

Tidal Grief and Coastal Memory: Exploring Blue Humanities in Anees Salim's *The Small Town Sea*.

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Abstract: Sea is not just a setting, and to read it as one is only a misinterpretation. This paper undertakes a sustained literary-critical inquiry into Anees Salim's *The Small Town Sea* (2017) through the analytical lens of Blue Humanities, an interdisciplinary paradigm that interrogates the dynamic, historically layered relationship between human civilisation and aquatic environments (Mentz 3). The novel narrated in epistolary form by an unnamed thirteen-year-old boy situates the sea not merely as a backdrop but as an active, symbolically dense participant in the processes of mourning, identity formation, and ecological imagination. Drawing on the theoretical formulations of Steve Mentz, John Gillis, and Stacy Alaimo, this paper argues that Salim constructs the sea as simultaneously a mnemonic archive, a site of ecological consciousness, and a medium of existential reckoning. The analysis proceeds through three interconnected axes: the narrator's affective and developmental relationship with the ocean, the father's maritime nostalgia and its transcultural resonances with India's coastal heritage, and the sea's symbolic function as a force that both creates and dissolves selfhood. This paper further demonstrates how Blue Humanities, with its foundational concern for coastal cultures and environmental ethics, enables readers to perceive the novel's elegiac coastal south not as mere regional colour but as a site of deep maritime consciousness. The study contributes to the growing field of Indian Ocean literary studies and argues for the urgent relevance of Blue Humanities frameworks in reading postcolonial South Asian fiction.

Keywords: blue humanities, coastal identity, Indian ocean, ecocriticism, grief, memory.

1. INTRODUCTION: THE SEA AS SUBJECT, SYMBOL, AND SYSTEM

In a memorable passage from Anees Salim's *The Small Town Sea*, the unnamed narrator observes, "The sea was nothing but a liquid desert where boats were camels, waves were sand dunes, ships caravans and the horizon the lone oasis" (Salim 71). The passage crystallises the novel's central aesthetic project: to render the sea not as a fixed natural entity but as a fluid, metaphor-saturated domain that refracts the full complexity of human emotional and cultural experience. Such a treatment of the ocean is precisely what the emergent field of Blue Humanities seeks to theorise. As Steve Mentz argues in his foundational study, Blue Humanities represents a critical reorientation away from what he terms the 'green' terrestrial focus of conventional ecocriticism toward the aquatic, the maritime, and the oceanic (Mentz 5). Water, in this framework, is not merely an environmental resource or a scenic backdrop but a constitutive force — shaping coastlines, communities, psyches, and literatures alike. Anees Salim, one of contemporary Indian fiction's most quietly profound voices, has consistently returned to coastal Kerala as a site of creative and philosophical investigation. *The Small Town Sea*, his 2017 novel, is perhaps the most fully oceanic of his works. Narrated as a letter addressed to a literary agent named James Unwin, it tells the story of a boy who accompanies his terminally ill father to the father's coastal hometown to die beside the sea he has always loved. The novel unfolds as a study in grief, memory, and the irreversible passage of time — but it is equally, and urgently, a work of marine literature in the fullest sense, one that participates in what John Gillis has called humanity's deep 'islandic' imagination, a cultural inheritance of attachments to shorelines and tidal thresholds (Gillis 2).

Previous scholarship on the novel has productively examined its engagement with death and sublimity (Devaraj and Richard), its treatment of existential mourning (Parbhakar and Kumar), and its resonances with colonial coastal cultures (Ferwerda). However, no sustained study has applied the Blue Humanities framework as a coherent analytical architecture to the novel's construction of the sea. This paper addresses that critical lacuna. It argues that *The Small Town Sea* enacts, at the level of both content and form, a thoroughgoing blue humanities vision: one in which the sea emerges as mnemonic archive, ecological conscience, developmental catalyst, and existential mirror. By reading the novel through the theoretical coordinates supplied by Blue Humanities scholars, this paper reveals not only the richness of Salim's marine imagination but also the ways in which the novel participates in, and enriches, a global conversation about humanity's relationship to water.

This study pursues several interrelated objectives. It traces the theoretical contours of Blue Humanities and locates *The Small Town Sea* within that intellectual landscape. It examines how the sea functions as a dynamic agent in the narrator's

psychological and moral development. It analyses the father's relationship with the ocean as an expression of both individual longing and India's deep maritime cultural history. It reads the sea's symbolic economy in the novel — as metaphor, motif, and imagery through the lens of Blue Humanities aesthetics. And finally, it considers the novel's implicit environmental ethics, attending to moments where the narrative performs what Stacy Alaimo calls 'trans-corporeality,' the ongoing material interchange between human bodies and their aquatic environments (Alaimo 2).

The paper thus positions *The Small Town Sea* as a major contribution to Indian Ocean literary studies — a field increasingly concerned, as Isabel Hofmeyr and others have argued, with recovering the ocean not as an absence between landmasses but as a 'contact zone' with its own histories, cultures, and imaginaries (Hofmeyr 3). Recent scholarship has further deepened this project: Kabir and Raimondi, introducing the concept of 'archipelagic memory,' argue that Indian Ocean literary studies must attend to how coastal and island communities encode oceanic histories in cultural memory across fractured, non-linear geographies - a framework that illuminates the particular kind of memory-work that Salim's novel performs (Kabir and Raimondi 4). Salim's small town, pressed between a square and a vast sea, is precisely such a contact zone - a place where the human and the oceanic perpetually negotiate the terms of their coexistence, their mutual formation, and their irreversible loss.

2. BLUE HUMANITIES: THEORETICAL COORDINATES

The field now known as Blue Humanities emerged from the intersection of maritime history, environmental humanities, and cultural studies in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Originating in the work of scholars associated with maritime archaeology and ocean history, it has since expanded dramatically to encompass literary criticism, postcolonial studies, anthropology, and climate science. At its core, Blue Humanities insists on what Mentz calls the stormy quality of oceanic existence - not the Romantic sublime of a benevolent sea, but an acknowledgement of the ocean's indifference, its violence, and its transformative unpredictability (Mentz 8). This insistence on the ocean's violence and unpredictability as generative rather than merely threatening was already present in Mentz's earliest articulation of the field, where he argued that the sea in literary tradition has always been 'a place of violence, transformation, and inhuman scale' that resists the consolations of terrestrial pastoral (Mentz, 'Blue Cultural Studies' 999).

Several foundational principles organise the field. First, Blue Humanities attends to the sea's role in shaping human cultures through trade, navigation, maritime ritual, coastal livelihood, and the psychological landscapes of people who live within earshot of the surf. John Gillis, in his influential cultural history of islands and shores, argues that modernity's turn away from the sea represents a profound impoverishment of the human imagination, and that recovering a 'coastal consciousness' is both an intellectual and an ethical imperative (Gillis 11). Second, Blue Humanities foregrounds environmental ethics - the moral obligations that arise from recognising the ocean as a living, vulnerable system. Scholars in this tradition, following Alaimo's concept of trans-corporeality, insist that literary texts can model new modes of environmental awareness by dramatizing the porous boundary between human and marine worlds (Alaimo 15). Third, and perhaps most relevant to literary analysis, Blue Humanities invites attention to the sea's symbolic and aesthetic dimensions - the ways in which ocean imagery, maritime metaphor, and coastal landscape operate within literary texts as carriers of cultural meaning. Mentz's most recent theoretical statement refines this further, arguing for what he calls a 'poetics of planetary water' - a critical framework that reads literary oceanic imagination not merely as regional or historical but as a response to the ocean's global, climatic, and geological dimensions, dimensions that have become urgently visible in the era of climate crisis (Mentz, 'Planetary Water' 3).

India's relationship to these blue humanities concerns is ancient and complex. The maritime trade networks of the Harappan civilisation, the naval expansionism of the Chola dynasty, the dhow cultures of the Indian Ocean littoral, and the traumatic ruptures of colonial sea-borne conquest all constitute a layered maritime heritage that continues to inflect Indian literary and cultural production. As Sugata Bose has demonstrated in his account of the Indian Ocean as a 'hundred horizons,' the ocean has functioned in South Asian thought as simultaneously a space of possibility and of danger, of connection and of exile (Bose 4). Salim's novel, set on the Malabar coast, inherits and reworks this layered maritime cultural memory with remarkable sophistication.

3. THE NARRATOR'S BLUE EDUCATION: SEA, SELF, AND DEVELOPMENT

The bildungsroman is fundamentally a literature of formation - of the self-shaped by experience, encounter, and environment. In *The Small Town Sea*, the unnamed narrator's formation is inseparable from his relationship with the sea, making it what we might call a maritime bildungsroman: a coming-of-age narrative in which the ocean itself serves as the primary pedagogical force. The Bildungsroman as a form has, as Boes has charted in his survey of critical trends, proven remarkably elastic and capable of absorbing postcolonial, non-Western, and environmentally situated narratives that stretch well beyond its original European and bourgeois parameters (Boes 231). Salim's novel pushes this elasticity further still, proposing a specifically maritime variant of the form in which the ocean, rather than society, education, or romantic experience, serves as the protagonist's primary agent of formation

From the novel's opening pages, the sea is not a distant spectacle but an omnipresent presence — audible, visible, and emotionally charged. The town is described with a topographical precision that places the sea as one of its defining coordinates: “a square on one side and the sea on the other” (Salim 45), with the space between occupied by the familiar landmarks of small-town life. In this geography, the sea is not peripheral but constitutive - it is one of the poles around which all human activity is organised.

The narrator's marine education begins through his friend Bilal, who functions as a kind of indigenous coastal guide, a figure who mediates between the narrator's urban displacement and the sea's local mysteries. In one of the novel's most memorable episodes, Bilal climbs a tree and reports, with the authority of a maritime eyewitness, on a pirate ship visible from the treetop – “a black flag with a skull and swords in it” (Salim 55) - a ship whose sinking is then apparently confirmed when, three days later, a dead man in an orange shirt washes up on the shore. Whether this sequence constitutes fact or coastal mythology is characteristically left unresolved; what matters is the epistemological framework it establishes: the sea, for those who know how to read it, is always telling stories, always offering up its secrets in the currency of death and wreckage. This is precisely the ‘shipwreck’ poetics that Mentz identifies as central to the Blue Humanities tradition - the understanding that the ocean's primary gift to human imagination is not tranquillity but crisis and transformation (Mentz 22).

The narrator's ambivalence about the sea - an initial seasickness, a gradual recognition of deep belonging mirrors the novel's broader epistemological movement from surface to depth. His acknowledgement that “the best part of the sea is where it meets the land” (Salim 71) represents a characteristically liminal blue humanities sensibility: an understanding that the most generative cultural and psychological space is the threshold, the littoral zone, the shoreline where the human and the oceanic worlds perpetually negotiate their boundaries. As Gillis has argued, shorelines are cultural as well as geographical frontiers - sites where identities are simultaneously formed and dissolved (Gillis 18).

The narrator's blue education reaches its darkest and most transformative moment with Bilal's death by drowning. The sea that had animated the narrator's imagination, had been the site of their shared adventures and stolen afternoons, becomes abruptly a site of irreversible loss: “His body washed up on the beach an hour ago.” (Salim 256) After this, the narrator retreats from the shore and his retreat is not a rejection of the sea but a deepening of his relationship to it. He is now a subject shaped by the sea's capacity for violence, aware of the ocean's indifference in a way that no amount of childhood wonder could have taught him. His subsequent stance - drawn to the sea's sound and view from a distance but unable to approach it — enacts precisely what Alaimo theorises as the trans-corporeal subject's ambivalent awareness: the recognition that the natural world is both constitutive of and threatening to the human self (Alaimo 27). The narrator's protective distance from the sea in the novel's epilogue is not emotional withdrawal but a form of mature ecological consciousness - the understanding, hard-won through loss, that the sea is not a human possession but an autonomous force with which humans must negotiate on unequal terms.

4. THE FATHER, THE SEA, AND MARITIME NOSTALGIA

If the narrator's relationship with the sea is one of gradual initiation and ultimately traumatic education, the father's relationship represents the other pole of the novel's blue humanities vision: a lifelong, consuming, and finally mortal attraction to the ocean. The father's decision to return to his coastal hometown to die - “I have come back to die here” (Salim 67) - is at once a deeply personal act of homecoming and a culturally resonant statement about the place of the sea in the Indian coastal imagination. It is, in Samuelson's terms, an enactment of the ‘amphibian’ condition of coastal subjectivity - a position perpetually negotiating between land and sea, between the interior life of the self and the exteriority of the ocean, never fully settled on either shore (Samuelson 18). The father's dying return to the coast is thus not merely a biographical detail but a formal and philosophical statement: the coastal subject, Salim implies, cannot die well anywhere but at the littoral threshold. His desire to die within earshot of the waves he grew up hearing enacts what Gillis terms the ‘littoral compulsion’ - the deep human need to return, at moments of extremity, to the edge between land and water (Gillis 25).

The father's marine sensibility is rendered through a series of precisely observed details that accumulate into a portrait of a man for whom the sea is not merely a landscape but a condition of being. He sleeps on the left side of the bed because it is closest to the window, “which he always insisted on leaving open, even when it rained, his ears longing for the sound of the sea” (Salim 58). This habitual orientation toward the ocean speaks to what Mentz describes as the ‘blue’ mode of perception - an attunement to the ocean's rhythms and sounds as a form of existential grounding (Mentz 31). For the father, the sea's sound is not background noise but something close to a heartbeat, a pulse whose cessation would signal the end of meaningful existence. That on the day of his death the sea's sound quietens is one of the novel's most understated and devastating symbolic gestures.

The father's blue sensibility also manifests in his theories about the sea's dangers - specifically, his conviction that every school near a beach has lost at least one student to the ocean. This statistical fatalism, blending coastal folklore with paternal anxiety, reflects the double consciousness that characterises maritime cultures globally and is especially

pronounced in the Indian Ocean littoral: the sea is both beloved and feared, a source of life and livelihood and simultaneously an ever-present death. This ambivalence is not merely thematic but material - it inscribes itself in the bodies, practices, and psychologies of those who live by the sea. Fourqurean, examining a comparable dynamic in South Asian fiction, argues that the non-human environment in this literary tradition functions not as backdrop but as ‘an active participant in the formation of human subjectivity,’ shaping characters’ affective lives through material interchange rather than through symbolic representation alone (Fourqurean 558). Salim’s father, whose every bodily habit - his sleep position, his open window, his ear always turned seaward, registers the sea’s claims on his body, is precisely such a materially formed subject. As Bose has shown, this ambivalence is structurally inscribed in the cultural memory of Indian Ocean societies, which have maintained an intimate, productive, and often devastating relationship with maritime space across millennia (Bose 12). The father’s gift to the narrator is the Secret Beach — a discovery made together, a private coastal world that they share exclusively, visible only to themselves and the birds: “Except for Vappa and me, only the birds knew of it...” (Salim 62)

This secret geography is a brilliant instantiation of Blue Humanities’ interest in the affective cartographies of coastal cultures — the ways in which specific maritime places accrue layers of personal and familial meaning that transform them into sacred, irreplaceable sites of memory and attachment. The Secret Beach represents the father’s ultimate bequest to the narrator: not wisdom or material inheritance but a private coastal world, a blue space charged with the intimacy of their relationship and destined to become, after the father’s death, both a memorial site and a wound.

5. THE SEA AS SYMBOL, MOTIF, AND ECOLOGICAL PRESENCE

Blue Humanities, as a field, is deeply interested in the aesthetic and symbolic functions of the ocean in literary texts — how writers deploy marine imagery not merely for descriptive richness but as a vehicle for exploring the deepest concerns of human existence. In *The Small Town Sea*, Salim constructs an elaborate symbolic economy organised around the sea, in which the ocean functions simultaneously as metaphor, motif, and what we might call an ecological presence - a non-human agent with its own rhythms, moods, and agency.

The sea’s most insistent symbolic function in the novel is as a figure for death and memory. The narrator’s observation that he missed the sea “the way dead people were” missed (Salim 125) establishes a profound equivalence between oceanic and human absence - both are characterised by the paradox of omnipresence and inaccessibility, of being everywhere in consciousness yet unreachable in physical fact. The waves, which wash the narrator’s inscriptions from the wet sand, become a sustained metaphor for the impermanence of memory and the insistence of grief - the sea that erases is the same sea that, in the novel’s moral economy, “returns unflinchingly” those it has taken (Salim 49).

This rhythm of taking and returning, of erasure and restoration, is linked in the novel to a broader meditation on the sea’s agency. The observation that “the sea, contrary to what people believe, is more or less mute. It’s the shore that is noisy. You need to get out of the sea to hear it roar” (Salim 72) suggests a sophisticated ecocritical awareness of the ocean as an entity that exceeds human perceptual frameworks - that its power and presence cannot be apprehended from within but only from the threshold distance of the shore. This insight aligns with Mentz’s argument that Blue Humanities requires a kind of cognitive humility before the ocean, a recognition that the sea’s meanings cannot be exhausted by human symbolisation but always exceed and overflow the categories we impose upon it (Mentz 19).

The motif of birds, particularly the narrator’s ornithological sensibility and his practice of reading birds as omens and metaphors extends the novel’s ecological imagination beyond the ocean into the wider bio-system of the coastal environment. The narrator’s description of the dying sparrow’s fluttering wings as resembling the soul leaving his father’s body enacts precisely the kind of trans-corporeal perception that Alaimo identifies as characteristic of environmentally aware literary texts: a dissolution of the boundary between human interiority and the non-human world (Alaimo 21). The birds that circle the sea are not merely observed; they are incorporated into the narrator’s emotional and psychological landscape as living participants in his experience of coastal life.

The novel’s environmental ethics emerge most clearly in the narrator’s reflection on the potential degradation of the Secret Beach. His concern that increased human presence would lead to “dirt and garbage accumulation” (Salim 80) is a small but telling moment of ecological consciousness, an awareness that the sea and its margins are vulnerable to human carelessness, that the beauty and sanctuary they provide must be actively protected. This moment anticipates the concerns of contemporary marine conservation discourse and situates Salim’s novel within the tradition of literary environmentalism that Blue Humanities critics have sought to recover and amplify.

The recurring motif of shadows is defined by the narrator as an ‘eternal element’ that stays ‘sometimes visible and sometimes, invisible’ (Salim 214), and acquires its deepest resonance when read against the novel’s marine symbolism. The shadow, like the sea, is an entity of depth and surface, of presence and absence, of constant motion and underlying stillness. That the narrator links shadows to ‘the skies and the sea’ in the same breath suggests that Salim is constructing a symbolic triad - sea, sky, shadow - that together constitute the novel’s meditation on permanence, loss, and the sustaining power of memory. These are not merely aesthetic flourishes but what Philip Armstrong, drawing on Donna

Haraway, would call 'significant others' in the text's ecological and affective world - non-human presences that constitute and challenge human selfhood (Armstrong 7).

6. COASTAL CULTURE, COMMUNITY, AND THE BLUE SOUTH

The small town of the novel's title is not a neutral setting but a culturally and historically specific coastal community - a town in southern India where the sea has shaped every dimension of social life, from its physical geography to its daily rhythms to its relationship with death. In reading this community through Blue Humanities, we can recover the depth and complexity of what Salim presents as a world perpetually in dialogue with the ocean.

The town's geography including its square, its temples and mosques, its marketplace and railway station, all ranged between the sea and the hinterland reflects the classic structure of Indian Ocean coastal towns as described by historians of the region: communities that are simultaneously oriented toward the interior and toward the ocean, communities in which maritime and terrestrial economies and cultures are perpetually in negotiation (Bose 18). The mosque and temple existing alongside each other at the sea's edge speak to the syncretic, cosmopolitan quality of Indian Ocean coastal cultures - cultures that were formed, as Hofmeyr has shown, by centuries of maritime exchange across ethnic, religious, and linguistic boundaries (Hofmeyr 12).

The sea's role in the community's relationship with death is particularly striking and deserves sustained attention. The narrator's observation that "unnatural deaths were a regular highlight of the page" (Salim 204), where 'the page' refers to the local newspaper, points to the sea's status as a recurring agent of mortality in this community. But the novel complicates any simple narrative of the sea as merely dangerous. The folk belief that the sea "returns the people unflinching whom it has snatched away" (Salim 49) suggests a community that has developed, over generations, a complex moral and spiritual relationship with the ocean, a relationship in which the sea is understood not as an indifferent natural force but as a moral agent that observes certain obligations toward the living. This is a form of what we might call blue cultural ecology - the system of beliefs, practices, and ethical understandings that coastal communities develop in response to their sustained cohabitation with the sea.

The narrator's observation that "deaths provoke stories in a small town like ours" (Salim 259) positions the community's narrative culture as fundamentally maritime as a culture of storytelling generated by and organized around the sea's capacity for violence and surprise. This is, in the deepest sense, a Blue Humanities insight: the recognition that literary and oral culture in coastal communities is not merely influenced by the sea but is constituted by it, that the rhythms and forms of communal storytelling are shaped by the same tidal forces that shape the coastline itself. Mentz, writing about the relationship between maritime experience and narrative form, argues that the ocean's unpredictability generates what he calls a blue poetics - a narrative sensibility characterized by disruption, transformation, and the acceptance of irreversible change (Mentz 36). Salim's novel is a sustained, brilliant enactment of precisely this blue poetics.

7. HUMAN CONNECTION, ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS, AND BLUE CONSCIOUSNESS

Blue Humanities, at its most politically engaged, is concerned with the future as well as the past — with the ecological crisis that now threatens the oceans and the coastal communities that have depended on them. While *The Small Town Sea* is primarily an elegiac rather than a polemical text, it nonetheless participates in what we might call the ethical project of Blue Humanities: the cultivation of what Mentz terms 'blue awareness' - a form of ecological consciousness specific to the oceanic world (Mentz 42).

The narrator's deep emotional and sensory investment in the sea - his attentiveness to its sounds, smells, and moods, his grief at its loss, his complex reconciliation with it in the epilogue - models a form of relational awareness toward the non-human world that is precisely what ecocritical scholars have argued literature can uniquely foster. As Alaimo contends, literary texts that represent the human subject as materially and emotionally continuous with the environment rather than separate from it contribute to the ethical project of building a more sustainable relationship with the natural world (Alaimo 33). In *The Small Town Sea*, the sea is never merely a backdrop; it is always an interlocutor, always an agent whose moods and movements matter, whose well-being is inseparable from the well-being of the humans who live beside it. The narrator's reflection on his knowledge of the ocean - "Here's what I learned of the ocean. The sea, in spite of being home to millions of fish, does not smell of fish but of damp socks" (Salim 72) is characteristically comic on the surface but deeply serious in its implications. It is the observation of someone who has spent time actually at the sea, learning its sensory reality through direct experience rather than through received representations. This mode of marine knowledge - empirical, embodied, and affectively invested is precisely what Blue Humanities scholars have argued is necessary for developing genuine environmental stewardship of the oceans.

The novel's epilogue in which the narrator declines to return to the shore is not a retreat from blue consciousness but its deepest expression. The narrator does not hate the sea; he understands it with a clarity and a pain that preclude a casual approach. His protective distance is the distance of someone who has been genuinely changed by his relationship with the ocean - who carries the sea within him as memory, as grief, as constitutive experience and who knows that to

return to the shore would be to submit to a process of transformation, he is not yet ready to undergo again. This is, in the fullest sense, a blue humanities subjectivity: shaped by the sea, responsible to it, and permanently altered by its power.

8. CONCLUSION

Anjum Hasan has described *The Small Town Sea* “a story of growing up, getting out and going nowhere” - a formulation that captures the novel's elegiac circularity and its preoccupation with forms of departure that leave the self fundamentally unchanged. But to read the novel through Blue Humanities is to see that this stasis is deceptive: the narrator may not go anywhere geographically, but his relationship to the sea and through the sea, to grief, to memory, to the non-human world, to the possibilities and limits of human connection is transformed beyond recovery. The sea does not release what it forms.

This paper has argued that *The Small Town Sea* is a major work of marine literature that enacts, at the level of form, character, symbol, and ecology, the core concerns of Blue Humanities as a critical paradigm. Through the narrator's developmental relationship with the ocean, the father's consuming maritime nostalgia, the community's blue cultural ecology, and the sea's rich symbolic economy, Salim constructs a vision of coastal life that is simultaneously historically grounded, ecologically attentive, and existentially searching. The novel participates in, and enriches, the global conversation about humanity's relationship to water - a conversation that has never been more urgent than in this era of rising seas and disappearing coastlines.

By situating *The Small Town Sea* within the theoretical framework of Blue Humanities - drawing on the formulations of Mentz, Gillis, Alaimo, Bose, and Hofmeyr - this paper has demonstrated the interpretive richness that the blue humanities lens brings to South Asian fiction. It has also been argued for the novel's significance beyond the regional: as a work that thinks seriously about the ocean's role in human culture, history, and identity, *The Small Town Sea* belongs to the global literature of the sea. Future scholarship might productively extend this analysis to examine Salim's other coastal novels through the same framework, or to situate his work within broader Indian Ocean literary networks, contributing further to the decolonisation of Blue Humanities as a field still dominated, as Ferwerda has noted, by North Atlantic perspectives (Ferwerda 24).

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