**CfP: Aquatic Environments, Hydro-Politics and Literary Strategies in Latin America**

**Cologne, December 4 and 5, 2023**

This workshop will focus on the role that literature can play in sharing alternative practices of hydro-politics in the aquatic environments of Latin America.

Water, in particular its scarcity or abundance, has become a tangible sign of climate change. The severe drought in Europe in the summer of 2022 –the worst in 500 years- and the floods in Pakistan later that year are pressing indications of the global socioecological crisis of the Anthropocene. The impact of human activities on the Earth, which causes this crisis, is particularly visible in vast hydraulic engineering constructions, like (mega)dams, canals, regularized rivers or pipelines for drinking water. These human interventions in aquatic systems did not only rewrite geohistory by shifting the axis of the Earth and changing its rotation speed (Blackmore 13). Like every other extractive installation, they also form part of an intricated web of power relations which creates inequality and exploitation, but also work, wealth, community, or simply the possibility to survive.

From pre-Columbian times till today, human interventions in aquatic environments – the technologies related to irrigation, to fighting drought or floods; the use of rivers as borders or transportation routes; the management of drinking water– have been shaping the geopolitics of Latin America and the Caribbean. Moreover, the transoceanic colonial history of the region reveals the close connection between bodies of water and economic interests, and shows that the conquest and colonization of land is inseparable from a conquest of the waters. Studies on these topics, like De Loughrey’s seminal book Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures (2007) and the more recent volumes Liquid Ecologies in Latin American and Caribbean Art (2020), edited by Blackmore and Gómez, the special issue on World Literature and the Blue Humanities (2020), edited by Campbell and Paye, and Hydrocriticism and Colonialism in Latin America. Water Marks, edited by Mabel Moraña (2022), shape the emerging field of the “blue humanities” from a Latin American and Caribbean perspective – even though in some cases only partially. These studies are interested in the idea of hydro-power as “energy, force, militarism, and empire” (DeLoughrey 2019, 26), but pay also attention to “how concepts of flow, fluidity, and mobility can oppose strategies of imperialist containment and hegemonic enclosure” (Campbell 9).

Although literary studies are included in the interdisciplinary field of the blue humanities, little attention has been paid so far to the specific literary strategies that can serve to oppose unequal structures of hydro-power in Latin America and the Caribbean. This workshop will therefore focus on the potential of literature to share alternative practices, knowledge and ways of thinking with water instead of thinking about it as a mere object or resource (Blackmore and Gómez 3).

We kindly ask you to send an abstract (250 words) and a biobibliography (150 words) by September 15, 2023. Conference languages will be English and Spanish.
The workshop is organized by Jun.-Prof. Dr. Bieke Willem and Rebecca Seewald, contact address: r.seewald@uni-koeln.de

During the workshop, the following topics will be discussed:

- Water as a conduit for memories and possible futures

- Submerged perspectives (Gómez-Barris)

- Liquid narrative forms and genres (ecogothic, Oceanic Weird, travel narratives, oral literature etc.)

- (gendered) symbols and tropes of liquidity

- Water and (mental) healing

- Multispecies encounters in aquatic environments; liquid metamorphosis

- Water frontiers, migration crossing liquid borders

- Enclosed by water: islands and archipelagos as particular literary spaces

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