

Editorial

Introducing a World of Islands

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This Book

Close to 10% of the world's population – that is, some 600 million people - live on islands today, covering some 7% of the earth's land surface. One-fourth of the world's sovereign states consist of island or archipelagic territories. The combined land area and exclusive economic zone of the world's islands covers more than one sixth of the Earth's total area. Islands have paved the way to the emergence of such disciplines as biogeography and anthropology; they are typical 'hot spots' for biological diversity, ecological conservation and international political tension. Islands may offer distinct identities and spaces in an increasingly homogenous and placeless world.

This book provides a thoroughly referenced, comprehensive and pluri-disciplinary overview of the study of islands. It should prove useful to a variety of *aficionados*, specialists and generalists, especially those living or working on islands. In particular, *A World of Islands* seeks to serve as a reference text and primer to those educators, scholars, researchers, scientists, entrepreneurs, public policy officials and analysts who are keen to adopt an 'island imagination' to their work, study or specific inquiry. Over 40 contributors, from all over the world and from numerous disciplinary backgrounds, deploy their expertise and ideas to highlight insights from, and for, the study of islands and island life. Material is as jargon-free as possible to facilitate understanding across specializations.

This book thus extends an invitation to place islands right in the centre of things. While some will certainly question the inclusion or omission of particular themes, this here is the closest thing to an *island studies* textbook.

The Status of Research Subjects

Inviting key scholars to write about the island phenomenon from the vantage point of particular disciplines could prove problematic. The result may be a collection penned by authoritative experts; however, most of these are (as they themselves may be wont to admit, and with all due respect) white, western, middle-aged men. Island scholarship remains dominated by those observing from the ‘outside-in’; although a conscious attempt has been made in this book to provide platforms to other contributors.

All too often, we are faced with a situation where the subject matter – the island, or the islander – becomes a “looked at” reference group. Following his first contact with the natives of Polynesia, anthropologist Raymond Firth had nonchalantly described them as “turbulent human material ... [to] be induced to submit to scientific study” (Firth, 1936: 1). This amounts to a removal of agency, cheating islanders of the possibility of defining themselves and of articulating their own concerns and interests. Political correctness may have brought to an end explicit, even contradictory, references to “savages”: be they noble, ignoble, lustful, uncultured or virtuous. Yet, islanders continue today to suffer being the passive and unwitting “objects of the gaze” of non-islanders, and perennial targets of new ‘civilizing missions’: not only of social researchers, but also of consultants, investors, journalists, film-makers, conservationists, tourists (*e.g.* Urry, 1990: 9). Island stuff is often either romanced, rendered as coy subject matter; seen only fleetingly through rose-tinted glasses (Smawfield, 1993: 29); or otherwise trivialized and subsumed within a paradigm of structural deficiency (Hau’ofa, 1994). [Why indeed, for example, should we continue to refer to *small* islands (rather than just *islands*) when they are very much the norm? *Large* size is the actual exception.]

How do islanders react to this debilitating discourse of inauthenticity, where they continue to be ritually “aesthesicized, sanitized and anaesthetized” (Connell, 2003: 568)? Most will not even bother, perhaps feeling bemused at best with how they continue to survive while international scholarship has condemned them to ‘non-viability’

or 'chronic vulnerability'. Some islanders may be confused by how they are seen as 'paradises' by mainlanders, while they may struggle at home against un- and under-employment, aid dependency, loss of talent, drug running or money laundering. Others will accept the claiming syndrome as a necessary mythology, since it bolsters the charm and mystique of their tourism industry. Other islanders may be silently thankful that even a perverse interest by the international community is possibly better than no interest at all. Some will protest and seek distinctiveness, laying claims to an exceptional, indigenously rooted counter-identity. Some others will be confused by statements about bio-diversity and endemism that are meant to redefine the net worth of what to them may be well-known, common, local species. And yet another category of islanders would develop and hone those skills that allow them to engage mainlanders, manipulating their resources, humouring their objectives, often surviving comfortably as *glocal* citizens in a split, schizoid world with two parallel sets of values, languages and practices: look at the exasperated attempts of Dolittle, an Australian "overseas expert", who is hired to "look into the feasibility of making the islanders of Tiko work on weekdays" but despairs after speaking with a VIP who fritters away the office hours playing cards with his secretary (Hau'ofa, 1983). One wonders whether, or to what extent, such a parody is true ...

Meanwhile, given the enduring fascination of 'islanding' to those who would visit, but not live on, islands, one must pay due respect to this powerful and millenary cultural industry.

This Continental Obsession to Claim

Finding oneself on, or close to, an island seems to trigger a desire to circum-navigate, circum-ambulate, or climb its highest point and 'take it all in' (*e.g.* Baum, 1996: 21). A subconscious obsession to frame and map an island cognitively, and to discern its finite geography, is strong. There seems to be a 'need' at large:

"... to go to the centre of the island and from there to sing or shout or reflect that, however shattered it might seem to others, the island experience is, within itself, with all its conflicts, potentially whole" (Ritchie, 1977: 188).

In so doing, one feels that one knows, and therefore controls, the island more thoroughly and intimately. Unlike mainlands, one can actually buy and own a whole island (FT Expat, 2002; Vladi Private Islands web-site). Is this not part of the reason why so many islands are self-contained jurisdictions, perhaps precursors of the modern territorial, nation-state? (Baldacchino, 2005: 247; Steinberg, 2005). The geography is simply too gripping; the island image is too powerful to discard; the opportunity to 'play God' on/for an island is too tantalizing to resist. In contrast, mainlands, and their vastness, overwhelm and frighten. We would make islands in our own image (Denning, 1980; 2004). Virtual islands can be, and have been, conceived, engineered or fashioned in strict accordance to the whims and ideals of their [invariably male] masters: take Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* or Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island*. Can one be but a Governor on one's own island (Redfield, 2000: 12; also Loxley, 1990)? The act of material ownership and insular commodification can easily and tragically delude one into thinking that an island and its habitat/habitants can be moulded in strict accordance to one's desires, as in D.H. Lawrence's tragic short story, *The Man who Loved Islands* (Lawrence, 1926). Richard Grove sums it up (1995: 8-9), with references to 'ease' that are doubly dubious:

“[T]he island easily became, in practical environmental as well as mental terms, an easily conceived allegory of a whole world”.

An Elusive Definition

The finite geography of an island belies a more complex identity that confronts attempts at definition. The mere rendition of an island as “a piece of land surrounded by water” is academically imprecise. Where does “land” become too large or too small (*see Depraetere and Dahl, this volume*)? Does anything happen to an island if it is physically linked to a mainland (*e.g.* Baldacchino, 2006d)? A long tradition of scholars now identify the sea as *just one* of a series of 'media' which can act as frontiers, barriers or obstacles to smooth transfers and exchanges (Brunhes, 1920: 160-161; Carlquist, 1965; Pitt, 1980; King, 1993: 15-19; Newmark, 1987). In other words, literal islands are only one sort of myriad insular situations in the physical world. Consider a lake (the inverse of a literal island) which is presumably as much of an island for the fish that inhabit

it; or a nature reserve; or the effective ‘islanding’ of a tree-dwelling species of animal that inhabits a small dot of taiga (a sub-arctic conifer forest) surrounded by wastes of tundra (a sub-arctic treeless plain) (MacArthur & Wilson, 1967: 3-4). It does not take much to image similar extensions of islandness: we now have islands in our kitchens, and the island of Langerhans lies in our pancreas; Bill Holm (2000: 59-82) considers his piano to be an island ...

Perhaps our obsession with only one type of island, and one type of obstacle, is fuelled by a jaundiced, mainland-driven impression of the sea as “the most effective barrier” (Carlquist, 1965: 4). After all, an expanse of ocean may prove easier for a particular species to cross than a mosquito-infested jungle, a desert or a continental ice sheet. Moreover, all boundaries are porous: ask prison guards! The ability of island spaces to keep objects out (or in) is always relative. Island studies is very much about the implications of permeable borders.

An Island for All Seasons, and for All Tastes

And there is more. Thanks to its self-evident vulnerability, it is fallaciously simple to conceive of ‘the island’ as the convenient platform for any whim or fancy. An island can be both paradise and prison, both heaven and hell. Any island, any islander, is a living contradiction between openness and closure (Villamil, 1977; Kirch, 1986a; Péron, 1993: 16), gripped by negotiating the anxious balance between roots and routes (Connell & King, 1999: 2; Clifford, 1997; Jolly, 2001); and thus not surprisingly nervous of bridges and tunnels that presage attachment to mainlands (Baldacchino, 2006d; *see Royle, this volume*). Island geography tends towards isolation; island history, on the other hand, tends towards contact (*see Warrington & Milne, this volume*). The latter includes some high profile invasions, and other more recent security threats (*see Bartmann, this volume*). Islands are paradoxical spaces which lend themselves alluringly to smug subordination via different discourses:

“Islands ... absolute entities ... territories, territorial; relational spaces – archipelagos, (inter)dependent, identifiable; relative spaces – bounded but porous; isolated, connected, colonized, postcolonial; redolent of the performative imaginary; vulnerable

to linguistic, cultural, environmental change; robust and able to absorb and modify; ... utopian and dystopian, tourist meccas, ecological refugia..." (Stratford, 2003: 495).

In fact, a significant component of the contemporary intoxicating 'lure' or 'fascination' of islands (Baum, 1996; 2000; King, 1993) has to do with the fact that islands suggest themselves as *terrae nullius*, empty spaces, waiting, wanting, to be possessed: potential laboratories for any conceivable and uninhibited human project, in thought or in action. There is something about the insular that beckons specificity, greater flexibility, a more genuine 'gone there, done that' (even if psychological) triumphant finality, an opportunity for a more thorough control of intervening variables which then are more likely to guarantee successful outcomes (e.g. Baum, 2000: 215). But: the small, remote and insular also suggests marginality, being on the edge, being out of sight and so out of mind, situations which can expose the weakness of mainstream ideas, orthodoxies and received wisdoms, while fomenting alternatives to the status quo. Any dominant paradigm is supposedly weakest at its periphery (Paterson, 2000: 171).

The synergetic outcome of these features is to propel islands as sites of innovative conceptualizations, whether of nature or human enterprise, whether virtual or real. It generates more scope for tinkering, a greater readiness for either making the strange familiar (breaking out of the mold) or making the familiar strange (finding your soul). Thus, Innisfree Island, in Ireland, is marketed as one such refuge for the soul, the Sligo Tourist Board seeking to capitalize on the text of the poem *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* by Irish author W.B. Yeats (1893) (Royle, 2001: 12). Same with American Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) TV profiling of Ricardo Montalbán fulfilling the wildest dreams of his eccentric clients on *Fantasy Island* (1977). This proneness to novelty is generally exacerbated by increasing remoteness and by smaller size of territory and population. Islands are the first, the harbingers, the pioneers, the miner's canary (Baldacchino & Milne, 2000: 241). In the words of United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, islands are the frontline zones where many of the main

problems of environment and development are unfolding (UN, Special Session of the General Assembly, 1999).

Island Scholarship

It is difficult to assign even a tentative date to the origins of island studies scholarship, cutting as it does across disciplinary boundaries. Was it Joseph Hooker's 1866 Lecture on Island Flora? William Shakespeare's (1611) *The Tempest*? Thomas More's (1516) *Utopia*? Cristoforo Buondelmonti's (1418) *Isolario*? Homer's (3000 Before Present?) *Odyssey*? Or should we look beyond Europe, considering Zakariya Al-Qazwini (1202-1283) and his *Atar al-Bilad* (Delgado Perez, 2003)? Or the story of the first beach crossing in the Western Pacific, some 2,000 years ago (recaptured by Denning, 2004)? In more scholarly circles, looking at islands *because they are islands* was probably initially pioneered by bio-geographers like Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace, by human geographers (Brunhes, 1910/1920; Semple, 1911), and by anthropologists (Radcliffe-Brown, 1922; Mead, 1928). The rest of the disciplines followed, some hesitatingly, and with the odd voice of dissent thrown in (*e.g.* Selwyn, 1980). Concerns over economic development, viability and security - often conflating islands with the overlapping category of small jurisdictions - emerged, linking islandness to inconsequentiality, non-viability or vulnerability (*e.g.* Robinson, 1960; Fischer & Encontre, 1998) and, more recently, to resilience (*e.g.* Briguglio *et al.*, 2006). Such scholarship was accompanied by inroads from public administration and political science (*e.g.* Baker, 1992; Richards, 1982); educational planning (*e.g.* Bray & Packer, 1994); tourism management (*e.g.* Conlin & Baum, 1995); demography (*e.g.* Williamson, 1981); epidemiology (*e.g.* Cliff *et al.*, 2000); biogeography (*e.g.* Whittaker, 1999); biology (*e.g.* Carlquist, 1965); archaeology (*e.g.* Kirch, 1986b); history (*e.g.* Howe *et al.*, 1994); information technology (*e.g.* Little *et al.*, 2000); migration studies (*e.g.* King & Connell, 1999); sustainable development (*e.g.* Biagini & Hoyle, 1999); renewable energy (*e.g.* Weissler, 2004); and music studies (*e.g.* Hayward, 2006). The realm of the literary and fictional is not immune from similar epiphanies: we come across the microcosm of Lilliput and the mobile panopticon of the flying island of Laputa in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (Swift,

1726, Parts I & III, respectively), the heart-breaking *Paul et Virginie*, by Jacques-Henri de Saint Pierre (1787); the gentle yet doomed utopian Buddhist island of Pala in the last novel by Aldous Huxley (1962); more recently, Bill Holm's (2000) *Eccentric Islands*; and so much poetry and prose (e.g. McLeod, 2000; Hay, 2005). For a dash of science fiction, consider *Galápagos* by Kurt Vonnegut Jr. (1985). And, to try and tie it all together, a 'geography of islands' by Stephen Royle (2001).

It would be just as difficult to try and define *island studies* merely as material written about islands, on islands, by islanders or for islanders. Islanders are reclaiming more of this field from mainlanders, and embracing more participative methodologies while doing so. But disempowerment, and the likelihood of being written *about* – and hence becoming victim of various stereotypical misrepresentations – still generally increases with smaller island population size.

Celebrating Experimental Sites

It should come as no surprise to note that islands, both real and earthy as much as concocted, or even those occupying the fuzzy space in between, stand out as sites of novelty, of coy experimentation, of deliberate or coincidental pathbreaking events. Amongst the rich compendium of nissological appellatives, islands call for recognition, and celebration, as experimental sites. In fulfilling this designation, human action, human imagination and nature are in solid agreement.

The rich diversity of novel episodes and situations which emerge from island scrutiny is cause for celebration. The merits of this review exercise should lie primarily in confronting two suppositions: the first, that matters relating to islands are often obscure or assumed to be naturally insignificant; the second, that observers and critics often suffer from the strictures imposed by academic disciplines and which fashion their training, perspectives, discourses and career paths, possibly rendering these observers and critics knowledgeable about *some* island matters but totally oblivious of others. Yet: the first principle couldn't be further from the truth; while the second can, with some understandable difficulty, be overcome. In fact, this book's originality may lie precisely in teasing

together pluri-disciplinary observations about island studies that are hardly likely to be found side by side.

Stumbling Ahead

Islands are synecdoches: their understanding facilitates a ‘coming to grips’ with a more complex whole. They also act as advance indicators or extreme reproductions of what is future elsewhere. Crucial, new insights into evolutionary theory, and the realization of so much species differentiation on islands in modern zoogeography, is primarily due to the unwitting and haphazard stumbling of what, at first sight, may have appeared to be inconsequential, island-based, island-specific fieldwork. This includes such investigations as the study of Darwin’s finches on the Galápagos Islands (Darwin, 1979; Lack, 1947) or Alfred Wallace’s study of birds-of-paradise on the Aru Islands (Wallace, 1975) (*see Andrew Berry, this volume*). The forays of Bronislaw Malinowski amongst the Trobriand (or Kiriwina) Islanders of Papua New Guinea (1922), Margaret Mead to Samoa and the Admiralty Islands (1928, 1934) and Raymond Firth to Tikopia (1936) led to the birth of ethnography and the consolidation of social anthropology as a discrete social science discipline with its own methodological rigour (Baldacchino, 2004b; DeLoughrey, 2001: 35). More recently, one has more likely descended deliberately upon a specific island for observations of an extraordinary and extra-insular relevance, as in the case of Daniel Simberloff and Edward Wilson’s (1969) controlled experiments amongst the mangroves of the Florida Keys; Dolph Schluter’s research on song sparrows on Mandarte Island (*e.g.* Schluter & Smith, 1986); the work of Baldwin & Sanderson (1998) on the adaptive radiation of the Hawaiian silversword (*see Percy et al., this volume*); or Peter and Rosemary Grant’s ongoing studies of finches on Daphne Major, in the Galápagos (*e.g.* Weiner, 1995).

Take the *physical sciences*. David Quammen (1996) visits Aldabra, Aru, Angel de la Guarda, Galapagos, Guam, Hawai’i, Komodo, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rakata and Tasmania: these islands provide rich evidence in support of his conviction that we are witnessing widespread ecosystem decay. Insularity is pronounced as the flywheel of evolution, with copious island-based examples of endemism (Carlquist, 1974), including gigantism

(such as the Solomon Island rat, the Komodo dragon and the Aldabra tortoise) and dwarfism (such as the Icelandic horse, the Shetland pony, the now extinct pygmy elephant of Malta, and *Homo floresiensis*). Angela Cropper (1994) confirms that between 66% and 97% of endemic plant species on Lord Howe Island, St. Helena, Rodrigues, Norfolk, Ascension, Juan Fernandez, Canaries, Seychelles and Galapagos are rare, threatened or extinct. When one excludes the 'continental islands' of Antarctica and Australia, islands occupy 1.86% of the Earth's total surface area; and just 1.47% if Greenland is also excluded (Global Shoreline Database, 2006, as described in Wessel & Smith, 1996); but 13% (108 out of 830) of UNESCO's World Heritage sites (as at September 2006) are on islands or else are islands *in toto* (UNESCO World Heritage web-site). The latter would include Chile's Easter Island, Ecuador's Galápagos, Gambia's James Island, Greece's Patmos Island and Russia's Solovetski Archipelago (location of the first Gulag), to name but a few. The island of Mafia, off Zanzibar, is the World Health Organization test site for the elimination of advanced lymphatic filariasis or elephantiasis (*The Economist*, 2003). The islanders of Tristan da Cunha may hold the key to the asthma and lung cancer genes (Scott, 2003; see *Cliff et al.*, *this volume*). The Micronesian islands of Pingelap and Pohnpei have the highest known incidence of achromatopsia, or colour blindness (Sacks, 1997; Gabilondo, 2000). Iceland is today a key leader in genetic decoding, thanks to its extensively well-documented genealogical heritage (Vesilind, 2000).

In geophysical terms, everywhere is born; however islands can be and are born more quickly (such as Surtsey, off Iceland, or Kavachi, in the Solomons – see Nunn, 1994; *Nunn*, *this volume*); islands can have their entire living biota wiped out (such as Anatahan Island, in the Northern Marianas: NASA, 2003); or be practically blown off the face of the map (such as Krakatoa, Indonesia, in 1883: Whittaker, 1999) as a consequence of natural activity. (For the subsequent colonization of the "Child of Krakatoa", see *RJ 'Sam' Berry*, *this volume*). They can also suffer terribly at the hands of humankind: Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, is the site of the world's largest nuclear weapon test series in 1946; the Chagos Archipelago is the site of a forced and complete evacuation of an indigenous people, now condemned by the courts, in 1971

(Harwood, 2002); and Tuvaluans risk becoming the world's first modern environmental refugees (Farbotko, 2005). Natural disasters arising from hurricanes, tsunamis and earthquakes can have totally devastating effects on islands. Life cannot get more extreme than that.

Consider next the *social sciences*. Geoff Bertram and Ray Watters (1985) examine Tuvalu, Niue, Kiribati, Cook Islands and Tokelau, identifying in the process the mutually reinforcing features of a rent-driven, 'MIRAB' economy which departs from the orthodox conceptualization of economic development as being necessarily driven by indigenous, productive forces (*On MIRAB, see Bertram & Poirine, this volume*). Both Joseph Barnes (1954) and Jeremy Boissevain (1974) conceive of social network theory from respective fieldwork on the Norwegian island of Bremnes and in a village on the island state of Malta. George Doxey (1976) conjures up his tourism irritation index from fieldwork in Barbados. Both Alfred Crosby (1986) and Richard Grove (1995: 9) remind us that Mauritius was the site of the modern world's earliest known debate on what constitutes proper environmental management. David Landes (1998: 69) documents the island groups of Açores and Madeira as the world's prototype plantation economies. Their separateness, distinctiveness and more manageable small size render islands obvious starting points for designing sustainable ecotourism programmes via biosphere reserves, national parks and other diversity rich areas (Di Castri & Balaji, 2002). Chumbe Island, outside Zanzibar, is one successful prototype for eco-tourism projects (Leniuk, 2006), along with a modest collection of 'cold water' island locations (Baldacchino, 2006c). The impact of tourism is nowhere more sudden, pervasive, transparent, and perhaps even irrevocable or unsustainable, as on small islands and their (more fragile) habitats and/or communities (Apostolopoulos & Gayle, 2002; Baldacchino, 2004a; Bastin, 1984; Briguglio *et al.*, 1996; Conlin & Baum, 1995; Gössling, 2003; Lockhart & Drakakis-Smith, 1996): UNESCO recognized this island condition early on in reviewing case studies of tourism effects in five island territories: Bali, Bermuda, Cyprus, Malta and the Seychelles (De Kadt, 1979). New Guinea (the world's second largest island) is the world's largest depository of language diversity (Crystal, 1997). Extreme examples of high population density and its effects as played out on

a bounded territory can be glimpsed from life on the atoll capital of Malé, Maldives, with its population density of 5,200 persons per km². Singapore, Bermuda, Java, Majuro, Malta and South Tarawa would be trailing close (UN Earthwatch Island Directory web-site). Though all these lag far behind Ap Lei Chau, Hong Kong, an island with 80,000 people living in an area measuring just 1.3km² (Guinness World Records, 2006); or Ebeye, in the Marshall Islands, with some 12,800 residents on 0.05km² of land area: a staggering population density of over 35,000 people per km², or 90,000 per square mile (Gorenflo & Levin, 1989).

Island creativity extends to political economy. It is now more common for islands to trade in their sovereignty, or part thereof, in exchange for economic largesse. While 43 of the world's sovereign states (22% of the total) are exclusively island or archipelagic territories (CIA, 2006); there are today at least some additional 100 other populated sub-national island jurisdictions (SNIJs) which are known to enjoy some degree of autonomy without full sovereignty (Baldacchino & Milne, 2006; Watts, 2000). "Creative political economy" involves the sale of stamps, internet domain sites, telephone dialling codes (Prasad, 2004); offshore finance centres (Hampton & Christiansen, 2002; Le Rendu, 2004); prison services (like St Helena, Alcatraz, Robben, Tasmania and infamous Devil's Island); hosting movie productions (Malta, New Zealand, Rapa Nui); or religious pilgrimages (Bardsley, Iona, Lindisfarne, Mont Saint Michel, Shikoku, Solovetski); serving as targets of branding exercises that help position island products into niche export markets (*e.g.* Fairbairn, 1988; Baldacchino & Fairbairn, 2006) and attracting other, rent-based revenues (Kakazu, 1994). Other islands have exploited their strategic "in-betweenity" (Baldacchino & Greenwood, 1998: 10) in time (Bermuda) and/or space (Iceland, Ascension, Kinmen, and Australia's current use of Nauru as an immigrant detention centre – Connell, 2006).

Thirdly, the realm of the *literary and fictional* is not immune from similar epiphanies, even if the discovery, rather than of buried material treasure, is either of one's soul, one's life mission or one's real self. On the mysterious isolated islands of the mind, standard biological or political processes need not apply. Imagined geography, reminds us Balasopolous

(2002: 59), can legitimately conjure up the ideal commonwealth of *Utopia* (More, 1516); the bounteous plenty of *The Island* (Byron, 1823), or the savage yet sensual practices of *Typee* (Melville, 1846). Meanwhile, the “geographical precision” of an island (Weale, 1992: 81-2) is conducive to psychological distinctiveness. Literature by island writers is replete with struggles to articulate island particularity (a very short list would include Hay, 2003; King *et al.*, 1995; Levy, 2005; Wendt, 1973; Wood, 2003).

The smaller the island, the more likely is it that it lacks a physical, domestic hinterland (Baldacchino, 2006a; Hintjens, 1991: 38); but that does not prevent it from serving as a material or spiritual hinterland to others, as tourists would readily attest (*Gössling & Wall, this volume*). Many characters who travel to islands, even in the course of a story, even if by themselves, usually return disturbed, broken, refreshed, redeemed, resolute, shaken or otherwise somehow transformed, by the experience. These range from the atavistic anarchism of William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*; the noble intentions of social engineering in H.G. Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau*; and a recent commentary on religious experience and morality in Douglas Glover’s *Elle*, marooned on the Île des Demons. As Shakespeare reminds us (via prototype islander Caliban) in *The Tempest*, that early specimen of island-framed literature which melds reality with illusion: “be not afeard, the isle is full of noises” (Act 3, Scene 2, line 138).

Noisy it is indeed. The theme of island redemption is central to Western historical inscriptions of island sites (DeLoughrey, 2001: 35): as Gillis (2004) points out, the cultural history of ‘the West’ is primarily an island story. Such islands became:

“... the loci of imagination, desire, hopes and fears, the goal of dreamers and mystics and misfits, multiplying moulds into which cosmographers and cartographers could pour both art and science, material spaces which the merchant venturer, pirate, colonist and governor could penetrate and exploit” (Cosgrove, 2005: 302).

Many of these former island colonies now desperately seek to market themselves as tourism destinations on precisely the same refreshing

mythical allure, laced with whiffs of fecundity and exoticism - for the erogenously inspired - and/or spiritual healing - for those tickled by what is beyond the flesh (*e.g.* Gabilondo, 2000: 99). The magnetic attraction of such unsullied fantasies continues unabated: in 2001, the box office hit *Castaway* (starring Tom Hanks) was filmed on Monuriki Island (Yasawa Group, Fiji); while separate rounds of the TV serialized crowd-puller *Survivor* have been filmed on such island locations as Aitutaki (Cook Islands), Pulau Tiga (Malaysia), Nuku Hiva (Marquesas Group), the Pearl Islands of Panama, Palau and Vanuatu.

From ‘the islands of the World’ ...

That all islands are unique is self-evident. Yet, in their self-contained difference, they invite comparison:

“Islands .. are unique and therefore they are normal. Island species tend to be different. Island communities tend to be different. But throughout the world they manifest their differences in a handful of similar ways... Islands are distinct from mainlands in that they represent simplified, exaggerated versions ... of exactly those evolutionary processes that occur on mainlands” (Quammen, 1996: 120, 139).

This means that there may be no better comparison for an island than another island, over and above the relevance of comparing the observation of processes and dynamics on mainlands with those which habitually also occur, enhanced or exacerbated, in an island setting. Yet, such deliberate comparisons remain exceptional: and, in the rare cases when comparisons are attempted, islands have been (and continue to be) looked upon from a large-scale, land-based, continental frame of mind; as if mainlanders refuse to get their feet wet (*e.g.* Dolman, 1988). They are, simply, the *islands of the world* and, as such, become easy candidates for the “deficit model”, being judged by what they *don’t* have – land area, population, economies of scale, natural resources, fiscal reserves, brain or brawn pools, domestic markets, impersonal bureaucracies, competitive advantages, leverage in international relations - rather than what they *do*. Sadly, islanders may be as much party to this perverse relativity as mainlanders.

If ‘island studies’ has come of age, it should not be construed flippantly or anecdotally, in a manner which may (inadvertently or otherwise) encourage the naïve perception of islands as being pristine, exotic, malleable tropes; simple and accommodating social microcosms; or manageable physical laboratories (*e.g.* Ratter, 1996). Nor are islanders just as uncomplicated, sensuous savages or passive respondents. Such stereotypes simply nurture those objective conditions which are ideal for insatiably curious Westerners to swoop in, get their data or experience, and rapidly move out, in jet-set mode. By way of example, Oscar Spate described the modern idea of ‘the South Pacific’ as a “European artefact”, and the Pacific Islands as “so splendidly splittable into Ph.D. topics” (Spate 1978: 42). Upon leaving Grenada after a visit during the US invasion and occupation in October 1983, then-Secretary of State George Schultz looked out of his official jet at the lush greenery below and proclaimed: “What a lovely piece of real estate!” (Frazier, 2005). Indeed, mainlanders’ interest in islands as up-market property locations risks transforming island life (*see Clark et al., this volume*). It is high time to critique such tempting yet demeaning conceptualizations, driven as they are by an *ex post* convenience.

Nor is *island studies* the study of events and phenomena on sites which merely happen to be islands, or on islands – or, for better or for worse, on *small* islands. Were it so, the island Lilliput is easily studied and absorbed, in one look, in one book, or even in one chapter of a book, before the rapacious onlooker departs, in Lemuel Gulliver style, to his next exotic destination (Swift 1727/1965). *Veni, vidi, vici*. Such is the nature of island travelogues as old as *The Odyssey*, a tradition that continues today in such texts as Holm (2000); Clarke (2001) or Winchester (2004). Nor do islands faithfully reproduce on an affordable scale the dynamics and processes that obtain elsewhere (*e.g.* Bahn & Flenley, 1992). Islandness (which is a term preferred to *insularity*, since the latter comes along with so much negative baggage) is “... an intervening variable that does not determine, but contours and conditions, physical and social events in distinct, and distinctly relevant, ways” (Baldacchino, 2004b: 278).

... to A World of Islands

But the negatives have been piled high enough. *Island studies* presents itself as a legitimate defence of, and for, “a large portion of the Earth’s beauty, diversity, intellectual interest, spiritual depth and ecological health” (Quammen, 1996: 607). The inherent and intrinsic, yet comparable, uniqueness of any island, even the smallest, is a bastion of hope, however slim, that locality thrives and survives in an age which glibly heralds the “death of geography” (*e.g.* Ohmae, 1990). Geographical boundedness, historical distinctiveness, biotic diversity and endemism, linguistic nuances, cultural specifics, innovative governance practices and “pseudo-development” strategies (Baldacchino, 1993) ... collectively, the evidence suggests *islandness* as a relevant, cross-cutting, intervening variable. As prototypical ethno-scapes, islands spearhead the study of the production of locality (Appadurai, 1996: 180; Baldacchino, 2006b). *Island matters, islands matter* was the insightful theme for the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development for Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994 (this being the small island state version of the 1992 UN ‘Earth Summit’ held in Rio de Janeiro).

Explaining *island studies* as the critical, inter- and pluri-disciplinary study of islands on their own terms is perhaps an elegant explanation, but still somewhat cryptic. When Grant McCall (1994; 1996) made the clarion call, his thrust was radical, his intent iconoclastic. If the 20th century had been the century of mainland, industrial, large-scale, continental (but polluting?) progress, he argued (and hoped), then perhaps the 21st century could prove to be the century of island, small-scale, service-driven (and perhaps more sustainable?) prosperity. Following Christian Depraetere (1991a; 1991b), McCall called this bold, islands-driven focus *Nissology* (after νῆσι – [*nisi*] the Greek word for island). Its key mandate: sharing, advancing and challenging existing theorization on islands and island studies; while avoiding, delimiting or debunking false or partial interpretations of the island condition.

It is a message very similar to that of another island scholar from the insular Pacific, Epeli Hau’ofa (1993), and from whose vision this book’s title has been drawn. He would have us see islands right at the centre

of things, and not at the fringe; he would have us talk about “our sea of islands”, rather than “the islands of the world”. His is an appeal for self-confidence, for shedding inferiority complexes as well as images of island vulnerabilities and inconsequentiality, that have been imposed on, and sadly often uncritically accepted by, the insular psyche by the Western land-b(i)ased perspective. His is a framing of island societies that encompasses their far-flung, regional and global migrant diasporas (*see Connell, this volume*), and thus transcend the apparent limitations and tribulations of their small size and remote location. Archaeological evidence suggests that this pan-Oceanic community also existed in the past (*see Anderson, this volume*); and that most island societies, certainly in the Pacific, should not be called “insular” (Gosden & Pavlides, 1994). Similarly, Quammen (1996) exhorts us to understand our “... whole planet as a world of islands”.

Conclusion

Islands have historically served as refreshment stops on long maritime journeys (DeLoughrey, 2001: 28). They can today serve more readily as revictualling stations for ideas on the condition of nature, humankind or simply of ideas for their own sake:

“...[T]he heretofore obscure histories of remote islands deserve a place alongside the self-contemplation of the European past – or the history of civilizations – for their own remarkable contributions to an historical understanding. We thus multiply our conceptions of history by the diversity of structures. Suddenly, there are all kinds of new things to consider.” (Sahlins, 1987: 72).

This is a sharp contrast to the early fatal impact and subsequent long imperialist contact with islands, a process which typically starved these territories from any local history and transformed their societies into cargo cults and material comprador communities, intimately integrated with the metropole. Islands are sites of agency, depositories of ‘new things’. The fragmented (continental) narrative of the many islands of the world can be profitably replaced by a reclaiming, pan-archipelagic script of ‘a world of islands’. The treasures that islands deliver include powerful messages, bearing the fullness of vital, novel noises. Far cries

indeed, as Hau'ofa (1993) reminds us, from just being bothersome dots summarily left out of maps.

Annexe I: Institutional Recognition of Island Studies

The study of islands on their own terms today enjoys a growing and wide-ranging recognition. There are various 'island' initiatives of major international institutions: the United Nations (UN) via its Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Programme - freshly energized by its 'Barbados Programme of Action+10' meeting in Mauritius in 2005 - and its specialized agencies, such as UNESCO's Small Island Voice and UNDP, as well as by the Alliance of Small & Island States (AOSIS) active in the UN General Assembly; the World Bank and its small states forum; the European Union, mainly via its Regional Policy Directorate-General, the Committee of the Regions and the lobbying of the Islands Commission within the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR); and regional fora (such as the Pacific Islands Development Program, South Pacific Forum, the Baltic Seven Islands Cooperation Network, the Indian Ocean Commission or the Caribbean Community). The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) is an exclusive grouping of island jurisdictions. A Global Islands Network (GIN) is active, and maintains an impressive web-site and news alert service at www.globalislands.net. The International Small Island Studies Association (ISISA), set up officially in 1992, continues its well-attended biennial conferences; and since 2005 has a web-site maintained by the University of Tasmania at: www.geol.utas.edu.au/isisa/. The Japan Society of Island Studies (Nihon-Tosho-Gakkai) was set up in 1997 and maintains a trilingual web-site at: www1.odn.ne.jp/cah02840/JSIS/. The Small Island Cultures Research Initiative (SICRI), set up in 2005, is a welcome addition of a global network of island scholars and activists: www.sicri.org/. A clutch of universities – including Kent (UK), Macquarie & New South Wales (Australia), Malta and Hawaii (USA) - have an island-related institute or research centre. The University of the South Pacific has a Faculty of Islands & Oceans: www.fio.usp.ac.fj/. International publishers Pinter (UK) launched an 'Island Studies' book series in 1996. There is the commitment to small-state, mainly island, scholarship by the Commonwealth where 32 out of the 52 member (mainly island) states

have populations of less than 1.5 million. The island studies program at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), Canada, kicked off in 1985 with an Institute of Island Studies: www.upei.ca/iis, and now also includes a dedicated Canada Research Chair (Island Studies), a Master of Arts (Island Studies) and Island Studies Press. (More about these and other organizations and programs in the contribution by Graeme Robertson, this volume).

Annexe II: Recognition of Island Studies in Academic Journals

International journals, often cast within strict disciplinary parameters, have sporadically dedicated special, >one off= issues to island matters. These include: *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* [Vol. 32(1), 2001]; *Asian Journal of Public Administration* [Vol. 16(1), 1994]; *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* [Vol. 28(1-2), 2001]; *Convergence* [Vol. 29(2), 1996]; *Geografiska Annaler* [Vol. 85B(4), 2003 & Vol. 87B(4), 2005]; *Health and Place* [Vol. 1(4), 1995]; *International Journal of Educational Development* [Vol. 21(3), 2001]; *Journal of Biogeography* [Vol. 29(5-6), 2002]; *Journal of Developing Societies* [Vol. 22(3), 2006]; *Journal of Historical Geography* [Vol. 29(4), 2003]; *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship* [Vol. 19(4), 2006]; *Public Administration & Development* (various issues); *The Round Table* (various part issues, as well as Vol. 95(386), 2006); *Prospects* [Vol. 21(4), 1991]; *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* [Vol. 95(3), 2004]; and *World Development* [Vol. 8(12), 1980; Vol. 21(2), 1993 and sub-section in Vol. 32(2), 2004].

Other scholarly journals, like *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, *Caribbean Geographer*, *Journal of Caribbean Studies*, *Journal of Eastern Caribbean Studies*, *Journal of Pacific Studies*, *The Contemporary Pacific* or the French-language *Archipel*, treat islands and island issues habitually, from a distinctly regional focus. Meanwhile *INSULA: The International Journal of Island Affairs*, is a notable semi-academic effort, running since 1992, with support from UNESCO and its International Scientific Council for Island Development: www.insula.org/.

UPEI is also the location of the moderated island studies web-site: www.islandstudies.ca. This site also hosts the electronic, scholarly and peer-reviewed *Island Studies Journal* (launched in 2006): www.islandstudies.ca/journal.

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