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CHAPTER 5

UNKNOWING A SOUTHERN LIFE: WRITING AROUND THE ABYSS

Katherine Collins

In the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford are two objects that were made and used in different parts of the Southern Hemisphere. One is a stick chart, a navigational aid from Jaluit Atoll in the Marshall Islands, made from thin strips of wood and seashells (see Figure 5.1).¹ The other is a water carrier from the Northern Cape Province in South Africa, an ostrich egg engraved with shapes and schematic figures such as antelopes and ostriches, into which has been cut a lateral hole (see Figure 5.2). The stick chart was obtained by Georg Irmer in 1896, brought to the UK and donated to the museum the following year; the egg was collected by Edward John Dunn in 1872 and donated in 1936. A more recent companion to these objects is the museum catalogue, which contains information about where they originated, their local names (in these two cases, unknown), the materials from which they were made and processes through which they were created. The catalogue also includes information about their collectors, donors, and a history detailing their listing and illustration in various academic publications.²

Viewing these two objects and their catalogue entries side-by-side, I was struck by the imbalance of the two sections; the information about the objects themselves was typically less than half a page, the other running to two, even three pages. I do not wish to suggest that curators at the Pitt Rivers are indifferent to these imbalances – for instance, Laura Peers has worked to reconnect community members with their material heritage, and Alice Stevenson, Dan Hicks and colleagues have worked to understand the Museum's collection as 'a kind of archaeological site'.³ Nonetheless, these catalogue entries are a stark reminder that here, in this northern institution, we seem to know more about how these two southern objects came to be in the museum, and who has documented them in which academic publication since they arrived, than we do about the objects themselves.⁴ When I mentioned my observation to another contributor to this volume, Obari Gomba, we spoke about the kinds of questions we would probably never be able to answer, a century after the objects came to be part of the Museum's collections: Who made this? What did this object mean to them? Who taught them this craft and what stories were exchanged as they learned? Who did they teach in turn? How did they spend their time once their work of carving and measuring was done? My experience with two of these objects and their catalogue entries in the Pitt Rivers Museum underpins my thinking in this chapter on life writing and the Southern Hemisphere.

One way of conceptualizing the imbalance in the information we have about the objects is to consider it a product of abyssal thinking, a term introduced by Portuguese academic Boaventura de Sousa Santos during a lecture in New York in

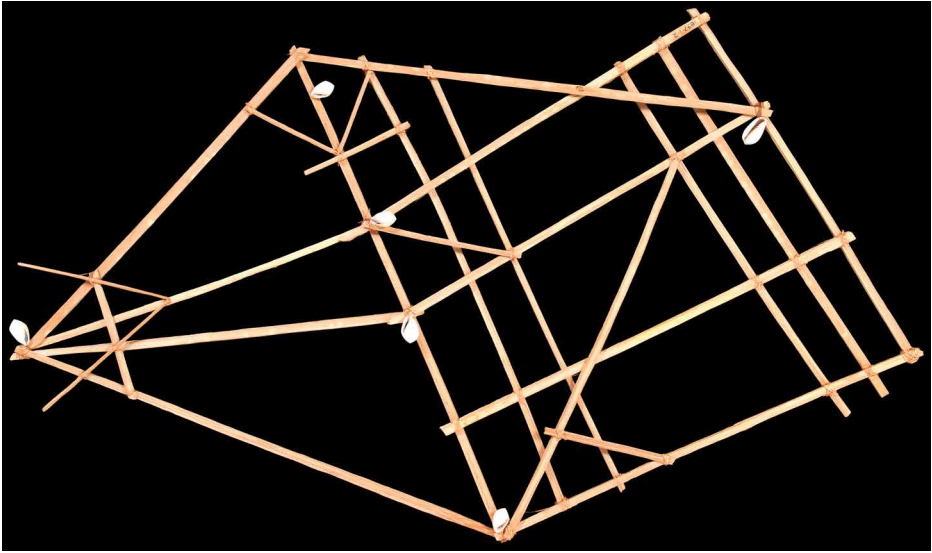


Figure 5.1 Sailing chart from the Marshall Islands. Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (1897.1.2).



Figure 5.2 Ostrich egg from southern Africa. Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (2004.142.1110).

2006. Abyssal thinking is ‘a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of “this side of the line” and the realm of “the other side of the line”’.⁵ Thus, the phrase ‘the abyssal line’ entered the Anglophone lexicon and has since become a popular way to write and speak about Epistemicide⁶ in multiple languages – English, Portuguese and Spanish primarily, but also Japanese, Afrikaans and Catalan – in fields such as linguistics, education, cultural studies and Indigenous studies.⁷ In this chapter I trace the history of the abyssal line concept in its evolution from a metaphorical cartography originating in the amity lines of the sixteenth century, to a compound metaphor that is both a territory to be mapped and a means of inscription. I analyze the ‘abyss’ as a poetic and as a conceptual metaphor, identifying source domains from ancient Mediterranean cosmologies to the Black Atlantic and the relational poetics of Édouard Glissant.

Abyssal lines

For de Sousa Santos, abyssal lines are the inheritors of the amity lines that emerged in the middle of the sixteenth century. Amity lines were actual lines, albeit contested and shifting, drawn on the world map to delineate places where conflict, piracy and violence between European actors would not, ostensibly, affect international treaties or influence diplomatic relations between European states. Described by Mark Netzloff as ‘[o]ne of the abiding fictions underwriting the history of international law’, amity lines ‘held an imaginative currency because they served as a moving horizon that could maintain a conceptual boundary separating Europe from its messy entanglements across the globe.’⁸ Comparing the amity lines and modern abyssal lines, de Sousa Santos writes:

The abyssal character of the lines manifests itself in the elaborate cartographic work invested in their definition, in the extreme precision demanded from cartographers, globe makers, and pilots, and in vigilant policing and the harsh punishment of violations. In its modern constitution, the colonial represents not the legal or illegal but rather the lawless. [...] ‘Beyond the equator there are no sins.’⁹

In his early work, de Sousa Santos argued that while there are no longer literal lines that delineate places in the world where it is agreed openly that lawlessness may prevail, the ‘metaphorical cartography’¹⁰ of such lines remains. As a result, ‘modern western thinking’ divides ‘the human’ from ‘the sub-human in such a way that human principles are not compromised by inhuman practice.’ Examples of these inhuman practices include Guantánamo and ‘the savage zones of the mega-cities, in *ghettos*, in sweatshops, in prisons, in the new forms of slavery, in the black market of human organs, in child labour and prostitution.’¹¹

These early iterations of abyssal lines represent a pluralistic approach within a socio-legal framework. Later, the concept is expanded theoretically and epistemically to emphasize that realities on the other side of the lines are not just ‘made invisible’¹² but actively ‘produced as non-existent’.¹³ Concomitantly, the definition simplifies into a line that ‘marks the radical division between forms of metropolitan sociability and forms of colonial sociability’.¹⁴

As the scope and definition evolve, de Sousa Santos moves away from the plural, *abyssal lines*, in favour of the singular *abyssal line*,¹⁵ and explicit comparisons between abyssal and amity lines and their cartographies cease to be drawn.¹⁶ My reading of this evolution is that as abyssal lines become less overtly associated with the form of metaphorical cartography associated with literal lines ‘that define borders as fences and killing fields, that divide the cities’,¹⁷ so *the abyssal line* itself becomes the symbol of a variety of ways that exclusion and oppression manifest. In *Epistemologies of the South*, for example, abyssal lines are part of the map, interrelated lines that can be conceptual, epistemic, or temporal. These include ‘civil society and the state of nature’; science and ‘incomprehensible magical or idolatrous practices’;¹⁸ the visible and invisible; the existent and non-existent; and present and past. Together, these cartographic lines combine to produce the predominant division between human and sub-human. Four years later, in *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, the *abyssal line* itself has come to symbolize the territory that requires mapping: ‘The sociology of absences is the cartography of the abyssal line’ and its ‘official cartographer’ is ‘the modern archive’.¹⁹ Such is the case for the stick chart and ostrich egg, represented in the modern archive of the Pitt Rivers catalogue primarily as museum objects, while knowledge of the southern relationality of these object’s biographies is absent.

As a compound metaphor, the abyssal line is a ‘meandering’,²⁰ ‘elusive’²¹ and ‘ghostly presence’,²² frequently described as ‘invisible’ throughout de Sousa Santos’s work.²³ Yet the sense of an ethereal, barely present line coexists with the line’s other, fiercer, qualities, such as being ‘radical’, resilient and persistent. The line is sometimes personified, for example, as the ‘collective unconscious of capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy’. It produces an ‘inaudible voice’;²⁴ hides ‘behind the mask of liberal ideology and its abstract political ethics’;²⁵ and moves ‘insidiously’.²⁶ It is at the same time a territory to be mapped and is itself ‘drawn’²⁷ on a map or ‘inscribed in the lived experience of racialized and sexualized bodies’.²⁸ Conversely, when she is conducting research, the ‘researcher herself is, as it were, a map crossed over by the abyssal line’.²⁹ Thus, the abyssal line occupies a duality whereby it can both cross and itself be crossed in ways that are ‘fatal’.³⁰ An example, often repeated, is that of a woman ‘in a sexist society’ who experiences abyssal and non-abyssal exclusions – the latter if she is paid less than her male colleague for the same job, the former if she is a victim of sexual violence,³¹ at which point she has crossed the abyssal line ‘from the world of metropolitan sociability to the world of colonial sociability, the realm of subhumanity [*sic*]’.³² The abyssal line can also be ‘witnessed’, ‘identified’, ‘made visible’, ‘confronted’ and ‘denounced’; ‘ignored’, ‘reproduced’ and ‘legitimized’; and ‘overcome’ and ‘superseded’.³³

The abyss metaphor

Metaphors can shape how we think and interact conceptually, materially and relationally. Conceptual metaphor theorists propose that this structuring occurs via our attempts to understand complex, abstract ideas by relating them, through metaphor, to those which are familiar.³⁴ As a compound metaphor, the abyssal line is based on two simpler metaphors: the line and the abyss.³⁵ While much has been written in the service of articulating the literal and metaphorical aspects of the line, I suggest that de Sousa Santos introduced the ‘abyssal’ not as a conceptual metaphor but a poetic one, a linguistic flourish to reinforce his thesis that northern epistemologies render other ways of knowing invisible. I have two reasons to propose this. The first is that the seeds of the abyss metaphor may have been sown at least ten years earlier than the 2006 lecture, in the article ‘Depois do dilúvio neoliberal’ (After the neoliberal deluge/biblical flood), published in a São Paulo daily newspaper.³⁶ In this article, de Sousa Santos writes that neoliberalism is reaching exhaustion due to the ‘abyssal/abysmal increase in social inequality and exclusion and their effects in democratic governability’. In Portuguese, the words *abissal* and *abysmal* are close synonyms,³⁷ whereas in English the meanings have diverged, *abysmal* being ‘an exceptionally poor standard or quality; extremely bad, appalling’ and *abyssal* for the hellish depths, the unfathomable, the oceanographic and the geological.³⁸ Therefore, when de Sousa Santos uses the term ‘abyssal’, it is plausible he intended to convey a meaning such as ‘especially destructive’ akin to the biblical flood, rather than to invoke the abyss with all its associated symbolism in English. Secondly, in previous work, when de Sousa Santos has intended a term to be understood as deliberately, conceptually metaphorical, he identifies it as such; examples include the ‘metaphorical cartography’ discussed previously, intercultural translation³⁹ and the metaphorical ‘South’,⁴⁰ which has of course been greatly expanded since 1995 (see the introduction to this volume). It is possible, therefore, that the ‘abyssal’ is not metaphorical but rather results from its translation from Portuguese to English and might equally be named something like ‘destructive’ thinking or the ‘eradication’ line. There is certainly a point to be made here about the dominance of English as an academic language and the importance of thinking carefully about translation when working with concepts originating with speakers of other languages. However, it must also be acknowledged that ‘abyssal’ thinking and the ‘abyssal’ line/s have been used conceptually and widely in English for over fifteen years, and bobbing in their wake is all their symbolic baggage packed with chasms, underwater depths, darkness and primordial chaos. Perhaps the translation of ‘abyssal’ has not yet been scrutinized closely by Anglophone academia precisely because the metaphor does seem to resonate so well, poetically?

The source domain⁴¹ for the abyss that comes most readily to mind for those educated in Northern institutions originated in theology – the Hebrew, Babylonian or Egyptian primordial deep waters that existed before creation;⁴² the chaos of early Greek cosmology; or the underworld of Tartarus – and continued as a strong theme throughout western philosophy. In the case of the stick chart and ostrich egg, the symbolism is consistent with de Sousa Santos’s arguments on the abyssal line, in that it reinforces the idea that

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what was known about the objects in their original context, for the object's nineteenth-century collectors at least, was 'incomprehensible', or perhaps their 'utter strangeness' led Dunn and Irmer to deny, consciously or not, the 'very human nature'⁴³ of the southern people who made and used them. Consequently, these collectors may have had little curiosity about those southern people's lives and their relationships to these objects, which is why this information is now lost to the Pitt Rivers, a northern institution on 'this side' of the line. However, despite its ability to explain the absence of southern knowledge in this way, it must be acknowledged that these source domains are themselves (per de Sousa Santos) abyssal. As Martin Bernal has argued, the discipline 'Classics' has

incorporated social and cultural patterns in society as a whole and has reflected them back, to provide powerful support for the notion of Europe possessing a categorical superiority over all other continents, which in turn justifies imperialism or neo-colonialism as *missions civilisatrices*.⁴⁴

In addition to the entangled nature of the classical and western philosophical abyss as a source domain, metaphor itself can be 'a technique ultimately of avoidance. Even as it illuminates, it makes the actual disappear'.⁴⁵ This is a perspective taken also by Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang in their influential essay 'Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor'.⁴⁶ Tuck and Yang's contention is that the realm of the symbolic should not supersede or complicate what is really at stake, which is Indigenous peoples' rights to, and return of, their land, on their own terms⁴⁷ and not defined in a settler colonial sense as 'property'. 'Until stolen land is relinquished', they write, 'critical consciousness does not translate into action that disrupts settler colonialism'.⁴⁸ It is powerfully symbolic to imagine knowledge of the stick chart and ostrich egg – their makers, caretakers, those who knew how to use them, those who benefited from their use, those who knew their cultural and symbolic meanings, their names, their stories – as simply swallowed by the unfathomable darkness and depth of the abyss. The potential loss of knowledge of these objects and their relations to the lives of southern peoples is not anyone's fault, the metaphor could suggest; rather the loss has happened because of a force beyond human control, the 'abyss' possessing as it does the physical and temporal scale of a geological event. This aspect of the abyss symbolism, therefore, might enable a 'move to innocence', which 'represent[s] [...] fantasies of easier paths to reconciliation' for those within the northern metropole.⁴⁹ Conversely, Tapji Garba and Sara-Maria Sorentino have argued that we cannot discount the 'relationship between history and contingency, materiality and the symbolic' in theorizing.⁵⁰ Their analysis is of a different colonial practice, slavery, a context in which the abyss metaphor has been used powerfully by writers such as Édouard Glissant, upon which I will now expand.

Lines in the sea

As I have shown in this chapter, abyssal lines are often explained and illustrated using cartographic metaphors to refer to legal and epistemic divisions. As with the 'abyss'

in abyssal lines, the mapping metaphor isn't much elaborated, but I want to suggest that the 'representation of spaces'⁵¹ that emerges from de Sousa Santos's cartography is primarily of dry land. In part, this is because land is where the social movements and radical organizations that form the core of his analysis tend to be located. There is some textual evidence as well; for instance, when discussing problems of scale, de Sousa Santos offers representations of 'land use'⁵² as an example, and he writes of 'the savage zones of the megacities.'⁵³ When water is discussed, it is primarily in a context of its significance to the environment, as a subject of political struggle and, occasionally, as a metaphor for, for example, globalization as an 'unstoppable flood.'⁵⁴ And yet, the Southern Hemisphere is the watery hemisphere, connecting to the north, too, through water.

Tracing de Sousa Santos's references on the origins of his cartographic thinking in the lines of amity as previously mentioned, as well as the Treaty of Tordesillas between Portugal and Spain, which proposed a line in the Atlantic between the Cape Verde islands and the Caribbean, another reading of abyssal cartography is possible, one with its source in the ocean and the fragmentation of the archipelago, rather than the unity of the continent. For Édouard Glissant, as John Drabinski explains, the Caribbean is at the centre of his thinking, not just because that was his home, but because the Caribbean

is simultaneously local – hemispheric, specifically historical, particular in its memories – and global – the crossroads of the world, from the beginning. That is, Caribbeanness is *tout-monde*, not as an aesthetic or ethical idea or ideal, but as a direct description of the material histories and memories of the archipelago.⁵⁵

Glissant takes the trauma of the Middle Passage as the source of history, and for him, the abyss represents at the same time a profound sense of loss and, at the shoreline, of beginning.⁵⁶ Glissant's conception of the abyss also includes a line: the tracings of slave ships from African countries in the East to the Americas in the West. This line he calls a 'creature' and identifies it as a 'fibril'.⁵⁷ Typically, a fibril is part of a biological system, such as a plant root, muscle fibre or protein. Thus, here the 'abyssal line' (a phrase Glissant does not use) does not divide but rather is part of a system of relation.

Connections across oceans with traces of sadness and loss, though incomparable in scale and impact, can also be read into the journeys of the stick chart and ostrich egg. And therefore, I want to suggest that Glissant's concepts of opacity and transparency offer alternative ways of recognizing such 'abyssal' absences. For Glissant, opacity is neither a lack of transparency or translucency nor the obscurity of a difficult text,⁵⁸ which is often accompanied by exclusion. Rather, opacity 'is that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence.'⁵⁹ Opacity is, as Drabinski explains, therefore an ontological and epistemological concept, which sustains the 'constant reinvention of not just meaning, but the meaning of meaning.'⁶⁰

Transparency, typically the opposite of opacity, in this case is associated with the verb *grasp* figuratively to attain intellectual mastery over a subject and literally 'the movement of hands that grab their surroundings and bring them back to themselves. A gesture of

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enclosure if not appropriation.⁶¹ The desire for transparency then, in Glissant's terms, becomes a demand for formulation, a series of clarifications, in pursuit of a particular kind of Western universality.⁶² And I can't help but notice the parallel in the way the stick chart and ostrich egg were grasped, brought back across the ocean to Oxford and in the process, most of what was known about the people who made and used them was washed away. Seeking to recover lost knowledge about the stick chart and ostrich egg, to answer the questions I have posed throughout this chapter about the lives that once surrounded them, might well, in Glissant's terms, represent yet another gesture of enclosure and appropriation.

So, what can we do with the concept of opacity, when it comes to the lives of, and those surrounding, the stick chart and ostrich egg? Taken literally, the formulation of a *right to opacity* could result in another move to innocence, in this case absolving the northern institution of any obligation towards understanding or restitution on the basis that the waters ought to remain murky. Instead, I suggest that Glissant's work suggests that the loss can be mourned, and that mourning – reading with the frame of melancholy, trauma, memory and traces – like the ocean itself, has its own shape and texture. It is not an absence to be grasped, claimed or filled in.

Conclusion

The stick chart and the ostrich egg are not split, broken or fragmented. Yet both are fragments of the lives that once gave them their different watery purposes: allowing people in southern Africa to carry water and people in the Marshall Islands to navigate between islands in the South Pacific. The stick chart was obtained from Chief Nelu by Dr Georg Irmer, in 1896 then governor of the Marshall Islands, who gave it to the educationalist Sir Graham Balfour, at that time travelling in the Pacific.⁶³ The ostrich egg came into the possession of Edward John Dunn in 1872.⁶⁴ Both objects travelled from the Southern Hemisphere to the Northern, likely by water, washing up on the shore of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. Balfour gave the stick chart to the Museum in 1897; Dunn donated the Ostrich egg in 1936, where it was left unentered until 2004.

The catalogue entries are also full of fragments, of crossing places. The language, if it can be read as a form of life writing, is dense, coded, staccato. It is shattered by slashes, intruded upon by capital letters and punctuation marks:

'Vessel/Animal Figure/Bird Figure/Food Accessory/CLASS: Vessel/Figure/Food and Drink/?' and 'Illustrated as Fig. 35 "Marshall Islands stick chart, c. 1896. Pitt Rivers Museum 1897.1.2", p. 79, in *Talking Maps*, Jerry Brotton & Nick Millea (Oxford: Bodleian Library University of Oxford, 2019).'

It does not have the kind of transparency of clear waters, where there seems to be nothing but air between a boat and its shadow on the riverbed below. Neither does it have the opacity of the iron-grey ocean that keeps its secrets close and its wreckage hidden. If

these catalogue entries can be read as a kind of chaotic, melancholic life writing of loss, perhaps they can also be read, as John Drabinski puts it, as a move

toward the unexpected, but always in terms of contact, entanglement, and engagement. And so, opacity does not imply or enact a fundamental passivity – a term that, as Glissant says of ‘seize’ and ‘grasp’, has terrifying resonance in the Americas – but rather, with the consciousness of consciousness secured at the end of the world, a kind of vulnerable activity. Vulnerable, that is, because opacity is open to transformative contact.⁶⁵

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Lucy Allen-Goss and David Mills for thoughtful comments on drafts of this chapter.

Notes

1. For reflections on Pacific navigation, see Epele Hau'ofa, *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008) and Teresia K. Teaiwa, ‘Charting Pacific (Studies) Waters: Evidence of Teaching and Learning’, *The Contemporary Pacific* 29, no. 2 (2017): 265–82.
2. For example, the first reference for the stick chart is: Listed on page 491 in ‘Appendix 13.1: Documented Stick Charts in Museum Collections, Made before 1940’ to ‘Nautical Cartography and Traditional Navigation in Oceania’ by Ben Finney, in *Cartography in the Traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian, and Pacific Societies* (Volume Two, Book Three of The History of Cartography), ed. David Woodward and G. Malcolm Lewis (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 443–92. The provenance is given as follows: ‘Dr. Irmer, governor of the Marshall [*sic*] Islands, obtained it from Chief Nelu, Jaluit, 1896. Graham Balfour, who traveled [*sic*] in the Pacific in the 1880s and 1890s, presented it to the museum. (Graham Balfour may have been a cousin of Henry Balfour, the museum’s first curator.)’ A note (note 5, page 492) reads: ‘H. Lyons, “The Stick charts of the Marshall Islanders: A Paper Read at the Afternoon Meeting of the Society, 14 May 1928”, *Geographical Journal* 72 (1928): 325–8; this item is referenced as 18” x 11”’ [JC 26 2 1999].
3. See Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown, *Visiting with the Ancestors: Blackfoot Shirts in Museum Spaces* (Edmonton, AB: Athabasca University Press, 2016); and Alice Stevenson and Dan Hicks, *World Archaeology at the Pitt Rivers Museum: A Characterization* (Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology, 2013), 2.
4. This is not a new observation. See, for example, Isabelle Parsons, ‘Artefacts That Travel: The Changing Contexts and Meanings of Archaeological Objects Collected by Edward J. Dunn’, *Southern African Humanities* 25 (2013): 53–63.
5. The lecture was published in 2007 as ‘Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges’, *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 30, no. 1 (2007): 45–89, 45.

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6. Jairo I. Fúnez-Flores has been researching the genealogy of this term and has attributed its introduction to Raul Pertierra in 1988 in “The Rationality Problematique: An Anthropological Review of Habermas’s “The Theory of Communicative Action” Volume I. *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 23 (1988): 72–88.
7. Field and language information was obtained via a search for ‘abyssal line’ in the Bodleian library catalogue on 14 April 2023.
8. Mark Netzloff, ‘Lines of Amity: The Law of Nations in the Americas’, in *Cultures of Diplomacy and Literary Writing in the Early Modern World*, ed. Tracey A. Sowerby and Joanna Craigwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 55, 56.
9. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, ‘Beyond Abyssal Thinking’, 49; and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (London, New York: Routledge, 2016), 121.
10. Santos, ‘Beyond Abyssal Thinking’, 53; and Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*; Santos, *Decolonising the University: The Challenge of Deep Cognitive Justice* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 124.
11. Santos, ‘Beyond Abyssal Thinking’, 53 (emphasis in original).
12. See Santos, ‘Beyond Abyssal Thinking’; *Epistemologies of the South*; Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018); Santos, ‘The Alternative to Utopia Is Myopia’, *Politics & Society* 48, no. 4 (2020): 572.
13. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, ‘Epistemologies of the South and the Future’, *From the European South* 1 (2016): 21. See also Santos, *Decolonising the University*.
14. Santos, ‘The Alternative to Utopia Is Myopia’, 572.
15. This shift is most apparent between two of the most highly cited books published in English, *Epistemologies of the South* in 2016, in which he uses the singular and plural forms with similar frequency, and *The End of the Cognitive Empire* in 2018, in which he uses the plural once, while the singular appears in the text over a hundred times. This comparison was made on Santos’s scholarly books and essays in English between 2007 and 2020 using the text search function in the qualitative analysis software NVivo.
16. He does make reference to the sixteenth century in *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, in a context of tracing capitalism’s relationship with colonial domination.
17. Santos, ‘Beyond Abyssal Thinking’, 57.
18. Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 122.
19. Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, 25, 30 and 198.
20. Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 126.
21. Santos, ‘Myopia’, 754.
22. Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, 23 and 191.
23. See, for example, Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 119 and 120; Santos, *Decolonising the University*, 161 and 372; and Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, 6, 24, 108 and 128.
24. Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, 8, 24, 173 and 177.
25. Santos, ‘Myopia’, 573.
26. Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, 42; see also Santos, ‘Myopia’, 583.
27. Santos, *Decolonising the University*, 158 and 372.
28. Santos, ‘Myopia’, 573.

29. Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, 173.
30. Santos, 'Myopia', 574; Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 'The Resilience of Abyssal Exclusions in Our Societies: Toward a Post-Abyssal Law', *Tilburg Law Review* 22, no. 1–2 (2017): 251 and 253.
31. There has been very limited engagement in Santos's work thus far about sexual harassment and abuse within 'non-abyssal' settings, such as Northern institutions of higher education. For a discussion of the wider phenomenon, see Erin Pritchard and Delyth Edwards, *Sexual Misconduct in Academia: Informing and Ethics of Care in the University* (London: Routledge, 2023).
32. See Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, 23; 'Resilience', 253; Santos, 'Myopia', 574.
33. Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, 135, 137, 220, 250, 251, 265, 276 and 297; Santos, *Decolonising the University*, 166, 166 and 342; Santos, 'Myopia', 578 and 584.
34. Originating in cognitive linguistics, notably George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980). More recently, see Raymond W. Gibbs, *Metaphor Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); and Zoltán Kövecses, *Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). An example supported by ample linguistic evidence is using the metaphor of war to conceptualize arguments.
35. Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
36. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 'Depois do dilúvio neoliberal', *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 29 September 1996.
37. Thanks are due to Maria Rita Drumond Viana, who located the article in *O Estado de S. Paulo*, brought it to my attention and explained the closer relationship between *abissal* and *abysmal* in Portuguese. All translations to English from Portuguese in this paragraph were by Maria Rita Drumond Viana (2023).
38. Abyss, Noun. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, July 2023. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1111046421>.
39. Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 215.
40. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 'Three Metaphors for a New Conception of Law: The Frontier, the Baroque, and the South', *Law and Society Review* 29, no. 4 (1995): 569–84.
41. Kövecses, *Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory*.
42. Kathryn Madden, 'Abyss', in *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, ed. D. A. Leeming, K. Madden and S. Marlan (Boston: Springer, 2010).
43. Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 122.
44. Martin Bernal, 'The Image of Ancient Greece as a Tool for Colonialism and European Hegemony', in *Social Construction of the Past*, ed. George C. Bond and Angela Gilliam (London: Routledge, 2020), 119.
45. Deborah Tall, *A Family of Strangers* (Louisville, KY: Sarabande Books, 2006), 85.
46. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, 'Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40.
47. A similar debate rages, of course, about the return of museum objects; see, for example, Dan Hicks, *The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution* (London: Pluto Press, 2020).

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48. Santos, 'Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor', 19.
49. Tuck and Yang discuss a variety of moves to innocence in the settler colonial North American context; different factors may be at play in the Southern African and Micronesian contexts as to how these moves to innocence might be grounded.
50. Tapji Garba and Sara-Maria Sorentino, 'Slavery Is a Metaphor: A Critical Commentary on Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor"', *Antipode* 52, no. 3 (2020): 11.
51. Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 140.
52. *Ibid.*, 142.
53. *Ibid.*, 124.
54. Santos, *Decolonising the University*, 210.
55. John E. Drabinski, *Glissant and the Middle Passage: Philosophy, Beginning, Abyss* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), preface.
56. Drabinski, *Glissant and the Middle Passage*, 54.
57. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 5.
58. Glissant's examples of 'difficult texts' are myth or tragedy, which I find supportive of the point made earlier about the relationship of the Western canon to 'abyssal' exclusion.
59. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 191.
60. Drabinski, *Glissant and the Middle Passage*, 13.
61. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 191–2.
62. Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash and Kandioura Dramé (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 2. Glissant explains in his own footnote on this page, that, much like Santos's metaphoric definition of the South, '[t]he West is not in the West. It is a project, not a place'.
63. Pitt Rivers Museum Catalogue. Oxford: University of Oxford. Item 1897.1.2.
64. Pitt Rivers Museum Catalogue. Oxford: University of Oxford. Item 2004.142.1110.
65. Drabinski, *Glissant and the Middle Passage*, 20.

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