

REVIEW ESSAY:

From Odysseus to Robinson Crusoe: A Survey of Early Western Island Literature

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Abstract

This paper examines the history and development of books about islands in Western culture. Islands are prominent in Homer's *Odyssey*, and Plato's island of Atlantis is perhaps the most famous mythical island of all time. The Greeks were the first to develop the island-book as such, but Roman writers showed much less interest in insular themes. The article traces the history of the *immrama* (medieval Irish accounts of mythical Atlantic island voyages), notes the importance of islands in Marco Polo and John of Mandeville, describes the rise of the *isolario*, or island-book illustrated with maps, and concludes with the emergence of the Robinsonade.

Keywords: islands, Greek, Roman, medieval, *immrama*, *isolario*

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Introduction

In a well-known section of his book *Storia letteraria delle scoperte geografiche*, Leonardo Olschki argues that *romanticismo insulare*, the "romance of islands," came into vogue upon the dissemination of Marco Polo's *Il Milione* (completed in 1299), with its reports about the exotic island of Japan, rich in gold and pearls, and of the 12,700 islands of the Indian Ocean (Olschki, 1937: 34-55). Certainly Polo's work was important in increasing interest in islands both as objects of exploration and as settings for works of literature, but Olschki's account leaves one with the impression that the fascination with islands hardly existed before Marco Polo. In addition, Olschki gives no detailed account of the development of the fascination with islands in works that followed Marco Polo's. I propose here to briefly survey the history of western literature about islands, focusing on the periods preceding and following the completion of Marco Polo's book.

Greek Literature

The romance of islands has been part of Western literature since its origins (Vilatte, 1989, 1991; Montesdeoca, 2001, 2004: xi-xxxvii). Homer's *Odyssey* begins not only *in mediis rebus*, in the middle of the action, but also *in medio oceano*, with Odysseus on the isle of

Ogygia in the middle of the sea (1.50), love-prisoner of the goddess Calypso who lives in a cave (1.11-21, 1.48-85, 5.1-228) while he longs to complete his journey home. Later we learn that Odysseus visited many exotic islands before reaching Calypso's, including the floating island of Aeolus, king of the winds, who tied the winds in a bag for Odysseus to speed his voyage home (10.1-75); the island of the goddess Circe, who turned his men into pigs and told Odysseus how to reach the Underworld (10.135-574); and the island of the Sirens, who sing a song so beautiful that sailors are irresistibly drawn to the shore and are content to die listening to the song, rather than seeking to escape or even bothering to eat (12.39-54, 166-200). And before returning home Odysseus will visit Scheria, the island of the Phaeacians (5.436-8.586 and 13.1-92), who have little contact with the outside world, lead an easy life (6.204-205) with lots of changes of clothes and warm baths (8.246-249), and have magic ships which they row faster than a hawk can fly without pilots or steering-oars, for the ships know themselves the course they are to trace, doing so without danger of shipwreck (7.192-198, 8.556-563, 13.81-88, 13.113-115) (on islands in the *Odyssey* see Welcker, 1832; Shewan, 1919; Elliger, 1975: 107-112; Espelosín *et al.*, 1994: 111-124; 129-130).

One of the most famous islands ever, real or imaginary, is the island of Atlantis, which was described by the Greek philosopher Plato (427-347 BC) in his dialogues *Timaeus* (esp. 24-25) and *Critias*. According to Plato, Atlantis was a huge island in the Atlantic Ocean and a fabulously wealthy and powerful city-state, with a large trade network and possessions in Europe and other Atlantic islands. The kings of Atlantis decided to assemble a great fighting force and conquer those areas around the Mediterranean they did not already rule, particularly Athens and Egypt. The Athenians defeated the Atlanteans, however, and shortly thereafter the island of Atlantis disappeared beneath the sea in a series of violent earthquakes and floods. Plato's account of Atlantis has inspired a staggering quantity of discussion: estimates of the number of articles and books devoted to the topic run as high as 50,000 (Zangger, 1992: 38). In fact the tremendous interest in Plato's Atlantis is deeply ironic, for in Plato's account, Atlantis is the enemy of primeval Athens (which he describes in *Critias* 109a-112d); Plato builds Atlantis up only to tear it down and show the superiority of Athens, which in the end triumphed over her island foe. Plato prized simplicity and functionality over luxury and extravagance and was suspicious of naval power and overseas trade, which he felt turned a city-state's focus outward rather than inward and led to an increase and indulgence of desires, rather than their control (*Republic* 372e-374a, *Gorgias* 518c-519a, *Laws* 705a, 706a-d) (for discussion, see Gill, 1977).

The earliest record we have of a book specifically about islands is the book *On Islands* by the Greek philosopher Heraclides Ponticus (d. after 322 BC), which is long since lost, though a few other ancient authors quote from it or mention it. Island books enjoyed a certain vogue in ancient Greece—which is not entirely surprising, given Greece's richness in islands—and we have fragments of and references to books titled *On Islands* by Xenagoras (date uncertain) and Philostephanus of Cyrene (3rd century BC); and Philostephanus' much more famous friend, the Alexandrian poet Callimachus (c. 305-240 BC), wrote a book titled *The Foundations of Islands and Cities, and Their Changes of Name*. Callimachus' sister's son, who was also named Callimachus, wrote a book *On Islands* in epic verse, but this work, like his uncle's, is unfortunately lost to us. Semos of

Delos (c. 200 BC) wrote an island book as well, as perhaps did Aretades of Cnidus and Hermogenes of Smyrna (Ceccarelli 1989).

Roman Literature

Diodorus Siculus (1st century BC), author of a world history in 40 volumes titled the *Bibliotheca historica*, was very interested in islands, no doubt at least in part because he came from Sicily. It is Diodorus who preserves for us records of the extravagant mythical islands discussed by Hecataeus of Abdera, Euhemerus of Messene, and Dionysius Scytobrachion; and the fifth book of Diodorus' history, which Diodorus himself calls the *nesiotike* or "island book," is a description of the islands of the world, and is the only island book surviving from classical antiquity (see Vernière, 1988; and Prontera, 1989).

Islands, both historical and mythical, do appear in Roman literature (see Borca, 2000); but in general Roman authors display less interest in islands than Greek authors do. To take one example, Pliny the Elder (AD 23-79) devoted Books 3-6 of his encyclopedic *Naturalis historia* to the geography of the world, and in the course of this description he mentions many islands, but he does not devote a separate section of his work to the subject.

Isidore of Seville, who lived at the end of the 6th century, wrote an encyclopedia titled *Etymologiae* which was of great importance throughout the Middle Ages; Book 14, chapter 6 of that work is devoted to islands. Isidore surveys the major islands of the world by region (the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, and the Mediterranean), supplying the position and size of the island and relaying information about climate, inhabitants, animal and plant life, and interesting legends associated with each islands. Isidore's chapter on islands inspired similar chapters in later encyclopedias, for example Book 12, chapter 5 in Rabanus Maurus's 9th century *De universo sive De rerum natura*.

Irish Literature: the *Immrama*

Near the end of the early 8th century *Vita Sancti Albei* (the life of the Irish St. Albeus or Ailbeus), he boards a mysterious magical ship that arrives from the ocean, sails away, and returns with a flowering branch - a sure sign that he had visited land to the west (Plummer, 1910, vol. 1:46-64; Heist, 1965: 118-131). It seems likely that this and perhaps other similar episodes in the lives of Irish saints were influential in the development of the genre of *immrama* (the singular *immram* is literally "a rowing about"), or tales of sea voyages among islands in the Atlantic (see Seymour, 1930: 62-96; Löffler, 1983; Herbert, 1999; Wooding, 2000). The earliest *immram* is the *The Voyage of Bran Son of Febal*, in which a beautiful woman appears to Bran bearing the branch of an apple tree with silver stems, and sings to him, describing the paradise island from which she has come. The island is supported by four pillars and neither sickness nor death is known there; instead, there is beauty, music, riches and women. The woman also says that there are 150 islands in the western ocean, each twice or three times as large as Ireland (an ample supply of venues for future tales). Bran and his companions embark on a sea voyage west the next day; first

they come to the Island of Joy, where the people laugh continuously, and then they reach the Island of Women. It seemed to them that they remained on the island a year, but upon their return to Ireland they learned that in fact they had been there for generations; Bran departs from Ireland and was never heard from again (Meyer, 1895; Mac Mathúna, 1985).

The best known *immram* is the *Navigatio sancti Brendani* or Voyage of St. Brendan (c. 484–c. 577), which is thought to have been composed around AD 800; the oldest surviving manuscript of the *Navigatio* dates to the 10th century. At the beginning of the *Navigatio*, St. Barinthus tells Brendan about a voyage west he made to the *Insula deliciosa*, “Delightful Island,” and to another island called the *Terra repromissionis sanctorum*, the “Promised Land of the Saints,” an island full of flowers and precious gems where there is no night. Brendan and some of his brethren decide that they too should voyage to the Promised Land, and so they undertake what turns out to be a seven year trip, during which they visit many exotic islands: an island that turns out to be a benevolent whale named Jasconius; a huge crystal pillar that rises straight out of the sea with a silver canopy; an Isle of Smiths, who throw pieces of molten slag at Brendan’s boat; a barren rock upon which Judas Iscariot is pounded by the waves - this being a brief respite from the torments of Hell, granted to him in honour of Christ’s resurrection; and several others. Brendan and his men finally reach the island they had sought for seven years; they explore it for forty days, or at least they explore the half of the island on one side of a river that splits the island in two, and then collect some of the island’s fruit and precious stones and return to Ireland (see Babcock 1919, 1922; Selmer, 1959; Burgess & Strijbosch, 2000; also Plummer 1910, vol. 2:270 ff.).

The *Navigatio* was very popular: the Latin version survives in 125 manuscripts, and it was translated into many European languages in medieval times: Anglo-Norman, German, Occitan, Catalan, and the dialects of Tuscany, Bologna, and Venice—this last version being of special interest as the latter part of the narrative, particularly some of the descriptions of the island, are considerably longer than in the Latin original. St. Brendan’s islands were believed to be real, and thus are mentioned by Honorius Augustodunensis in his *De imagine mundi* 1.35 (12th century) and by Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia* 2.11, and the islands appear on several medieval maps, for example the Ebstorf *mappamundi* (c. 1235), the Hereford *mappamundi* (c. 1290), the Angelino Dulcert map of 1339, the Pizzigani map of 1367, and the Battista Beccario map of 1426 (Babcock 1919, 1922: 38–49). There is considerable debate about whether an early version of the *Navigatio* might have been archetype of the *immrama* genre, and the question is far from settled. Strijbosch’s arguments that a version of *Mael Dúin* was the archetype of the genre (Strijbosch, 2000) seem to me much weaker than those of Carney for the priority of the *Navigatio* (Carney, 1963).

Other *immrama* include the *Immram curaig Maíle Dúin*, *The Voyage of Mael Dúin’s Boat*, in which the hero visits many exotic islands while searching for his father’s murderers, whom he eventually finds but forgives; the islands include one of huge ant-like creatures which try to eat Mael Dúin and his companions; an island full of demons racing on demonic horses; and an island surrounded by a continuously revolving wall of fire with a small doorway through which the voyagers glimpse the inhabitants of the island splendidly clad and feasting with golden chalices (Stokes, 1888–89; Oskamp, 1970). In *Immram*

curaig Ua Chorra, *The Voyage of the Ui Corra*, three brothers who had been heathen pirates convert to Christianity and undertake a penitential sea voyage; many details of the voyage derive from the *Navigatio Brendani* and the *Immram Maíle Dúin*, but they also visit some islands that do not appear in previous *immrama*, such as an island surrounded by a burning sea, with dead people on one side of it, and living on the other, and the burning waves break over the island continuously, tormenting the living people.

There are also two very similar *immrama*, probably dating from the 10th century, titled *The Voyage of Snedgus and Mac Riagla* and *The Voyage of St. Columba's Clerics*. The men of Ross kill their chieftain, who had worked them inhumanly, and St. Columba decrees that by way of punishment 120 of the men should be set adrift on boats at sea. Snedgus and Mac Riagla deliver this sentence, and then they themselves decide to undertake a voyage on the western ocean, preaching the gospel on the islands they encounter. One of the more unusual islands they visit harbours cat-headed men, another dog-headed men, a third swine-headed men (Stokes, 1888, 1905).

After St Brendan

Sometime after the Brendan legend reached Brittany, several important elements from the legend, including a sea voyage to a western paradise island, and also a celebration of mass on the back of a whale-island, appear in the *Vita Machutis*, the *Life of St. Malo*, probably first written down early in the 9th century (Lot, 1908; Mac Mathúna, 1994/2000). There is another brief text of a voyage to a paradise island in the Atlantic which, though possibly influenced by the *Navigatio* of St. Brendan, shows signs of other influences as well. It is an 11th century Latin text preserved in two 14th century manuscripts that describes a voyage of one Trezenzónio from the *farum Breçantium* (now known as Torre de Hércules, in A Coruña, Spain) to a paradise island in the Atlantic which is called the *insula magna solistitionis*, the “Great Island of the Solstice.” When the Moors have laid waste to Galicia Trezenzonio goes to the great lighthouse at A Coruña, and in the first light of day he sees a distant island in the ocean, and prays to God to protect him on his journey to the island. He sails to it quickly, and there explores a huge bejewelled basilica, and stays on the island for 7 years, enjoying its perfect climate, beautiful surroundings and abundance of food, while being undisturbed by fear, danger, hunger, or any sordid thought. Finally an angel comes and tells him to return to Europe, and he obeys. The solar nature of the island is not emphasized during Trezenzónio's visit, but is indicated by the island's name and the circumstances under which he first sees it. There is no solar island in any of the *immrama* (d'Azevedo, 1918; Almeida Lucas, 1991; Nascimento 1998: 213-242; Catalão, 1992).

Travels to the East

The east was reputed to be full of marvels long before Marco Polo wrote (Ctesias, 1973; Wittkower, 1942; Le Goff, 1971); but Marco Polo's eastern travels, and particularly what he wrote about the exotic islands of the east—the giant ruby belonging to the King of Seilan (Ceylon, *that is*, Sri Lanka), the great riches of the island of Chipangu or Japan, the

Island of Men and the Island of Women, and the enormous bird called the Ruk which is native to Madagascar, capable of carrying an elephant—greatly increased European interest in exotic eastern islands (Olschki, 1937: 34-55; Douchet, 2004; also see Shiffman, 2000). It is intriguing that in Marco Polo's narrative, the more distant the area he is describing, the more islands it has.

The *Travels* of John Mandeville, also known as *The Book of Sir John Mandeville*, was composed between 1357 and 1371 and purports to describe Mandeville's extravagant adventures in Asia. In fact, the author of the book probably never traveled himself, and his stories are mostly derived from other travel books. However, the book was one of the most popular of the Middle Ages, and survives in more than 250 manuscripts (for a list of manuscripts, see Bennett, 1954: 265-334). Mandeville describes many exotic islands: in the island of Lamary, men and women go naked because of the great heat, sleep with each other indiscriminately, hold all property in common, and are cannibals; in the isle of Pathen there are trees that bear grains, and others that bear honey, and others that bear poison, and also a lake in which grow canes with long roots, and precious stones are found in knots in their roots. In the isle of Milke the men are devoted to killing one another and to drinking human blood; an unnamed island is inhabited by people with horses' feet who run very swiftly and thus catch the animals they hunt; and Mandeville places the fabulously wealthy and powerful (but mythical) emperor Prester John on the Isle of Pentexoire, while other accounts placed him in India or Africa (Bovenschen, 1888; Mandeville, 1983, 2000).

Curiously, though islands are prominent in Polo's and Mandeville's narratives, they are generally not prominent in the illustrations of the medieval manuscripts of their works. For example, the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 2810, which dates from 1413 and is one of the most extensively illuminated travel books of the late Middle Ages, contains illustrated texts of both Polo and Mandeville. The manuscript contains illustrations of Marco Polo's Java (f. 73v), Java Minor (f. 74v), Seilan (f. 76v), the islands of men and of women (f. 87) and Madagascar (f. 88). Yet, none of these illustrations clearly indicates that the place in question is an island: there is no sense of insularity (*Livre des merveilles*, 1907; Polo, 1995; for general discussion of the imagery see Wittkower, 1957; Porter, 1977; and Kann, 2002). There are two heavily illustrated manuscripts of Mandeville in the British Library, MS Royal 17. C. XXXVIII and MS Harley 3954, with 213 illustrations between them, but of these only two actually depict islands, f. 37v and f. 38r in the Royal manuscript (Scott, 1996: 2.207).

Only one manuscript of Marco Polo includes a world map, namely the 14th century manuscript in Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Cod. Holm. M. 304, f. 100v, but this map shows no islands (Santarém, 1849: plate I, no. 3, *Le livre de Marco Polo*, 1882: f. 100v; Bagrow, 1948: fig. 1 and p. 12; Dutschke, 1993: 446-449); similarly one 15th century manuscript of Mandeville, namely Cape Town, National Library of South Africa, MS 4.b.17, includes a map of the world at f. 2v, but this map again shows no islands (Steyn, 2002: 48-50, with illustration). There is also a small schematic world map in the Mandeville manuscript London, British Library MS Royal 17. C. XXXVIII, f. 41v, but: no islands (Scott, 1996: 2.207). An excellent illustration of the great number of islands that

Marco Polo ascribed to the Indian Ocean may be seen in the eastern portion of Abraham Cresques's "Catalan Atlas" of 1375 (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Espagnol 30), where a multi-coloured profusion of islands fills the ocean and surround a legend that quotes Marco Polo on the great number of islands and their fantastic riches (Bagrow, 1964: plates 37-39; for a colour facsimile of the map see Cresques, 1977; for a color facsimile and transcription of the legend that quotes Marco Polo see *Mapamundi*, 1983: esp. 89). The Fra Mauro world map of 1459, on permanent display in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice, also depicts the Indian Ocean as filled with marvellous islands, and has a legend indicating that there are 12,600 islands in the ocean (no doubt an error for the 12,700 islands mentioned by Marco Polo), and depicts four-masted ships sailing among those islands. These ships are also mentioned by Polo in his Book 3, chapter 1 (Bagrow, 1964: plate 42; Crone, 1952; for transcription of the legend see Leporace, 1956: IX, p 6).

Rebirth of Island Books

Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) wrote a book titled *De montibus, sylvis, fontibus, lacubus, fluminibus, stagnis seu paludibus, et de nominibus maris*, a collection of information from classical and other authors about the mountains, woods, fountains, lakes, rivers, swamps of the world, and the names of the seas. Boccaccio's friend Domenico Silvestri noted that more interesting things generally happen on islands than elsewhere; and so, sometime between 1385 and 1410, he wrote a volume titled *De insulis et earum proprietatibus* (*On Islands and Their Properties*) to accompany Boccaccio's book. The *De insulis* is an alphabetical encyclopedia of every island Silvestri could find mentioned by classical or medieval authors, a tremendous labour, as Silvestri himself notes in his preface, going on about the staggering number of islands in all the rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans of the world. In Silvestri's work, the long-neglected genre of the island book is reborn (Montesdeoca, 2001, 2004).

Before discussing the rise of the *isolario*, an island book illustrated with maps, I would like to describe the French work titled *Les merveilles du Monde* or *Les secrets de l'histoire naturelle*, which is known from four manuscripts: three in Paris, two in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Fr. 1377-1379 and MS Fr. 22971, one in the private collection of the Charnacé family; and one in New York, Morgan Library, MS M. 461. The manuscripts range in date from 1427 (Fr. 1377-1379) to c. 1480 (Fr. 22971). The work was also printed a few times in the early 16th century, but these printed editions are very rare; one of these editions is that published by Jehan Treperel in Paris in 1527, which has the title *C'est le secret de l'hystoire naturelle contenant les merveilles et choses mémorables du monde*; there are copies of this edition in the British Library, in the Bibliothèque municipale d'Angers, and in the Herzog-August-Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. The final third of the book includes chapters on curious animals, fish, stones, plants, buildings and monsters, while the first two thirds of the book is a brief, alphabetically arranged geographical encyclopedia. A rather high percentage of the places described are islands; there is even a separate entry for "Ile" or "Isle," which offers a definition of "island" borrowed from Isidore of Seville and talks a little about how oceanic islands can increase in size through sand added by storms. Moreover, the beautiful illustrations in the manuscripts depict all of

the islands discussed, and quite a few of the illustrations depict the islands as islands, i.e. as land surrounded by water, and exhibit considerable interest in insularity (Beaugendre, 1992, 1996). Moreover, the beautiful illustrations in the manuscripts depict all of the islands discussed, and quite a few of the illustrations depict the islands as islands, i.e. as land surrounded by water, and exhibit considerable interest in insularity (Beaugendre, 1992, 1996). Some of the images from Bibliothèque Nationale de France MS Fr. 22971 are available at: <http://classes.bnf.fr/ebstorf/feuille/secrets/index.htm>.

The Florentine Cristoforo Buondelmonti (c. 1385-c. 1430) went to Rhodes in 1415 to learn Greek, travel the Greek isles, and purchase ancient Greek manuscripts for patrons back in Florence. A lively and curious man, Buondelmonti explored the ruins on each island he visited to see if they corresponded with descriptions of buildings he had read in classical authors, particularly Ovid, Virgil, Pliny, and Plutarch; he also drew a map of each island. Sometime before 1420, he wrote a *Liber insularum archipelagi* (*Book of the Islands of the Greek Archipelago*), dedicated to the powerful Cardinal Jordano Orsini—probably an attempt to advance his career in the church. The work was very popular and survives in more than sixty manuscripts. In his book Buondelmonti gives accounts of seventy-two islands in the Aegean (and also of Constantinople, evidently just because he found it interesting). His approach is straightforward: he names the chief ports and towns of each island, the highest mountains, the best land and springs, and offers some remarks about the island's history in classical mythology. He devotes somewhat more space to seven islands: Crete, Rhodes, Euboea, Corfu, Lesbos, Cos, and Chios (Buondelmonti, 1824, 1897, 2005; Turner, 1988; Lancioni, 1991: 75-78; Manners, 1997 gives references to several manuscripts of Buondelmonti's work). Images of all of the maps in a beautiful manuscript of Buondelmonti (P/13) in the Caird Library at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England, are conveniently available through the library's manuscript catalog at: www.nmm.ac.uk/uhtbin/cgiirsi/abcd/0/49

Buondelmonti's great innovations were his concern with the present topography (and not just the mythological history) of the islands, and also his inclusion of a map of every island. The presence of maps with the first-hand description of an area was a multimedia revolution; the *Liber insularum archipelagi* was very popular throughout the 15th century, and defined a new genre: the *isolario*, or cartographic island book (Guglielminetti, 1989; Lancioni, 1991; Cassi and Dei, 1993; Tolia, 2002, forthcoming). With the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, the *Liber insularum* acquired additional interest because it was no longer possible for Europeans to travel safely in the northern Aegean and see the things that Buondelmonti had seen.

Henricus Martellus Germanus (fl. 1480-96) created the next surviving *isolario*, which was titled *Insularium illustratum*; it is known from a few surviving manuscripts (one is London, British Library Add. MS 15760; another is Chantilly, Bibliothèque Musée Condé, MS 698; another is Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Voss. Lat. F23; and another is Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, MS Plut. 29.25), and follows Buondelmonti's model closely. Working in Florence with the map-engraver and publisher Francesco Rosselli, Martellus was probably commissioned to create this *isolario* because of his talent as a map-painter and his expertise in the new Italian humanist script. His mountains are in brown,

rivers light blue; forests green; his towns are carefully drawn, and his islands are placed like jewels in seas of rich ultramarine blue. Martellus added regional maps and a world map, which gave his *isolario* some of the character of an atlas (d'Urso, 2000; Hage, 2003). A few images from one of Martellus's *isolarios* are available by searching for "Martellus" at: www.imagesonline.bl.uk/britishlibrary/

The Venetian mariner Bartolommeo da li Sonnetti (fl. 1485) made fifteen voyages among the Greek isles and wrote an *Isolario* which survives in several manuscripts (see Bracke, 2001) and which also has the distinction of being the first printed *isolario* (Venice, 1485?); indeed its charts were the very first nautical charts to appear in print. Sonnetti depicts 49 islands; his charts are simple but charming, showing only the coastlines and the important towns, with a large windrose over each island; the text, as his epithet indicates, is written in sonnet form. Unlike Buondelmonti, Sonnetti covers the Dodecanese but not the Ionian islands (Bartolommeo da li Sonetti, 1972; Donattini, 1994-95; Bracke, 2001). Needless to say the maps in the manuscripts of Bartolommeo's work are more beautiful than the woodcuts in the printed editions. Incidentally Sonetti's maps were copied by the Turkish naval commander Piri Reis in his *Kitab i-Bahriye* or *Book of Sea-Lore* (1521 and 1526), which includes 223 maps of Mediterranean coasts and islands (Loupis, 2000).

Benedetto Bordone (1460-1539) gave the *isolario* a new, global scope with his *Libro de Tutte l'Isole del Mondo*, or more fully, *Libro di Benedetto Bordone nel qual si ragiona de tutte l'isole del mondo* (Venice, 1528 and 1532), which was reprinted (1534 and later) under the title *Isolario di Benedetto Bordone*. The book has three divisions: the first brief section covering islands in the western ocean; the second longer section covering the islands of Mediterranean; and the third brief section covering the islands of the Indian Ocean and the Far East. It has 107 maps in the text, three folding maps, and one world map. One of Bordone's maps is a plan of the island-city of "Temistitan" (Tenochtitlán, now Mexico City) before its destruction by Cortez; Bordone also has a map of "Ciampagu" which is the earliest European-printed map of Japan. With its global coverage, Bordone's *isolario* moved another step towards the atlases that would appear in the 16th century (Almagià, 1937; Bordone, 1966; Albuquerque, 1983; Lancioni, 1991: 84-89; Donattini 2000: 239-264). A low-resolution PDF of the 1528 edition of Bordone's *isolario* is available for download through <http://gallica.bnf.fr>

Alonso de Santa Cruz (1500-1572), *Cosmógrafo Mayor* to Charles V of Spain, wrote at the order of the king an *Islario general de todas las islas del mundo* (1542), a great work that covered the entire world in detail with eight regional maps and 103 local maps, as well as a map of Mexico. The quality of Santa Cruz's research and of his maps is very high, but his work had little influence on other cartographers and *isolario*-authors because it remained in manuscript (the presentation copy, Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, MS res. 38, is complete, while the other four manuscripts are all incomplete: these are Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS 7195 and 5542; Besançon, Bibliothèque municipale MS 460, and Seville, Archivo General de Indias, patronato 260, no. 2, ramo 6), and it was not printed until the 20th century (Santa Cruz, 1918; Hill, 1971; Cuesta Domingo, 1983-84; Naudé, 1992). M. Cuesta Domingo (2003) has recently edited an impressive facsimile of the Madrid manuscript of Santa Cruz's *Islario*.

Tomasso Porcacchi da Castiglione (1530-1585) wrote *L'Isole più famose del Mondo*, (Venice, 1572, with many later editions); the first edition contains chapters about and maps of 28 islands or archipelagos, including the New World, as well as a world map; the second edition of 1576 was considerably expanded. Porcacchi's chief virtue is the sophistication and elegance of his maps, which are printed in copperplate rather than woodcut (Gerstenberg, 2004). A low-resolution PDF of the 1572 edition of Porcacchi's *isolario* is available for download from: <http://gallica.bnf.fr>, and the full text of Annette Gerstenberg's edition of Porcacchi's 1572 *isolario* is available at: www.annette-gerstenberg.de/isole/

The two next works in the *isolario* tradition are essentially collections of island maps, with almost no text. Giovanni Francesco Camocio (fl. 1558-1575) compiled such an *isolario* titled *Isole famose, porti, fortezze e terre marittime sottoposto alla serma. sigria. di Venetia, ad altri principi christiani, et al sigor. Turco nouamente poste in luce* (Venice, 1572), which focused on the Mediterranean but also included maps of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Iceland (Gallo, 1950: 97-98 lists the maps in Camocio's *isolario*). Camocio's work inspired a rival *isolario* by Simon Pinargenti, *Isole che son da Vanetia nella Dalmatia, et per tutto l'Archipelago, fino a Costantinopoli, con le loro Fortezze, e con le terre piu notabili di Dalmatia, nuovamente poste in disegno a beneficio de gli studiosi de Geografia* (Venice, 1573).

Antonio Millo, a sailor of Greek extraction from Melos, wrote a charming *isolario* at the end of the 16th century which survives in several manuscripts, including London, British Library Cotton Julius E. ii, ff. 1-60v, British Library Add. MS 10,365, ff. 36r-96v, Venice, Biblioteca della Fondazione Querini Stampalia, MS 765 and 162, Venice, Museo Correr, Portolano 46, cat. 3, and Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, MS It. IV 149 (5105) (Tolias, 1999: 40-42, 58-61, 193-198; Tolias, 2001). The work is titled *Isulario de Antonio Millo nel qual si contiene tutte le isolle dil mar Mediteraneo*, and as its title implies it essentially confines its attention to islands of the Mediterranean, though some manuscripts include text (but no maps) about Cuba, Sumatra, Iceland and England, among others. Images of all the maps of a Millo manuscript (P/17) in the Caird Library at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England, are conveniently available through the Library's manuscript catalog, at: www.nmm.ac.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi/abcd/0/49

André Thevet (c.1516- c.1590), a Franciscan friar and the French Royal Cosmographer, completed a manuscript in 1586 titled *Le Grand Insulaire et pilotage d'André Thevet, angoumoisain, cosmographe du Roy* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 15452-15453)—a very ambitious work that runs to more than 1200 pages and originally included some 250 maps; the manuscript now contains 87 maps of islands. In the first volume of the manuscript, Thevet discusses 100 islands, most of them in the Mediterranean, but also a few in the Black and Caspian Seas. In the second volume, he discusses 40 islands of northern Europe, and then 110 overseas islands; about a dozen of the islands in this latter group had never been mapped before, or had never been mapped before in detail. Later, in 1588, Thevet produced a manuscript titled *Description de plusieurs isles* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 17174), a summary of the

Grand Insulaire without the maps; Thevet does not enjoy a strong reputation as a scholar, and spent a great deal of energy battling his cartographic rivals; but his insular ambition demands admiration (Hasluck, 1913-14; Hair, 1982; Lestringant, 1984; Dumotier-Sigwalt, 2002). A few of the maps from Thevet's *Grand Insulaire* may be viewed at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>

In Germany, Jean Matal (Johannes Metellus Sequanus) was caught up in the isolario vogue and wrote a book titled *Insularium: Orbis aliquot insularum, tabulis aeneis delineationem continens, in quo describuntur multae per Oceanum sparsae insulae, operi geographico quo Europa, Asia, Africa, et America describuntur...* (Cologne, 1601); and in 1638 Francesco Lupazolo wrote a manuscript titled *Isolario dell'Arcipelego et altri luoghi particolari, di Francesco Lupazolo, nel qual si vede il loro nome antico et moderno, modo di vivere, il numero delli populi, habbito delle donne, et le antichità, si come altre cose particolare fuor dell'Isole, fatto l'anno del S. 1638, in Scio* (London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 792, ff. 55r-94v) whose maps are simple but pleasant, drawn in pen with no color. Twenty years later, Marco Boschini (1613-1678) published a slim isolario which, like Lupazolo's confines itself to the islands of the Mediterranean, titled *L'Arcipelago con tutte le isole, scogli secche e bassi fondi, con i mari, golfi, seni, porti, città e castelli nella forma che si vedono al tempo presente* (Venice, 1658), with 45 engraved maps.

Perhaps the last true isolario was that of P. Vincenzo Maria Coronelli (1650-1718), Cosmographer of the Venetian Republic, titled *Isolario: descrizione geografico-historica, sacro-profana, antico-moderna, politica, naturale, e poetica ... di tutte l'isole... del globo terracqueo... ornato di trecento-dieci tavole...* (Venice, 1696). The first volume of Coronelli's work covers islands of the Adriatic and Aegean, even including a section on islands in Italian lakes (pp. 123-136); and the second covers islands in the rest of the world. Coronelli's 310 maps are beautiful, and he certainly had a fondness for large projects: he also edited the first few volumes of an encyclopedia, the *Biblioteca universale sacro-profana*, which was to have run to 45 volumes (Armao, 1944: 116-123).

By Coronelli's time, the isolario had lost popularity to its brash offspring, the atlas (see Akerman, 1991: esp. 171-180). It also seems likely that the sheer number of known islands, which increased rapidly during the Age of Exploration, was so daunting that it dissuaded authors from attempting the genre.

The Original Robinsonade

In 1704, a few years after the publication of Coronelli's *isolario*, the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk got into an argument with the captain of the ship *Cinque Ports* while it stopped at Juan Fernandez, the largest of the Juan Fernandez Islands 600 km west of Valparaíso, Chile. Selkirk was something of a hot-head and asked to be left on one of the islands, which the captain readily agreed to do. Selkirk then changed his mind and begged to be taken back aboard, but the captain refused to accept him, and sailed away; Selkirk remained completely alone on the island for more than 4 years.

He was taken off the island by Captain Woodes Rogers on February 12, 1709, and reached England late in 1711. Rogers gave an account of Selkirk's years on Juan Fernandez when he published a memoir of his voyage in 1712, and this account was also published separately the same year. Richard Steele interviewed Selkirk and published an account of his adventures in 1713 (Rogers, 1712: 125-131; Selkirk, 1712; Steele, 1713).

Daniel Defoe, no doubt inspired in part by Selkirk, wrote his novel *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York*, which he published in 1719, transferring the tale from the eastern Pacific to the western Atlantic, to an unnamed island near the mouth of the Orinoco river, and greatly extending the protagonist's stay on the island to 28 years (Defoe, 1719). For Defoe, the challenges of surviving on an island were a milieu for demonstrating the power of a resourceful and educated individual to control his environment and to create from raw materials everything necessary for existence, to conquer the world through human labor and science (Watt, 1957). Defoe thus created a new genre of island book, the Robinsonade, which is very well suited to modern western individualism, and the genre continues to be practised today (Reckwitz, 1976; Maher, 1985; Colvin, 1989; Barberet, 2005; Fisher, 2005).

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