance to turn the whole bay into a sanctuary. A marine park. I used to plan it in my head: how I'd build a jetty, a safe marina for little blue glass-bottomed boats, some outriggers with red sails, and then a sort of floating restaurant at one end…. It would have been a temple to your gastronomic god…I thought of it like a ring, a circular platform with the sea in the middle. (1994, p. 177)

This quotation divulges the fact that neoliberal politics has influenced Mr. Salgado so much so that he agrees to give up his ethical principles for the sake of being *nouveau riche*. This sudden turn of action induced by the neoliberal possibilities of getting money through setting up a marine park is an ominous sign. The debris and residuals of neoliberal infrastructural activities get collected in the hydrous repository of the Indian Ocean, which sounds the vulnerability of marine life. An understanding of geo-tropicality leads one to question Mr. Salgado's ethical compromise in giving in to the systems of neoliberal violence. The literary reference to 'glass-bottomed boats' is suggestive of the fact that the Indian Ocean bears exclusive witness to how marine ecologies are tactfully targeted by neoliberal elites who disregard the value of the nonhuman realms of the Indian Ocean.

Futurizing geo-tropicality through the Indian Ocean is therefore suggestive of how this Ocean seeks to lay down a fluid and acentered hydro-materiality—the micropolitical becomings of which work as a veritable "outside" of the Anthropocene. Under the guise of the steady disappearance of corals, Gunesekera's *Reef* maps out the future-shaping capacities of geo-tropicality. The ecological happenings in the Indian Ocean following socio-political and cultural changes, reflect the co-intensive and co-constitutive becomings of the Anthropocene in conjunction with nonhuman worlds. In short, *Reef* strongly demonstrates how the Indian Ocean externalizes the declining balance between coastal and marine ecologies by pointing at the steady destruction of coral reefs, illicit marketing of endangered species (including dolphins), and the ruinous impact of an upcoming marine park, to name a few. Futurization of geo-tropicality thus is needed to take stock of what is going to happen to the rest of the world which awaits the terrible impingements of what Rob Nixon calls 'slow violence.'[10]

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[10] In *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon lays out that slow violence refers to "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all…. We need, I believe, to engage a different kind

Geo-tropicality, in the context of the Indian Ocean, can tenably be considered as a critical lens with which to push the local Sri Lankan government to step up the management of unchecked coastal developments happening in conjunction with neoliberal capitalism. The growing toxicity of the Indian Ocean induced by exploitative human actions, renders coastal developments highly vulnerable to eco-precarities. Geo-tropicality bolstered by blue (infra)structuralism can be employed to foreground the enunciative models of futurity that the Tropics onto-epistemologically represents. Gunesekera's *Reef* also puts the focus on the sliding of the Indian Ocean into the terrains of blue trauma—a nonhuman understanding of which is required to make sense of the appalling consequences of how neoliberal elites have been unreasonably manipulating oceanic resources to serve their own interests.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the discussion of this paper has shown that the problem of facing the unknown of futurity can adequately be dealt with through the notion of geo-tropicality which not only helps individuals become aware of the distinctive and complex entanglements between Nature and Culture found in tropical zones, but also works as 'a plane of exteriority', thereby making it easier for individuals to understand the limits of the Anthropocene in the wake of the nonhuman turn. The novel *Reef* carries ample literary suggestions as to how one needs to work out epistemic configurations of geo-tropicality in terms of blue (infra)structuralism, ecoprecarity, and coastal development. In short, the futurization of geo-tropicality undoubtedly calls for the systematic denunciation of the structured and stratified understandings of the disjunctive productivity of the Tropics which stands characterized by 'alliance', rather than by 'filiation.'

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of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales" (2011, p. 2).

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Acknowledgements

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