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ROUNDTABLE

Who Cares about Jellyfish? An Environmental Legacy of the Suez Canal Begins to Surface

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On June 24, 2015, a huge swarm of jellyfish clogged the cooling system of an Israeli coal-fueled power plants located on the Mediterranean shoreline, almost forcing a shutdown. Images from the event displayed tons of pale blue, translucent jellies, lumped together in a container and spread over the factory floor after being removed from the cooling system filter.[1] The spectacular incident prompted speculation that the jellyfish were foreign agents sent from Egypt to sabotage Israeli security. It may seem laughable, but this is not the first time that non-humans have figured as agents and national security threats in geopolitical dramas in the Middle East. In 2010, following repeated shark attacks on tourists in one of Egypt's Red Sea resorts, Sharm El-Sheikh, the governor of South Sinai told the media he could not rule out the possibility of the attacking shark being remotely controlled by the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad. In this context, foreign, underwater jellyfish armies are nothing out of the ordinary.

The 2015 power plants incident stands out for another other reason: it marked a whole new level of animals interference in human affairs. The event prompted the *Washington Post* to celebrate jellyfish as "nature's ultimate guerilla protesters," half-jokingly, half-seriously praising them as conscientious environmental activists.[2] Through this anthropomorphic framing, the *Washington Post* article entered the same realm as those speculating whether the attack was executed by foreign jelly agents, trained and sent by Egyptian intelligence. Stripped of their anthropomorphizing tendencies, both analyses, despite their contradictory conclusions, were also more or less accurate.

We do not have to identify the jellyfish as guerilla fighters to conclude they constitute a disruptive force to power plants operations. Judging from the many cooling system shutdowns recently caused by jelly swarms, these translucent creatures seem to be in a better position to challenge the energy sector than human climate activists.[3] Now, those speculating that foreign powers were behind the attempted closure were pretty spot on too. The jellyfish were indeed foreigners to the Mediterranean Sea. The *Rhopilema nomadica* jellyfish is native to the Indian Ocean and have entered the Mediterranean Sea from Egypt via the Suez Canal. In biological language, the jellyfish were specimens of an alien species, a term used to denote species that dwell in a place other than their original habitat.

But there is more to conspiracy than geography. At the time of the 2015 power plants clogging, the mega-project of expanding the Suez Canal by adding a second lane was nearing

[1] Ruth Schuster, "Israeli Power Plants Fights Off Giant Jellyfish Swarm," *Haaretz*, 25 June 2015.
[2] Elahe Izadi, "How Jellyfish have Become Nature's Ultimate Guerrilla Protesters against Power Plants," *The Washington Post*, 6 July 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2015/07/06/how-jellyfish-have-become-natures-ultimate-guerrilla-protesters-against-power-plants/.
[3] Ibid.

its completion. From day one, biologists had raised concerns that widening the waterway would increase the jellyfish influx to the Mediterranean.[4] Their objections were ignored. Who cares about jellyfish when we are talking about the world's largest shipping artery? When President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi inaugurated the new lane later that summer, stating that the Suez Canal was "Egypt's miracle and its gift to the world," fish were probably the last thing on his mind.[5] In the years to come, he might think twice about the power of fish.

The massive jelly clog provides a glimpse into an unruly environmental afterlife of the Suez Canal that150 years after the opening of the waterway has begun to haunt human and more-than-human life worlds. It is a story about a mass migration that went under the radar in an era of emerging border regimes and policing of mobilities through a place known to be one of the prime checkpoints for seafarers and among the first marine border control areas.[6] In this essay, I think about the invisibility of this underwater mass migration through shifting borders and boundaries, be they physical, regulatory, or intellectual. I use these terms in a broad sense to think through how some mobilities go unnoticed, while others are closely surveilled and policed. At the core lies an interest in how paradigmatic thinking and disciplinary boundaries limit everyday vision and stifle scholarly imagination. Underlying the argument is a tracing of shifting world orders, from an anthropocentric controlled and controllable world order, which the Suez Canal was part of instituting, to unpredictable life in the Anthropocene.[7] Here, the jellyfish case is illustrative. Not only did the jellyfish have the capacity to shut down power plants, but their presence in Mediterranean can be understood as a vibrant afterlife of the manmade passageway, an unruly progeny challenging the legacy of its creator.

The Fish and the Gift

Al-Sisi is not the first person to call the Suez Canal a miracle. At the 1869 inauguration, attendees from all corners of the world stood in awe of this spectacular achievement headed by Ferdinand de Lesseps. The completion of the new infrastructure passed well beyond the ordinary: by parting the desert and linking two distant seas, mankind had created a new route between East and West.[8] Anthropologist Brian Larkin uses the term "colonial sublime" to capture the overwhelming sense of awe that massive infrastructures instilled in people under colonial rule.[9] The awe stemmed from both the impressive bridges, railways, and electrification processes *per se*, alongside the brand new world they represented. They were the cathedrals of the new world order, where man, not god(s), controlled nature through science and technology, powered by black magic substances: first coal, then oil. In this new world, the manufactured shipping lane was the zenith of the "colonial sublime," a man-made inscription on nature with no comparison.[10]

[4] Juli Berwald, *Spineless: The Science of Jellyfish and the Art of Growing a Backbone* (New York: Penguin, 2018).

[5] BBC, "Egypt launches Suez Canal expansion," *BBC*, 6 November 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33800076.

[6] Valeska Huber, *Channelling Mobilities: Migration and Globalisation in the Suez Canal Region and Beyond, 1869–1914* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[7] Anna. L Tsing, Nils Bubandt, Elaine Gan, and Heather A. Swanson, eds., *Arts of living on a damaged planet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

[8] I use mankind rather than humans as a gesture to the spirit of the time. D. A. Farnie, *East and West of Suez: The Suez Canal in History* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1969); Charles William Hallberg, *The Suez Canal: Its History and Diplomatic Importance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931); and Zachary Karabell, *Parting the Desert: The Creation of the Suez Canal* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 2003).

[9] Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 35*ff*.

[10] On Barak, *Powering Empire: How Coal Made the Middle East and Sparked Global Carbonization* (Oakland CA: University of California Press, 2020).

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The Suez Canal fundamentally redrew the geopolitical map of seafaring, colonial control, and trade. The 1930s discovery of oil in the region only amplified the canal's importance for world politics.[11] Today, it is one of the world's major oil arteries; 10 percent of world trade passes through it every year, and the revenues generate up to 15 percent of Egypt's GDP.[12] The passageway's economic and geopolitical significance has turned the canal area into a high-security zone, a territory *non grata* for ordinary people. This does not mean, however, that the Suez Canal is absent in Egyptian public debate and Nile-centric imaginaries of the Egyptian nation.[13] On the contrary, it figures frequently, but as *an abstract*: a piece of national property, an invaluable asset, a symbol of national sovereignty. These dominant imaginaries of the waterway have tended to overshadow local experiences and understandings expressed by residents of the canal cities—Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez. Despite fighting wars and defending their homes, canal residents as actual people have often been absent from the national imaginary, history writing, and state projects.

For me, as an anthropologist who has worked on Egypt for over ten years, the Suez Canal was long a "dead zone of the imagination," to use David Graeber's vocabulary.[14] In addition to concrete national security issues, a combination of factors stifled my anthropological imagination. First, the manmade route has typically fallen into the realm of "high politics," that is, as a topic for political scientists or possibly economists (because of its free-trade zones). Second, its ambivalent rendering in the national debate (as an asset devoid of the organic life that many Egyptians seem proud and protective of) created little zest for anthropological exploration. Third, large stretches of the canal area are indeed inanimate, biologically dead zones that turn one's thoughts to the emptiness of modern capitalism: a constant flow of soulless cargo ships—origin unknown, history unknown, destination unknown—slowly moving through the barren desert as giant ghosts.

A Greek and a pufferfish animated the dead zone for me.[15] At an anthropological conference in 2018, Panos Kompatsiaris asked me what I knew about pufferfish in Egypt. Pufferfish? He told me that a round and cute pufferfish was the main protagonist in his research.[16] I learned that the fish was wreaking havoc in the Aegean Sea and were subjected to xenophobic outrage because they had entered the Mediterranean via the Suez Canal. "Could a fish even live in the canal?" I remember wondering. Sometimes a question about a fish can be the greatest gift. Beyond scholarly and national borders, the Suez Canal is bursting with untold stories about seafaring cultures, more-than-human mobility, life journeys across space, and unfolding afterlives in distant places.[17]

Afterlives of the Suez Canal

With the European "discovery" of the Americas in 1492, the Atlantic Ocean became the new center of global shipping and trade. As a consequence, Mediterranean port cities lost their prominent role in shipping and experienced a gradual decline in wealth.[18] It would be the new passageway, the opening of the Suez Canal, that reinserted the Mediterranean

[11] Laleh Khalili, *Sinews of War and Trade: Shipping and Capitalism in the Arabian Peninsula* (London: Verso, 2020).

[12] Mirette F. Mabrouk, ed., *Rethinking Egypt's Economy* (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 2020).

[13] Timothy Mitchell, "America's Egypt: Discourse of the Development Industry," *Middle East Report*, no. 169 (1991), https://merip.org/1991/03/americas-egypt/.

[14] David Graeber, "Dead Zones of the Imagination: On Violence, Bureaucracy, and Interpretive Labor: The Malinowski Memorial Lecture 2006," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2, no. 2 (2012): 105–28.

[15] For many people, it would be one of these giant ships that ignited their interest in the Suez Canal.

[16] Panos Kompatsiaris, "Aliens in the Mediterranean Sea," *The Enemy* 1, no 1 (2018): 11–32.

[17] Since then, my scholarly attention has been captivated by various "afterlives of the Suez Canal," a term Nefissa Naguib and I use to conceptualize our shared interest in what Aaron Jakes has seen as "the world that the Suez Canal made" and continues to make, far beyond its geographical location. Aaron Jakes, "The World the Suez Canal Made," *MadaMasr*, 4 April 2021, https://www.madamasr.com/en/2021/04/04/opinion/u/the-world-the-suez-canal-made/.

[18] David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), xvii.

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into the center of global shipping. he Mediterranean sea was transformed from a cul-de-sac to a sealinking the Atlantic Ocean with the Indian Ocean and itsports were once again located alongone of the world's busiest shipping routes.[19] With this realization, one wonders what the Mediterranean region would look like today without the route to the Red Sea. And yet, this radical change of the sea is, astoundingly, often missing from scholarship on the Mediterranean. What, then, are the conceptual and imaginative boundaries that explain why the easterly passageway and its effects have tended to fall outside the purview of Mediterranean scholarship? Perhaps, the answer lies in the Mediterranean's long history of seafaring. In this context, sea traffic and trade have always been the natural order of things, and sea traffic and trade propelled by the Suez infrastructure may have been understood as a continuation of past practices, not as a new dimension of seafaring.[20] Others will be in a better position to answer.

Linking the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean had even more radical implications beneath the surface north of the canal. As the stories about jellyfish and pufferfish hinted, the Suez Canal is not only infrastructure for humans; since its construction, it has also been used by marine creatures drifting north. Today, at least six hundred species of fish, octopi, squid, prawns, crabs, and numerous smaller organisms have survived the journey and found new homes in the Mediterranean.[21] The marine phenomenon bears the name of the Suez Canal's mastermind: Lessepsian migration and the alien species from the south are often referred to as Lessepsian species.

This marine species highway did not materialize overnight. At the inauguration, the ditch—160 kilometers long, 20 meters wide, and 8 meters deep—*linked* the two seas. Today, as the only free-flowing, sea-level canal between biotas that for millions of years have been separated, the Suez Canal is beginning to merge them.[22] After successive renovations to accommodate larger vessels, the waterway is now 250 meters wide and 25 meters deep. The greater width and depth have increased water flows that over time have erased a number of natural saltwater–freshwater barriers. The previously salty Bitter Lakes have gradually been diluted, while the construction of the Aswan Dam halted the yearly inflow of freshwater.[23] These different interventions have step by step stabilized the canal's salinity level, which is a matter of life and death for sea creatures. In contrast to the celebrated inauguration of the gateway between East and West in 1869 and the addition of the second lane in 2015, the construction of the highway for fish happened gradually and in silence. The

[19] Abulafia, *Great Sea*; Huber, *Channelling Mobilities*.

[20] Historic and anthropological scholarship on the Mediterranean Sea has long been involved a debate about the region's conceptual and geographical borders and possible common features. As several scholars have noted, this debate has tilted heavily towards the northern shores of the sea. North African countries may be excluded from the regionalization, something I have experienced as a member of the EASA Mediterranean Network. The Suez Canal is another location often missing from these debates. A lucid example is Horden and Purcell's oft-cited piece "The Mediterranean and 'the new thalassology'," published as part of a special issue on oceans in *The American Historical Review*. The Suez Canal is not mentioned once in that text. Michael Herzfeld, "The Horns of the Mediterraneanist Dilemma," *American Ethnologist* 11, no. 3 (1984): 439–54; P. Horden and N. Purcell, "The Mediterranean and 'the New Thalassology'," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 722–40. But for more recent nuanced discussions see Naor Ben-Yehoyada, The Mediterranean Incarnate: Region Formation between Sicily and Tunisia since World War II (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017) and Carl Rommel and Joseph John Viscomi, "Introduction: Locating the Mediterranean," in *Locating the Mediterranean: Connections and Separations across Space and Time*, eds. Carl Rommel and Joseph John Viscomi (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2022), 1–29.

[21] Stelios Katsanevakis et al., "Invading the Mediterranean Sea," *Frontiers in Marine Science* 1, no 32 (2014), https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2014.00032.

[22] Stephan Gollasch, Bella S. Galil, and Andrew N. Cohen, eds., *Bridging Divides: Maritime Canals as Invasion Corridors* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2006); Ashley Carse, *Beyond the Big Ditch: Politics, Ecology, and Infrastructure at the Panama Canal* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014).

[23] Bella S. Galil, "The Marine Caravan—the Suez Canal and the Erythrean Invasion," in *Bridging Divides*, ed. Gollasch et al., 219–222, 226–232; Berwald, *Spineless*.

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Figure 1. With disappearing endemic species, Mediterranean cuisine will change (Collage by the author, source of the photograph: the Happy Foodie)

result is a colonial sublime unforeseen at the grand opening: never before or since has an act of human intention merged two distant oceans and, by extension, blended two previously separate ecosystems. A highway for fish. But who cares about fish? Biologists do, it turns out.

For several decades, Lessepsian species have profoundly affected local ecologies in the Mediterranean Sea. Used to harsher living conditions in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea, the newcomers thrive in their new habitat. For marine biologists, the changes the newcomers bring about have been a topic of discussion for many decades.[24] The effects are most drastic in the Eastern Mediterranean, where new species have begun to outcompete and threaten endemic species. The migrant species are also a problem for local communities. Our jellyfish protagonists, for instance, damage fisheries by destroying the catch in nets and cause economic loss by swarming and scaring tourists away. Biologists warn that the alien species, together with rising sea temperatures, are driving a biodiversity collapse in the Eastern Mediterranean. Swarming jellyfish are only one sign. Some biologists have recently come to argue that we are now at a point of no return. Species are becoming extinct and the Mediterranean is changing irreversibly.[25] With disappearing species, also traditional dishes will go extinct: without the endangered native *Vongole verace*, spaghetti vongole might be no more. (Fig. 1: Spaghetti vongole-lovers don't panic. Unless you are a nativist, there are fortunately migrant *vongele* with similar taste.)

And yet, the story is not as apocalyptic as biological paradigms imagine. Certainly, a few "rogue species" like the jellyfish, pufferfish, and lionfish wreak damage and, like "bad" human migrants, are hypervisualized in social media and public culture.[26] Most newcomers, however, have simply moved into the sea and found their ecological niches without pushing other species aside. Indeed, as zoologist Francis Por argues, the most accurate description of

[24] A search in scientific databases for the term Lessepsian migration or Lessepsian species generates thousands of hits. Two comprehensive works by authors who have studied the topic for decades and published numerous articles are: Francis D. Por, *Lessepsian Migration: The Influx of Red Sea Biota into the Mediterranean By way of the Suez Canal* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1978); and Galil, "The Marine Caravan."

[25] Paolo Albano et al., "Native Biodiversity Collapse in the Eastern Mediterranean," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 288 (2021): 28820202469.

[26] In my research on social media, alien species are captured, tortured, and proudly paraded under hashtags like #invasivespecies.

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this environmental afterlife is a *species transformation*, an addition of a new layer of "faunal complexes of hundreds of species" to endemic ecologies that are already the result of layering, change, and movement.[27]

Just as the Suez Canal was never solely human infrastructure, the species transformation in the Mediterranean is not solely an ecological matter.[28] If we lift our gaze from the canal zone, we can see how humans have played their part in creating the conditions that currently accelerate species transformation. Marine migrants are entering a gradually depopulating sea already in crisis.[29] Fish have long constituted a primary source of nutrition around the Mediterranean, and today a staggering 93 percent of native fish stocks are overfished.[30] Heat is another factor. Rising sea temperatures are currently altering the life conditions for marine species globally. Local Mediterranean species, many of which developed in the cooler Atlantic, will struggle with only a few degrees' temperature rise. Migrant thermophiles, on the other hand, are adjusted to tropical seas and can tolerate higher temperatures.[31] Lessepsian species already constitute 20 percent of the region's catch and have filled our plates for decades.[32] What would a meal in Alexandria be without deep-fried *Sultan Ibrahim* or *gambari* in tomato sauce?[33] The new species only makes up a part of the "storm" the Mediterranean is facing.

Don't Shoot the Jellyfish

For some years now, I have researched this unruly underwater process, documenting how, one-and-a-half centuries after the opening of the new route, the construction haunts human and non-human life-worlds. As the jellyfish incident that opened this essay illustrates, this is a peculiar story that bites its tail more than once. The massive jelly clog can certainly be told as a fable of nature's revenge against human carelessness and destructive behavior. While it would be a stretch to accuse Egyptian authorities of actively sending jellyfish to Israel, it is true that they played a part in facilitating the fablelike incident. Even stripped of potential conspiratorial and anthropomorphic elements, the tale is remarkable: foreign jellyfish drifting through a 150-year-old canal, evading Egyptian border controls, and sabotaging the operation of a prime symbol of global warming. The story's key components—mobility, control, unruly others, and heat—keep appearing in my research. And these are intimately connected—often co-constituted—with borders and boundaries.

The Suez Canal was part of instituting current mobility regimes due to the affordances it offered in surveilling and controlling the flow of people and goods passing through. In this context, it may seem ironic that a marine migration that is irreversibly changing the

[27] Francis D. Por, "Climate Optimum rejuvenates the Mediterranean Marine World," *Integrative Zoology* 5, no. 2 (2010): 116. While this species transformation has few contemporary equivalents, it is comparable (although on a smaller scale) to the Columbian exchange, as Crosby has explored in detail. Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972).

[28] Cf. the first sentence of *Feral Atlas,* "Every human event in history has also been a more-than-human event." Anna L. Tsing, Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxena, and Feifei Zhou, eds., "Introduction to Feral Atlas," in *Feral Atlas: The More-than-Human Anthropocene* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021), 1, https://feralatlas.org/.

[29] Galil, "The Marine Caravan."

[30] WWF Mediterranean/Evan Jeffries, "Seafood and the Mediterranean. Local Tastes, Global Market" (2017) https://www.fishforward.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/WWF_Seafood-and-the-Mediterranean_final.pdf.

[31] Albano, "Native Biodiversity Collapse."

[32] EastMed, "Report of the Technical Meeting on the Lessepsian Migration and its Impact on Eastern Mediterranean Fishery. Nicosia, Cyprus, 7–9 Dec." Technical Document 04 (2010).

[33] Lessepsian prawns make up the majority of prawns fished and sold along Egypt's Mediterranean coasts. Endemic prawns were commercially fished up until the 1950s, but have increasingly disappeared since. The small pink fish that in Arabic is called Sultan Ibrahim comprise several species in the Latin system, for instance the endemic *Mullus barbatus* and the *Lessepsian Upeneus moluccensis*. Galil, "The Marine Caravan"; Galil, Bella S., "Loss or gain? Invasive aliens and biodiversity in the Mediterranean Sea," *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 55, no. 7–9 (2007): 314–22.

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Mediterranean Sea unfolded under the radar for many decades. But it is far from a coincidence. The anthropocentric world order that birthed the canal was not blind only to fish. It was premised on a worldview that sees some (if not all) humans as active and mobile and, as such, as potential assets or threats. Other species were understood to be passive and sedentary.[34] This mindset explains why the emerging urge to control and police human mobility was not extended to non-human beings, at least not to lives unfolding beneath the surface.

For the last few decades, people across the globe have begun to reckon with the mobility of non-human others. As landscapes undergo radical shifts due to climate change, other species are increasingly interfering with human activities. These discoveries have come to animate the same type of border and mobility regimes that apply to humans: unruly migrants, no matter the species, must be policed. In fact, the mobility of non-human species is today framed as the second largest threat to biodiversity. In the name of salvaging local biodiversity, the United Nations not only advocates reducing and stopping non-human mobility, but in the language of warfare, it underscores how important it is to both control and "eradicate the priority species."[35]

This mindset has been challenged recently by both ecologists and scholars of the more-than-human, who underline that alien and invasive species are indicators of ecologies in crisis, not the cause.[36] The same scholars have critiqued current ideas of balanced ecosystems that replicate the way anthropologists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries understood societies of so called "primitive people" to be comprised of different parts with specific roles and functions. The system was in static balance; what changed over time was the individuals. As an alternative to "ecosystems"—and in line with the current view on human culture—the term "ecologies" has been suggested. "Ecologies" presents another model of emergent constellations made up of an arbitrary set of creatures who have found ways to live together, but whose arrangements and relationships continuously change.[37]

If the previous anthropocentric world order ignored animals mobility, the current UN-led obsession with biodiversity is not only nativist, it is blind to the longer history of animals mobility. Many of the species recently labeled "invasive" were introduced to their current habitat decades ago, often through imperial trade, infrastructural expansion, or escape from captivity. This is the case with many migrant species in the Mediterranean. Many so-called "newcomers" were first spotted in the sea over fifty years ago.[38] Only in the last decade have they become a "problem" and given the deadly label *invasive* alien species. While such labeling usually corresponds to a population increase in alien species alongside a decrease in endemic populations, when fluctuations in species appear suddenly after decades of coexistence, there is more to it than competition. Shifts of inhabitants and species are likely the outcome of quickly changing living conditions propelled by anthropogenic factors.

[34] Crosby, *Columbian Exchange*; Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2002); On Barak, *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2013); and Anna L. Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[35] Mariam Ticktin, "Invasive Others: Toward a Contaminated World," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (2017): xxi–xxxiv; the UN Sustainable Development Goal no. 15 aims in Target 15.8: "By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species" (https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal15).

[36] Tao Orion, *Beyond the War on Invasive Species* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015); Tsing, *Mushroom*; and Avi Khalil, "Don't Shoot the Messenger! Invasive Species and Halting Biodiversity Loss," *A Beautiful Resistance*, 22 October 2019, https://abeautifulresistance.org/site/2019/10/22/dont-shoot-the-messenger-invasive-species-and-halting-biodiversity-loss.

[37] Eben Kirksey, *Emergent Ecologies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015). See also Tsing, *Mushroom*.

[38] Galil, "The Marine Caravan."

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Changing ecologies, shifting species balance, and altered living conditions seem to be a defining feature of life in the Anthropocene. Perhaps it is time for another approach beyond current mobility regimes that police movement and decide who (human or non-human) belongs where. The recent wave of non-human mobility, together with the proliferation of alien species, indicates one thing: it is not only humans who are climate refugees. These patterns are clearly discerned in the oceans. In search of cooler waters, fish swim further out from the shore or to deeper water. Reuters calls the phenomenon an "underwater exodus."[39] In the process, these species cross both territorial boundaries and the conceptual border set up by the UN. They go from cherished endemic species to illicit aliens.

Oceans of Authors

The Suez Canal is an icon of the colonial world order. In the shadow of grand events and mega-projects underpinned by masterminds and carefully drawn plans, a series of "non-events" have come to create a highway for fish that is irreversibly changing Mediterranean ecologies and more-than-human seascapes. This process cannot be halted by erecting border controls for fish in the canal. Biologists say it is too late.[40] The massive jelly clog in 2015 not only disturbed the world order the Suez Canal had come to represent, but it also targeted the magic substance that animated it in the first place: coal. The incident provided a glimpse into a future comprised of many different afterlives whose effects we are only beginning to understand: that of the ditch, that of the sea, that of coal and fossil fuels, and those of living beings adjusting their lives as their living conditions change. As mentioned above, it is a story that bites its own tail, especially when noticing how the Suez Canal unleashed some of the processes that today challenge the anthropocentric world order it was part of instituting. The fantasy of control seems far away.

Jellyfish are today flourishing in many of the planet's oceans, as if throwing a party for the Anthropocene. Perhaps their long experience on the planet has taught them how to live with global warming. Jellyfish are indeed magical creatures. They have overcome life's most fundamental premise and solved the puzzle that has occupied humans through all eras: they have defied aging. A cousin of this piece's jelly protagonist, *Turritopsis dohrnii,* can live forever, unless it becomes sick, injured, or eaten.[41] But who cares about jellyfish?

A storm awaits the Mediterranean Sea. As with most storms, it is probably not caused by migrants, but instead by heat.[42] New and old marine creatures will likely be some of the most influential co-authors in scripting the future of the sea. We must wait and see if endemic fish will survive the expected heat wave. And if not, if migrant tropical fish will turn from villains to gifts as they continue populating the Mediterranean. Jellyfish and their underwater peers are indeed ambiguous figures: specters of imperialism but also possible miracles of the Anthropocene.

[39] Maurice Tamman, "Ocean Shock: The Climate Crisis Beneath the Waves," *Reuters Investigates*, 30 October 2018, https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/ocean-shock-warming/.

[40] Erecting barriers in the Suez Canal will slow the species influx and prevent new species from settling in the Mediterranean Sea, but will not influence the size of the migrant species populations already settled north of the canal.

[41] Peter Schuchert, "Turritopsis dorhnii (Weissmann, 1883)," *World Hydrozoa Database*, World Register of Marine Species (2012).

[42] A storm is normally caused when warm air rising from the Earth's surface collides with colder air higher up in the atmosphere.

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