

## BOOK REVIEWS SECTION

Albury, Paul (2004) *The Paradise Island Story*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, revised by Anne and Jim Lawlor, Oxford, Macmillan Caribbean, 136pp. (illus), \$19.90 (hardcover). ISBN: 0333992571.

*The Story of Paradise Island* is an innocent book. It wants to be a straightforward anecdotal narrative about the apotheosis of “Hog Island,” which forms a harbour for the Bahamian capital of Nassau, into “Paradise Island,” a wave-lapped Garden of Eden for heat-seeking tourists who like their creature comforts dosed with novelty. At one level, this slender book is just that. There is a sort of antiquarian frontispiece, full of pirates, privateers, and adventurers, before the arc of the narrative reaches the tourism era. There, after a few false starts and thwarted dreams, entrepreneurship and free enterprise triumph in the person of South African hotelier Sol Kerzner, “a man of single-minded vision” (a popular descriptor in the world of business, which, when it takes notice of the past at all, remains wedded to a “great men” version of it). At last count, Kerzner and his associates had invested something in the order of \$1 billion in tourist accommodations, attractions, and infrastructure on the 850-acre island, turning it into one of the premiere tourist destinations in the Caribbean. What we have in this book, writes J. Barrie Farrington in a florid foreword, is not a critical examination of anything, really; rather it “is a journey of magical proportions through time and a series of financial adventures and escapades” (p. iv).

Yet, at the same time, and without at all meaning to, *The Story of Paradise Island* encapsulate some of the most fundamental dilemmas of development in small islands. Who created Paradise? For whom? And at what economic, ecological or cultural cost? The authors are curiously unconscious of that discourse, but it shadows their narrative none the less strongly.

First published in 1984, the book was penned by Dr. Paul Albury, a well known local historian with a “wide interest in Bahamian history” (back cover). The second edition has been revised and updated by his daughter and son-in-law, Anne and Jim Lawlor. The story begins in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the first British settlements on New Providence Island. It is a familiar enough New World tale, full of imperial raids and reprisals, pirates and privateers. This section, particularly, is hummingbird history, flitting from one anecdote to the next and pausing over the more colourful figures. About a third of the way into the text (in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), tourism discovers the Bahamas, and Hog Island in particular. Tourism development and developers dominate the rest of the book.

Albury makes no attempt to connect the early days to the recent past. It is J. Barrie Farrington, in the foreword, who instinctively finds them all of a kind. When Farrington writes of Nicholas Trott, an early governor, “He knew the island had to be his ... and he had the connections to make that happen (p. iv),” he might just as easily be talking about Huntingdon Hartford, Donald Trump, and other 20<sup>th</sup>-century swashbucklers who fell in love with either the island or its business potential, and became major players in its hospitality industry. He might have gone even further. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries,

Hog Island evidently served the needs of the neighbouring main island; but, both before and after, it existed primarily for the benefit of outsiders. Resort owners are more peaceful than pirates, and more apt to invest than pillage, but they are no less bent on profit, while tourists are no less intent on sensory pleasure than sojourning buccaneers. Each is a consumer, and Paradise Island is the commodity. The 20<sup>th</sup>-century re-naming of the island, duly sanctified by the local legislature, from “Hog” to “Paradise” is emblematic of the commodification.

For, in the end, it is tourism that lies at the heart of the Paradise Island story, just as it lies at the heart of the Bahamian economy. Instead of dwelling on either the tourists or the locals who cater to them, Albury’s book focuses on “those who came to create in Paradise Island the fantasy of the ultimate experience of the ‘get away’ from the drudgery of everyday existence (p. iv).” The phrase articulates one of the great imaginative motifs in island historiography: the island - especially the tropical island - as paradise. Escape, the phrase cajoles, from the ordinary. In this construction, the island is a refuge from “drudgery” not danger, an escape from work to wonder. The foreword is a shameless advertising pitch: “It is believed that each night Atlantis [Resort] and Paradise Island are showered with pixie dust, which makes each morning’s awakening a euphoric occurrence.” (p. iv). Alas, so is much of the text. Although it also displays a shrewd appreciation of the intensely competitive nature of the tourism industry and the imperative to find new experiences for a fickle clientele (paradise must continually re-invent itself), the later chapters are largely a fawning panegyric to developer Sol Kerzner. The last chapter, especially, an extended prose tour of Kerzner’s opulent Atlantis Resort, reads like a graft from the hotel’s own promotional literature.

With its picture postcard illustrations, interspersed with grip-and-grin publicity photos of development visionaries, *The Paradise Island Story* is obviously intended as a souvenir. But of what? In different hands, it might be used to explore questions that tourism poses for tropical islands. There are, for example, technical issues here about the business of tourism. What constitutes a critical mass of investment capital? In the relentless consumerism that dominates the post-Cold War triumph of capitalism, colonization has given way to commodification – paradise is a package deal. How, then, do you make your package more attractive than the next? Whether you go up-scale or cut-rate, the business is cut-throat. And what about the politics of tourism? Do the book’s veiled references to backroom bribery suggest that the working relationship between private and public sector on the Bahamas is partnership or co-option? What is the relationship between Paradise Island and its mainland, New Providence Island, of which the smaller island is a satellite and to which it is now joined by two bridges? While far more stable than war-time privateering and Prohibition-era rum-running (two earlier economic mainstays), the Bahamian hospitality industry has its limitations, especially when the ownership is off-shore. What percentage of tourist spending percolates through the local economy? How much of it is siphoned off as profit?

Questions of sustainability, both economic and environmental, are especially pertinent to small islands. Can paradise be too crowded? Even sand and sea are a non-renewable resource, and the book’s aerial photographs depict a Paradise Island chock-a-block with

high-rise hotels, casinos, condos, time-shares, and cabanas. The developers' idea of eco-tourism (an identified trend in the text) appears to be casinos with a better view of marine habitat. Golf courses and artfully designed gardens provide much of the greenery. Nature is present, but none of it is natural.

Moving from the physical to the cultural landscape, other questions intrude. How does one measure the impact of tourism on the local culture, not just the natural selection that results from reductionist "packaging" of indigenous culture to entertain visitors, but the long-term consequences for thousands of resort employees of a life in the service industry as the tourism equivalent of "hewers of wood and drawers of water"? The text's approving references to management campaigns to elevate standards of promptness, courtesy, and general attitude among resort staff echo with cultural collision. Do any of the resort employees even live on Paradise Island, one wonders? With building lots in a recent development selling for between US\$500,000 and US\$3 million, it seems unlikely any could afford to own there.

Paradise Island, a densely developed resort island tethered to a tourist destination, seems like the ideal place to examine some of these themes. Sadly, the text seldom asks such questions, much less try to answer them. And the authors would probably be disappointed that we might expect different. "It's not that kind of book," they would rightly protest. And it is not. But the result is much like many tropical island vacations; we go away entertained, even tantalized, but not enlightened.

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Diamond, Jared (2005) *Collapse: How Societies Chose to Fail or Survive*, New York, Penguin. ISBN: 0713992867.

Diamond's previous book, *Guns, Germs and Steel* (1997), established him as a best-selling popular science writer. Drawing on his background in biology, ecology and environmental history, his latest book tackles another big topic: a discussion of social expansion and the divergent paths of sustainability and collapse. Based on case studies of particular societies in historical contexts, Diamond constructs a set of common dynamics that lead to the book's conclusions about the necessity of planning and strategies for sustainable futures.

The book's prologue lays out his approach in a direct and accessible manner, positing a five point framework which determines whether societies can sustain or collapse, comprising: human-inflicted environmental damage; climate changes; relation to hostile neighbours; relation to supportive neighbours; and societies' responses to the previous four. Subsequent chapters provide case studies of the interaction of these factors.

From the point of this journal, the most relevant chapters are those that deal with the various survival and decay of island societies – specifically Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Pitcairn and the Hendersons, Tikopia, the medieval north Atlantic Viking empire and the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. Rapa Nui is an obvious choice for this journal's readers. Its deforestation by obsessive monument builders is well-documented and has been previously held up as a model of self-destructive social and ecological sabotage in books such as Paul Bahn and John Flenley's *Easter Island, Earth Island* (1992). While Diamond summarizes the issues concisely, he offers few new insights on the topic and also expresses a gratuitous opinion about pre-contact written language forms on the island in a simplistic evaluative manner. In contrast, his discussion of pre-contact Pitcairn Island culture and its links to the societies of the Henderson group of islands draws on and synthesizes more obscure research to create a convincing and illuminating account. My immediate response was to send sections of the book's highlights to contacts on Pitcairn itself, for whom scattered signs of the time before settlement by the *Bounty* mutineers have remained obscure and seemingly disconnected with their lives. Faced with a social crises (and possible evacuation) caused by a range of factors, including inadequate transport for import and export products, the lessons of an earlier history are singularly apposite for Pitcairn.

Shifting from the Pacific, Diamond's linked account of the development and decline of the Vikings' medieval maritime empire in the North Atlantic provides another set of valuable perspectives on island cultures. His account of the decline of the Viking's Greenland colony and, in particular, its agricultural basis and rationale, benefits from his visit to the former heartland of the colony, and the farm site of Gardar in particular. Similarly to James Clifford, in his meditation on the history and social inhabitation of the Californian historical site of Fort Ross (in his *Routes* [1997]), Diamond's observations appear enriched by a contemplation of the experience of material location itself. The book's straightforward presentation of Greenland as an outpost of an over-extended empire, fragile in its economy and located in a particular climatic moment, provides one model of peripherality and, ultimately, unsustainability. By contrast, Diamond's account of the manner in which Iceland has overcome the environmental devastation caused by its settlers – specifically, a deforestation that comes close to rivalling that of Rapa Nui - is a persuasive one. Adjusting to the effects of inappropriate patterns of agriculture and settlement, Diamond presents Iceland as a notable success story, something of a model of survival and development.

Reprising the duality of success and failure of the Iceland/Greenland comparison, Diamond's account of the marked differences in the social and environmental nature of the two nations that occupy the Caribbean island of Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) traces similar ground. Despite the clear presentation of wise policy as opposed to corrupt maladministration, the crux is nevertheless that the different approaches to inhabiting the same island are largely based on relative accidents of history.

Having detailed stories of collapse and highlighted tales of social survival the book ends on an upbeat conclusion, namely that understanding the history of previous societies will enable 'us' to learn from history. Here the failures of societies such as pre-contact Rapa Nui are seen as innately linked to their insularity and isolation. But Diamond's laudable

idealism rings more than a little hollow. To take two diverse examples, it's difficult to see, for instance, what use such historical knowledge is (at this advanced historical moment) for the inhabitants of isles such as Tuvalu when the waves lap ever higher and threaten to swamp the island as global warming continues. Similarly, to shift to a seat of global power (and global carbon dioxide emissions), it is (at least) doubtful whether the inhabitants, politicians and planners of the choked gridlocks and degraded surroundings of Los Angeles will react to studies such as this and change their ways. Indeed, looked at from the vantage of Diamond's history, the Schwarzenegger/Bush team might chillingly resemble those community leaders who presided over the removal of Rapa Nui's last tree...

*Collapse* has many of the familiar faults of 'big picture' popular science publications: over-simplistic summaries, lack of substantiation and references to particular points that informed readers may query or take issue with; together with a generic formula that inclines the writer to pose over-tidy summaries and potential solutions. That said, Diamond often collates data and communicates it in a manner that renders the opaque clear, and the contorted as comprehensible. There is material here that is stimulating for the undergraduate and established researcher alike; and, certainly, ample material for debate and deconstruction. Perhaps the greatest success of the book is that its act of 'pulling back' from the specific in order to glimpse the grand scheme of historical forces is ultimately an empowering and inspiring one. With the caveats noted above, island studies researchers, in particular, are likely to find much that excites the imagination and much they can draw upon for the consideration of other locations and societies.

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David Killingray and David Taylor, editors (2005), *The United Kingdom Overseas Territories: Past, Present and Future*, Overseas Service Pensioners' Association Research Project Occasional Paper 3, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, U.K. 146pp. ISSN: 1742-4992.

This small edited book emanates from an Institute of Commonwealth Studies research project on the history of the British Colonial Service since World War II. The project has been financially supported by the Overseas Service Pensioners' Association and some authors of the book's 10 chapters would presumably be members of the Association. Thus, we see chapters from a former Governor of Montserrat and a former British Ambassador to Nicaragua, as well as academics and those working in the Overseas Territories, including a former speaker of the Montserrat Legislative Council and the Director of Economic Planning for Anguilla,

That this book is a suitable candidate for review in *Island Studies Journal* reflects the fact that of the still fairly long list of British Overseas Territories, all bar Gibraltar are islands: Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Montserrat,

Pitcairn, St Helena and Dependencies (the dependencies are Ascension Island and the Tristan da Cunha group) and the Turks and Caicos Islands. There are also British administered islands without a permanent population, but which may have a scientific and/or military presence: South Georgia and the Sandwich Islands, British Antarctic Territory (not all of which is insular) and finally British Indian Ocean Territory, which includes Diego Garcia. These last islands did have a population, but one that, shamefully, was removed to facilitate the operation of the United States airbase on Diego Garcia—‘disgraceful dealings’ as David Killingray puts it (p. 3). The use of such words gives the clue to the fact that authors in this book, despite its provenance within the world of diplomats, are not necessarily ready just to spout the British government’s line on the often controversial matter of relationships between the Territories and their administering power. However one chapter, by Roy Osborne, the former Ambassador, throughout uses the word ‘we’ when referring to the British Government which despite that word’s theoretical embracing of a plurality, actually just underlines the fact that the Territories are an Other, outside of the ‘we’. His reassurance that his ‘we’ are working ‘for the benefit of the people who live’ in the Overseas Territories (p. 29) is also hard to swallow at times. The latest example is that on Ascension Island, the St Helena Dependency, there were promises that the right of abode and the right to own property would be enshrined in new legislation, when, at last, Ascension seemed to be moving towards democracy and the establishment of a civilian population as opposed to just having a civilian workforce in the island’s military and communication facilities. “Delighted long-term residents spent money on their houses and invested in local businesses. Ascension set out gaily towards constitutional democracy and began to plan for tourist development”. But in December 2005, following a visit from British Ministry of Defence officials, “without consultation, the Foreign Office announced that it no longer considered it ‘appropriate’ to grant right of abode or property rights” (*The Guardian*, 18 January 2006). Ascension, like Diego Garcia, is British territory housing a United States airbase. That story broke too late for this book, of course, so the editors cannot be criticised. However, perhaps they might be for something else regarding Ascension, namely its almost complete absence from the volume. Tristan da Cunha is completely absent and there is very little on St Helena, Bermuda, Pitcairn or the Falkland Islands. The Falklands Conflict of 1982 and the long, sad saga of the abuse cases involving a large proportion of the adult male population of Pitcairn are perhaps the most newsworthy events in the British overseas realm in the last 25 years and given the title of the book, one might have expected some discussion thereof. The title would also not lead one to imagine that one of the two most substantial chapters would be on the French Overseas Territories by Nathalie Mrgudovic. So readers expecting any sort of exhaustive survey of the British overseas realm will be disappointed. The editors have anticipated this, admitting the “unbalanced view” in their book but pointing out that “organisers of seminars and editors of papers have to work with the cloth that they are given” (p. 2). This is certainly true, but it was presumably within the editors’ tailoring possibilities to have chosen a title for the book that accurately reflected its contents.

There is little else that disappoints. What is here is a series of authoritative statements on certain aspects of British, especially British West Indian, and French colonial experience. There is a fine essay on the development of the Gibraltarian identity from a very varied set of immigrants by Martin Blinkhorn, and this deserves to be appreciated by those interested

in the theme of identity generally, and not just by those curious about colonies or Gibraltar itself. Other chapters of wide interest are those by Killingray and Peter Clegg. The former deals with British decolonisation generally, focusing on the smaller territories including the remaining islands (and Gibraltar) that did not make it. The struggles of the British government, particularly under the Labour Party in the 1960s, to shed their colonies is well told, including the complex machinations involving federations and the halfway house of Associated Statehood. Island states such as The Bahamas, Grenada, Dominica, St Lucia, St Vincent, Antigua and St Kitts-Nevis (and mainland Belize) all progressed to full independence via being an Associated State. However, Anguilla squeezed by the British into association with the larger and not particularly adjacent St Kitts and Nevis (four French and Dutch islands intervene) did not stay, and that grouping, like other federation ideas in the West Indies, failed. Now the rush to independence is over, if only in the words from David Taylor's chapter because "the electorate regards continuing dependence as a safeguard against corrupt government" (p. 22). In 1999 another Labour Government with the late Robin Cook as Foreign Secretary issued a White Paper, *Partnership for Progress and Prosperity*, setting out the "modern partnership between the United Kingdom and the dependent territories", then renamed Overseas Territories, though their dependency (in most cases) continues. Killingray ends his informative chapter with a reinforcement of the powerless small island concept, these Overseas Territories - except perhaps for the Falklands by reason of the Conflict - are "far away, many weak and insignificant and ... probably have little weight in the corridors of Whitehall" (p. 15). This is being newly re-discovered by the civilians of Ascension Island. Peter Clegg's chapter is on offshore finance and, whilst there is a focus on the Caribbean, the development and regulation of offshore finance has much wider resonance in the island world. It is perhaps not surprising that John Christensen and Mark Hampton, two leading offshore finance commentators whose works Clegg references, are both from Jersey.

Overall this is a worthwhile collection of essays, its slightly inappropriate title notwithstanding, which is to be recommended to those interested in that subset of islands, the 'last colonies' to borrow from the title of the 1998 book by Robert Aldrich and John Connell which is cited in this volume.

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Buondelmonti, Cristoforo (2005) *Liber Insularum Archipelagi (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf Ms. G 13)*, facsimile edition. Edited by Irmgard Siebert & Max Plassmann, with contributions from Arne Effenberger, Max Plassmann & Fabian Rijkers (Schriften der Universitäts und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf, Vol. 38), Wiesbaden, Reichert. 168pp., 62 pp. facsimile.

As it must have been in the 15th century, Cristoforo Buondelmonti's *Liber insularum archipelagi*, or *Book of the Islands of the Greek Archipelago*, known in more than 70 Latin manuscripts following probably three editions (1418, 1420, 1422), is still an attractive guide for a virtual journey among the Greek isles: from Corfu traversing the Ionic Sea we follow him in the direction of Crete, enter the Aegean Sea cruising through the Dodecanese and Cycladic Islands, reaching the north-eastern coasts and the Sea of Marmara. A long and attentive perambulation of Constantinople can be considered the climax of the trip, which nevertheless does not end there but continues, leading us to the Northern Aegean Islands and the Sporades, and terminates with a visit to Aegina.

The *Liber* of the Florentine cleric Buondelmonti was an innovation both in its format (cartographic sketches of islands accompanied by descriptive texts) and in its content, which harmonizes information from the Greek and Latin classics with authentic and actual (nautical, demographic, political) knowledge of the Mediterranean and especially the Aegean world. This idiosyncrasy makes it of interest to various modern disciplines, including philological research, the history of cartography as well as the history of geography; there are also the cultural and semiotic implications involved in Buondelmonti's foundation of the literary genre of the *Isolario* or island-book. These multifaceted values are contrasted by the absence of modern editions of this key text; the only full text editions, one of a Latin version by Gabriel Ludwig Rudolf von Sinner (1824), and one Greek by Emile Legrand (1897), date from the 19th century.

Now at last an excellent facsimile edition makes this important work, both its text and beautiful hand-painted illustrations, accessible to the scientific community. The facsimile reproduces manuscript G 13 of the university library of Düsseldorf (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf), a "solitaire" of the collection (as is stressed in the preface, p. 7). The *Liber*-manuscript is part of a volume which contains six astronomical, historical and geographical texts, including also Buondelmonti's *Descriptio insulae Cretae*. Max Plassmann and Fabian Rijkers analyse the origin and history of the volume and its components; unfortunately the binding and paper quality do not allow us to track the history of the volume before the 19th century ('ULBD Ms. G 13: Überlegungen zu Herkunft und Geschichte', pp. 9–11). In the context of a facsimile edition, discussion of the material aspects of the manuscript such as size, coloration and paper quality should have been supplied in the introduction to furnish a quick orientation for the users; the reference to a hand written catalogue (p. 9, note 1) is quite useless for the international public.

Arne Effenberger ('Die Illustrationen – Topographische Untersuchungen: Konstantinopel / Istanbul und ägäische Örtlichkeiten', pp. 13–68) outlines bibliographical facts and philological and editorial aspects as known from both old and more recent studies on Buondelmonti, such as Giuseppe Ragone's 2002 essay which can be read as a preliminary discussion to a modern critical edition. Effenberger's analysis of the Düsseldorf ms. takes an historical-topographical approach which stresses the significance of the textual and iconographic representations embodied in the manuscript, mainly the map of Constantinople / Byzantium / Istanbul. This map is unique for its pictorial perfection and knowledge of Ottoman urban architecture at the time of Mehmet II. Effenberger's purpose

includes and goes far beyond the identification of the image of the town in the Düsseldorf manuscript. Effenberger consults a number of nearly contemporary iconographical sources, and the reproduction of 25 of them constitutes a precious complement of the edition and synthesizes a concise history of iconographic representations of the Ottoman Capital from the 15th to the 17th century. Effenberger also notes the illustrator's preference for detailed depictions of (former) Genoese colonies such as Pera and Chios, and therefore supposes that the illustrator or the man who commissioned the manuscript was of Genoese origin.

Useful appendices conclude the commentary on the facsimile edition. The first gives an overview of all the chapters of the *Liber*. They are introduced by originally red coloured letters, which form an acrostic which identifies Buondelmonti as the author of the work (CRISTOFORVS BONDELMONT DE FLORENCIA PRESBITER HUNC MISIT CARDINALI IORDANO DE URSINIS MCCCCXX). The schedule also indicates the modern name of each island, the name Buondelmonti uses, the beginning of the text and the folio numbers of the description as of the relevant map; three synoptical schedules are dedicated to the gates of Istanbul.

This beautiful edition re-establishes and renews the fascination of a remarkable manuscript of the *Liber insularum archipelagi* and sheds light on one of its principal concerns, the historical topography of the Greek islands and also of Constantinople. May the edition promote, as the editors intend, the further philological, literary, geographical, and historical research on Buondelmonti, even if we do not share Buondelmonti's optimism as demonstrated in his introduction to the *Liber*: "UT CITO LEGENTIBUS ITER PATEAT SINE LABORE," that is: "That the way may lie easily open to the readers, without effort."

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Montesdeoca Medina, José Manuel (2003) *Los islarios en la época del humanismo. El De insulis de Domenico Silvestri. Edición y traducción*, La Laguna, Universidad de La Laguna, lxxvi+665pp. (CD-ROM, Colección Audiovisuales y Medios Informáticos; Serie Tesis, Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales, Año 2000/2001).

This text is a revised version of the author's doctoral thesis. It contains the first translation into a modern language (Spanish) of *De insulis et earum proprietaribus* (*About islands and its properties*), by Florentine humanist Domenico Silvestri (ca. 1335-1411), which may be considered the first known *isolario* or island-book. The book is divided in two main parts, the first being the "Introduction" (pp. xi-lxxvii), which presents the information necessary for a better understanding of the author and his work in 4 sections. In the first, Montesdeoca supplies a brief history of books about islands, from their remote origins in ancient Greece in the works of ancient scholars, the literature about sea voyages, and historical reports; to Rome, emphasizing the importance of Pomponius Mela, Pliny the Elder, and Isidore of Seville; to the Middle Ages, with their new contribution from occidental books of travels (like Marco Polo's *Milione*; Oderigo da Pordedone's *Travels*;

or John of Mandeville's *Travels*), to arrive to the age of humanism (the 14th-16th centuries), during which 'island books' properly named first appeared.

The next two sections offer a brief portrait of the author and of his work which is the object of the study; here we really miss a proper discussion of the historical-political and more importantly cultural context that would allow us to appreciate, even in a general way Domenico Silvestri's life and work in the general framework of the fascinating revolution in the arts and literature that took place in 14th century Italy –a discussion that would give sense to the book's title. He was “notary, adviser of art, and of the *Comune*, ambassador of his town in Bologna, the Lombardia, and Genove” (p. xxxviii). Silvestri wanted to complete the Boccaccio's *De montibus et silvis*, and “to collect in one book all the news about islands that it could be find it spread out in the texts of the Antiquity just like another one [authors] had done with rivers, lagoons, swamps, and so on” (p. xlv). The last of the four sections sets out the rules Montesdeoca followed in preparing his edition and translation of Silvestri's text.

Thus we arrive to the second and much more substantial part of the book, that is, the edition and translation of the *De insulis*. Preceding the body of this Renaissance treatise is a brief foreword (pp. 1-13) in which Silvestri states his intention to continue Boccaccio's *De montibus et silvis*; defines the term *island*, quoting from the Italian grammarian of the 11th century, Papias' *Vocabularium latinum* (“it comes from the word *insilio-insilis*, as islands swell up out of the sea and has their roots there, or because they are located *in salo*, that is, in the sea”), and he describes the difficulties he confronted in compiling a book about islands. After the foreword, the treatise presents to us all the islands of the world (pp. 16-661) in nearly 900 entries arranged in an alphabetical order, as a dictionary, with the Latin text and the Spanish translation on facing pages. As we move through these nearly 700 pages we watch a large amount of information pass before our eyes, extracted from many sources previous to the fourteenth century, with the references systematically identified in the footnotes supplied by Montesdeoca.

The entries follow a simple formula: Silvestri supplies the geographical location of the island, its other names, its soil characteristics, ancient legends, a description of its monuments, historical digressions, relevant etymologies, and anything strange or marvellous connected with the island. The length of entries varies considerably; the longest, by far, is that for Sicily (*s.v.* 793). Together with mythical isles like Atlantis (*s.v.* 94), “the biggest of the Atlantic Sea”, we find others famous for their legends, like Britannia (*s.v.* 122), under which heading the author recounts Merlin's adventures and misfortunes; Delos or Delphos (*s.v.* 273), Apollo's cradle; Gades (*s.v.* 405), where the ancients located the Pillars of Hercules; and Trapobane (*s.v.* 840), which is “placed between the dawn and the sunset”. We also encounter imaginary islands, like the Deserted Island (*s.v.* 279), located “beyond the Pillars of Hercules”; unexpected islands, like the entry for Egypt (*s.v.* 314), a “quasi-island” according to Pliny, because “the Nile stretches out in such way that it forms a triangular shape [...]; many people call it Delta”; and others which are all but unknown: Bucinona (*s.v.* 126); Dimastos (*s.v.* 290); Leucosia (*s.v.* 517); Picionia (*s.v.* 686)...

The work closes with an ample bibliography (pp. 663-684), arranged thematically in the following sections: the author; islands and *isolarios*; geography and travels; Humanism and the Renaissance; sources (without the necessary standardization of the classical authors); and general subjects.

The importance of Silvestri's *isolario* should be reason enough for those interested in geography in general, and island studies in particular, to read this book. Montesdeoca's translation of Silvestri's work into a modern language is welcome and very valuable, as it makes the book accessible to a much broader audience. (Previously, the text was only available in Latin in Carmela Pecoraro's edition of 1954, which many libraries do not own.) The author clearly spent a great deal of time and effort on a commendable translation and this somewhat makes up for the brief introduction and the rather muddled bibliography. The book's dictionary format makes it easy to obtain information about any particular island; further the electronic edition allows many additional possibilities, such as keyword searches of both Silvestri's Latin and Montesdeoca's Spanish. The fact that the book is published on CD, available from the University of La Laguna (Spain), also makes it very affordable (6 euros) and it allows its acquisition both by the general public and by libraries and institutes of higher education.

Montesdeoca's book offers us a wonderful opportunity to travel through time and space to a transition world, where distant islands are still the repositories of old legends and medieval fantasies, but at the same time the geography of a new world in culture, politics, science, and economics, was beginning to take shape. Like a modern travel guide book, Montesdeoca's work is a charming way to know the world of the 14<sup>th</sup> century; it is also an essential tool in the historical study of islands.

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Perry, Roger (2004) *Island Days*, London: Stacey International, 312pp, Casebound. ISBN: 1-900988-801.

This is a fascinating account of Roger Perry's work on three separate and very different island groups spanning a period of some twenty-three years: the Galapagos, the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati) and Tristan da Cunha. The book is written in an easy-to read-style, like a series of adventures in parts. It is highly descriptive, both of the places, the wildlife and some of the people he encountered. In parts one imagines being there with him. He also recounts something of the human history associated with each of the islands he visited in the three groups, which adds to the interest. He demonstrates a pioneering spirit in places, with a willingness to take necessary risks to achieve his objectives, and does so successfully.

Working for UNESCO in the Galapagos, and based on Santa Cruz, Perry was essentially charged with developing the embryonic conservation work in the island group. Starting at a time before tourism had developed there, he describes various stages in his exploratory journeys and the setting up of a viable research facility. He makes light of his travels in search of declining populations of tortoises during which evidently he lived close to nature at times. His work was largely fundamental in the establishment of a National Park by the Ecuadorian Government in 1968. It was not without excitement, as at the time of the eruption of the Fernandina volcano, which he graphically describes. When he left the Galapagos, after having had his contract extended twice, it was clearly with a sense of understandable achievement.

Perry's next job, to the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati), was for the British Ministry of Overseas Development. After a brief stop-over in Tarawa, he spent almost all of his two-year contract on Christmas Island (Kiritimati). There he discovered for himself the effect of human activities and of introduced animals on the extensive bird colonies, which he surveyed in detail. There are signs of disapproval by the Gilbertese (I-Kiribati) to the restriction of their exploitation of birds for food by the introduction of a Bird Protection Ordinance. As in the Galapagos he has adventures while assessing bird populations on other islands, first Fanning and Washington and later the Line Islands, Malding in particular. True to form, he also examines the evidence of previous human occupation and activity on Malding. His time came to an end soon after he and his wife had an exciting departure from Flint Island.

By contrast his posting (with dog) as Administrator to the British Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha (officially part of St Helena and Dependencies) by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office must have seemed an anti-climax: a smaller island group, with many fewer inhabitants. But Roger set about his work and his keenness for adventure just as enthusiastically, again supported by his wife. Tristan was more isolated however, relying still on Morse code for communication with London, but there is close contact with the islanders through the Island Council. Once again, Roger Perry enlists the help of individuals for his excursions, though not without incident on occasion. Once again he shows a wide knowledge of species there and has misgivings about the exploitation of birds for food; but the status quo is allowed to continue. His sense of humour persists in relation to the islanders whose friendship and care leaves a lasting impression.

The book as a whole is a fascinating record with the thread of nature conservation running through, but one wonders how much more there was to tell - enough to fill three separate books? Clearly the author has been uniquely privileged to have served in the way he did. The only disappointment is that there are not more illustrations, dispersed in the text to which they specifically relate.

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Oostindie, Gert (2005) *Paradise Overseas: The Dutch Caribbean, Colonialism and its Transatlantic Legacies*, London, Macmillan Caribbean, 204pp. ISBN: 1-405057130.

The Caribbean with some 37 million inhabitants is probably one of the most racially or culturally diverse regions of the world populated by a polyglot of peoples. There are whites, blacks, browns, yellows, reds, and an assortment of shades in between. There are Europeans, Africans, Asian Indians, Indonesian Javanese, Chinese, Aboriginal Indians, and many mixes. There are Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Rastafarians, Santeria, Winti, and Vudun, amongst other creeds. They speak in a multitude of tongues: Spanish, English, Dutch, French and a diverse number of creoles such as Papiamentu, Sranan Tongo, Ndjuka, Saramaccan, Kromanti, Kreyol, as well as Hindustani, Bhojpuri and Urdu. Perhaps, no other region of the world is so richly varied. The Caribbean region has been truncated into sub-linguistic subsets reflecting the early pattern of colonization by an assortment of European powers. The Dutch parts, on which this book review is focused, include Suriname which has been independent since 1975, and the Netherlands Antilles constituted of the islands of Aruba, Curacao, Bonaire, Saba, St. Maarten and St. Eustatius. The Dutch Antilles is integrally linked by the constitutional Charter of 1954 to the Dutch state as equal partners. There is one anomalous island, St. Maarten, which is a split jurisdiction, jointly run by The Netherlands and France.

This volume focuses on the Dutch Caribbean. Its author, Oostindie, Director of Caribbean Studies at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, sets out to explore the underlying historical themes of the Dutch presence in the Caribbean, which continue after four centuries of colonial control. Oostindie, who is Dutch, emotionally agonizes over the Dutch failure and negligence in administering to its colonies as he is obsessed with continuing Dutch efforts to oversee and assist in the post-independence era. The Dutch Caribbean sphere covered in this volume is constituted of territories that are individually very different from each other. For instance, Suriname with some 430,000 citizens plus another 30,000 Brazilian migrants, is constituted of almost a dozen ethnic communities made up mainly of 'Hindustanis', originally from India (about 33% of the population); Creoles descended from African slaves (about 25 to 30%); Maroons, descended from escaped African slaves (about 10%), Javanese from Indonesia (about 15%); Amerindians (about 3%), and an assortment of Mixed races, Syrian/Lebanese, Chinese, Europeans, and Latin Americans. About 320,000 Surinamese have migrated permanently to the Netherlands. In contrast, Curacao, with about 130,000 residents, 40% of whom are migrants, is mainly constituted of persons of African descent. Aruba with about 90,000 is yet another bag of uniqueness: militantly anti-Curacaoan and oriented heavily towards Venezuela, it is constituted of various racial mixes including an Amerindian strain. Oostindie argues that the internal diversity of these islands and dissimilarity with each other makes nonsense of the claim of a unified Dutch Caribbean. "It is about the nebulous nature of what is so deceptively called the 'Dutch Caribbean', a collection of regions which have never been culturally uniform and whose inhabitants have been difficult to define even in terms of geography since the start of the mass exodus to the Netherlands in the early 1970s". (p. viii). In the Dutch Caribbean colonial experience, a few peculiar facts stand out however: such as the exchange of Manhattan (which was a Dutch colony) for Suriname!

Starting systematically, Oostindie devotes an initial section of the volume to the construction of the Dutch Caribbean which followed a familiar pattern of European colonization, decimation of the indigenous population (which was also genocidally completed in the Caribbean islands), establishment of coffee, cotton and sugar estates which witnessed the importation of millions of Africans through the odious slave trade, and the abolition of slavery followed by a new wave of imported indentured labourers.

The construction of these Caribbean societies, equally for the Dutch as for the other imperial components of the insular region, witnessed the virtual elimination of the indigenous population so that new societies populated by immigrants became the norm. The African slave trade, lasting in the Dutch possessions for 300 years from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup>, laid the nucleus of the Dutch colonies. The European settlers included substantial numbers of Sephardic and Askenaz Jews: as much as one third to two thirds.

Oostindie summarized these population movements neatly: “Colonial history is a history of migration (in the Caribbean) and the history of the Dutch Caribbean was no exception”. Oostindie uses the term “carnal conversation” to refer to the fairly large mixed population that was created from European-African miscegenation. Into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the trajectory from colonial control towards self-government continued. There were some variations in this pattern for the Dutch Caribbean when, except for Suriname, the Dutch controlled islands did not seek self-government and independence but voted to remain as a political part of the Dutch Kingdom by the Charter of 1954. This has created a rather peculiar Dutch constitutional federal state overwhelmingly dominated by the Netherlands with Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire, St. Maarten, St. Eustatius and Saba orbiting around it in a fiction of equality and partnership.

The settled colonial structure in the Antillean Dutch Caribbean marked by agriculture and manual labour was drastically rearranged in 1920 by the arrival of a Shell Corporation oil refinery. Oostindie remarks: “Oil changes everything”. The population of Curacao and Aruba was transformed by the arrival of a diversity of new migrants in service to the oil industry. This event created a major deviation in the trajectory of development between Suriname on one hand and the Dutch Antillean islands on the other. Suriname with its sugar and ethnic diversity would literally spin in its own political and cultural dynamic with greater similarity to such places as Trinidad and Guyana. Suriname’s politics of self-determination would turn on the ethnic divide between the Asian descended population and the Afro-Creole population.

A striking paradox in the Caribbean refers to the fact that it is the dependent and not independent islands which today contain functioning democracies, protection of civil liberties, and the highest standard of living. Suriname, which decided to cut its colonial ties with the Netherlands in 1975, is today among the poorest states in the Western hemisphere. The lesson of Suriname’s descent into poverty and political repression was not lost on the Dutch Antilles which, even though egged on by the Dutch to become sovereign states, overwhelmingly decided through referendum that independence was not for them. Having said all of this, in this new relationship, not everything between the Dutch Caribbean

territories and the Netherlands is satisfactory and calm. In the politics of Curacao, for instance, Oostindie remarked that ‘anti-Macambo’ (anti-Dutch) sentiments are pervasive. In a strange, love-hate relationship, some 100,000 Curacaoans have chosen to migrate and live in the Netherlands. It is the asymmetry between the Netherlands and the Antillean Caribbean in what is formally a relation of political equals that has generated so much anti-Dutch animus. To maintain their high standard of living, the Dutch Caribbean islands are overwhelmingly dependent financially on the Netherlands. Because of their relatively smaller population size and wealth, the Antilleans are not in a position to challenge the Dutch Parliament in collective decision making. What irks the islands and challenges the theory of their autonomy within the Dutch Kingdom is the strict accountability to which they must adhere in spending the financial subsidies from their political partner, the Netherlands, resulting in charges of neo-colonialism.

The link that animates the relations between the Dutch Caribbean and the Netherlands consists of the large number of Antilleans and Surinamese who reside in the Netherlands. Oostindie discusses the contradictions and tensions in this diasporic connection in which formal citizenship is intermixed with unwelcome practices of racial discrimination. Dutch society has grown increasingly intolerant of its 435,000 Caribbean migrants. All this, Oostindie remarks, underscores the Dutch record of failure and frustration with all of its decolonization projects both in the East and West Indies. Unlike Britain, which successfully jettisoned its colonies and walked away without ongoing financial responsibilities, the Netherlands seems to be unable to extricate itself from its colonial quagmire. *Paradise Overseas* is an excellent volume choked full of interesting facts about a small, remote area of the world. Several thematic strands of comparison were attempted to offer unity to the volume; for instance, the issue of a Caribbean identity. This was something of a painful struggle for Oostindie especially after he concluded that these territories had very little in common. Today, their differences notwithstanding, they all seem to orient to a common point in the Netherlands. As a volume that is descriptively detailed and theoretically provocative, especially on the agonies of the post-colonial condition, it is highly recommended.

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Richardson, Brian W. (2005) *Longitude and Empire: How Captain Cook's Voyages Changed the World*, Vancouver, Canada, UBC Press. ISBN: 0774811897.

I confess that when I was first asked to review this book my initial reaction was, “Does the world really need *another* book on Captain Cook?” After reading *Longitude and Empire*, I now realize that I was asking the wrong question. Although Cook’s name appears on almost every page, this book is not about Captain Cook or his voyages. It is about a scientific practice and its connection to a new way of viewing the earth, or a global epistemology. Therein lay the book’s strengths and its weaknesses.

Richardson is interested in Cook because his voyages were the first that used the chronometer to plot longitude. The chronometer enabled Cook to sail in an entirely different way from his predecessors. Previous navigators sailed along coasts and latitudinal parallels. According to Richardson, this mode of sailing led navigators to conceive of (and map) a world of unrelated coastlines, a perspective that lent support to a worldview of unordered civilizations that were divided into two groups: “us” (the civilized) and “them” (the savage).

According to Richardson, the chronometer changed all this. Enabled by the ability to calculate longitude, Cook constructed a world of points, located relative to each other on a global grid. As he plotted points, Cook sought to uncover shapes, and these shapes – bounded territories – were seen by Cook as hosting distinct societies. Having defined the boundaries of a territory and having located that territory relative to other territories, Cook could proceed to describe that territory’s nature and society. Thus, Cook provided an organizing framework that could be used to compare the world’s nations and rank them according to levels of civilization (or of development) on tables that recognized relative difference amidst an environment of underlying similitude. Non-European societies were identified as infants that required the stimulus of global interaction to spur development. Hence, the chronometer enabled a way of thinking about the world, first actualized by Cook, that provided the foundation for 19<sup>th</sup>-century ideologies of empire and, one could argue by extension, 21<sup>st</sup>-century neoliberal policies of economic development.

In other words, the whole world as we know it owes its existence to a clock! I exaggerate, but not by much. Richardson writes, for instance, that with the ability to measure longitude: “it becomes possible to locate nation-states, even if they are mere points, on maps...[which] becomes the foundation for the political and national divisions between people....[This] ideal of the insular territorial nation-state [then] becomes the basis on which nineteenth-century ideals of empire can be justified” (pp. 119, 135).

To support this argument, Richardson presents a thorough interpretation of Cook’s narratives, and he also provides close (and critical) reads of secondary source works by individuals like Paul Carter and Bernard Smith, interrogating how Western world-views emerged through Cook’s writings and spatial practices. Richardson’s chapters connecting this emergent way of organizing world knowledge with contemporaneous changes in ideas about the relations between state, nation, and territory are particularly strong. However, underlying Richardson’s explanations about how modern political theory utilizes a worldview that is embodied in Cook’s narratives is an explanation of the *source* of that worldview: The invention of the chronometer and the impact that it had on Cook’s navigational and cartographic practices. This is where the book becomes problematic.

While it is incontestable that Cook was an innovator in chronometer-enabled navigation, Richardson’s argument about this mode of navigation leading to a new global epistemology could be true only if this way of thinking of the world did not predate Cook. To support his case, Richardson would need to delve into histories of science, navigation, exploration, and geographical knowledge to demonstrate the revolutionary nature of

Cook's way of navigating, exploring, and viewing the world. These histories, however, are largely absent from *Longitude and Empire*. Reading the book, I kept waiting for an analysis of Cook's innovations in light of historically informed work by people like Bruno Latour and David Turnbull on the role of spatial calculation in constructions of knowledge, Graham Burnett and Matthew Edney on the role of cartographic ordering in imperial expansion, Brian Harley and John Pickles on the political implications of changing modes of spatial representation, and Felix Driver and David Livingstone on the role of geographic knowledge in ideals of enlightenment and empire. Edward Said provides a useful entry to such topics, and Richardson uses Said's work extensively; but, in going directly from Said to a reading of Cook's *Voyages*, Richardson bypasses much of the literature that could place the chronometer and Cook's navigational and cartographic practices within a larger set of changes that were impacting on how Europeans were conceiving of and ordering the world around them.

In light of these gaps, I remain unconvinced by Richardson's claim about the impact of the chronometer. Europeans had been obsessing over the longitude problem (and using approximations of longitude in grid-based, geo-location systems) for centuries prior to Cook's journey. Seventeenth-century navigation manuals and popular geography books ordered the world's places (and peoples) as destinations that were similar-but-different, and they plotted imaginary diagonal lines across the sea for accessing these places. True, this mode of navigating became *practicable* only with the invention of the chronometer, but Europeans were *thinking* this way much earlier. This suggests that Cook's way of viewing the world was the culmination of a long-term transformation of social thought and geographic imagination whose origins predated (and had deeper, more social causes than) the invention of the chronometer.

Despite these failings, one can learn much from *Longitude and Empire*, especially if one modifies Richardson's assertion of technological causality. Instead of accepting his argument that the ability to calculate longitude *led to* Cook practising a new way of ordering the world, one can just assert that Cook's voyages (and, in particular, his narratives) *embodied* a modern world global epistemology that was already emergent. When one approaches the book with this somewhat more modest agenda, one gains significant insights, especially regarding the role of islands in the Western imagination.

Richardson contrasts the role of islands in pre-chronometer navigational systems with their role in Cook's voyages. Analyzing John Locke's *Whole History of Navigation* (1703) as an example of pre-chronometer navigation, Richardson writes:

Unlike places on coasts, which can be described in detail in terms of before and after one another, islands are sporadic, almost accidental, and can only exist either in direct relation to the coast, or in a collection at the end of the narrative. Islands do not have coasts, and they barely have positions. To the navigators in Locke's world, therefore, islands can only be intelligible as points close to a continental line. The oceanic island can have no place at all (p. 28).

In contrast, for Cook (and subsequent navigators), ocean exploration involves mapping the shapes and locations of islands. According to Richardson, islands are important because they divide the ocean into places; and exploration, for Cook, is all about knowing places. Once the boundaries and locations of islands are known, they can be conceived of as naturally occurring containers for social and physical matter (*e.g.* cultures, political systems, natural resources). Indeed, Richardson notes that the island trope is so important for Cook that he creates pseudo-islands along coastlines, attributing a degree of insularity to coves and peninsulas so that they can be presented as conceptually bounded places.

Richardson also demonstrates how this use of the island as a socio-geographical ideal-type requires emphasizing its isolation:

If the problem of adjoining places and peoples is resolved by using the model and terminology of the island to represent places on the coast, ocean communication *between* islands also presents a problem for the account of distinct places. How can Cook assume that islands are so clearly separated from each other? The answer, implied throughout, is that the distance between them is a barrier that isolates them and helps preserve their identities (p. 89).

Although Richardson does not make this point, this perspective on islands has cast a shadow ever since on the ways in which Western observers conceive of islands.

As noted earlier, Richardson is particularly strong when connecting Cook's perspective on the world with contemporaneous developments in political theory. Here the island also plays a crucial role, providing a spatial grounding for the formation of the classical-era's state-idea. Richardson notes that the island, viewed as a natural, isolated, and holistically integrated and unified entity, became the model with which late 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century thinkers developed the ideal of the nation-state as an organically occurring bounded territory. For Rousseau, Richardson notes, "the island [was] the daydream of the nation-state" (p. 117), but in the post-Cook world, "the island was not only the daydream of the nation-state, it was an idea that made the nation-state intelligible" (p. 133).

In summary, I have two very different impressions of this book. The historical geographer (and historian of science) in me is unconvinced by Richardson's central argument. A more sustained engagement with the histories of science, exploration, and geographical knowledge would, I believe, lead to a substantial modification of Richardson's claims about the dramatic changes in global epistemology brought about by the ability to calculate longitude. From an island studies perspective, however, the book is much more satisfying. Richardson ably sums up the attitudes toward islands that permeate the modern way of viewing the world and his linking of these attitudes with key debates in political theory is masterful. The book provides excellent material for forays into the role of islands in our contemporary social and political imagination.

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