

BOOK REVIEWS SECTION

Susan Lewis (2006) 'The Story of Mann and All That, or How Heritage Became History Again'; Jennifer Kewley Draskau (2006) 'Ethnocultural Linkage in Language Revival: The Role of Joshua Fishman's Yians in Xish Revitalization: The Case of Manx Gaelic'; Breasha Maddrell (2006) 'Shaping the Shape-Shifter: Cultural Revival, Spirituality and the Manx Manannan', *Celtic Cultural Studies*, Issue No. 5: Contemporary Issues in Manx Culture.

During the past several decades, the Isle of Man has undergone a remarkable process of cultural and linguistic revitalization. Issue 5 (2006) of *Celtic Cultural Studies*, an "interdisciplinary on-line journal," features a series of articles that focus on various aspects of this revitalization process. Although the title of this special edition is "Contemporary Issues in Manx Culture", the articles reveal both the contemporary manifestations and the historical roots of the Isle of Man's cultural rejuvenation.

The articles explore different, yet complementary, aspects of contemporary culture in the Isle of Man. In her article "The Story of Mann and All That, or How Heritage Became History Again", Susan Lewis uses a thespian backdrop to reinforce a broader point about the importance of making the Isle of Man's history and culture relevant and alive to islanders and newcomers alike. Jennifer Kewley Draskau's piece on "Ethnocultural Linkage in Language Revival: The Role of Joshua Fishman's Yians in Xish Revitalization: The Case of Manx Gaelic" examines the contributions that non-Manx have made to the preservation and promotion of the Manx Gaelic language. In "Shaping the Shape-Shifter: Cultural Revival, Spirituality and the Manx Manannan", Breasha Maddrell traces the efforts of cultural revivalists to resurrect Manannan, the Celtic sea-god, patron and protector of the Isle of Man.

As a collective endeavour, the articles clearly view culture and history as dynamic, living concepts. Whether the focus is art, language or theatre, the authors emphasize the active dimension of culture and history as something to be experienced, rather than the mere passive transmission of information. Connected to this point is the authors' emphasis on the human dimension of culture. Culture is carried and experienced by people, and in some cases by people who have no ancestral connection to a particular cultural homeland. The three articles also stress the links between the historical foundations of Manx culture and current socio-cultural issues on the island. In particular, they confront the thorny issues of ethnicity and belonging in the context of a vulnerable small island culture.

Susan Lewis explores the place of history and heritage on an island that in her words "has experienced a lengthy social drama over the last few decades, prompted by the speed and magnitude of demographic change and characterized, among other things, by expressed fears for the dilution of culture and the creation of a society of two halves." Given the demographic changes that are taking place, how should the Isle of Man's story be presented in order to make it appealing to different demographic constituencies? Lewis draws an important distinction between heritage (a watered-down version of history that appeals primarily to tourists and newcomers to the island) and history ("the people's

stories” or “a shared sense of pastness” that appeals primarily to the ethnic Manx). While this distinction has some merit, in terms of highlighting the issue of demographic differences, one would think that both ways of presenting the past serve some purpose to the people on the island. Heritage can be a way to tell the island’s story in a way that is appealing to both newcomers and to islanders who have no particular inclination towards or interest in the finer points of Manx history. History still has its place, for those who want to access it, as do theatrical productions that present history as a series of connected stories. Another way of bringing the Isle of Man’s “society of two halves” together is to stress the contributions that successive waves of immigrants (from the Norse period to the present day) have made to the island’s culture. This is perhaps a way to convince the newcomers that they have a vested interest in learning more about the island’s story.

Jennifer Kewley Draskau continues this theme of the place of non-Manx in the island’s history by focusing on the role that outsiders have played in the revival of Manx Gaelic. For many years now, Manx Gaelic has been teetering on the verge of extinction. Its fortunes have improved since the death of the last native speaker in 1974, largely as a result of the work of grassroots language enthusiasts, and also, more recently, the Isle of Man Government. As Kewley Draskau suggests, the contributions of non-Manx to the fortunes of the language have been mixed. In the past, non-Manx, including Gaelic speakers from other Celtic countries, have been some of the most vocal critics of Manx Gaelic. Such criticism and the loss of confidence in the language on the part of the speech community were some of the leading causes of the decline of the language in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, the current revival, with its roots in the work of *Yn Çheshaght Ghailckagh* (the Manx Language Society), is based upon the hard work of key individuals, some of whom have no ancestral connection to the island. Nevertheless, as Kewley Draskau argues “in any successful revival of [Manx Gaelic], it is, in the final analysis, [the Manx] themselves who need to believe in it.”

This article provides an interesting and thoughtful series of reflections on the current state of Manx Gaelic. While it is apparent that non-Manx have contributed to the current linguistic revival on the island, the article is somewhat short on evidence, both in terms of who these people are and what contribution, exactly, they have made. Also, more could be said about current efforts to use the education system as a means of reviving the language among the younger generation. For example, the establishment of the *Bunscoil Ghaelgagh* (the Manx language primary school) in 2001, which is briefly mentioned, represented a significant step forward for the language in its quest to escape the fate that has befallen so many of the world’s now extinct minority languages.

Breasha Maddrell’s article on cultural revival and Celtic mythology touches on a number of themes raised by the other two articles, and introduces some new perspectives on the revitalization of Manx culture. The focus of her article is Manannan mac Lir, the Celtic “sea-god and ruler of the Otherworld”, a larger than life figure who features prominently in the mythology of the Isle of Man, as well as other Celtic nations. Maddrell succinctly summarizes the literary tradition of Manannan and his importance to the cultural life of the island. Continuing on a theme raised by the other two authors, she outlines the role that contemporary cultural revivalists, both Manx and non-Manx, have played in promoting the

“Manannan Vision” through art, literature and popular culture. For the author, “Manannan suits the Isle of Man because the shape-shifting, the fluidity of form...reflects the fluidity of identity necessary for a small island nation in the middle of the Irish Sea.” It is this fluidity that perhaps makes Manannan the best spokesperson for Manx history, a role that he played in the theatrical production described by Susan Lewis. Maddrell also makes a perceptive connection between the branding of the island’s image through the legend of Manannan and the current branding process that has been spearheaded by the Isle of Man Government.

All three articles make important individual contributions to our understanding of contemporary Manx culture. Moreover, they do so in a way that each complements and builds upon the others. Clearly more in-depth research is needed, especially on current issues such as demographic change, language revitalization and planning, and image building. Yet, on the whole, these articles provide a useful starting point for such research.

Gary N. Wilson
University of Northern British Columbia
Prince George, Canada
wilsong@unbc.ca

Luc Folliet (2009) *Nauru, l'Île dévastée: Comment la civilisation capitaliste a anéanti le pays le plus riche du monde*, Paris, France, La Découverte, 150 pp, ISBN: 978-2-7071-5816-1. 12 €.

Few island countries exemplify the structural disadvantages of small island states as much as Nauru. First, size: the 9,000 Nauruans live on 21 square kilometres, making it the smallest republic in the world. Second, isolation: the nearest inhabited islands are hundreds of kilometres away; the nearest metropolis, Brisbane, 3,500 kilometres. Third, monoculture: for years the phosphate mine covering most of the island assured the islanders’ prosperity, to the point where they had one of the highest GDPs per capita in the world in the 1970s. When the mine was exhausted, their world suddenly collapsed around them: for a few months in 2006 they had no contact with the outside world.

Luc Folliet is a French journalist who visited Nauru in 2005 and 2006, staying for a few weeks to write this engaging little book. This text combines a historical account of outside powers’ manipulations and the nationalist resistance to which these gave rise, with a hard-hitting but fair ethnography of the islanders as they slipped into poverty in the new millennium.

Nauru officially became a German colony in 1898; mining operations began in 1907, a British company having secured a monopoly for the extraction of phosphate. At the end of the First World War, all German colonies became Mandates of the League of Nations, and Nauru was placed under British and eventually Australian administration. The League’s smaller mandate territories became United Nations Trust Territories in 1945, and the fact

that colonial rule was supervised by the United Nations may have saved Nauruans from being deported like the inhabitants of Banaba Island (now in Kiribati), who were forcibly removed by the British from their island to permit intensified exploitation of phosphate. When the Nauruans, under the leadership of Hammer Deoburt, demanded a greater share of the revenue generated by the mine, Australia offered to relocate them first to Fraser Island and then to Curtis Island, both off the coast of Queensland and much larger than Nauru. What the Nauruans wanted, however, was not a larger island for resettlement but control over their own, one natural resource. In the end, the British company and the Australian government caved in: in 1968, Nauru became independent; in 1970, the Nauruan state took over the mine.

Folliet is at his best where he chronicles the social consequences of the sudden wealth, followed by the collapse in the late 1990s. The work in the mines was done by so-called *islanders*, guest workers from Tuvalu and Kiribati who lived in separate quarters. Shops, petrol stations, and restaurants were owned by Chinese immigrants. To the extent that the Nauruans worked at all, they held government jobs, not only in the bureaucracy but also in state-owned companies (Air Nauru, Bank of Nauru, Nauru Pacific Line) that often made a loss but were kept in operation for symbolic, prestige purposes, as well as for creating employment. With the best of intentions, the government set up a welfare state that distributed the wealth generated by the mine among the citizenry: it even paid for the cleaning ladies that cleaned Nauruan homes. Health care, electricity and education were free. To prepare for the time after the phosphate would run out, millions were invested in real estate, mainly in Australia. But the properties were ill chosen and the outsiders who brokered the deals were often crooks, so much so that the money went to waste. Meanwhile, the government did not admit to its disastrous management and contracted ever more onerous loans to cover its expenses.

In such a welfarist environment, Nauruans became lazy rentiers: they stopped going out in their boats to catch fish, imported ever more cars to drive round - and round again - the island, and preferred Chinese take-out meals to cooking. The unhealthy lifestyle combined with the Polynesian predisposition to obesity soon gave them the highest obesity rate in the world: four individuals out of five are overweight. With obesity comes diabetes, the country's top health problem and leading cause of death.

To generate income, the island was turned into a tax haven, and passports were sold. But some of the banks were implicated in money-laundering, and some of the passports went to terrorists: in 2002, Colin Powell declared Nauru to be a rogue state. In 2004 all remaining overseas property investments had to be sold to repay the crippling debts. The country had hit rock bottom. In the mean time, Australia's prime minister had refused to allow Afghan and Iraqi boat people to land in Australia and claim refugee status, and offered to pay Nauru to take them in. In a strange twist of sovereignty, Nauru accepted and became one of Australia's offshore refugee camps between 2001 and 2005. Having become a UN member in 1999, Nauru has also come to exploit its sovereign status by selling its diplomatic support: Nauru recognizes the Republic of China on Taiwan and, as a member of the International Whaling Commission, in 2006 supported (along with St. Kitts and Nevis as well as Dominica) Japan's call for an end to the moratorium on whaling.

Interestingly enough, misrule in the 1990s does not seem to have generated much opposition. This, according to Folliet, was due to the small size of the population, as a result of which state and society are almost coterminous. *Everybody* was implicated in the charades, or at least everybody's relatives were, leaving little incentive for anybody to rock the boat. Theorists of democracy often claim that small size is conducive to greater democracy and political stability, and small island states figure prominently in their reasoning. Nauru does not seem to confirm that pattern. Under Deroburt, Nauru had at least enjoyed political stability, but this ended with his departure in 1986. Democracy seems to have meant above all voting presidents in and out of office; after 1986, Nauru had no less than 23 presidents in 22 years, some of them exceptionally corrupt. But there is hope: in 2004, a new generation of critical Nauruans came to power and set their island on the path of a modest recovery.

This book is a well written journalistic account of the rise and fall of a small distant island jurisdiction few island-scholars will ever have a chance to visit. The author argues persuasively, and his personal vignettes are always insightful. The content of the book is thus more lucid than its title, for it is never shown that capitalist civilization 'destroyed' (*anéanti* on the cover, *détruit* on the title page) the country. Rather, one has to conclude that it was the incompetence and naïveté of the Nauruans themselves, coupled with the unscrupulousness of their Western advisors, that brought the island to the brink of disaster.

H. E. Chehabi

Boston University, USA

hchehabi@hotmail.com

Godfrey Baldacchino, Rob Greenwood and Lawrence Felt (eds.) (2009) *Remote Control: Governance Lessons for and from Small, Insular, and Remote Regions*. St. John's NL, ISER Press, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 318 pp. ISBN: 978-1-894725-08-8. Can\$29.95.

I:

This book is a collection of fourteen articles by an international cast of rural policy and development practitioners and scholars with experience working in Canada, Ireland, Iceland, Saint-Pierre et Miquelon and Tasmania. It is the product of two networks: the Canadian Rural Revitalization Network and the North Atlantic Forum, and several of the articles in the book were presented at a 2005 conference held in Twillingate, Newfoundland, entitled *Big Lessons from Small Places: A Forum on Governance in Rural North America and the North Atlantic Rim*. The book is divided into three parts: "Contextualizing and Conceptualizing Issues While Challenging Existing Frameworks", "Reviewing Municipal Government in Small, Insular and Remote Regions", and "Case Studies in Rural/Island Sub-National Governance for Development".

The title *Remote Control* conjures up two images: either the work is a litany of complaints advanced on behalf of communities chafing from too much central government control; or else it is a celebration of the “creative deployment of the resourcefulness of jurisdiction”. As it turns out, the book is a combination of both.

Those fascinated by the concept of “islandness” will find many interesting observations in this series of articles, most of them backed up by good research, and meriting the attention of academics, policy makers and rural development practitioners. They describe the demise of peripheral locations, how many government initiatives turn out to be nothing more than “palliative care dressed up with well-meaning goals”, and how to find the right “structural holes and opportunity niches” in the wake of globalization.

In Part I, Freshwater and Tomblin write about rural-urban interaction and about setting up new and innovative governance structures that are more appropriate for communities “at the fringe”. Bryden observes that rural policy in Europe and North America remains deeply rooted in agricultural policy and that communities and governments need to change their approach to prepare better for future shocks; he outlines eight characteristics of healthy rural communities. Drawing on their experiences with the New Rural Economy (NRE) project in Canada, Lyons and Reimer review community capacity frameworks and introduce six features which can be used in comparative analyses. Douglas and O’Keefe compare rural development policy and planning processes in Newfoundland and Labrador and Ireland. They argue that Ireland’s has been more successful because the country has an explicit and integrated policy on rural development while Newfoundland and Labrador’s is sectorally divided, lacking even a charter document. Baldacchino speaks of the “power of jurisdiction as an economic resource”. Using the examples of Québec, Prince Edward Island and Aboriginal peoples, he describes a winning strategy within the Canadian context, the employment of asymmetrical federalism where “governance entrepreneurs” have been successful in crafting ever-increasing autonomy.

In the second part of the book, Lipton, Hagens, Reimer and Jacob write about autonomy within the context of small-town and rural Canada. They observe that there is an important distinction between the power to make political decisions and the ability to implement them; they argue that, to be successful, local governments must acquire the capacity to deal adequately with legal matters, planning and financial management. Felt examines the issue of municipal agency and the role of subsidiary political entity by comparing and contrasting Akureyri, Iceland and Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador. One of his conclusions is that Newfoundland and Labrador has the least empowering municipal legislation in North America. Eythórsson reviews the recent history of municipal amalgamations in Iceland which resulted in a 47% reduction in the number of municipalities in an eight-year period. Because the “public appetite” for amalgamation is in decline, it seems unlikely that further reform there will come about voluntarily.

Part III of the book opens with a paper by Armstrong and Stratford which explores the link between governance and land use planning and development controls by contrasting the experience of the West Prince region of Prince Edward Island and the Australian island state of Tasmania. Using sustainability as a starting point, the authors argue for a

“differently planned future” in West Prince where “municipal governments have the jurisdictional capacity and resources to lead, facilitate, enable and integrate efforts to contribute to, strengthen and diversify the economy of the region”. Novaczek, Angus and Lewis offer a comparative review of community-based fisheries management systems in Fiji and Prince Edward Island. Their paper highlights the merits of co-management by an empowered community, with checks and balances to control the influence of politics and greed on decision-making. Enguehard examines the “fruitful connections” between the peoples of the islands of Newfoundland and Saint-Pierre et Miquelon and suggests that by “tapping the diaspora”, communities can use common heritage and shared history as powerful tools for rural development, identity and pride. In her analysis, the author advises: “Never underestimate the allure of your corner of the world”. O’Keefe and Douglas continue the comparative assessment of rural development planning in Newfoundland and Labrador and Ireland by looking specifically at governance. They demonstrate that coupling financial accountability with local governance encourages transparency and the ability to innovate. Vodden reports on the Coasts Under Stress (CUS) project, a Canadian initiative focusing on six case studies of collaborative governance in coastal communities, from Vancouver Island to northeast Newfoundland and Labrador. Finally, Greenwood states that good governance is crucial to the long-term sustainability of Newfoundland and Labrador. He argues that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between economic underdevelopment and political underdevelopment, and suggest that three policy filters need to be applied when assessing options to achieve a sustainable quality of life: doing governance, looking in and looking out.

Remote Control is an interesting compendium of current research on topics related to governance for small, insular and remote regions. From the viewpoint of a practitioner, it comes across as being a bit disjointed, and often academic. Nevertheless, those who spend a career studying these matters, those who attended the conference in Twillingate – and those who wish they had – will find much here to stimulate their thoughts on the subject.

Jean-Paul Arsenault
Commission on Land and Rural Governance
Province of Prince Edward Island, Canada
jparsenault@gov.pe.ca

II:

This edited volume is an outcome from a conference in Twillingate, Newfoundland, in 2005, organized under the auspices of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation and the North Atlantic Forum. The point of departure for the venture is well stated in the acknowledgement notes by the three editors, who hope that the lessons from the conference and the book contribute to policy and practice that empower people, communities, and regions to make the most of their opportunities. Specifically, the book aims at uncovering strategies for turning by creative approaches to governance the drawbacks of small size and isolation into resources for promoting sustainable growth. The result is a somewhat uneven but still very readable and well-executed collection of research essays, studded with facts, interpretations, and reasoned observation.

The contributions to the volume are ordered in three departments. Following the editors' introduction, the first department comprises five chapters that deal with concepts and frameworks in the study of small place governance. The second department consists of three chapters, which are about municipal government, and the third department has six chapters which report empirical case-studies. However, the last of these six chapters is really not a case study but an excellent comparative contribution by Rob Greenwood, which brings together the various chapters and spells out to the readers the main thrust of lessons learned. True, the emphasis in this summarizing chapter is on the North Atlantic Rim and Newfoundland and Labrador rather than on smallness, islandness and remoteness *per se*. Still, it seems that the chapter would have well deserved to be taken out from its case-study company to occupy a more independent position. Another objection to the overall volume structure concerns an imbalance between the three parts, the second part, on municipalities being clearly subordinated in terms of space and importance. This is the more so as one of the three chapters in this second part is about municipal amalgamation in Iceland, while a second chapter compares two towns, one of which is Icelandic. Given the overall emphasis in the volume on the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador and given the somewhat specific and non-Canadian nature of the Icelandic municipality system, this advertising of the Nordic fairy-island is hardly justified.

Two methodological weaknesses disfigure to some extent the collection:

The comparative political and social science literature is imbued with binary comparisons: that is, comparisons that are between two units of analysis, be they countries, regions, municipalities, or what have you. This preference for the binary approach marks also and to a high extent indeed the volume under review; in fact, most of the empirical exercises are in this category. Whereas two chapters deal with Newfoundland and Labrador as compared to Ireland, a third chapter, dealing with municipal agency and socio-economic development, compares the towns of Akureyri (Iceland) and Corner Brook (Newfoundland). Still another chapter, on scale, land use and good governance, operates through a comparison of the island jurisdictions of Tasmania and Prince Edward Islands, and a fourth binary comparison, on fisheries management systems, is between Fiji and Prince Edward Island. A fifth comparison is between rural Newfoundland and Labrador and Saint-Pierre et Miquelon. All this is unfortunate, as the binary approach is imperfect and really comes out as a comparison-obscuring rather than a comparison-enhancing device.

Whereas the popularity of binary comparisons stems from many sources, some of which are clearly external to scientific consideration proper, the real weakness of the approach lies in the fact that binary comparisons are by necessity over-determined. This means that many factors remain as possible explanations and there will - with only two cases under study - be no decisive way of testing between them. To overcome this binary shortcoming there are three remedies: control, control and control. The implication of this is that at least a third control case should always be added to the research population. Since this golden rule is neglected almost throughout the volume, there is much uncertainty in the mind of

the reader as regards the validity and robustness of the many findings. Fortunately, the circumspect Greenwood chapter provides help, advice and direction.

The critical reader may also detect problems in the volume that relate to case selection, the problem now being that different selection principles travel this way and that way all over the various chapters. Whereas a correct blend of similarity and dissimilarity that resembles the principles of a so-called most similar system design may be found in the selection principle that guides the chapter by Lawrence Felt on Akureyri and Corner Brook, other contributions are clearly more elusive. In some instances, like the chapter on Fiji and Prince Edward Island, the case selection apparently departs from choices on the dependent variable and thereby from case similarity. In other instances, like the chapter on Tasmania and Prince Edward Island or the chapters on Newfoundland and Ireland, case selection is apparently guided by availability or by intuitive, or practical, or ingenious, or perhaps even circumstantial considerations. Whereas different approaches are, of course, legitimate as such in research, their parallel use in chapters that otherwise advocate a common cause is rather confusing and serves to complicate if not undermine a comparative reading. Again, by coming to the reader's assistance the chapter by Greenwood stands out as a true asset.

Godfrey Baldacchino contributes a fine piece on asymmetric federalism, which is based on extensive reading and was originally a keynote address to the Twillingate conference. He shows how small sub-national jurisdictions have in many cases prospered from an asymmetrical federalism, and he is able to explain or at least hint at explanations why the prospering has taken place and why sub-national island jurisdictions appear, to use Baldacchino's term, as governance entrepreneurs. It is a pertinent observation by Baldacchino that islands form but one sort of insular situations in the physical world, and that there is much relativity to our understanding of the sea as the ultimate barrier. An appendix to the Baldacchino chapter provides a non-exhaustive list of sub-national island jurisdictions; it is perhaps a bit difficult to understand why the appendix admits, for instance, the four constituent states of the Federated States of Micronesia, but excludes the constituent states of federal Belau, or the island provinces of Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The reason may be that the excluded units are considered too small to really qualify as entrepreneurs; such considerations, however, would imply that prerequisites for good governance are inscribed in the very definition of governance actors. It just so happens that implications of this type are refuted in the volume in a chapter on capacity analysis by Tara Lyons and Bill Reimer, who argue that external conditions should not be included as part of capacity characteristics of groups or communities.

Dag Anckar
Åbo Akademi University
Åbo, Finland
dag.anckar@abo.fi

Dinesh Dodhia (2008) *Emerging Debt Problems of Small States*, Economic Paper No. 78, London, Commonwealth Secretariat, ISBN: 978-0-85092-868-6. £10.00stg.

This important and timely study has put together for the first time a clear description of the nature and the volume of debt facing small island states (SIS), these being defined as island countries with a resident population of 1.5 million or less.

The study is carefully presented in two parts. The first looks at the various factors that have caused debt levels to rise, followed by a prediction of future trends and how these will affect the development prospects of SIS. The second part proposes a comprehensive framework that can be used to address the debt problem and how debt levels could be made more sustainable.

The debt levels of SIS have been rising of late. The author is correct in pointing out that the debt problems of small states have not featured prominently on the agenda of international organizations and have received little attention from researchers. In fact, small island states have been stereotyped of late as struggling with climate change, enjoying tourism as the main driver of their economic growth, and suffering from environmental vulnerability. Issues related to the economic growth of SIS are quickly dismissed as connected to a reticence in achieving economic reform through 'good governance'. More often than not, international organizations and developed country aid donors have suggested drastic austerity measures to address the economic problems of these countries. The issue of economic problems arising out of the special characteristics of SIS has often not been considered as an important variable in explaining their economic woes. It must be noted that this was perhaps recognized by the former colonial powers, especially amongst the small states that have been members of the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) grouping within earlier rounds of international trade negotiations, where they enjoyed preferential access and/or preferential prices for their agricultural and fisheries products.

The book's data is derived mainly from International Monetary Fund (IMF) publications whose data, in turn, is usually gathered from national sources. In addition, data on debt is fairly well recorded at national levels and hence there are no major concerns about the integrity of the data used in this report. However, for some countries, the author is right in pointing out that data is very scanty and/or of dubious quality: such situations would need to change if the debt management of these SIS is to become more effective.

The reasons for high indebtedness presented in the study can be divided into three parts. First, it can be explained by the way in which debt has been managed. Quantitative assessments show that generally primary deficits played a major contributory role in the increased levels of debt. In addition, the large interest rate contribution and exchange rate movements also helped increase the level of debt. In such countries as St Kitts and Nevis, Jamaica, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, St Lucia, Barbados and the Bahamas, interest payments on debt were not offset by the growth in GDP. In some countries where growth rates were high - such as those in Mauritius, Antigua and Barbuda, and Dominica - debt levels were much more manageable and sustainable.

Countries in the Pacific Islands - such as Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Tonga - have shown a decline in public debt ratios. This has resulted from the combination of factors which included the ability of governments to create large fiscal surpluses. However, these have been short-lived, at least in the case of both the Solomon Islands and Tonga.

One of the key factors explaining rising or falling levels of debt – and one that cuts across all regions and countries - rests on these countries' ability to manage their economic (GDP) growth. Obviously, those who were able to grow their economies over a sustained period of time were much better able to manage their debt levels at an acceptable level. Those that were not able to manage and sustain a strong economic growth rate were clearly having problems with their debt levels and debt servicing. For example, Pacific island countries managed to achieve acceptable levels of growth in the 1990s and thus managed to better contain their debt levels, compared to those SIS with low growth rates and high debt levels in the 1980s.

When compared to Pacific Island countries, small Caribbean island states had slightly different problems. Except for Jamaica, most small states in the Caribbean had deteriorating fiscal balances between 1998 and 2003 when compared to the 1991-1997 figures. Some of the sensible reasons pointed out in this study to explain this poor performance include the impact of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the US, loss of preferences as a result of increasing trade liberalisation under the WTO, and the impact of natural disasters (especially hurricane damage to cash crops).

The study projects an analysis of the future debt situation; but those scenarios would now change significantly for most SIS. The onslaught of the global economic crisis on these countries will have a significant impact on their ability to manage their debt levels. In addition, many SIS will have to grapple with the changing trade regimes. The output growth in some of the ACP small states which depended on the exports of tuna, sugar and banana will be significant as the effect of the economic partnership agreement (EPA) with the European Union (EU) is implemented. In the Pacific, however, only two countries - Papua New Guinea and Fiji - have signed the interim EPA and they have done this precisely to protect the preferential access to the EU market for sugar in the case of Fiji, and tuna in the case Papua New Guinea. Pacific Island countries have signed a trade agreement amongst themselves called the Pacific Islands Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) intended to enhance intra-regional trade. However, the actual impact of this agreement for most member countries would be minimal. Only two large economies - again, Fiji and Papua New Guinea – are likely to benefit the most. In addition, Pacific Island Countries are starting another free trade agreement which would include Australia and New Zealand. This agreement - called the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) - could, in the long-term, prove beneficial to Pacific island countries because it has the potential to increase the volume of trade; however, in the short-term, there could be significant adjustment costs in the form of loss of government revenue due to the reduction and elimination of tariffs on goods imported from Australia and New Zealand. Such significant budget stress could add to the debt levels of Pacific SIS. The political strife in Fiji as a result of the military coups has already reduced growth

prospects; while the global economic crisis, and loss of preferential prices for sugar, could make Fiji one of the most indebted countries in the Pacific region.

The study's other strength lies in the analysis and recommendations for SIS to manage their debt problems, and the suggestion for an international framework to address small states' debt problems is a noble contribution. Five critical areas have been identified for this policy recommendation to take effect. These include fiscal discipline, improved debt recording, management and restructuring mechanisms for responding to natural disasters and other shocks, the crucial importance of concessional financing and compensating for preference erosion, and the promotion of private investment by mitigating endowed handicaps.

To achieve these institutional mechanisms, small island states would, however, need support from major donors and international lending agencies. The global economic crisis presents new and critical challenges to many SIS and debt financing in the face of declining outgrowth would be an important tool. While they pursue this approach, the lessons from this study would be very relevant to their policy makers. In my view, this is a very timely publication on a very important subject and one that would need further and more detailed analysis in future.

Biman C. Prasad
School of Economics
University of the South Pacific
Suva, Fiji Islands
prasad_bc@usp.ac.fj

Evangelia Papoutsaki & Usha S. Harris, eds. (2008) *South Pacific Islands Communication: Regional Perspectives, Local Issues*, Suva, Fiji Islands, University of the South Pacific/Singapore, Nanyang Technological University/Auckland, New Zealand, Auckland University of Technology. Softcover, 288pp, including maps, B&W illustrations, endnotes and index. ISBN: 978-981-4136-08-2. US\$30.

Media, now reaching out slowly across the dispersed islands, atolls and archipelago of the South Pacific, has taken up all formats including national newspapers, magazines, irregular local newsletters, radio, television and the internet and in some cases has merged news with theatre and travelling road shows. The common aim is to draw the audience of what are relatively new states, into the events as concerned citizens, participants and voters. In perfect times, the media can also raise public awareness about national, regional and international issues. Creating and maintaining this dual role is the problem tackled in the fourteen chapters in this valuable new edited collection of essays. Most authors also tackle the problem of securing better training for journalists, and how to implement strategies to avoid "the media's simplistic and one-dimensional portrayal" (p.8) of crises, events, public achievement and private life. Several essays also acknowledge that the media in the South Pacific does not extend far into rural areas or out to distant islands and archipelagos, and newspapers, for example, rarely have distribution networks much beyond the capital city.

It was often said in Papua New Guinea (PNG) that, if a newspaper *did* arrive in a remote village, it was only of interest as an unexpected source of cigarette paper. Having briefly visited many remote villages across the Pacific over the last thirty years, I was always disappointed by the absence of newspapers. But as technology improved, it was exciting to witness the power of voice over the radio. Sean Dorney, an Australian radio and now television journalist, was once described as the voice most recognized in the Pacific – all through the power of radio’s reach into remote areas.

Newspapers have always been of interest to researchers from outside the Pacific, and applying the empirical tradition of western academia, they were sought out for documentary insights into past events. Unfortunately, much of the early small island press consisted mostly in government proclamations and notices, and was only rarely a deliberate attempt to archive the past and recent holdings. The efforts of the joint microfilming project, PMB (PAMBU initially and now the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau) is important to acknowledge for the copying of runs of newspapers from across the region. Today, newspapers are perhaps less sought out and significant, and the essays here raise contemporary concerns about mobile phones, internet, video and television and how they will reports news in the future. Several essays suggest that, in better hands, the media could become an agent for “promoting advocacy, influencing policy makers and impacting on public attitudes” (p. 219), for example, on domestic violence, corruption, illegal logging, environmental policies, schooling, gender and other matters of national interest. This is perhaps putting too great a burden on the Pacific’s young journalists, often without training, and often moving sideways from other non-media vocations. Several essays point out the exciting efforts of some journalists to make a change, to mount a campaign and to use the media to bring about change. However, the overall feeling is that improved communication in the Pacific, in the half-dozen states covered here, is a target yet to be achieved, and yet to come to terms with accommodating long held local traditions, customs and protocols which impact on how a journalist operates.

This is an enjoyable read and a timely collection, and contributes to a slowly expanding body of research on the impact of the media in small island states, and - in a pragmatic context - how journalists can do a better job. Indeed, two essays - one by David Robie on the history of training programs, and the other by Steve Sharp and Evangelia Papoutsaki on journalism education and regional perspectives - analyse tertiary education, although there is disagreement whether there are three or four universities offering undergraduate vocational training. The benchmark in media education seems to be Divine Word University in Madang, PNG, and it is cited several times. An essay by Helen Molnar reports on a 14-country survey on the quality of reporting on governance and generally on the news priorities of the mostly state-owned television and radio stations, community radio, private and state-owned newspapers, student newspapers and online news services. There is a brief, but significant, account of reporting in PNG about West Papua. The essays cover Tuvalu, in a rare journal appearance, the pro-democracy movement in Tonga, post-conflict Solomon Islands, and video and rural women in Fiji, while PNG features in four essays. The opening essay on the evolution of reporting, and new forms emerging, in the Pacific, was contributed by Ron Crocombe, who sadly passed away, at great loss to Pacific

Studies, in June 2009. Ron also contributed an appendix, listing Asia-Pacific videos and journals on the Pacific.

The essays are concise, well written and avoid jargon. More editorial work was needed to avoid PNG being cited as having 820 and in another place 867 languages, and once as having 5.9 and elsewhere having 6 million people. Niue is cited once with a population of 1,492 and elsewhere as 1,500. The 2006 census recorded 1,625 people on Niue but oral accounts suggest actual residents may be less than 1,000. These are minor quibbles, as overall it is a useful publication. As in most collections that survey a wide geographic range, and in this instance several media formats, there are annoying errors; most of Nuku'alofa was not reduced to smouldering ruins; and in an otherwise excellent survey of reporting on domestic and sexual violence in PNG, the reader is left with a rather soft and inadequate conclusion. Seven of the essays have been previously published. Finally, the cost of the publication in US\$ is rather high and will probably prevent this book reaching the undergraduates in Pacific universities who would have benefited from reading about how news is reported in the region.

Max Quanchi
Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane, Australia
m.quanchi@qut.edu.au

Nesrin Eruysal (editor) (2009) *Söyleşi Üç Aylık Şiir Dergisi / The Poetry of Islands* (English and Turkish Language), *Solyesi Poetry Review*. Freely downloadable from: <http://eleusinian.files.wordpress.com/2009/09/volume-11.pdf>.

Douglas Robinson's illustration on the front cover of the first issue of Nesrin Eruysal's *Solyesi Poetry Quarterly* provides a vision into an island imaginary. Boats appear on the sea as seen through a burnt-out hull upended on a shore, and the distance is all horizon. In her short introduction, or 'conversation', Eruysal quotes from Hölderlin and exhorts her reader to "interpret the secrets of dwelling on islands", wishing that *Solyesi Poetry Review* will provide a spring-board for 'conversation' between poets and readers. So this journal is ambitious and broad in its scope. The page-long conversation is supplemented by a very short article by Pete Hay - 'Writing the Poetry of Islands'. After Eruysal's poetic introduction, this gives what follows some sort of theoretical basis. Hay talks concisely and persuasively about the "phenomenon of islandness", their "shifting liminality", and neatly questions the position of the "island artist" among all others. The island artist, argues Hay, rests at the interstices of events whilst maintaining the necessary element of liminality.

What the journal would benefit from is some indication of the reasons behind its production. Why, for instance, is it bi-lingually English-Turkish? This may be an exciting experiment in poetics (indeed, there are very few bi-lingual poetry journals around); but, without a mission statement, it will go unnoticed. So short an introduction to the journal and the ideas behind its production has one advantage, however: it leaves the project open

to shift and change, sitting amongst contemporary poetry, just as islands themselves sit in the ocean. Nevertheless, it is disappointing that this advantage should rely so much upon the reader's intuition.

In a way, the journal is made navigable for mono-linguists: the poems occur first in Turkish (pp. 2-32) and then in English (pp. 44-77). However, as a bi-lingual poetry journal, it may be nicer to have the poem and its translation facing each other, on recto and verso sides of the page. In this way, the parallel table of contents (although this, with its double page-reference columns *is* innovative) would be streamlined, and the volume perhaps more easy to navigate for bi-lingual speakers, the mono-linguists among us also no longer given the impression that we have been given only the front (Turkish) or the back (English) of the volume.

What a lot of the poetry attempts is a sort of poetic translation, but of the island experience rather than a description of the islands themselves. This perhaps is typical of the poet existing in or writing of the "phenomenon of islandness". However, I do not mean this final comment to be a criticism, or to be reductive. Indeed, what is particularly breathtaking about this new journal is the sheer number of poets and poet-translators contained therein (p. 25) and the wide-ranging geographical (and often island-) locations from which they hail. Locations range from America to Iceland, Malta and Cyprus, the Faroe Islands and Ireland, the Hebrides and Shetland, to name but a few.

Recurring tropes in the poems re-animate the possibilities first articulated in Eryusal's and Hay's introductions. In fact, the volume kicks off with a poem by Hay himself, translated into Turkish by Eryusal. More generally, many of the poets draw strong analogues between the life of the island and the body, or island life: for Dimitris Lentzis, the island and the physical body are afloat in a sea of water and emotion; for Immanuel Mifsud, the water becomes a metaphor for the soul and vice versa; for Aine MacAodha, the island and 'life' are inseparable.

Nowhere are the lines of flight between the human and the island drawn more elegantly or self-consciously than in Maria Grech Ganado's poems 'Portion' and 'Island'. Here, we have references to T.S. Eliot and John Donne, and, obliquely, Marianne Moore's and Thom Gunn's snails, who, like Ganado's speaker, "[leave] behind / a thread .../ securing my own body to my island home." Indeed, the phrase 'island home' reverberates throughout the volume, gaining different resonances in different contexts.

Another common trope is the idea of the journey to- and from- the island, where the island is appreciated from outside, tempered by reminiscences or projections of the experience of life within. Sheenagh Pugh's poem 'Sailing to Islands' is a particularly strong example, and is also conscious of the liminal position of islands: "...and the sea goes on / beyond them; they are not the end after all". Equally, Hrafn Andres Hardarsson's 'Life Itself' ends beautifully, as both islands and also "tears / are lost and disappear, / no reappear forever / in the eternal breath / between sea and sky."

Many of the poems collected here demonstrate a confident simplicity when dealing with these often unpopulated land- and sea- scapes. I was charmed by the lyric qualities of many of them, and surprised at the sheer variations in form used throughout: from Donald S. Murray we have a villanelle; from Oddfridur Marni Rasmussen, a prose poem; from Pugh, carmen figuration; and from Hardarson, a full-blooded sequence. Equally surprising is the proliferation of different impressions and resonant images. Having so many 'island poems' collected together helps the discerning reader identify key tropes in 'island literature'. I can safely say, therefore, that the first volume of *Solyesi Poetry Quarterly*, even though its prose manifesto is scant, successfully provides a wealth of poetic 'conversation' about its given topic.

Perhaps it would be best to leave the last word to one of the volume's poets, founder of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics and Hebridean islander: Norman Bissel. The poem expresses Norrie's and many others' ideas of islandness and the open world as tied, inextricably, to our experiencing body:

Sometimes here
it's hard to tell
the sound of the wind
from the sound of the waves
or the sound of the waves
from the sound of the rain
or the sound of the wind
and the waves and the rain
from the sound of my breath.

It will be interesting to see how this new journal of poetry evolves.

Heather H. Yeung
Department of English
University of Durham, U.K.
h.h.yeung@durham.ac.uk

Monique Mund-Dopchie (2009) *Ultima Thulé: Histoire d'un lieu et genèse d'un mythe*. Geneva, Librairie Droz, 494 pp. ISBN: 978-2-600-01234-8. US\$130.

In the 330s or 320s BC, Pytheas of Massalia (modern Marseilles) set out to explore the northern Atlantic; north of Britain he reached the island of Thule, which is most often but not always identified with Iceland. Thule was his most famous discovery, and this cold island at the edge of the known world captured the imagination of later generations. From the time of the Roman historian Pliny the Elder, it was thought of as the most distant land known, and was used in formulas to express the breadth of Roman imperial conquest; it continued to appear in literature into the 19th century.

For the past 20 years, beginning with her article “La survie littéraire de la Thulé de Pytheas,” *L’Antiquité Classique* 59 (1990), pp. 79-97, Monique Mund-Dopchie has written extensively on Thule, and established herself as the leading authority on the history of the idea of Thule and its intersection with geographical reality. The book under review here is a convenient and impressive summation of her research to date on the island, and traces thought and literature about Thule from the time of Pytheas to the book’s publication. The easiest way to appreciate the book’s scope is to examine the author’s “Liste chronologique des sources” (pp. 401-448), which details all of the sources that mention Thule from Pytheas to 2007; a very useful resource indeed.

One of the interesting aspects of Thule which Mund-Dopchie well explores is its location on the border between fact and fiction, or the remarkably persistent ability of the island to attract myths over the centuries. Following a brief discussion of what Pytheas said about the island (pp. 23-25) and the statements of various ancient geographers (pp. 27-57), she turns to “La représentation mytho-poétique” of the island (pp. 59-82) in ancient texts; after her analysis of 16th century texts on the island and attempts to locate it on maps (pp. 137-248), she discusses the image of the island in 16th- and 17th- century literature (pp. 249-291); and following her discussion of the identifications of the island from the 18th to the 21st century (pp. 301-339), she recounts “L’émergence d’une Thulé mythique” in Goethe’s *Der König von Thule*, the conflation of Thule with Atlantis, Thule in occultist literature, the Nazi mythography of Thule, and Thule in “Lost World” fiction (pp. 341-375).

Mund-Dopchie’s discussion of the late 15th and early 16th century cartography of Thule (pp. 137-248) is rich and detailed, with analysis of identifications of Thule with islands other than Iceland (pp. 170-210). But one thing that I missed in the book is a discussion of the medieval cartography of the island, and this lack is reflected in the absence from the book’s bibliography of some works on the historical cartography of Iceland, which contain considerable material on Thule. These works include Halldór Hermannsson’s *The Cartography of Iceland*, published as Vol. 21 (1931) of the journal *Islandica*; Haraldur Sigurðsson’s *Kortasaga Islands fra oendverdu til loka 16 aldar* (Reykjavik: Bokautgafa Menningarsjods og Thjodvinafelagsins, 1971), an important book-length survey of the historical cartography of Iceland (which has an English summary pp. 257-266); and the same author’s “Some Landmarks in Icelandic Cartography Down to the End of the 16th Century,” *Arctic* 37.4 (1984), pp. 389-401.

But: Mund-Dopchie answers most every other question about Thule, and the index of names and geographical index make it easy for the reader to go directly to her discussion of Thule in Anthony Burgess’s novel *The Kingdom of the Wicked* (1985), for example, and also all of the passages in which she analyzes various authors’ attempts to connect or identify Thule with Atlantis.

These latter attempts are interesting, as they cause one to reflect on the fact Thule has shared with Atlantis the ability to continue generating literature and myth many centuries after its first appearance in western consciousness. Mund-Dopchie's book is an ample testament to the richness of Thule's history. The price of US\$130 is however very high for a paperback book with 22 black-and-white illustrations, placing it beyond the budget of many scholars; still, it will be a welcome addition to research libraries.

For discussion of a book that describes a modern encounter with Thule, see E. Kathleen Stuart's review of Joanna Kavenna, *The Ice Museum: To Shetland, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Estonia, Greenland and Svalbard in search of the Lost Land of Thule* (London, Penguin Books, 2005), in *Island Studies Journal* 2(1), 2007, pp. 157-158.

Chet Van Duzer
Los Altos Hills CA, USA
chetv@aol.com

Bär, Werner-Francisco (2009). *La imagen cartográfica de la isla de Mallorca (siglos XVI y XVII). Un estudio comparativo*, Palma de Mallorca, Miquel Font, 444 pp. + illustrations + maps. ISBN: 978-8479671556, €29.50c.

La imagen cartográfica de la Isla de Mallorca was released this year in simultaneous Spanish and Catalan editions. Both are the translations, with revisions and enlargements, of the book *Das Kartenbild der Insel Mallorca vom Ende des 15. Jhs. bis um 1700: ein Vergleich aus kartographischer Sicht*, originally published in the German language in 2004. The book's cover, with an attractive reproduction of an Arabic map of the book's subject, graciously invites one to undertake the reading.

Werner-Francisco Bär, the author, has produced a detailed and complete monograph, laden not only with scientific data, but also with historic curiosities, collected in the course of a prodigious study. The reader is astonished by both his enormous research in archives all over the world, and the extensive bibliography, which sets the book on a solid foundation. The bibliography includes classic studies of Mallorca as well as recent books and articles, including some of Bär's own works. The book is a watershed in the study of the historical cartography of Mallorca which is much more than a mere collection of data, but contains essential analysis and interpretation.

Bär's study of the historic maps of the island is innovative, as he uses the most modern technical and computer methods in analyzing cartographic aspects such as the projection, orientation, area, distances or scales with applications like Arc View CHALK 3.2a, Jet Navigation Chart, and Free Hand. These studies enable the author to obtain data about the work methods of the mapmakers he studies, as well as about the scientific techniques of the era. When these results are considered in chronological order, from the beginning of the 16th century until the end of the 17th, really interesting conclusions arise about the transmission of sources among the mapmakers, intercultural scientific communication from one end of the Mediterranean to the other, similarities and differences between the

different schools of mapmakers, and indeed about the history of Early Modern Europe in general. The selection of representative models of the island of Majorca makes it possible to appreciate, in a more exact way, the development, evolution and transmission of the image and representation of the island of Mallorca during the 16th and 17th centuries. This technique offers the reader a practical view, without the burden of unnecessary additions that distract from the thread of the argument.

Apart from the essentially cartographic and technical study, the author offers a likewise detailed account of those minutiae that accompany the maps and complement the images that he is studying. These include the labels, hydrographic representations, and indications of relief, localities and vegetation. All these details, as the author correctly argues, “generally go unnoticed” (p. 20). Likewise, the author has made a notable effort in studying the place names and the changes that they may have undergone as an outcome of both historical and cultural episodes. Thus, the toponyms on the maps of Piri Re’is are transcribed and indexed in great detail, greatly facilitating their direct study for researchers who do not speak Ottoman Turkish. We concur with Professor Roselló in characterizing this work as “solid, well documented, and with a coherent methodology” (“Presentación”, p. 11).

Bär presents the data following a similar model for the fourteen authors that he studies in this work. These mapmakers, who are well known to those interested in insular themes, are, in chronological order, Cristoforo Buondelmonti / Henricus Martellus, Benedetto Bordone, Piri Re’is and other cartographers of the Ottoman school, Alonso de Santa Cruz, Johannes Honterus, the maps of the atlas of Lefreri’s type, Thomaso Porcacchi da Castiglione, Francesco Ferretti, Ioannes Metellus / Gerard de Jode, Petrus Bertius, Vicente Mut and Vincenzo Coronelli. Systematically, each author is studied individually, and each author’s works are studied both singly and as an organic corpus. Bär presents a detailed biography of each of these mapmakers, followed by an exhaustive account of their cartographic output, and of the current condition and location of the manuscripts in which they have been preserved or of whose existence there is good evidence, incorporating in the process any information that other researchers may have contributed in recent years. This is one really interesting aspect of the book that is very attractive to the reader and complementary to the general study. It goes beyond other merely cartographic or geographical treatises, and it contributes another historic view: that of the evolution of the book of maps itself. This carries with it the vital context to the content that geographers and cartographers may be keen to find and study. Finally, the study of the content of the maps is offered. Here, no significant detail escapes Bär’s most attentive eye.

This book is addressed to a highly specialized public since, although the language is fairly straightforward, and the ideas are expressed clearly, the contents assume prior knowledge in almost all of the subjects that the author addresses. The scientific character of this work is clear in the methodical and abundant critical approach; but, this renders somewhat more difficult a wider diffusion of this piece of research.

The author effectively communicates an interest in knowing and travelling across the island of Mallorca, his island, through the proposal of a fascinating historic-cartographic itinerary; this journey is indeed a worthwhile one to undertake under Bär's expert guidance.

Mercedes Delgado Pérez
University of Málaga, Spain
mardelper@uma.es

Annamarie Beckel (2008) *Silence of Stone: A Novel of Marguerite de Roberval*, St. John's NL, Breakwater Books. ISBN: 1-55081-243-2. Can\$16.95.

It would make a terrific movie—and has, of course, lured audiences in various guises throughout the years—the story of an innocent castaway, marooned on a deserted island, fighting for survival against all odds including the hope of rescue. Rarely is the protagonist a female (think of Robinson Crusoe, Gilligan, Dr. Moreau.) Never mind. It's an elemental fantasy that calls out to anyone whose idea of a good walk in November includes inching along the edge of the world, alone in the North Atlantic Ocean with a stiff Easterly blowing, enthralled with the romance of pressing on for days against a stretch of archipelago hoisted against the polished meridian of mercurial sea and sky. Except that in this instance, the story is true.

Silence of Stone, by Newfoundland author Annamarie Beckel (2008), recounts the Renaissance story of Marguerite de la Roque de Roberval, the adolescent niece of the first French Governor Viceroy in Canada. The book is a page-turner, not least because of the circuitous geographies of exile and strange registers of island captivity the young heroine, extraordinarily, is forced to endure. Marguerite was born of noble rank. When not dancing the pavane in her pearls, silks and taffetas at the court of King François I, she was reading Erasmus's *Colloquia* in Latin with the King's sister, the Queen of Navarre. Marguerite had been orphaned and left in the guardianship of Jean-François de la Roque, Sieur de Roberval. Out of the blue, her custodian uncle called upon his cultivated young ward to accompany him on an ill-fated expedition to Canada. It was 1542. Marguerite was nineteen years old at the time. Her eponymous shipmates included a few soldiers and aristocrats, a host of sheep, goats, and pigs, and 73 murderers and thieves released from prison by King François I to populate the New World. En route to Terra Nova, in a foul journey lasting six weeks, Marguerite fell in love with a fellow passenger, Michel, a soldier and fellow nobleman. Her uncle's punishment for their crime of passion was tantamount to a death sentence: they would be castigated, left marooned and alone for all time (along with a nursemaid, Damienne, and scant provisions) on a remote and unforgiving island in the Gulf of St Lawrence, The Isle of Demons:

“I see nails ragged and bleeding from scraping for mussels. Dry bones. A dead gull, flesh gone. Sucking on the tips of white feathers my belly cavernous and hollow. My hands and feet are suddenly numb with cold” (p. 37).

“I think of fish: raw, burnt, half-rotten, slimy and stinking. Marguerite ate it all, every scrap. She sucked the bones and ate the heads, the skin, the tails, the fins, sometimes gagging and trying not to chew—and never considered whether she liked it or not” (p. 80).

Silence of Stone is a recounting of Marguerite’s days (all 880 of them) on the island, and the aftermath of this harrowing trauma following her rescue and return to France by the Breton fishermen who unexpectedly find her.

Literature is, of course, a container for holding and projecting speculative longings related to our deepest desires. Island studies scholars point out that even ancient story arcs (for example, crime and punishment) can assume particularly troublesome contours in island literatures, where representations of loss and hope get inscribed in over-determined ways. While readers hunt for intelligibility through representations of island experience, such symbolizing experiments seem sometimes to require that protagonists test their roots in the incoherent *non-places* of the island, where primordial notions of estrangement or abjection dominate. In such versions, iterations of island and archipelagic space call out materially/physically and mythically/psychically in grandiose, haunting ways that confound possibilities for psychic mobility or permeability in the islander. One of the things I find interesting about *Silence of Stone* is Annamarie Beckel’s rich negotiation of this mythic story arc (the island as Other) to conjure a fantasy experience of nightmare that opens into the possibility of islandness as a dynamic, living, interconnected life world.

In *Silence of Stone*, Marguerite de Roberval stands front and back facing emptiness. The liminal space of the landwash is her survival zone, and the heroine must learn to use all of her senses—of touch, of skin, of movement—to register the knowledge she will need to circumvent her condition. Beckel shows her heroine developing an acute sensitivity to sound and its reverberation, where *what is audible* portends—not only isolation, distance, and vulnerability (Marguerite’s voicelessness), but also a new capacity to hear (the language of wind, of birds, of self). She learns how to use her body as a unit of measurement, in which the island unfolds as a space of permeability, where psychic and geographical borders can meet in acts of co-adaptation. As Marguerite’s losses accrue (her husband dies, followed by her nursemaid companion and, finally, her infant daughter), the island space deepens its solitude in harrowing ways. Yet, at the same time, something opens in her that demands living countenance. Alone (in reason or in madness? We are never absolutely sure), Marguerite learns new arts to discern relative lengths of distance across and beyond the island. She learns how accurately to predict the volumes of food she will need so as not to die of hunger. She experiments with how to register the heat and smoothness of the rocks outside her cave, and to use that knowledge not as a figure of threat or of violence, but rather as a means through which to absorb the sun’s rays in winter to keep warm. The heroine’s tactile perceptions keep her alive, furnishing her with a spatial intelligence that is alert, connective and discriminating in the face of indifference. In a sense, it is the openness and freedom of the island, its utter absence of fixed meanings, paths, or patterns that draws Marguerite into the depths of exposure and vulnerability that subsequently incur her deepest humanity. Left in exile for two and a half years, she eventually succumbs to the vastness of the space in which she is engulfed (i.e., she gives

up all hope of rescue and entrusts her fate to the island). In so doing, the island becomes her place of most deeply and spiritually felt value, where she is able to meet her most basic needs for food, water, rest, and even companionship (with the ravens, who assume a role as her spirit guides, and—surprisingly—with an Aboriginal man, who most likely perceives her as a spirit, and who befriends her with food, comfort and tokens). Even inanimate objects assume a new significance for the heroine, a presence in her life that is enabling and that will continue to sustain her long after her rescue and return, where—in a small attic room in Paris her attentiveness to a spider or a feral cat signify her connection to life. Solitude on the island, for Marguerite de Roberval, is a condition for acquiring a new sense of immensity and humanity.

Judith P. Robertson
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St John's NL, Canada
jrobert@uottawa.ca

Patrick D. Nunn (2009) *Vanished Islands and Hidden Continents of the Pacific*. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu. ISBN: 978-0-8248-3219-3 Hardcover. US\$50.00.

Patrick Nunn is Professor of Oceanic Geosciences at the Fiji campus of the University of the South Pacific and well-versed in Pacific geology and geography. He has written two valuable textbooks on islands: *Oceanic Islands* (Blackwell, Oxford 1994) and *Environmental Change in the Pacific Basin: Chronologies Causes, Consequences* (Wiley, Chichester 1994), as well as various scholarly papers on coastal and insular processes of emergence and submergence, such as plate tectonics and sea-level change. He is, in short, very well qualified to write the kind of book that much of the latest volume is about. He is, however somewhat less qualified or assured in handling another topic, teasingly implicit in the alluring title and a tantalizing introduction, which clings around the scientific core.

The two themes of the book are linked uneasily together. The first, comprising chapters 2-4, 8-9 and some parts of others, describes the processes and events of Pacific island formation, deformation and disappearance in the pre-human past and through modern observation. There is little new in any of this but it is a readily-accessible and quite lively account for the non-specialist. The oceanic geology, geomorphology and biogeography about actual islands refers to places that were too old to have been inhabited by people or, if within in the human era, were mere dots of land. Chapter 5 recounts the arrival of people in mostly orthodox terms, and comes unstuck where it does not. His assertion (p. 82) that historical Pacific Island notions of evil, fear of natural phenomena and mutual distrust between societies can be attributed ultimately to environmental catastrophe around AD 1300, which is his own debatable proposition, beggars belief.

The second theme, comprising chapters 6-7 and parts of others, discusses the historical, ancient-traditional and modern-oral accounts of vanished islands and hidden continents that had been explicitly associated with people or with mythological or deified figures. Nunn tackles the historical literature by discussing selected examples, such as Mu,

Lemuria and *Terra Australis*. As it has long been apparent that there is nothing scientifically factual about these, he has little to add and dismisses them accordingly in a spirited challenge to the pseudoscience involved. I understand the origins and intention of this, but I doubt whether it will make any difference to beliefs in current circulation. It is axiomatic that rejection of scientific rationalism is unlikely to be overturned by greater insistence upon scientific rationalism. Indeed, it might very well be reinforced by it.

The functional link between these two widely separated themes of island history - one in non-cultural geology the other in problematics of tradition - lies in Nunn's belief (p. 4) that:

“... myths are fictions that sometimes contain coded grains of historical truth...[and]... in the Pacific Islands, where most written history began only a couple of hundred years ago, they represent a massive archive of historical material that anyone interested in the region's long-term geological history would be foolish to dismiss.”

This proposition begs questions about the scholarly methods by which grains of 'historical truth' are to be winnowed from fictional chaff. By what independent criteria are some mythical assertions considered historical recollections while others are not? How do allusions in mythology to the appearance or disappearance of islands become raised to an epistemological status sufficient to be discussed in a context of geoscience? The answers are not encouraging, for Nunn's criteria, insofar as they are divulged, are that stories can be assessed according to the plausibility of their details and breadth of recurrence and in light of the geological credibility of a described event in the area to which the story refers (p. 87). Put simply, this means that the author is the arbiter upon grounds of his own choosing.

Nunn (pp. 87-89) assesses 41 accounts of vanished islands as 'fictional or mythical' and 21 as authenticated satisfactorily. Yet, from the beginning of his discussion of these, the absence of a recognizable system or any discoverable consistency is apparent. The first example is a Japanese story – a blatant sexual fantasy unremarked by Nunn - that is considered, on grounds undisclosed, an authentic eighth century account of a mythical island. It is validated because an island of the same name exists today. Next, are two cases of vanished Marquesan islands fished up by the Polynesian culture-hero Maui. One is banished to the fictional list despite Nunn's suggestions of its geoscientific plausibility; while the other is approved as plausible because a remnant of the island still exists. The logic of this, and many others of his succeeding examples, is quite inscrutable. Furthermore, the fact that so many Pacific islands have either steep volcanic slopes and/or are subject to earth movements ensures that there is hardly a case in which geoscientific ingenuity cannot propose the possibility of an island having disappeared where one is interpreted from the traditions as having done so. Equally, however, in very few of the cases is there actual geological evidence of submerged islands, as Nunn himself is willing to concede. Consequently, the matter is on all counts conjectural.

From a social sciences perspective, there is also a fundamental problem: Nunn understands too little of the implications of anthropological method and theory in the study of Pacific

tradition, some of it going back to late nineteenth century debates in the ‘traditionalist’ era about how, and how much, ancient knowledge was conserved, transferred, and known to be reliable, and some from recent debates about the re-invention of tradition, both as a continuous process in Pacific societies and as a manifestation of modern claims to authority over resources. Without knowing how others have grappled with important questions that he has yet to ask, for example about how authority is constituted and demonstrated in the sources of traditions, he shows little comprehension of the contexts, subtlety, usages and volatility of traditional stories, believing that from his own earth science resources he can simply pick out the grains of historical truth. It is just not that easy.

Nunn’s command of the literature of Polynesian traditions is also slight, and it is not enhanced by his own speculations. For example, he suggests (p. 103) that the meaning of Hawaiki for east Polynesians was symbolic ‘of shared ancestry, seafaring achievements and cultural antiquity’. In fact, they retained almost no coherent knowledge of shared ancestry outside the central archipelagos, focused almost exclusively upon their own traditions of colonization voyaging and conceived of Hawaiki as timeless. For Maori, to take only one of varying interpretations, Hawaiki was at the same time an ancestral source and current destination of spirits lying to the northwest, an historical homeland of original tribal migrants lying to the northeast, and the internal spiritual being of a person, the Hawaiki of the soul being continually re-born in infants. Many of the traditional stories about appearance or disappearance of islands refer to the world of gods and demi-gods before the arrival of people as witnesses, and are very widespread in the Pacific. It is quite illogical to assume, as Nunn prefers, that the geoscience probabilities need to be assessed for each archipelago to which much the same story was transferred, as if it was a serial record of actual geological movements. It is far more plausible to accept that it was only the story that moved.

Vanished Islands and Hidden Continents of the Pacific is a book of two parts. In his own disciplinary territory, in which is encompassed the greater part of the book, the author is authoritative and interesting, even if what he has to say is hardly novel. Outside it he soon loses his footing. Yet few would disagree with his final words (p. 199) or forebear to wish, as does Nunn, that they could be more widely accepted in popular fora:

“There is no sunken continent in the Pacific... Nan Madol and the Easter Island *moai* were simply created by the ancestors of the modern islanders and so on. The geological history of the Pacific Basin is well known. The origins of the people who inhabit it are equally well known. There are lacunae of uncertainty and voids of information in both time and space but, truly, no real mysteries.”

Atholl Anderson
Australian National University
Canberra, Australia
atholl.anderson@anu.edu.au
