Islands of the Mind

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Islands of the Mind:

Psychology, Literature and Biodiversity

Edited by

Richard Pine and Vera Konidari

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Figure 1. Frontispiece: Gerald Durrell and Lawrence Durrell, Jersey Zoo, 1960 (Estate of Gerald Durrell – photographer unknown)

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The essays in this book emanate from a festival, "Islands of the Mind", which we co-directed in Corfu in June 2019.[1] As an island playing a significant role in cultural and geopolitical terms since at least the seventh century BC, Corfu has been justifiably celebrated by many writers; in the modern era, the brothers Lawrence and Gerald Durrell, who were the initial inspiration for the Durrell School (later Library) of Corfu (having lived there in the period 1935-1939), were central to the festival discussions, since their writings and careers indicate the continuing importance of islands in terms of literature, biodiversity and psychology.

Since its inception in 2002, the Durrell School/ Library has addressed many topics in the fields of literature, ecology, history, politics, music and psychology. This festival was not only a celebration of many of these topics but also a deep exploration of the phenomenon of islands: the mindscape that emanates from the island context and hinterland.[2]

Seven hundred and thirty million people – almost ten per cent of the world's population – inhabit islands. One quarter of the states represented at the United Nations are islands. Islands constitute almost twenty per-cent of the total land area of Greece and, in the eastern Mediterranean, constitute a sea and land border with Turkey that, in the light of current migrations, is problematic.

The fact that the majority of the essays in this volume are by natives or long-term residents of very significant islands (for example, Malta, Jersey, Tasmania, Corfu, Ereikousa and Ireland) owes much to their island bases.

The production of this volume is due predominantly to our belief that

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[1] The directors of "Islands of the Mind", at the Solomos Museum, Corfu, were William Apt, Vera Konidari and Richard Pine, with Alkis Leftheriotis as Festival Assistant.

[2] The essays in this volume take their place beside four previous collections culled from our activities, all published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing: *Creativity, Madness and Civilisation* (edited by Richard Pine, 2007), *The Literatures of War* (edited by Richard Pine and Eve Patten, 2008), *The Ionian Islands: aspects of their history and culture* (edited by Anthony Hirst and Patrick Sammon, 2014) and *Encounters in Greek and Irish Fiction: Creativity, Translations and Critical Perspectives* (edited by Paschalis Nikolaou, 2020).

we must continually concentrate on the *personality* of the island, in a psychology as complex as that of any individual or community/society, in order to fully appreciate the issues relating to islands both large and small, in literature, science, ecology and geopolitics. The entire concept of an island as both a physical reality and a state of mind makes us aware of the complexity of using a word as fragile as "island" and, perhaps, as little understood. Due to the exponential growth in island studies, led by figures such as our keynote speaker, Godfrey Baldacchino, and the *Island Studies Journal*, almost every aspect of island life – including cuisine – now demands subjective and objective scrutiny and discussion.[3]

Islomania

In *Reflections on a Marine Venus* (1953), his exploration of the island of Rhodes, Lawrence Durrell coined the term *islomania* to describe an "affliction of spirit" affecting those "who find islands somehow irresistible", with subconscious yearnings towards a "lost Atlantis".[4] Another pertinent term, employed by novelist John Fowles, is *enislement* – another new word like Durrell's *islomania*; Fowles takes it from the seventeenth-century "enisle", meaning to make someone/something into an island.[5]

John Gillis, from whose *Islands of the Mind: how the human imagination created the Atlantic world* (2004) we unashamedly borrowed our festival title, suggests that "it is not real islands that are irresistible, but the idea of the island", and that "we use them [islands] as thresholds to other worlds".[6] This, as part of the "tourist gaze", may be true of those who visit islands due to some psychological need. But the "tourist gaze" does not necessarily address the issue of the indigenous imagination: how island-born folk perceive, and express their perception of, their island. (In any case, as action-research teaches us, the observer inevitably disturbs the field which s/he observes, and therefore implicates the observer in the process.)

The "island" is commonly defined as a piece of land surrounded by water (either in the sea or inland) but it can also be a state of mind: in classical Greece each city-state (such as Athens, Thebes, Sparta or Corinth) could be regarded as an "island" in its insularity, its compactness and its

[3] The festival featured a launch of *Dining with the Durrells* (2019), by David Shimwell, and a presentation by Anna Baldacchino of *A Taste of Islands* (2012) by Anna and Godfrey Baldacchino.

[4] L Durrell, *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, p.15.

[5] Cf. J Fowles, *Wormholes: essays and occasional writings*, p.30.

[6] J Gillis, *Islands of the Mind*, pp. 3-4.

restricted communication with the outside world.

In modern times, attempts have been made to designate artificial islands as independent states, such as "Sealand", a steel-and-concrete platform in international waters off the east coast of England which its occupants attempted in 1967 to declare a sovereign state. Similarly, in 1964 Leicester Hemingway established a republic of New Atlantis, consisting of a barge moored in international waters off the coast of Jamaica. In the USA, in 1982 Key West (one of the islands off the coast of Florida known as the "Keys"), in a semi-jocular rejection of US authority, declared itself "the Conch Republic".

Even the uninhabitable islet of Rockall, unilaterally annexed by Britain in 1955, has been the centre of international disputes between Ireland and Britain. The Caribbean islet of Redonda, a source of guano, was annexed for Britain by M D Shiel in 1865 – a gesture politely refused by Queen Victoria; the islet, which was formally incorporated into Antigua-Barbuda in 1967, has given rise to literary conceits, principally through the writings of John Gawsworth.[7]

Real and imagined

It is undeniable, as J Edward Chamberlin points out, that "islands have provided a center of belief and a circle of wonder, a place where origins and endings are both real and imagined".[8] Lawrence Durrell's essay "The Magic of Islands" argues for the "charm" of islands, emphasising that a local name for the Galapagos Islands is "Las Encantadas" [The Enchanted Isles]. "In the folklore and poetry of nations […] all these images blend together in the subconscious of man to create an image which suggests a limbo of beauty and security".[9]

The "mystery" that attracts one to islands may be the subject of scientific enquiry or mere curiosity. But the mystery may also be within the self: we

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[7] M P Shiel, the novelist, having "inherited" the islet from his father M D Shiel, established an "intellectual aristocracy" which he "bequeathed" to John Gawsworth; it included Richard Aldington, Lawrence Durrell, Gerald Durrell, Victor Gollancz, A.E.W. Mason, Henry Miller, L.G. Pine, Stephen Potter, J.B. Priestley, Arthur Ransome, Bertram Rota, Dorothy Sayers, Martin Secker and Rebecca West. A radio documentary, "Redonda: the island with too many kings", was broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 27 May 2007. The US Guano Islands Act of 1856 empowered US citizens to annexe (on behalf of the USA) any unclaimed guano-producing island.

[8] J E Chamberlin, *Island*, p. 209.

[9] Published (in French) in *Îles de brume et de lumière* (1982) and reprinted in *Lawrence Durrell's Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988*, vol.1, pp. 280-83.

move towards islands not only to discover the island, the "otherness" it may offer, but also to discover oneself. (In the first page of *Prospero's Cell*, his memoir of Corfu, Lawrence Durrell asserted: "Greece offers you […] the discovery of yourself".)[10] And we may even be moving towards an island because we are in flight from something inhospitable or threatening in our original place, as is the case with the million-plus refugees landing on the shores of Greek islands such as Lesvos and Chios in the past five years.

As Ciarán Benson has observed, in the creation of symbolic worlds "the literal co-exists with the metaphorical, the true with the false, the transient with the durable, the actual with the possible, the desirable with the forbidden".[11] This is true not only of the visitor but also of the islander, because we all encounter difficulties between location and identity.

There is a very considerable distinction between imagined islands – places where we might travel in order to make discoveries or to hide ourselves – and the real, affirmable islands of the geographers. Is there not, however, a connection between the two? A psychological link between islands which are demonstrably *true* and islands of the imagination?

Thus islands, as *ideas*, may become cultural constructs as "real" as tangible, physical entities. In the most effective empathetic island-writing, the *idea* of the island and its *reality* become one: Lawrence Durrell's *Prospero's Cell* could be presented as an achievement of this magnitude.

The "imaginary" island – that is, one that may never exist on any geographical map and is purely notional (but which may nevertheless figure on a metaphysical or metaphorical map) – is the subject of works such as José Saramago's *The Tale of the Unknown Island* (1998) in which he writes: "Only the known islands are on the maps […] There can't possibly not be an unknown island".[12]

The imagined island is common to world mythology. Irish mythology is not merely confined to pre-history: the idea of "Tir na nÓg [The Land of Youth]" as an imaginary entity is resumed in contemporary folklore. In Richard Power's novel *The Land of Youth* (1966) this island is "a green and fertile land, always clear in the sunlight and the sight of it was granted only

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[10] L Durrell, *Prospero's Cell*, p. 11. John Gillis (*Islands of the Mind* p. 159, quoting Eric Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler*) records Michael Crichton's acknowledgement: "Often I feel I go to some distant region of the world to be reminded of who I really am". This is the same Michael Crichton who "invented" the island of *Jurassic Park* which, like Conan Doyle's *Lost World* (on which it is partly modelled), imagined a pristine ecosystem in which otherwise extinct creatures of the Triassic-Jurassic eras had escaped extinction.

[11] C Benson, *The Cultural Psychology of Self*, p. 5.

[12] J Saramago, *The Tale of the Unknown Island*, pp. 11-12.

to those who were in some way set apart".[13] In Brian Friel's 1993 play *Wonderful Tennessee* an invisible island, Oileán Draíochta ("Island of Otherness. Island of Mystery") is central to the belief/non-belief of the travellers awaiting the arrival of a mythical ferryman.[14]

The Celtic belief in such an island is not far removed from the "Isles of the Blessed" or "Elysium" described by Hesiod (in *Works and Days*) and the historian Pausanias, as a land of plenty.

Biodiversity

There are, however, other compelling aspects to island life and the study of islands: Gerald Durrell, for his part, pioneered the study of biodiversity; as his widow, Lee Durrell (herself a resident of Corfu) says in her essay, "islands are microcosms of the wider world" and as such are "vital repositories of the planet's biodiversity" which have inspired scientific breakthroughs such as the theory of evolution.

The current and impending tragedies of the ecosystem were explored by Rachel Carson, not only in her seminal *Silent Spring* (1962), but also in the essay "Lost Worlds: the Challenge of the Islands", written in 1948-49, depicting the vulnerability of island flora and fauna: "Man […] has seldom set foot on an island that he has not brought about disastrous changes […] Upon species after species of island life, the night of extinction has fallen."[15]

The development of biological science in the Galapagos islands by Charles Darwin, and by Alfred Russel Wallace in Indonesia, was accelerated by the recognition, in Wallace's words, that "they have a restricted area and definite boundaries, and in most cases these geographical and biological limits coincide".[16] He might have added that, with the obvious exception of birds, the fauna of the island are captive species. It was this factor which enabled Gerald Durrell and his successors at the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust to study conditions in islands such as Mauritius, Antigua and St Lucia, and to effect significant rescue operations for species in danger of extinction.

The fate of the dodo (in Mauritius in the 1600s) became so symptomatic of man's destructive footprint that it is today the symbol of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust. [Figs.3, 4]

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[13] R Power, *The Land of Youth*, p. 15.

[14] B Friel, *Collected Plays* vol. 4, pp. 159-246.

[15] R Carson, "Lost Worlds: the Challenge of the Islands".

[16] A R Wallace, *Island Life* [1892], p. 242, quoted by J Gillis, *Islands of the Mind*, p. 112.

The island as metaphor

A further aspect of the island phenomenon is the idea of the *island as metaphor*, a psychological signpost which in itself indicates the island as a *threshold* between an internal and an external world, an internal and an external state of mind.

If, as Georg Simmel asserted (in the early twentieth century), the ability to establish relations between things (or, we might say, by extension between people or places) is "the foundation of our mind",[17] then the visitor-writer – whether she or he be a poet, novelist, travel-writer or a scientist/biologist – will exercise that foundational facility by making connections, firstly, between themselves and the island and, secondly, between the world and the island. This, in Simmel's terms, is a metaphorical "bridge" between one fact or reality and another; possibly between the mainland and the island or between the *idea* of the external world and that of the imagined island. The connection *becomes the metaphor*, the means of carrying across meaning between self and island, between world and island. The "bridge" represents the elimination of a between-space which might prevent such a relationship.

But Simmel also maintained that a bridge – whether or not it is a physical object – nevertheless underlines the fact that the entities it connects remain separate and the bridge emphasises their distinctiveness. The bridge-metaphor thus both connects and indicates the impossibility of connection.

This has an even more profound aspect in Simmel's idea of "empathy", which proceeds from the "bridge-building" towards an understanding of one's own, or others', inner life. It is at this level that both the visitor-writer and the native writer experience a commerce, a commuting, between the outer and the inner self, in which our perception of the island can play a crucial role.

Strategic islands

The significance of islands in military – especially naval – strategy must not be overlooked in this exploration of the island as metaphor: control of Corfu was essential for Venice if its fleets were to have safe exit from the Adriatic. In 1716 the Ottoman siege of Corfu, successfully repulsed by a Venice-led coalition of forces, identified the island as "the bastion of Europe": the fall of Corfu to Ottoman forces would have opened all of southern Europe to invasion. After the defeat of Venice in 1797 Napoleon,

[17] Quoted in M Kaern, "Georg Simmel's *The Bridge and the Door*".

in his turn, recognised that if he were to lose Corfu "the Adriatic would be closed". He instructed his brother: "You must regard it as more valuable than Sicily […] The worst thing that can happen to me is to lose Corfu".[18] Subsequently, British control of Malta, Corfu and Cyprus in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was central to its dominance in the Mediterranean.

President of Ireland Michael D Higgins, speaking in Cyprus in October 2019, observed that: "Small islands, as we all understand only too well, are inherently vulnerable. This vulnerability has left island communities and low-lying coastal communities open to not only the forces of nature but […] often to the ravages of expansionist and acquisitive empires."[19]

More recent disputes, including the 1982 war between Britain and Argentina over the Falklands/Malvinas, the ongoing disputes between China and other neighbouring states over the islands in the South China Sea and, indeed, the very ontology of Taiwan, indicate that such strategic control and issues of sovereignty remain ubiquitous on the world map.

Insider/Outsider

We were particularly anxious, in devising the programme for "Islands of the Mind", that works by visitor-writers, arriving at the threshold of an island shoreline, should be both contrasted and compared with those of native writers, describing their perceptions from within the borders of that shoreline. It was very much our intention that "Islands of the Mind" should present the opportunity to find meeting-points between the visitor's and the native's reflections on islands. Island-born writers such as Liam O'Flaherty (Inishmore, Ireland) and Alexandros Papadiamandis (Skiathos, Greece) have brought the island mind to the international literary consciousness and their work should be placed alongside that of visitor-writers such as J M Synge (who wrote extensively about O'Flaherty's native island) or Lawrence Durrell (writing of Corfu, Rhodes and Cyprus), as alternative ways of seeing the same *topos*.[20]

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[18] Quoted in M Pratt, *Britain's Greek Empire*.

[19] M D Higgins, "Address to the Cypriot House of Representatives" 16 October 2019: https://president.ie/en/media-library/speeches/address-to-the-cypriot-house-of-representatives accessed 31 October 2019.

[20] Of the many books and plays by British writers inspired by islands, we might mention only the most prominent across the centuries: Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516); Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611); Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719); Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883); William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1955); and Aldous Huxley's *Island* (1962). It should be noted that none of these was occasioned by its author actually having been inspired by any particular

Tove Jansson wrote: "An island can be dreadful for someone from outside".[21] The encounter between the visitor and the island, and with islanders, is a trope of literature, from Sophocles' *Philoctetes* to *Robinson Crusoe* onwards to William Golding's *Pincher Martin.* It precipitates many of our fears and anxieties and may reveal aspects of the self – such as secrets – that have not previously been recognised, acknowledged or articulated. Robert Dessaix (who wrote a novel set in Corfu) wrote: "Islands aren't just islands, are they? […] It's the self we'd like to be!"[22]

One of the motivations for movement towards an island is Fowles's *enislement* – to *isola-te* oneself. But, as John Donne famously stated, "No man is an island entire unto himself": the world will continue to impinge on that isolation, not least, as in the case of Robinson Crusoe, in the epiphany of his *alter ego*, Friday.

Moreover, if "no man is an island", however much he may crave solitude, it is equally true that, in Carlo Ginzburg's title (2000), *No island is an island.* If an island is a *world*, it is also part of many other worlds. In many senses – strategic, cultural, psychological and literary – Corfu, for example, is a threshold, a cusp, a borderland, as well as an all-embracing entity. And we could also say that no man is an island, even to himself. Gavin Maxwell (1914-1969), one of the world's most persuasive naturalists, wrote that when a man stands on the shoreline "he stands at the limit of his consciousness", which suggests the liminality of the island experience.[23] The island shoreline is a point of both entry and exit, a point where the visitor encounters the island and also encounters himself. The capacity to accept the challenge offered to one's consciousness is one of the more confessional aspects of writing about islands.

In editing the selected texts for publication, we have been anxious to demonstrate the diverse approaches to the topic of islands, in both the physical and metaphysical aspects. The canvas of consideration could, indeed, be even wider than our current selection, but we are confident that the five-part structure of the book represents the ways in which literature, nature, science and psychology interact and evoke a range of outcomes constantly challenging received wisdom and conventional perceptions, and demanding that we revisit the strengths, dangers, opportunities and

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island: their narratives emanate almost entirely from the imaginations of the authors.

[21] T Jansson, *The Summer Book* [1972/2003] trans. T Teal, p. 43.

[22] R Dessaix, *Night Letters* (1996), pp. 81-82. We are obliged to David Green for this reference.

[23] Quoted in J Gillis, *Islands of the Mind*, p. 157.

weaknesses of both positive and negative approaches to the island phenomenon, from indigenous islanders and from outside observers. This phenomenon is a source of wonder and anxiety which we believe is reflected in what follows, from contributors each of whom is uniquely situated to comment.

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Richard Pine
Vera Konidari

PART ONE:

PSYCHOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

A Psychology of Islanders?

Godfrey Baldacchino

Introduction

Is it at all possible to conjecture or establish one or more traits that define islanders? The temptation is strong: as strong as it is naïve and simplistic to define an island simply as a piece of land, smaller than a continent, surrounded by water at high tide.

Eating up Easter is a 2018 documentary by native Rapanui filmmaker Sergio Mata'u Rapu about Easter Island (or Rapa Nui, in its indigenous Polynesian language). *Eating up Easter* candidly portrays the beauty of Rapa Nui's culture; but also the garbage, all of which is imported, that threatens to smother it. The documentary tells parallel stories, including the dream of a musician couple, Mahani and Enrique, to build the Toki Rapa Nui School of Music and the Arts, made from recycled material, so as to preserve the threatened cultural practices and oral traditions of their people, while reuniting a fractured community, overwhelmed by globalisation.

Rapa Nui is meant to be one of the most remote islands in the world. It lies over 3,500 km from mainland Chile, of which it forms part. And yet, some 7,000 islanders must contend with over 70,000 tourist visitations annually. Of the island residents, around half were not born on the island and only speak Spanish, the national language of Chile, rather than the indigenous Polynesian language. Many islanders (also called Rapanui), including documentary protagonists Mahani Teave and her spouse Enrique Icka, shuttle between mainland Chile and the island to sustain decent livelihoods, including pursuing employment, commercial and/or educational and career opportunities.

The Toko Rapa Nui School project is led by the concert pianist Mahani (twice elected Woman of the Year, Cultural Ambassador of Rapa Nui, honorary Vice-President of the World Indigenous Business Forum 2017) and the constructor and musician Enrique Icka (elected among the 100 young leaders in Chile 2016). Mahani is Rapa Nui's only classical musician. She was born on Hawai'i, from a Rapa Nui father and an American mother. She attended the Austral University of Chile (on the

mainland) and studied music at the Cleveland Institute of Music, Ohio, USA and the Hanns Eisler Music Academy in Berlin, Germany, where she was the recipient of a Konrad Adenauer Fellowship.

Islanders are not insular

I wanted to start this chapter in this way to issue a wake-up call. Most islanders today are like Mahani; they are not insular. (I say most because there are and will always be exceptions, and these can be celebrated or vilified.) "Islands are less 'insular' than are generally perceived": and this observation applies to both human and non-human species.[1] At least, not in one of the senses that the word 'insular' is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (2019): "cut off from intercourse with other nations, isolated; self-contained; narrow or prejudiced in feelings, ideas, or manners". They are not even insular in the sense of being self-sufficient and self-sustaining: one of the romantic fallacies of the modern age is that island societies and economies can and should practise sustainability and, for example, join the "slow food" movement by surviving on their own resources. Yet, this could not be further from the truth, and would imperil the survival of island societies, especially those that depend on exporting "cash crops", or welcoming long-haul tourists for economic survival. If islanders are conceptualised or coyly represented as people who are locked and imprisoned on, and in, their own little island world, consuming their own resources, then the truth is shockingly different. The "survival algorithm" of islander life takes in resources, experiences and places from beyond the island; in much the same way that the island economy is invariably sustained by external "inputs": investment, tourists, commodities, immigrants (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009). This practice becomes increasingly inevitable, the smaller the island, and the smaller its resident population. Cuba is currently the only island state that meets the World Wildlife Fund criteria for sustainability premised on self-sufficiency and a low carbon footprint: but this is a predicament Cuba enjoys not so much out of its own choosing, but thanks to a long oil and trade embargo by the United States (Lane, 2012). Moreover, it has the size, heft and resourcefulness to make it possible to survive in relative isolation (e.g. Cabello et al., 2012; Fanelli, 2007; Rossett, 2000).

[1] M. D. Rose and G. A. Polis, "On the insularity of islands", p. 697; also Gosden and Pavlides, 1994.

More and less insularity

At the same time, it would be to the point to state that Easter Islanders have been both more and less insular in other times of their history. Their Polynesian (and possibly also native American) ancestors would have boasted some impressive navigational skills to make the journey to Rapa Nui from the Central Pacific in the first place, at around 1200 AD (Thorsby, 2016). Then, with the passage of time, they apparently lost – deliberately or otherwise – these same navigational skills, which marooned them on their small island world for decades. It was in this state that they were "discovered" on Easter Sunday 1722. With their re-incorporation into the rest of the world came periods of the islanders being carried away as slaves and indentured servants in the 1860s; and migration to other islands, including Tahiti, in the 1870s. Meanwhile, between 1890 and 1950, the island was transformed into an open sheep farm and the remaining islanders were dispossessed of their lands and corralled in Hanga Roa, the only urban settlement. Nowadays, tourism offers an economic lifeline: visitors are especially attracted to the island by virtue of its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The same airport runway at Mataveri that brings in planeloads of tourists daily was also extended in 1987 by NASA by 430 metres to the 3,370 metre length required for a potential space shuttle landing and its eventual piggy-back retrieval by a Boeing 747. NASA planned to use Easter Island as a contingency landing site for its shuttle program after polar orbit flights were launched in 1991 over the Pacific from Vandenberg Air Base in California (Boadle, 1987). The shuttle programme was terminated in 2011; and, out of its 135 missions, not one landed on Rapa Nui.[2]

An uncertain isolation

What this means is that the Rapanui have not just been more or less isolated throughout their thousand-year history; the extent of their isolation is also affected by an indeterminacy, rather than an inevitability, of outcomes. And this insight does not just apply to one remote island. Being enisled, or islanded, is as much about technology, geography and history as it is about possibility, chance and serendipity. The material and physical conditions of "being an island" must be combined and entangled

[2] Ironically, the only time a US Space Shuttle does make an emergency landing on Easter Island is in a science fiction text: Correy (1981).

with the unfolding, or thwarting, of actual events. In such a situation, islandness – the condition of being an island – is as much about what *is* as about what *could be*. The most sophisticated transport infrastructures – from airports and Space Shuttle encounters to internet connections – must be assessed in relation to their actual use (and non-use).

> At any point in time, island life has, of course, its own domestic goings on. This is the fabric expected of all societies at all times. But: island life is also about acknowledging the significant role of exogenous factors, and as a combination of what is happening and what could or should, now or in the future. Waiting excitedly for the next flight or ferry to arrive; dreadingly anticipating the landfall of the next typhoon; wary of the next pirate raid; regretting the closure of an enterprise, fuelled by foreign investment, and the concomitant loss of jobs … These, and more, are also an intimate part of island life. The result is an idiosyncratic combination of actuality and possibility.[3]

> A period of undisturbed seclusion or exclusion may suddenly be followed by one of extensive intercourse, receptivity or expansion. Recall the contrast in the early and later history of the Canaries, Azores, Malta, England, Mauritius and Hawai'i: now a lonely, half-inhabited waste, now a busy mart or teeming way-station.[4]

This argument becomes an extension of the Heisenberg Principle, bred from quantum physics, into island studies. If, according to this principle, everything in the universe behaves as both a particle and a wave; then, (small) island societies suffer the same, with the added proviso that the unfolding predicament from such an entanglement of point and potential involves many *external* actors and artefacts (e.g. Gilbert, 1980).

A welcome departure from earlier exhortations of island specificity

This argument takes us away from the sterile debates about islands and islanders that have been conceptualised as binary opposites: open versus closed, roots versus routes, isolated versus connected, peripheral versus mainstream. It also indicates a gap and clear rupture arising since the heyday of functionalism and cultural relativism:

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[3] The vulnerability index is flawed also because it tries to quantify the indeterminate, while loading it with negative features: openness is inherently very bad for you.
[4] E Churchill Semple, *Influences of the Geographic Environment*, chapter 13.

Firstly, sabre-rattling narratives of brave and stoic island communities (Eriksen, 1991), perhaps best epitomised by UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's invocation to the affinity of "island race" for justifying the war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands (Dodds, 2003):

> The people of the Falkland Islands, like the people of the United Kingdom, are an island race. Their way of life is British; their allegiance is to the Crown. They are few in number, but they have the right to live in peace, to choose their own way of life and to determine their own allegiance. It is the wish of the British people and the duty of Her Majesty's Government to do everything that we can to uphold that right. *Prime Minister Thatcher in the House of Commons, 3rd April 1982*.

Secondly, generalised profiles of island peoples:

> Consider the pronounced insular [and Brexit disposed?] mind of the globe-trotting Englishman, the deep-seated local conservatism characterising that world-colonising nation, at once the most provincial and cosmopolitan on earth.[5]

Thirdly, throwing up one lush description after another of exceptional individuals in such communities. Take Tomas O'Crohan, who was born on Irish-speaking Great Blasket Island, off the west coast of Ireland, in 1865 and died there in 1937; author of *An t-Oileánach* (*The Islandman*), completed in 1923 and published in 1929 (O'Crohan, 1977). The book is described as offering readers an account of "the life and spirit of a now vanished traditional remnant oral culture through the voice of one of its most engaging and articulate members".

And *fourthly*, the provision of island character sketches that become more complicated when dealing with archipelagos, each island component of which, of course, must distinguish itself from the rest, and as marketing policies would dictate. Consider the following attempt from the pamphlet *A profile of the Azorean,* with references to islanders from São Miguel on the east end of the chain, to those from Pico on the west:

> The Micaelense is the hardest worker of the archipelago and is also the most different from the mainlander: rough, industrious, sturdy, and tenacious; while the Azorean from the Central and Western Islands is affable, somewhat cunning, fond of festivities, indolent; and finally, the

[5] Ibid.