

Note for the English-language edition

This book was written in 2011 and was published in German in 2013. It has not been substantively revised for the English-language translation, which likewise does not take account of special academic literature appearing after the German-language book's publication: perhaps particularly in the context of maritime matters, such an undertaking could quickly become boundless. Instead, working together with the book's—extraordinarily engaged—translator Joel Golb, we have tried to produce a version of the original text oriented toward an English-speaking and international readership. This does not alter the fact that the book's "global" perspective is also a limited one. It naturally does not try to either do justice to "world literature" in the term's present senses or offer a universal history of seafaring. Rather it thematically addresses the special, at times only loose alliance that seafaring and literary writing formed *in the Western world* from the beginning, an alliance that seems to still be intact. The question of whether this shared "beginning" or "origin" is simply a myth, a retrospective projection, or even one version of colonialist positing is as much a part of the history of this alliance as is the concession that it has always perspectivized and projected onto "the world" according to European standards. The history of Western seafaring (and the writing that cooperates with it) can thus be understood as a history of the "Western gaze"—even if this gaze has never wished to content itself with fixed cultural landmarks but has repeatedly strived to lose itself in the open horizon of the sea.

