

'Ships without Harbor': Shipwreck and Transit in the Caribbean"

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In 1943 Spanish author Max Aub, recently liberated from a prison camp in Algeria, published a play that chronicles the last days of a group of Jewish refugees trapped on a cargo ship, the San Juan. By the play's end, the San Juan, not welcome at any harbor, sinks and all passengers perish. A year later, Anna Seghers's novel *Transit* appeared in Mexico, the country where she and Aub were living in exile. The novel begins and ends with conjectures about the fate of another ship carrying refugees, the Montreal, that may or may not have sunk on its way from Marseille to Martinique. The Montreal and the San Juan are fictional, yet their journeys evoke those of actual ships, from the ill-fated SS St. Louis (1938) and the Struma (1942), to the Capitaine Paul Lemerle, a vessel that travelled the short-lived Martinique Escape Route. As Michael Rothberg writes in *Multidirectional Memory*, "the potential of a privileged perspective on the crosscutting events of war and colonialism." (72)

Taking Aub's and Seghers's works as a starting point, this paper explores actual and imagined flight routes from Europe to the Caribbean. The paper considers historical sources (among them the recollections of transit to Martinique by painter Wifredo Lam, photographer Germaine Krull, and writer Anna Seghers and her children). It also refers to Lisa Tetzner's young adult novels *The Ship Without Harbor* (1944) and *The Children on the Island* (1944), in order to reflect on the ways in which exiled authors imagined and depicted, before the war's end, experiences in the Caribbean in relation to the very real threats of shipwreck and refolement.