

Book reviews

Ulrik Pram Gad (2017) *National identity politics and postcolonial sovereignty games: Greenland, Denmark, and the European Union*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press. 152 pp, ISBN: 978-87-635-4502-0, US\$29.00.

In 1985, Greenland made history when it became the first territory to leave what was then the European Community (EC; later EU). The forced EC membership had played an important role during Greenland's struggle for home rule, which it acquired in 1979. Greenland has used its position as one of the EU's Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) to take steps towards independence from Denmark.

In this book, Ulrik Pram Gad provides an insightful account of the 'sovereignty games' that define the relationship between Greenland, Denmark, and the EU in the context of Greenland's pursuit of sovereign statehood. Greenland's anticipated oil riches, minerals, and access to transport routes form an important part of this imagined future and are used as an asset in interactions with third parties. Arguing that the political identities which have been constructed in Greenland and Denmark, and the accompanying narratives that serve to legitimize their present unequal relationship, are set to collide at some point, Gad comes to the conclusion that Denmark has few options if it wants to prolong the existence of the *Rigsfaelleskabet* (the community of the realm, comprising Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands). He argues that, paradoxically, full commitment to Greenlandic independence could be the most effective strategy to this end.

Gad approaches the role of the EU in Greenland's move towards independence through a study of the constructions and effects of national identity and foreign policy, drawing on discourse analysis, political debates, legislation, and interviews with key informants. Gad himself gained practical insights into EU-Greenland relations when working for the Government of Greenland at the turn of the millennium. The book forms part of a collective research project on *Microstates in the Margins of Europe: Postcolonial Sovereignty Games*, which aims to connect scholarship on postcoloniality, paradiplomacy, and EU studies.

The first part of the book focuses on the relationship between Greenland and Denmark and explores why both allow the community of the realm to exist (for now). Gad shows that while Danish national identity is based on an ideal of a culturally homogenous nation-state and therefore seemingly incompatible with the culturally diverse community of the realm, its self-image as benevolent democratic role model in the world, and a perceived historical responsibility, turn Denmark's relationship with Greenland into an apparently emotional one, devoid of self-interest. Drawing on short illustrative examples, he argues that the continued use of hierarchical family metaphors by Danish politicians serves to legitimize this relationship in Denmark. This is followed by an analysis of Greenlandic postcolonial identity discourse which functions both "as a mirror- and counter-image of the colonial power" and correspondingly envisions an ideal sovereign nation-state in the form of a culturally homogenous entity. Gad suggests that, as the country strives to realize this vision, Greenland's political identity retains a transitional character. The fact that economic self-support has been made a priority over political sovereignty in this process is rendered more complicated given the strong connectedness between Greenlandic political identity and the concept of a welfare state. Gad highlights that it is this particular dynamic that opens up a temporary role for Denmark to support Greenland's movement towards economic self-sufficiency and state sovereignty. Their current unequal relationship is thus explained in both Greenland and Denmark by the idea that Greenland requires support from Denmark in this process. In Gad's words: "the community of the realm must keep disintegrating to be legitimate."

The second part of the book extends its focus, taking into account actors from outside the community of the realm. This includes a useful interpretation of past Danish interventions in Greenland. For example, Gad positions the forced relocation of inhabitants from near the

American air base at Thule to Qaanaaq in 1953, as part of the games played by Denmark aimed at securing sovereignty over Greenland, thus challenging Denmark's altruistic self-image. Not least because of such past experiences, Greenland's home- and later self-rule authorities have worked to increase independence. The relationship with the EU, as Gad cogently outlines, has proven to be of particular significance in this context. He illustrates how Greenland, by letting Denmark 'disappear' from political discourse and diplomatic practice, has been able to practice and prepare for future sovereignty and construct an image of "sovereign equality" with the EU. Anticipated resources thereby allow Greenland to ease its dependence on Denmark and provide for a narrative that places Greenland in a position to demand acceptance of hunting practices that are crucial for Inuit cultural identity (e.g. sealing)—and thus form another important part of Greenlandic identity discourse—from parties interested in these resources. However, Gad stresses that the practical relationship between Greenland, Denmark, and the EU, which has been shaped significantly by individual actors, is much more complicated than Denmark merely providing the 'platform' from which Greenland maintains its EU relations. While Greenland has managed to "photoshop Denmark out" of interactions with the EU when it comes to certain matters, it relies heavily on Danish support in other areas.

Finally, Gad develops six scenarios for the future relationship between Greenland and Denmark. Returning to one of his core arguments, he suggests that perhaps the only option for Denmark to prolong the community of the realm is to fully commit to its end by working jointly with Greenland towards Greenlandic independence. For Greenland, in turn, this set-up may become more acceptable the lower its narrated and real dependence on Denmark is. Before concluding, Gad points briefly to the challenges that the post-Danish character of a sovereign Greenlandic state may face and calls for broader public debate to develop a coherent vision for the future. He notes that different factors, such as a fading of the expectations of a resource boom, could induce a break-down of the carefully balanced relationship between Greenland, Denmark, and the EU. By highlighting another seeming paradox, Gad however emphasizes that the narrative of a future sovereign Greenlandic nation-state rich in extractives may produce (some of) the resources needed to realize formal sovereignty.

This book offers interesting insights into the complexities and tensions that line Greenland's road towards independence. It constitutes an important contribution to the limited scholarship on Greenlandic foreign relations and sheds further light on the postcolonial relationship between Greenland and Denmark. The overall argument is developed in a very clear and concise fashion, in some parts at the expense of further depth. At the same time, this clarity may render the dynamics currently unfolding on the world's largest non-continental island accessible to a wider audience. The book provides sufficient background information to be easily comprehensible for readers not familiar with Greenland and will be of particular interest for scholars interested in questions of sovereignty and postcolonialism, paradiplomacy, micro-states, and EU-OCT relations.

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Marcus Bingenheimer (2017) *Island of Guanyin: Mount Putuo and its gazetteers*, New York, Oxford University Press. 304 pp., ISBN: 978-0190456191. £74.00.

It will be a familiar experience for island studies researchers to read a text dedicated to a particular island and parse it for information that may be relevant from a comparative island perspective. Sometimes, this process is easier than others.

Taken on its own terms, Marcus Bingenheimer's *Island of Guanyin* is an elegant presentation of a monumental scholarly effort focused on a narrow slice of historical literature related to a single island, Mount Putuo, which is located in China's Zhoushan archipelago. Specifically, Bingenheimer (p. 5) undertakes a chronologically, authorially, and sociohistorically comparative reading of 'temple gazetteers' ("a container format that collects texts about a religious site [...] and arranges them according to genre") related to Mount Putuo. These gazetteers, dating from between 1361 and 1999, collect prose texts, poems, illustrations, and maps related to Mount Putuo. This corpus represents a rich, multifaceted source of information concerning not just Mount Putuo but also Chinese governmental, military, religious, educational, economic, and touristic trends.

Mount Putuo is first and foremost a sacred site. As Bingenheimer argues:

A sacred site consists of more than a location and the socio-economic arrangements of its inhabitants. A location becomes a place by the meanings attached to it. These meanings must be encoded in some form of text in order to be remembered and communicated. [...] Without its meanings encoded in text, a place is but a point in space, unsighted by humans, uncited and uncitable. The process is dynamic — places keep changing, text is always on the move. What is here called the textualization of a site is the process by which meanings, place, and text change in time, and memories of change again leave their traces in text and landscape. Topographic facts and historical events inspire the production of texts; the texts in turn influence how people perceive a site and what is proper to do there (p. 12).

Landscape and literature thus write each other (pp. 15-16). Mount Putuo's sacredness is grounded in textual sources that were only associated with the island at a later date. The island is but one of numerous places across Asia that came to be regarded as identical to Mount Potalaka, described in an Indian sutra as the dwelling place of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, known in China as Guanyin (p. 2). Guanyin herself came to be located on Mount Putuo (formerly called Meicen) on account of a foundation legend: a ninth-century Japanese monk was stranded on the island and could not leave until he deposited on the island a statue of the Bodhisattva (pp. 80-81). This legend set in motion pilgrimages to Mount Putuo and ultimately the accumulation of the corpus upon which Bingenheimer's study is based. Islands are in many respects ideal sites for pilgrimage, which implies sacred movement to a peripheral place (p. 166). Crucially, Mount Putuo seems to have possessed just the right amount of peripherality, being close to the diplomatic and trade hub of Ningbo and within reasonably easy reach of the major population centres of late imperial China, at least relative to other 'sacred mountains'—especially for the literati who produced the gazetteers (p. 3).

It is thus in part due to its island spatiality, as a convenient (but not *too* convenient) stopping off point for diplomats and destination for pilgrims and curious literati, that Mount Putuo captured the imagination. Yet its location in a strategically important archipelago could also be a drawback: Mount Putuo was time and again regarded as a security risk by the Chinese state, as a haven for pirates and smugglers. In combination with Buddhism's low status relative to the state promotion of Confucianism during much of the period, imperial favour proved inconstant. The island was the site of fierce military battles and was subjected to forced depopulation, maritime isolation, and even the destruction of its temples.

A confluence of circumstances nevertheless ultimately boosted Mount Putuo's prestige: the Chinese education system produced more scholars than there were positions in the state bureaucracy, leading to a large public of highly educated readers with the time and interest to engage in "a wide array of cultural pursuits for pleasure" (p. 21). These literati—who were both the readers and the writers of the texts included in the gazetteers—were interested in Mount Putuo because it was regarded as a sacred site but were not especially interested in the enactment or practice of this sacredness through pilgrimage and religious ritual. Pilgrims and monks, who were so crucial to the development of Mount Putuo's temples and beauty spots as well as the surrounding region's economy, were at times regarded as inconveniences by the literati, who perhaps in the manner of today's elite cultural tourists, looked down upon mass (religious) tourism and the industry that served it (p. 166).

Mount Putuo remains a sacred site in today's China, and pilgrims and other tourists still contribute significantly to the Zhoushan archipelago's economy—even if today, visitors can travel from Ningbo by bus instead of boat, transforming what was once a four-day journey into a three-hour one (p. 175). Gone are the days when Zhoushan's "thousands of islands" (p. 174) defeated imperial cartography and offered protection to pirates.

Bingenheimer convincingly shows that Mount Putuo's geography and texts have been intimately interlinked. Holy sites and scenic spots, locations of miracles and memorable stories phase in and out of Putuo's history and across its rugged landscape. If one cave where Guanyin is said to appear proves insufficient for the island's needs as a tourism hotspot, then a second cave will be anointed sacred, and a third as well. If one Mount Putuo is not enough, then an even smaller nearby island will be designated as within Mount Putuo's sphere of sacredness. Famous sites are relocated or reproduced, and as old glories fade from memory, new ones come to take their place.

Island of Guanyin is a fascinating book. The fact that it is not written with islandness *per se* in mind renders it no less interesting from an island studies perspective. The volume is a welcome addition to the current scarcity of English-language literature on the islands of China, and it adds to the body of work concerning islands as holy sites. Its methodologically robust examination of textual history provides a surprising range of insights. The book's limitations are related to its methodology: the focus on a narrow genre of texts that permits the book's enormous detail and temporal attentiveness prevents Bingenheimer from taking much consideration of more recent developments on Mount Putuo and from undertaking the kind of wider comparative work that could highlight why Mount Putuo is both special and especially illuminating.

These are, however, only limitations in the sense that, when one reads a great book, one may wish the world of it. Like Mount Putuo itself though, Bingenheimer's volume is a perfect world in miniature, a microcosm of movement, islandness, and change. To hope for something grander is to misunderstand its significance on its own scale.

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Tim Simpson (Ed.) (2017). *Tourist utopias: offshore islands, enclave spaces, and mobile imaginaries*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press. 245pp., ISBN: 978-90-8964-847-1. US\$115.

Roughly five hundred years since Sir Thomas More wrote his *Utopia*, these authors bring him into the present day, describing “the *spatial production* of contemporary spectacular tourist sites,” or tourist utopias, in a world where “to be famous one only need to be a tourist.” In the book’s schema, these spaces of exception and consumption function “as laboratories for testing novel spatial formats, protocols, flows, mobilities, and subjectivities.” Readers of *Island Studies Journal* will be familiar with the comparison of island to laboratory, following on the notion that islands lend themselves, through geographical isolation and psychological remove, to contained experimentation. However, while some of the “offshore islands” of the book’s subtitle are real islands (like Dubai’s artificial ones), other tourist sites discussed are figuratively offshore rather than literally (such as the “instant cities” of Laos). This speaks to one of the central tensions in island studies (to which of course *ISJ*’s readers will also be attuned): the debate over extending the idea of the island to a general sense of islandness, applying attributes of actual islands to islanded spaces like the garden or the desert. Since this collection exercises a catholic definition of the island, it does not theorize islands *sui generis*, but it does offer local examples from which we can extrapolate ideas and insights with global ramifications.

Simpson, in his introductory essay, offers a useful review of the theories that inform his idea of a tourist utopia, and then even more usefully codifies his “tourist utopology” for us in digest form. As is the nature of such summary exercises, it needs must ignore certain subtleties such as the domestic tourist who is not accounted for among the “transient workers and nomadic tourists who have no real local stake,” but nevertheless establishes a clear and convenient theoretical platform both for thinking through the essays in this volume and for thinking beyond them.

The chapters are organized into three parts—Enclaves, Imaginaries, and Archipelagoes—and are of uneven quality. One by Keller Easterling, “The Zone is on Vacation,” is so riddled with mixed metaphors that it renders itself unreadable. For instance, over the course of two paragraphs, the author describes free trade zones as breeding promiscuously, as a warm pool for the latest cocktail of spatial products, as having swallowed the city whole, and as a germ of an epidemic. Easterling is a professor of architecture at Yale, and her figurative language is partly symptomatic of the archi-speak pervasive in that world and partly a reflection of the difficulty of grasping and making visible the inner workings of these zones, which are both abstraction and very real experience.

Conversely, one of the collection’s strongest essays, by Benjamin Kidder Hodges, manages to do a number of things well at the same time. It elaborates the idea of the utopic, building on Louis Marin’s idea of utopic spatial play, a touchstone text for the whole volume, as applied to video games and tourism in Bulgaria. Hodges is careful to maintain the distance of simile, arguing that game play and tourism resemble each other while avoiding collapsing the virtual and the real into each other. The piece also does some nice things with creative criticism, bringing Hodges’s personal experience, in which “research often felt like a kind of tourism,” into the discussion.

The other essays concern themselves with questions of how capital is imbricated in tourist experiences in the twenty-first century, progressing through a number of (mostly) Asian case studies (the book is part of Amsterdam University Press’s New Mobilities in Asia series) including Singapore’s casinos, Abu Dhabi’s cultural enclave, Disney’s man-made island in Tokyo Bay, and New Zealand seen through the *Lord of the Rings* films. Since the volume’s organizing idea is loose, the essays would have benefited from a coda designed to pull their threads together. As it is, the book ends with a single “archipelago” and the very last word goes to an anonymous blogger quoted in that essay.

The spaces of exception described here are generally read as exempt from the usual rules and laws and distinct from state order, but could alternatively be read as extensions of the state which wants to create loopholes for capital and its stakeholders so they can operate free of those controls. Curiously, the book itself is a product of one of these spaces of exception, and not in a tangential, theoretical way, but through direct funding and hospitality. The workshop that spawned the collection was “generously supported by contributions from three prominent local operators in Macau’s gaming industry” and was held in the Adelson Advanced Education Center in the Venetian Macau resort, where the authors were totally immersed in “the perfection of the biopolitical tourist enclosure.” The eponym is mega-billionaire, mega-casino owner, mega-donor Sheldon Adelson (lately with a heavy hand in U.S. G.O.P. electioneering and underwriter of the proposed relocation of the American embassy in Israel). No doubt “this generosity proved invaluable for the participants’ ability to understand the inner workings of Macau’s gaming and tourism business,” but what does it mean to theorize the tourism industry from the inside? If the Adelson Center runs training programs in hospitality and related industries, then to what extent is the theorization of those industries a useful tool in studying and potentially promoting them? We might think back to Jamaica Kincaid’s caustic remarks on Antigua’s Hotel Training School, along the lines of how Antiguan’s can’t see the relationship between a history of servitude and training for service. In an increasingly corporate academia, we must ask who our work is in the service of. On the other hand, is there any outside to today’s post-industrial tourist economy? Simpson et al. would argue that we’re all always already inside it.

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Bénédicte André (2016). *Îléité: perspectives sur le vécu insulaire*. Paris, Pétra. 266pp, ISBN: 978-2847431490. €20.00.

The title of Bénédicte André’s book announces its relevance for island studies: approximating the English *islandness*, the French term *îléité* (as opposed to *insularité*) signals an engagement with the lived experience of islands, a study of islands on their own terms through literary representations (thus, the second part of the title reads *literary perspectives on the lived experience of islands*). The three main chapters of André’s book set out to explore the textualisation of islandness in three former colonies of France: the former plantation islands of Guadeloupe (part of the Lesser Antilles) and La Réunion (east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean), today overseas departments and regions of France, and the archipelago of New Caledonia, situated halfway between Papua New Guinea and New Zealand in the South Pacific, a penal colony in the nineteenth century and now a special collectivity of France. André focuses on the work of one author for each of these island spaces: *Morne Câpresse* (2008) by Gisèle Pineau, a Paris-born Guadeloupian who moved to her native island at the age of 23; five novels by Creole author Axel Gauvin from La Réunion (who studied in France); and finally, a set of twenty-one short stories by Claudine Jacques, a French author who moved to New Caledonia as a teenager.

Beyond these case studies, the declared aims of the book are “to introduce island studies to the French scientific community” and to “demonstrate that a dialogue between the former and literary criticism can take place” (my translation here and below), which links *Îléité* to recent studies in the anglophone world like Ian Kinane’s *Theorising Literary Islands* (2017) or Ralph Crane and Lisa Fletcher’s *Island Genres, Genre Islands* (2017). Accordingly, André’s readings of the primary texts are preceded by a long introductory chapter (“Of the decontinentalisation of islands: influences and limits”) that offers an overview of recent

developments within island studies and convincingly challenges Pete Hay's contention that fiction and metaphor have no place in the field. For André, the experience of islandness already entails an imaginative dimension that fiction can help to explore. She also creates a dialogue between anglophone island studies and French cultural geography, notably the work of Joël Bonnemaïson and his understanding of islandness in terms of geological and historical rupture (rather than isolation). Arguing that island studies and postcolonial studies have common interests in their explorations of identity, liminality, otherness, agency, and power hierarchies, André draws on the writings of theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha, whose notions of hybridity and third space constitute an important background for her book.

Îleité succeeds in introducing the reader to a set of island fictions that have received virtually no attention from the perspective of island studies. André is attentive to the specific processes of (de-)colonisation and creolisation that distinguish these former islands colonies from their counterparts in, say, the British Empire; her analyses of the poetic and narrative strategies that respond to the specific contexts of French decolonisation shed light on the complexity of these texts' negotiation of cultural identity and the islands' relationship to metropolitan France. She also takes into account the differences between the historical and political contexts of Guadeloupe, La Réunion, and New Caledonia. Thus, she thinks about the difficulty of connecting place with ancestry in an island that had no indigenous population before colonisation (La Réunion); accordingly, she relates the "island malaise" in Gauvin's novels to a poetics of distance and incommensurability that resonates with the difficulty of figuring the island as a homeland for its inhabitants. The tension between enclosure and mobility in Pineau's *Morne Câpresse* is read in its relation to two conceptions of islandness as closed and open, and the oscillation between the two modes is seen as symptomatic of the "intranquillity" of a cultural identity that rests on a history of slavery and the shame resulting from it. Finally, the recurrence of the motif of the threshold and different forms of (resounding) silence in the work of Claudine Jacques are discussed in relation to the Nouméa Accord of 1998 and its emphasis on the "common destiny" of Kanaks and white Caledonians. On the eve of the 2018 referendum about the future political status of New Caledonia, André's discussion of the role of epiphanies, "acts of consciousness," and potentiality in the face of what she refers to as a culture of silence and division reveals the political relevance of Jacques's short stories.

Unfortunately, however, the islands themselves are frequently lost along the way. Time and again, André's book struggles to establish the relevance of her analyses for thinking about islandness. As such, the three chapters do not really live up to the promise of a nissological, geocritical, and geopoetic study of literary islands. The author's attempts to connect her readings back to a discussion of islands frequently run the risk of metaphorical abstraction that is not grounded in the text itself. Thus, the various spatial settings she discusses—ghetto, room, convent, canteen, hospital, fair—are all treated as metaphors of islandness in the (near) absence of textual examples where islands are treated *as* islands. The passing references to some aspects of island geography in Chapter 3—such as the threat of flooding, the difficulty of hiding on the island, or the caves traversing it—are among the rare exceptions. This vague and generalising conceptualisation of islands culminates in the questionable association of islands with a specific genre of literature: "[...] could the short story be a postcolonial insular genre *par excellence*?" While André's discussions of issues like food and language are often insightful, many of her analyses would be equally valid in other geographical settings; indeed, the postcolonial status of the geographies she examines seems to be much more relevant as a common denominator than their islandness. The book is thereby in danger of obscuring rather than illuminating its ostensible object of study. Indeed, the conclusion seems to suggest that islands are everything and nothing: "Between opening and enclosure, marginality and norm, history and memory, real and ideal, living the island constitutes a veritable act of funambulation [...]."

While *Îlêité* deserves credit for being one of few works (another example is Daniel Graziadei's *Insel(n) im Archipel* [2017]) that brings together—at least in the introduction—discussions of islandness in both English and French, it is rather selective in its engagement with discussions of literary islands, especially when these are not directly associated with the field of island studies. The most striking omission is the work of another scholar from La Réunion, Jean-Michel Racault, one of the most influential academics writing on island literature in French (as is Frank Lestringant, equally omitted from André's book). Given the book's postcolonial approach, it is also somewhat surprising that André ignores studies of (post)colonial islands in the anglophone world by critics like Diana Loxley, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, or Dorothy F. Lane. Further, André's book misses the opportunity of situating its case studies within a broader literary perspective on France and its island territories (one might think of the Martinican author Patrick Chamoiseau or the Tahitian novelist Célestine Hitiura Vaite).

All in all, *Îlêité* provides an interesting and eloquent account of the tensions and anxieties connected to the aftermath of French colonialism in three different oceans. Despite some small mistakes (the Ouvéa hostage crisis is dated to 1998 rather than 1988), the book relies on thorough and detailed knowledge of the political and cultural contexts that shaped the primary texts. Its contribution to literary island studies may ultimately be modest, but it is valuable for its exploration of the links between poetics and politics in a set of works that remind us of France's colonial past and neo-colonial present in the global ocean.

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Nicholas Allen, Nick Groom, & Jos Smith (Eds.) (2017). *Coastal works: cultures of the Atlantic edge*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 292 pp., ISBN: 978-0-19-879515-5. US\$80.

The peripheral character of coasts might be why they are also at the margins of cultural analysis. To be sure, while 'The Atlantic' is relatively well-understood, the cultural meanings of British and Irish coasts remain an understudied area of academic inquiry. But in *Coastal Works: Cultures of the Atlantic Edge*, a group of literary and cultural scholars gather to invigorate the coastal edge as a way of investigating the constant cultural becoming that unfolds between land and sea. They do so, particularly inspired by the scholarship of John R. Gillis, by drawing the Irish and British Archipelago into what in recent years has been labeled 'The Blue Humanities,' or technically speaking 'thalassology': the historical understanding of water and its effects on human society.

After a concise and well-written introduction, the book uses 13 highly interconnected essays to explore the intricate cultural and literary meanings of the British and Irish archipelago. I say 'essays' because, while scholarly research, they are indeed—to varying extents—imaginative and exploratory. The book opens with Nick Groom's remarkable essay on *Thoughts of a Project for Draining the Irish Channel from 1722*, an anonymous pamphlet that imagines a new Atlantic archipelago without the Irish Sea. While the pamphlet is obviously a thought-experiment, it nonetheless illuminates the sea as a space that is not simply there, not simply given: it can be colonized and territorialized. The book then moves on to Fiona Stafford's engagement with the literary and geographical Solway Firth, through a critical reading of John Ruskin, as an ambiguous border between expansion and inundation, conquest and exchange, England and Scotland. Nicholas Allen explores the writings of Ciaran Carson, Glenn Patterson, and Kevin Barry in order to invoke a coastal perspective on the literary Belfast and the fictional city of Bohane, particularly as they pulsate with formations

and withdrawal of empire. In a similar vein, Andrew Gibson's essay on Norman Nichol森 connects the coast to the question of where England is imagined to end. These intuitions about where England ends and begins then resurface in the essay of John Brannigan: an inquiry into the dualism of myopic English nationalism and island utopia off the Scottish coast in the writings of Louis MacNeice. Daniel Brayton too explores the coastal uncertainty between national solidity and aquatic fluidity, especially in Erskine Childers's classic novel *The Riddle of the Sands*, followed by Damian Walford Davies's exploration of Ronald Lockley's archipelagic counter-imagination from the perspective of island studies. The book continues with three essays on the scientific coast: Nessa Cronin's essay on Maude Delab who connected the coastal imagination, through naturalist field-work on the island of Valentia, with the emergence of modern European science; Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi's and John Plunkett's examination of the ways in which the peripheral coast of Devon inscribed itself into popular science in Victorian England; and Margaret Cohen's investigation of Zarh Pritchard's early submarine paintings and the ways they connect to the challenge of seeing under water among artists and engineers. In the final two essays, Andrew McNeillie takes inspiration from Tim Robinson to explore his own relation to the Aran Islands and the ways they connect to global history, and Jos Smith continues the focus on the Aran Islands as an exemplary instance of the way in which the archipelago is represented in *Archipelago*, the journal edited by McNeillie himself. Finally and appropriately, the anthology closes with an epilogue by Gillis.

What is intellectually born from *Coastal Works* is, in other words, a fascinating sibling of cultural nissology. For how long can you walk along the coast of an island? The answer, of course, is forever. The island is an infinite coast. Indeed, Godfrey Baldacchino has called the 'island' a "nervous duality"—constantly oscillating between, for example, the local and the global, the interior and the exterior, dystopia and utopia, routes and roots. Similarly, the cultural meanings of the coastal in *Coastal Works* are ambiguously situated between the inward facing and the outward facing. The coast, like the island, is culturally speaking both a rugged closure of land and a constant encounter with the open.

A problem with the book, however—though to varying extents, depending on the particular contribution—is that some of the responses to the coast border on essentialism. The afterword by Gillis is particularly telling. Setting out from Ralph Waldo Emerson's observation that "the point of greatest interest is the place where land and water meet," Gillis notes that "we have never been so conscious of shores as we are today." The reader is then informed that "we like to think of edges as a product of nature" and that "it is the mental construct of the horizon that draws us outward into a time and space of the beyond, where we escape reality, if only for a moment." Well, who is this we on whose behalf Gillis asserts the horizontal pull into an escapist time and space? Perhaps the generalization of a first-person perspective is not so strange in the essay as a style of writing. Maybe it testifies to a certain intellectual lineage that can best be understood as phenomenological, after all a widespread heritage among studies of space and place. Though I am fully aware that the book is disciplinarily rooted in literary and cultural studies—it is not ethnographic—I cannot help but feel analytically uneasy when 'the coast' is associated with a more or less well-defined form of perception.

Nonetheless, *Coastal Works* is a skillfully crafted collection of essays that converses intricately with the study of islands. In many anthologies, it is often difficult to really maintain a shared intellectual horizon throughout the book, but these authors succeed. The essays mirror each other. They deserve to be read by anyone who feels or remembers feeling in a particular mood when they walk along the coast.

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Gloria Pungetti (Ed.) (2017). *Island landscapes: an expression of European culture*. New York, Routledge. 299 pp., ISBN: 9781472425447. £115 (hardback).

Landscape research is a demanding and multifarious scientific field that best marks its steps ahead and lays out new ground of knowledge and applicability, through concerted and multilayered team efforts, across place, time, and cultural context. In this light, this collective volume comes as a welcome and worthy scholarly achievement, pushing the landscape research frontier further, as concerns island landscapes, in the case of Europe. As stated in the introductory chapter, the volume aims to improve consideration of European island landscapes, as part of Europe's cultural heritage. It does so by describing changes in European island landscapes over time, considering their current conditions and future trends, and acknowledging the broader context of attempts to achieve sustainability while balancing multiple needs and complex priorities. The introduction also professes that the book is not merely a collection of papers: it is the result of a proper endeavor to shape a methodology for researching European island landscapes and seascapes. While it succeeds in staking new territory in many ways, it only partly accomplishes the goals outlined in the introduction.

The book's scope creates a distinctively European arena for scholarly investigation, bringing together island analysis and discussion from a variety of relevant academic fields and disperse locations around Europe, in an interdisciplinary, multicultural probe into four landscape aspects: (1) history, (2) character, (3) identity, and (4) scenarios, planning, and tools. It does so through the ESLAND Project (European Culture expressed in iSland LANDscapes; <http://www.eslandproject.eu/>), which attempts to outline novel methodological approaches to island landscape research, analyzing the state of the field both methodologically and conceptually, and applying the theory to case studies. The book's organization in four parts, addressing the four landscape aspects, fully reflects the objectives and structure of the ESLAND Project. The ESLAND Project aimed to improve consideration of European island landscapes, as part of Europe's cultural heritage. It focused on the evolution of these landscapes and seascapes and their present conditions, proposing and employing holistic and interdisciplinary methodological approaches and tools towards a common basis of analysis and discussion on island landscape concepts, classifications, and identities. Each part of the book comprises eight contributions putting forth a) key issues, b) research methods and/or tools, and c) their applications to specific case study island landscape contexts (from Iceland to Cyprus, including the British Isles, Italy, Malta, Greece, Estonia, etc). The book's structure succeeds in delivering ESLAND's contributions in a clear-cut, straightforward way, by effectively delineating the four distinct research areas and outcomes of the project. Also, the book includes an impressive selection of images, which are used effectively to underline and highlight the content of the book.

The most valuable contribution of this book is that each part offers useful and sometimes groundbreaking contributions to its fields of enquiry. The chapters cover a broad range of issues and offer fresh perspectives on challenges that have been raised and considered in a variety of other fora. The biggest problem of the book is that it does not do so in an even and equally effective way. While certain chapters are inspirational for their insights and depth of research (such as those on the British Isles), the description and analysis in many of the chapters laying out case study applications is simply disappointing. For instance, the first few chapters of the section on landscape history provide very insightful and nuanced observations, indicating profound landscape knowledge and offering critical and balanced arguments about landscape problems and prospects, situated in the broader context of relevant European landscape aspects and issues. While such chapters may stand as full and proper research articles on their own (usually, those that introduce each part), most do not. Unfortunately, many of the latter read as loose discussions of landscapes, sometimes without even a stated objective, and with weakly defined methodology (if any) and limited bibliographies. Chapters such as 10 and 18 fail to demonstrate the applicability of the book's key concepts, methods, and tools,

both substantially and instrumentally. They do justice neither to the wealth of the landscapes they describe nor to the possibilities and potential for incorporation and application of the book's novel approaches and tools—including the *seascape* and *insularity* parameters—to the specific case studies. This may be due to the fact that this collection presents the products of the ESLAND project.

Another weakness lies in the treatment of the book's basic terms and definitions. Whereas the whole book is underpinned by a conceptualisation of landscapes as expressions of European culture (the subtitle of the book), the concept of *culture* is not clearly defined or theorised (barely a few lines on p. 9). UNESCO conceptualisations of culture dominate in *cultural heritage* definitions. The conceptualisation and definition of *landscape identity* is also problematic (p. 150; a more correct and well-rounded one is provided on p. 161), and it is certainly not the case that there are presently few landscape identity studies reported in literature. Theoretical issues and approaches revolving around *insularity* could profit from a more extensive scholarly literature review, while new word forms ought to be used more carefully (i.e. mind mapping implies a mapping of the mind). Lastly, despite the fact that qualitative data deficiencies hinder proper and holistic landscape interpretation or perception, generally speaking, it is possible to use qualitative scales and measurements for cultural elements, making it possible also, then, to map them. This is currently probably the biggest challenge in landscape characterization—though a very worthy one.

The conclusions competently and comprehensively summarise the accomplishments of this scholarly endeavor, in its proper scope and scale, placing the book in its broader interdisciplinary landscape studies context, and raising appropriately incisive and portentous points pertaining to the challenges and promises of breaking new ground in island landscape research. Nonetheless, these points (including insularity and seascape analysis) were not realised within and across the individual chapters; there is great variability in the depth and extent to which the authors of the 35 chapters deliver the objectives of the book, as set forth in the introduction. All in all, this collective volume represents an earnest effort to point out the difficulties and opportunities of new and older methodological approaches to various issues, aspects, and aims concerning European island landscapes, encompassing seascape and insularity dimensions, with an uneven degree of success.

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