

The Aesthetics of Location: the Indian Ocean in Yvette Christiansë's Unconfessed

Maria Olausen¹

¹Linnaeus University, English, Växjö, Sweden

maria.olaussen@lnu.se

This paper seeks to approach the question of aesthetic theory by focusing on the importance of location in the articulation of a literary voice. I take as my point of departure the ideas of transnationalism expressed by Isabel Hofmeyer when she identifies the Indian Ocean in paradigmatic opposition to the Atlantic Ocean, and I seek to read literary texts which draw on an Indian Ocean heritage. The aesthetic ideas are developed through the challenge of retrieving a voice which articulates the Indian Ocean context while at the same time expressing a historical reality dominated by the Atlantic paradigm.

Yvette Christiansë's novel *Unconfessed* (2006) deals with the history of slavery at the Cape. It builds on the court case of a slave woman convicted of the murder of her child and creates a connection to Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987), not only through this relation to the archive but also through the idea of haunting and way the mother addresses her murdered child in the novel. In Christiansë's novel, this voice is, however, deeply informed by the South African context and the specific history of Indian Ocean slavery. Christiansë's text evokes the tension between the paradigms through this relation to Morrison's novel and thereby expresses a specific aesthetics of location.