

BOOK and FILM REVIEWS SECTION

Anthony Cheke & Julian Hume (2008) *Lost Land of the Dodo: An Ecological History of Mauritius, Réunion & Rodrigues*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 464pp. (illus), (hardcover). ISBN: 978-0-300-14186-3. US\$55.00.

As an ecologist with an interest in both island biogeography and conservation biology, I was delighted to review a book that included in its title words such as dodo, ecological history, Mauritius, Réunion and Rodrigues. The dodo bird, a legendary flightless bird that was rushed to extinction by humans, is a symbol of species extinction worldwide. Oceanic islands such as Mauritius, Réunion and Rodrigues have been used as model systems through which we understand key ecological and evolutionary processes.

The *Lost Land of the Dodo* is a truly outstanding work on the ecological history of the Mascarene Islands (Mauritius, Réunion and Rodrigues). As the authors state in their preface, the book tells the story of “three islands far out in the Indian Ocean that escaped the heavy hand of humankind until fewer than 500 years ago” (p. 7). These islands had not experienced major perturbations of their biota before the arrival of early European colonizers in the 16th century. But, like many island systems worldwide, a continuous series of ecological disasters and species extinctions followed once permanent human settlements were established on these islands. The book offers to its readers a magnificent opportunity to travel through time to relive the discovery of these islands and to be acquainted with their original and current habitats and biotas.

In terms of content, the book comprises 11 chapters, 15 appendices, several maps and almost 200 pages of endnotes and references. It is exceptionally well documented and the organization of chapters allows readers to focus on the material of interest. Each chapter and appendix is filled with plenty of detailed data that can only be the result of the more than 30 years of work of Anthony Cheke in the Mascarene Islands. In addition, the book includes thorough accounts of extinct and extant vertebrate fauna of the islands that are nicely presented in 38 boxes interspersed within the chapters. One of the most fascinating components of this book is the illustrations. They not only include many first-time published sketches of the native fauna from early travelers to the islands, but there is also a wonderful collection of 39 colour illustrations of the original biotas prepared by Julian Hume.

The focus of the first chapter is a concise, straightforward overview of the geography of the Mascarene Islands, including a brief description of the process of colonization in newly formed volcanic islands. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 together comprise extensive and rigorous descriptions of the original fauna and flora of the Mascarene Islands. Through careful study of records dating back to early explorers, the authors eloquently describe which species were present in the Mascarene Islands before human colonization, how they got there, where they came from, which routes they used to reach the islands, as well as their geographic and phylogenetic origins. For instance, the authors provide detailed morphological descriptions of extinct flightless birds, including the Mauritius dodo and the ‘Réunion dodo’. The saga around the ‘Réunion dodo’ is worthy of note, because the authors succeed in demonstrating that this bird was most probably an ibis! For those readers more interested in ecology or evolutionary biology, Chapter 3 reviews

such topics as competitive exclusion, character displacement, resource partitioning and mutualistic relationships.

In the next five chapters, the authors describe with a wealth of detail the anthropogenic activities and environmental changes that took place on the islands after their early settlement and up to the 21st century. For instance, massive habitat changes resulted from the sugar industry and the transformation of natural habitats into agricultural fields in Mauritius. Through these chapters, the readers will also find a detailed, well-referenced history of the build-up of introduced species in the islands. Although there were some conservation initiatives during these centuries, habitat loss and degradation, as well as species extinction, increased significantly.

Chapter 9 is a contribution by Carl Jones, who was actively involved in saving the Mauritius kestrel from extinction. In this chapter, Jones provides a historical perspective on the conservation of biotas and habitats in the Mascarene Islands. We learn that conservation management work started on Mauritius and that it was highly influenced by the work of New Zealand biologists. For example, techniques and protocols developed by New Zealand biologists for rat and cat control have been adapted for use on Mauritius. Today's conservation programs on the Mascarene Islands focus on habitat restoration and the removal of exotic plants and the control of exotic vertebrates.

In the last chapter of the book, 'Reflections', the authors wrap things up with an excellent overview of the present-day challenges faced by conservationists when protecting native habitats and biotas in the Mascarene Islands. A major problem is the disengagement of the current inhabitants of these islands from their native flora and fauna. Although this is not unique to the Mascarene Islands, the level of ecological ignorance about them is particularly high. The authors clearly argue that there is not only a lack of knowledge of the native biota of the island by the general public, but authorities tend to see the forest as a sort of wasteland that can be sacrificed whenever there is a need for land areas. The authors end this chapter by stating that "any exotic introduced without prior study carries grave risks for the native biota" (p. 273); a powerful reminder of the disastrous effects exotic species have had on insular biotas worldwide.

If a book could receive a standing ovation, this one is a candidate. The *Lost Land of the Dodo* is a terrific work on the ecological history of the Mascarene Islands that should be read by anyone interested in island biogeography, zoogeography, conservation biology, ecology and natural history.

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Seán P. Kerins (2011) *A Thousand Years of Whaling: A Faroese Common Property Regime*, Edmonton, Canada, CCI Press, 193pp. ISBN: 978-1-896445-52-6. Can\$40.00.

Despite the recurring and often ardent interest in the Faroese *grindadráp* (pilot whale hunt) in sectors of the English-speaking world over the last few decades, there has been a marked lack of recent English-language literature devoted to the subject of the pilot whale drive in the Faroe Islands. However, Seán Kerins' book, along with J.P. Joensen's 2009 *Pilot Whaling in the Faroe Islands*, ably fill that gap in scholarship with their detailed accounts of this distinctively Faroese institution. Unlike Joensen's broad approach, Kerins frames his discussion of Faroese pilot whaling in terms of its development as a type of unique community-based common property management regime.

In the first chapter, Kerins provides a brief history of small-scale coastal (and industrial) whaling around the world in order to situate Faroese whaling historically. Further, in tracing the growth of external anti-whaling pressures, Kerins explains how, following the arrival of a large number of traditionally non-whaling countries in the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the 1986 moratorium on commercial whaling was passed. Although pilot whales were not included within the IWC's mandate, the moratorium was indicative of shifts in human-animal relations in post-domestic societies (those in which most people are alienated from the processes which turn animals into products) and this period saw the rise of the notion of the "superwhale" as an often anthropomorphized symbol of the environment. Under these conditions various environmental groups saw the Faroes as an ideal target for protests and there began a series of types of protest actions (letter writing campaigns, sabotage, boycotts of Faroese products, etc.). Kerins identifies a few recurrent arguments against the Faroese pilot whale drive, including, notably: that it is economically unnecessary; that it is merely an antiquated tradition; that modern technology supposedly makes the hunt unsustainable; and that subsistence and 'modern' economies cannot co-exist in the same society.

In his second chapter Kerins contrasts the relatively unproductive land of the Faroes (few trees, few crops, little arable land, but abundant sheep and sea fowl) with the extremely rich marine resources upon which the Faroese have built their livelihood. The chapter also includes IWC and North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) estimates of the stock of long-finned pilot whales in the North Atlantic (between 778,000 and 780,000) and suggests that, according to NAMMCO, the Faroese hunt is unarguably sustainable and has had a negligible effect on the population of the pilot whales. In taking a case study approach, the author made use of documentary and archival materials, interviewing, direct observation, observed physical/material culture, and engaged in participant observation. Regarding the last method, the author carried out two periods of fieldwork in the Faroes (2001-2002 and 2006), involving himself in the everyday work and subsistence activities (including whale drives) which fill up the Faroese calendar.

Kerins' third chapter describes his theoretical framework, which draws primarily upon political economy and world-systems theory. The author elaborates upon a series of design principles that is associated with long-enduring common property resource institutions. The presence of all of these design principles in any common property resource institution suggests that the institution will be both robust and successful (in the sense that it has the capacity to sustain both the resource and the local management institution over time).

In his fourth chapter, Kerins traces the roots of the common property institution of the *grindadráp* and considers the place of pilot whales in the long-standing mixed (subsistence and trade) economy of the Faroes. The author constructs a historical narrative of Faroese collective attempts at organization of their common property regime and regulation of the institution of *grindadráp* as one of increasing codification into law with the long-term aim of maintaining equitable and fair use (and division) of the resource. This codification and planning has had the effect of developing a "uniquely Faroese common property resource institution" (p. 111) that integrates into and complements their participation in the larger global (capitalist) economy.

Kerins devotes the fifth chapter entirely to a description of the modern *grindadráp*, from sighting the whales, to the drive, the slaughter, and the division of the meat. Although much of the chapter focuses on the logistics of the hunt (including the introduction of more humane killing methods), the core argument is that Faroese whaling has become a highly organized, regulated, and closely-monitored process thanks to its continual development and maintenance by the Faroese people (through codification in law, and constant reviewing and improvements made, in part, in response to international criticisms). After identifying all of the common property resource institution design principles from Chapter Three in the *grindadráp* (thereby confirming it as a robust and successful management institution), Kerins suggests that, in modern times, the Faroese have become active managers of their pilot whale resource (p. 148).

In his sixth and final chapter Kerins explains how the Faroese people have ensured their continued control of their resource (the pilot whales) and have successfully responded to external criticisms in fulfilling the final of the necessary common property resource institution design principles by 'nesting' their local institution (the *grindadráp*) within a national resource users' institution, the *Grindamannafelagið* (Pilot Whalers Association), and within the international regional management organization that is the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO).

In his brief conclusion, Kerins states that the main arguments offered by various protesters against the Faroese *grindadráp* are either intentionally misleading or simply false and misrepresentative. He also leaves readers with the suggestion that the Faroese pilot whale drive is under renewed pressure from both continuing protest action and the abundant pollutants present in the pilot whales, which threatens both the animals and the Faroese who consume them.

In short, Kerins provides what may well be the definitive English-language account of modern Faroese pilot whaling, as he provides both the ethnographic detail and historical depth necessary to make evident the process of the development of the *grindadráp* into a sustainable common property regime. In carefully addressing each accusation put forth by anti-whaling protesters throughout the book by citing specific examples from his own observations and research, the author manages to produce a book that stands in defense of this form of subsistence whaling without ever becoming unnecessarily polemical. Further, because Kerins ably situated the *grindadráp* historically, the reader can easily gain a sense of the central economic and cultural importance the pilot whale drive has assumed in Faroese society over the past 1,000 years.

It is worth noting, however, that, other than in the conclusion, there is somewhat scant mention of the potential seriousness of the threat that contaminant loading in whales poses to the Faroese. Although admittedly a detailed review of past and ongoing Faroese health studies is outside the scope of Kerins' focus, this small lacuna perhaps points to the need for a publication written for the layperson that addresses this complex issue.

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Jean-Michel Racault (2010) *Robinson & compagnie: Aspects de l'insularité politique de Thomas More à Michel Tournier*, Paris, Pétra, 372 pp. ISBN: 978-2-84743-033-2. €29.00.

Jean-Michel Racault, a well-known professor at the Université de Saint Denis on the island of Réunion, has devoted years of research to travel literature. Some of his previous works focused on French travel literature on the Indian Ocean, but his main topic is utopia and the utopian genre. Through several books and contributions to collective works, he studied utopian narrative in French and English literature. He also edited a two-volume book titled *Métissages* on linguistics and anthropology.

His new work deals with political insularity from Thomas More to Michel Tournier. After a very engaging introduction, the author develops his analysis in two parts with a total of 14 chapters. All of the chapters, except for the first and the last, were published previously as articles or lectures at colloquia. This is revealed only at the end of the book in a brief introduction to the bibliography of those publications, and it explains some of the characteristics of this work, which will be mentioned below.

Since the beginnings of recorded literature, islands have been part of narratives. They are also present in holy books and myths. Racault notes that, in the Early Modern Period, authors used islands as ideal settings to consider otherness, and accordingly he plans to study the double polarity of this theme: on the one hand, the political and social organization of utopias located on islands, and on the other, the significance of Robinsonnades and desert islands. He emphasizes the wealth of the research on the literature on islands; but he also stresses that, in many of these studies, islands are one part of the analysis but not the main topic. To avoid this difficulty, he chooses sources for their generic affinities with the utopian genre in the first part of the book, and for their links with Robinsonnades in the second part.

The author focuses on several specific books rather than trying to analyze all the relevant literature through the ages. Thus, the *Utopia* of Thomas More, Shakespeare's *Tempest*, the *Terres Australes* of Pierre De Brosses, and *Paul et Virginie* of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, form the bases of the first section and of his reflections on political insularity in the utopian genre. The writings of Defoe, Rousseau, Cooper, Verne, and finally Tournier are used in the second section to address the role of islands in Robinsonnades. Racault explains in the introduction that he does not want to address the issue of the articulation between utopia and Robinsonnade. This is a way

to justify the lack of links between the first and second parts of the book, except for the theme of insularity.

The title of the first section – “*La possibilité d’une île. De quelques expériences imaginaires entre Renaissance et Lumières (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles)*” – reflects the author’s plan to consider islands as part of the imaginary experiences from the Early Modern Period up to the Enlightenment. In Chapter One, we can see the birth of the model in Thomas More’s *Utopia*. All the elements developed in utopian literature are envisaged here: the circularity of narrative (travel to the island, discovery and description of the utopian society, and travel back to the mainland to testify), similarities and contrasts between the island and mainland, the paradox of the pseudo-isolation and closure of the island, and the utopian world. Racault has a fine and original chapter on the languages in More’s *Utopia*.

Shakespeare’s *Tempest* provides an occasion to consider the role and meaning of the island in and as theatre, as a setting of both power and illusion. Chapters Five and Six provide an analysis of the writings of De Brosses and Bernardin de Saint Pierre and their visions and uses of islands in their utopias. Chapter Four is an exception in this work, as it offers a synthesis of the role of the island in classical utopian narrative– which means in utopian literature from the end of the 17th century to the end of the 18th century. Thus, we find here a discussion of the choice of island as setting for utopian societies, on the topography of those islands and its significance, and on the stakes, constraints, and contradictions of this genre: for example, the role of the traveler and his (the main character is usually male) commitment to the discovered society, the issue of the false closure of the island, and the relationships between the island and the mainland.

The second section is dedicated to Robinsonnades, with four of the eight chapters focused on Defoe’s masterpiece. The main theme of the section is the writing and rewriting of myth. The author mainly develops the meanings of the island in *Robinson Crusoe*. He considers the significance of the island as a setting for the rebirth of the character, and as a setting for penitence before reintegration in society. He deals with the political stakes of the birth of the social contract between Robinson and Friday. The main force of this section is the accurate analysis of the impact of social, philosophical and economic theories on the writing of Defoe. The evolution of the meanings of the Robinsonnades, its reflection on loneliness, especially in Rousseau, and issues of colonialism and slavery are at the heart on this second section. The last chapter is a brilliant and fierce critique of the *Vendredi* of Michel Tournier. In a great tour de force, the author demonstrates the weakness of Tournier’s analysis of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and his dependence on the idea of decolonization and the way relationships were built between Western societies and developing countries in the 60s.

The wealth of Racault’s book is the author’s deep knowledge of utopian literature and of the Robinsonnade, and his gift for setting them in their precise historical context, including the history of economic, philosophical and social ideas. He could have stressed those aspects more, for we can see that his impressive grasp for synthesis could delve even more deeply into the meanings of both utopias and Robinsonnades in societies between the 16th and 20th centuries. But his treatments of loneliness and issues of colonialism and relationships between ‘the West’ on one hand and both new worlds and African civilizations on the other, are deftly and engagingly

handled. All aspects of insularity in the two genres of literature are precisely considered, especially in terms of politics.

We regret only one thing. The book is composed of previously published articles and lectures, and as a consequence, there are repetitions – for example on the circularity of utopian narrative, and on the relationship between Robinson and Friday. There is also a lack of connection between some chapters, and because Racault chose to study several specific books instead of offering a synthesis, the reader misses a broad analysis of the whole period, except in Chapter Four. We also feel the absence of a synthetic bibliography. The footnotes in each chapter mainly address the choice of editions of the sources, and a larger bibliography of scholarly studies would have been useful.

Despite these minor criticisms, Racault's book is an important contribution to the study of islands in literature, especially on Thomas More and Defoe and their influence on literature and genre. Moreover, in the author's brilliant critique of Michel Tournier's *Vendredi* at the end of the book it is possible to read a very complex and accurate reflection on the way of thinking about 'métissage' (or liminality) and decolonization since the second half of the 20th century.

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Fred P. Gale (editor) (2011) *Pulp Friction in Tasmania: A Review of the Environmental Assessment of Gunn's Proposed Pulp Mill*. Launceston, Tasmania, Australia: Pencil Pine Press. Pbk xxi+322pp. ISBN: 978-64654578-3. AUS\$39.95.

Branding cuts right at the intersection between materiality and metaphor. Various localities around the world are seeking to fight the dull placelessness of time-space compression that could follow from rampant globalization by asserting locale specificity. Capitalizing on that inherently manageable sense of scale and identity, island jurisdictions in particular have been busy re/inventing and re/imagining themselves, throwing themselves at the international community with messages that speak to their unique characteristics and marketable strengths. 'Green, clean and pristine', and versions thereof, are popular catchphrases in this branding exercise, appealing to various industries where islands, small ones especially, may have a competitive advantage: tourism, clean energy, local foods and beverages, art and craft.

Easy enough. But things can go awry: there are snags in this beguilingly simple, but actually high-risk strategy. The stronger the brand, the more successful its appeal, the more widespread its recipients, and the more consolidated its adherence and transmission across different local industries, then the more jarring and disharmonic any departures from this consistency can rve to be. Initiatives that do not match the message of the brand, or even fly in its face, do not merely stick out like a sore thumb; but they destabilize, crack and shatter the believability and trustworthiness of the whole brand.

Tasmania may be an island, but it is a large one, the 26th largest in the world. As such, it has a hinterland large, fertile and resourceful enough to allow itself to feature in the dreams of various development trajectories. Some of these fit snugly within the image that 'Brand Tasmania' stands for, and have done so for over a decade now: Brand Tasmania Council has been operating since 1999:

Tasmanians breathe some of the world's cleanest air and drink the purest water. Unpolluted coastal seas and rich, fertile soils enable them to produce the finest foods. (www.brandtasmania.com)

But some don't. The pulp mill in the Tamar Valley proposed by industry giant Gunns Ltd. is one such jarring initiative. (Iceland, the world's 18th largest island, is caught in a similar quandary as it debates whether to set up yet another aluminum smelter.)

Tasmania is the only island 'state' or 'province' within a large, federal, continental country. Historically, it has found itself at the receiving end of grand development schemes that often reproduce the large scale, resource based development model that has gripped its continental patron to the North, and which explains much of the affluence experienced by the Australian economy of late. Is Tasmania simply a much smaller replica of its mainland partner? Or should it seriously chart out for itself a development route that speaks more directly to its island status and distinct appeal: a status that most Tasmanians ascribe to most of their 330 odd offshore islands, but not to their 'mainland'? How natural does 'the Natural State' want to be?

Fred Gale, a political scientist at the University of Tasmania, brings together a rich collection of critical voices to dissect the pulp mill proposal and question the scientific and political integrity of the undertaking and evaluation of the mill's mandatory impact assessments. Fifteen chapter contributors, with diverse disciplinary backgrounds, review the tortuous decision-making process, and expose a series of flaws that should have the book's readers, and most Tasmanians, worried.

The more these authors bring to bear their forensic disapproval of this latest pulp mill initiative, the clearer the resilience of what they are up against: a flagship investment in a premier industry of choice, driven by a company that commands respect in the corridors of power. But even more than that: in my favourite essay in the collection, Tony McCall describes the episode as a continuation of the triple but enduring myths of 'big is beautiful', 'silver bird' panaceas to market woes, and a 'cargo cult' approach to economic development.

Reading the book suggests that the authors, and others, may be flexing their muscles for yet another dramatic showdown which pits industry against the environment. The 'battles' of this campaign are etched in public memory: Lake Pedder, Franklin-Gordon, Wesley Vale. It is worth reminding ourselves that these campaigns saw the emergence of the world's first green political party in 1972. It may be just a matter of time before the campaigners once again get to the streets. And the industry's many supporters will be there too, with all 'Gunns' blazing. Indeed, more 'pulp frictions' are in store.

But this scenario is not inevitable: even in the intractable world of Tasmanian politics, there may be a glimmer of hope. Appropriately, the book's final chapter documents some revealing and "remarkable" repositioning by Gunns of late. The company's Managing Director admitting that

the firm has been “out-thought and outplayed” by the pro-environment lobby, and is now pushing for a ‘new deal’ on forestry that has a four-page statement of principles being endorsed by all stakeholders.

The book makes a fascinating case study (though not a multi-stakeholder analysis) of a mega development project in a federal democracy, and is to be recommended not just to scholars of island studies and of Tasmanian economic history and environmental governance, but also to those keen to critically examine the practices and politics involved behind the implementation and evaluation of ‘high stake’ environmental impact assessments.

My concerns with this book are certainly not about the quality of its contents, which I have enjoyed reading. (Some unevenness is to be expected, since it is an edited collection.) They rather have to do with the absence of a subject and author index, and the repetition of various bibliographical references at the end of each chapter: a consolidated reference list would have saved space, and paper.

And, speaking of paper: of course, the book walks its talk. It is printed on paper made from environmentally responsible sources as certified by the Forestry Stewardship Council.

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Islands: LiNQ (Literature of Northern Queensland), Vol. 37, December 2010, Islands Special Issue. 190 pp., Department of Humanities, School of Arts and Social Sciences, James Cook University, Queensland, Australia.

In their foreword to the current issue of *LiNQ*, the editors quote Australian writer Nettie Palmer in their discussion of “the representation of islands in the literary imaginary.” Palmer considered that a place does not exist until it exists “most formidably on paper” (p. 11). Immediately I thought of the formidable, century-long existence on paper of my own island, Prince Edward Island, whose internationally known author, Lucy Maud Montgomery, represented the Island so indelibly in her writing that her depiction is arguably as solid as the geology of the place.

The latest issue of *LiNQ* impressively realizes Nettie Palmer’s criterion for the full existence of place by bringing us islands, eloquently represented, on paper. Islands that float up from the pages, enter into our awareness, and return home to their seas accompanied by the gentlest of tourists, visitors who leave no carbon footprint: readers. Nettie Vance’s husband, Vance Palmer, in describing Whitsunday Passage, might also have been describing the effect on the mind of reader-travel: “Its note is a quiet one; the excitement that it rouses in the mind is quiet, too. Seen in the morning light, there is an enchantment about those green shapes that rise from the still water, but they belong to the everyday world, not to some romantic, ethereal one...” (p. 164).

In her superbly researched essay, “Environment and Colonial Shadows: Green Island 1932,” Deborah Jordan writes about the literary and environmental influences of Vance and Nettie Palmer, who lived on Green Island in 1932. Jordan quotes from the diary of the remarkable

Nettie Palmer: “There is a good deal to be said for letting the mind rest in one spot, small enough to hold the affections and, perhaps, be understood.” Nettie Palmer called Green Island a “...little grain of rice, that hyphen-stroke, that island of Captain Cook already named Green” (p. 142). Jordan calls her exploration of Green Island’s influence on the Palmers’ “ecocommentary” in her efforts to define the genre of the Palmers’ writing inspired by the island and the coral sea that surrounds it.

Rachael Johnson recollects her childhood stay in Rabaul, New Guinea, and recounts her eight-year-old’s vision from the airplane as she and her family left the place:

From the plane, I saw a maze of islands so small that they could barely be called islands. I wanted to step on and off them in hopscotch fashion and bathe in their pools ... Only on those islands were time and space made wonderful and strange (p. 17).

Sarah Drummond takes us to sea level, to Breaksea Island, where she sleeps on a jetty:

At dusk, the fairy penguins started a collective cry like distressed babies as they marched down to the water. Massive seas poured into the crevice eight metres below. Sucked back ... I couldn’t see the waves but their sound filled the darkness and threatened to annihilate me a thousand times in a night ... All night the muttonbirds called ... chee whip? Chee whip! Beside my head, a nesting muttonbird stood dodo-ish by her sandy burrow. I could have reached out from my swag and wrung her neck (pp. 27-8).

In their essay “Island Challenges: Participatory Processes for Dealing with Climate Change,” Marianne Karlsson and Ilan Kelman discuss the vulnerability and impact of climate change effects on the United Nations-designated Small Island Developing States (SIDS), 52 small countries, territories, and, mainly, islands. The authors outline procedures and techniques by which islanders can assess their own islands’ situations and link the results with governments’ policies. There is much useful information here, with a number of suggestions for local ways to deal with climate change, such as:

...constructing three-dimensional maps or taking photographs of concerns relating to a changing climate. These visual aids foster discussions and dialogue around climate change that could in turn stimulate local action (p. 109).

Susan Cochran’s “Floating Land – Rising Sea: Arts and Minds on Climate Change,” is a stunning, multi-voice, multi-image essay based on the most recent exhibition in Noosa Art Gallery’s biennial event, which took place at Lake Cootharaba at the southern end of the Cooloolo National Park, part of the Noosa Biosphere Reserve (declared in 2008 as a UNESCO reserve). Artwork, photography, and many genres of creative and critical writing and performance were part of the ten-day *Floating Land-Rising Seas* event; each artist addressed what Cochran calls “complex issues about our daunting global future” in “...a way that scientific language cannot.”

On both front and back covers of *Islands*, the December 2010 issue of *LiNQ: The Literature of Northern Queensland*, is the text, “Your link to writing & culture in the North.” *LiNQ*’s *Islands*

issue does exactly this. Contributors to the journal have wide-ranging interests and expertise in art, poetry, eco-critical thought, climate and environmental studies, decolonization theory, and in the literature and culture of islands. Vivid connections are made that can deepen understanding of island residents and those who have yet to travel to Australia's north country or to the islands in focus in *LiNQ*'s volume 37.

In his epilogue to *LiNQ*'s *Islands* issue, Stuart Glover writes, "...the island is a binary idea. There is water, and there is land." Further, he writes concerning a dozen low-lying islands in Moreton Bay, that:

... history reminds us that the word 'island' is a verb as well as a noun. Islands come and go, and are forever being made and unmade.

My own island, connected a mere 6,000 years ago to the mainland of Canada, has been undergoing considerable 'unmaking' these last few years, both with the construction of a billion-dollar bridge and with a number of recent severe winter storm surges that have eroded much of the shoreline. Glover calls this making and unmaking "the process of islanding." With its rich miscellany life writing, prose, poetry, articles, reviews, interviews, and first-person accounts, with touches of both colour and black and white photography throughout the issue, *LiNQ*'s *Islands* issue does its own version of "islanding," creating islands of insight, understanding, and knowledge in a network of appreciation that holds the world gently. *LiNQ* accomplishes this "islanding" "most formidably on paper," as Nettie Palmer put it.

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Ralph Wessman & Lyn Reeves, (editors) (2011). *Famous Reporter 42*. North Hobart, Tasmania, Walleah Press, 160 pp. ISSN: 0819-5978. AUS\$18.00.

In this age of online journals, publishing an old-fashioned print literary journal is no simple accomplishment. For there to be two such journals, produced twice a year on the out-of-the-way island of Tasmania, is a rare feat—indicative of the island's vibrant literary community, and their refusal to be marginalized just because they are at the bottom of the world. Both journals publish the best writing from all over the world. Indeed, the journal *Island*, housed at the University of Tasmania, has been publishing for 32 years. In April 2011 it launched its 124th special island-themed issue as part of the Ten Days on the Island cultural festival.

Publishing for almost as long, *Famous Reporter* launched its 42nd issue, hence FR42, in February 2011 at the Hobart Bookshop, marking 24 years in business. Publisher and editor Ralph Wessman—who also runs Walleah Press—is a linchpin in Tasmania's writing and publishing scene. Each year he and co-editor Lyn Reeves (who runs Pardalote Press) read hundreds of submissions of fiction, creative non-fiction, essays, and poetry; Ralph interviews writers and

attends literary events, publishes two journal issues and the occasional book, successfully writes grant applications to Arts Tasmania (which supported *FR42*), and maintains a website (www.walleahpress.com.au) and blog. *FR42* offers up a smorgasbord of new writing from Tasmania, mainland Australia, and Canada, allowing us to sample new dishes so we can order off the main menu when we find ourselves in a bookstore.

Lisa Greenaway's essay "On *Going Down Swinging No. 30*" is the story of a mainland journal that has published for 30 years. She describes the job of a journal editor/publisher eloquently:

Journal editors open the doors and windows to artists all over the world, and invite the chaos in. The editor must create order ... curating images and sounds into a coherent whole. Telling stories. Making stories. There and back again ... alchemy, blind trust, magic.

Ralph's compendium, "North to Garradunga," captures an event I had the privilege of being part of in October 2010: "Small Island Dreaming"—a conversation with Pete Hay (whose seminal paper "A Phenomenology of Islands" was published in the first issue of *Island Studies Journal*) and Deirdre Kessler (a well-known Prince Edward Island writer who was on her second writing trip to Tasmania). The three of us shared our poetry and compared our two islands. Reprinted here is a poem Deirdre read, "Come from away: 40° South looks at 46° North", about a field trip to Prince Edward Island's North Shore, led by Pete Hay when he came to teach in the Master of Arts in Island Studies program in October 2009.

The poetry section includes three Tasmanians. In five tight stanzas Liz McQuilkin captures with gleeful irony the 21st-century bride wearing white in her poem "The Bride"; Fran Graham's "Cradle Mountain" is a gorgeous landscape poem with the lines "The landscape's skin is moist with mist and rain... Waterfalls slap rock with whip and strain..."; and Libby Goodsir's "Dawn Mothers Walking" is another "place" poem about wallabies that finishes with this evocative image: "side by side / sun licks our / new day." The last poem in the issue is by Melbourne's Lucy Williams. Called "hindsight," it is about the death of a brother, and is a courageous poem that says what we probably all want to, but can't: "if I had known about the certainty of his death... I would wish for death fast as new love / ... or the ocean rolling him under for keeps / the benevolent ocean flooding his lungs / any of this I would welcome." Folded in are three other Canadian poets: Stephen Rowe from Gander, Newfoundland; Jacqueline Turner from Vancouver, BC; and me, with "What the Apple Lady Sees," about women who work in a fish plant in Montague, Prince Edward Island.

FR42 not only reviews poetry, such as Australian Mark Tredinnick's *Fire Diary*, but it also looks at non-fiction, such as *Standing Strong*, edited transcripts of stories by ten Tasmanian activists; and *Into the Woods*, about the conflict over Tasmania's forests. Both are important Tasmanian books: "Both spotlight activists, their methods, their motives and how the public and establishment receive them." While the reviews are generally positive, they make us ask questions like "Whose voice is missing? What story isn't being told?": a crucial role for any civil society that prides itself on its democratic principles and freedom of expression.

FR42's fiction section includes Anne Shimmin's "The Martyrdom of Socrates," a tension-filled romp with unexpected and hilarious twists and a lovely description of a beach: "a million grains of sand wince as the salty tide washes over their tiny sunburnt shoulders." Tasmanian John Hale's story "Squeak, Piggy, Squeak" made me weep for the brutality of humankind.

Including a blog entry in a literary journal is a relatively new phenomenon. The last lines of Peter Grant's "Recovering from Optimism" (<http://auntyscuttle.blogspot.com/>) particularly resonate for those interested in place and attachment to place. A "passionate Tasmanian-by-choice," Peter writes: "Catch the right day, with the beach at peace and the cobbles warm, smooth and sensuous; with gulls strutting and probing the wrack, and oyster catchers stalking ahead of me like wary cyclists awaiting the velodrome bell; find it on such a day and I might believe that the interaction of wave and sand, cobble and creature, is nothing more than a long story of the deepest, most abiding affection. For it is all of these things, great and small, and the noticing of them, that bonds us to place. And noticing is vital, because it is far harder for we humans to wreak havoc in a place that we've come to know deeply and personally. For what is the sum of those things, if it's not love..."

Famous Reporter 42 is more than just a 160-page compendium of fine literature by 80 different writers: it represents the island sensibility, where people take on multiple roles because everything is interconnected. And at the centre is one such islander: Ralph Wessman, practicing alchemy.

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Lino Briguglio, Gordon Cordina, Stephanie Vella & Constance Vigilance (2010) *Profiling Vulnerability and Resilience: A Manual for Small States*, London: Commonwealth Secretariat and University of Malta. ISBN: 978- 1-84929-035-7. £20.00p.

For aspiring small-island-state policymakers and officials, it is important to know how to 'play the game' in order to secure financial aid, technical assistance, political goodwill, and market access. Certain rituals have to be performed to please international agencies and donors, and this manual offers a liturgy for those rituals. Central to the prescribed course of action is the preparation of a 'vulnerability profile' to justify international support for 'resilience-building'. Users of the manual learn how to organize conferences and profiling reports designed to meet the criteria used by global decision makers in doling out resources and favours. Here is the list of stakeholders who should be invited to the obligatory conference (pp. 49-50); the list of questions to be placed on the conference agenda (pp. 55-62); the standardized conference program (pp. 63-64) ; and a sample final communiqué (from an actual Vanuatu conference) (pp. 65-67). If the rules are followed and the right boxes ticked, the promised result is a diplomatically saleable document that covers the bases without sounding false or challenging notes. The drafting committees of future conferences need do more than change the country name and add one or two token pieces of local detail.

As a pure operating manual, the book serves its purpose. It will not, however, please anyone with a serious interest in either a dispassionate application of development theory to small states, or the provision of serious, high-quality, economic analysis of particular case studies.

Take first the theory. Over the past two decades there has been a vigorous academic debate over how one ought to think about the development prospects of small economies, most of which are islands. On one side stand those who, with Briguglio and his co-authors, hold it as self-evident that small economies are vulnerable and therefore in need of some special protection from the damaging impact of hostile external forces. On the other side stand those who see existing very small states as having met Darwinian tests of fitness to survive in the modern world, and as displaying generally superior development performance compared with larger developing states. From this latter, strategic-flexibility, point of view, the success of small states is to be celebrated - and the cultivation of negative self-images of weakness and dependence on outside help is to be avoided. The difference between the two paradigms is one of basic mindset.

The vulnerability paradigm argues that small states are vulnerable on account of diseconomies of scale, high degree of export specialization, high transport costs, lack of international market power, lack of a large geographic hinterland, and so on. The argument resonates with agencies such as the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNCTAD, and substantial resources have been poured into research on the dimensions of 'vulnerability'. This latest book by Briguglio *et al* is the latest fruit of this endeavour.

From the outset, the vulnerability paradigm has faced academic criticism. Empirically, small island states have higher, not lower, scores than large developing countries on a wide range of development indicators from per capita income to life expectancy and health status. Unable to deny the evidence, Briguglio and other vulnerability proponents have placed progressively greater emphasis on 'resilience', and describe the conflict of theory and evidence as the 'Singapore Paradox'. (The new book opens with a subtle re-writing of intellectual history in the opening sentence of Chapter 1, claiming that the vulnerability index "was initially developed by Briguglio (1992, 1993, 1995) to explain the seeming contradiction that a country can be economically vulnerable and yet register a relatively high GDP per capita". Readers should go back to those cited early works to judge for themselves whether this was in fact the original intellectual motivation for developing the index.)

Theoretical critiques note the circularity of assuming small states to be vulnerable and then using measures of smallness to demonstrate 'vulnerability'. Many of the allegedly exogenous elements of published vulnerability indices look more like outcomes of choices made by the small states than of outside forces beyond their control. Often 'resilience' is counterposed to 'vulnerability' in an ostensibly dialectical model, in which small states respond to external challenges (their vulnerability) by building within themselves the ability to resist and respond to external shocks. Resilience thus is claimed to be constructed as a social and economic artefact by the inhabitants of the small state, whereas vulnerability lies outside their control as an objective brute fact.

As an academic critic of the paradigm, I looked in this book for two things: evidence of some engagement by the authors with alternative points of view; and solid empirical work conducted within the vulnerability-resilience paradigm. On both counts the book disappoints.

The text provides no systematic theoretical or empirical demonstration of the alleged external origin of the components selected for inclusion in the ‘vulnerability’ index, nor of local control over those included in the ‘resilience’ one. When the two dimensions are put onto a diagram (Figure 4.1 on p. 29) it is asserted that horizontal movement on the “nurtured resilience” axis is possible but vertical movement on the “inherent vulnerability” axis is not. There is, in other words, alleged to be no scope for small states to influence their ratios of trade to GDP, nor the extent to which they import food rather than produce it at home, nor the ratio of transport and freight costs to imports. For all the vulnerability school’s rhetoric about natural disasters and a hostile outside world, when it comes down to the index-building exercise these are the variables chosen by Briguglio *et al.* None of them at first sight is really exogenous in the econometric sense. Serious statistical work is needed to test for exogeneity – which means research ranging far beyond the mechanistic, index-construction technology deployed here.

Turning to the resilience index (Chapter 3), Briguglio *et al.*’s key requirements for being or becoming resilient comprise the old neoliberal Washington Consensus (fiscal probity, low inflation, absence of regulation, low external debt) plus several, more recently fashionable development-community notions about ‘good governance’, plus good literacy and school enrolment, plus life expectancy, plus low unemployment. While obviously calibrated to resonate with the international policy *zeitgeist*, this ragbag of indicators desperately needs some compelling theoretical glue to bind them into a coherent story.

The bibliography is devoid of any references to critics of the paradigm or empirical studies that cast its validity into doubt, but loaded with references to the previous work of Briguglio and his Malta colleagues.

Following two chapters on the nuts and bolts of using Briguglio’s methodology to ‘profile’ individual countries’ vulnerability and resilience come three chapters with examples of country ‘profiles’ constructed by the Briguglio team in, respectively, St Lucia, Seychelles, and Vanuatu. It turns out that the three chapters are virtual clones of each other: a single template reproduced almost word for word, with occasional blank spaces left to be filled with data for the country being profiled. ‘One size fits all’ is an apt way to describe these three exercises, despite the claim in the introduction (p. 3) that the profiling approach is “tailored” to small state conditions and has moved “away from the ‘one size fits all’ assessments conducted by other organisations”.

If the claim of product differentiation *vis à vis* the IMF is weak, at least one might hope that the analytical quality of the three empirical chapters would improve on the aloof and distant IMF, by showing the results of greater engagement with the special features of the small states under review, and the benefit of detailed local knowledge held by the panelists in the country conferences organized by the Briguglio team. Again, disappointment: the arraying and interpretation of economic data, both micro and macro, is much inferior to the standard, orthodox economic work found in the IMF Staff Country Reports for the three economies, and the policy prescriptions are even more predictable and pedestrian than those of the IMF advisory teams.

It will be now be clear, I suppose, that I found this book tendentious in its ‘one-size-fits-all’ mentality, unthinking in its application of orthodox received wisdom to the diverse development problems of small states, irritating in its self-righteous belief in a monopoly of truth, and its refusal to acknowledge and cite critiques of the methodology and underlying theory, and

potentially damaging in its propensity to shoehorn the policy thinking of small island governments into predetermined box-ticking in accordance with the profiling template.

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Judith Schalansky (2010) *Atlas of Remote Islands: Fifty Islands I Have Never Set Foot On and Never Will*, New York, Penguin Books, 143 pp. ISBN: 978-014311820-6. US\$28.

Judith Schalansky's thoughtful and even poetic *Atlas of Remote Islands* is a beautiful book, whose winsome design and maps were created by the author herself. The author was born in East Germany in 1980, and thus prevented from traveling, she sated her desire for knowledge of the world by losing herself in atlases, and it was this love that generated this book.

The book opens with a preface (pp. 7-23) which is one of the more sensitive brief essays about islands in recent memory; it touches on cartography, the meaning of remoteness, islands as prisons and natural laboratories, and the naming of islands. Then follows the body of the atlas (pp. 24-133), which is arranged geographically by ocean (Arctic, Atlantic, Indian, Pacific, Antarctic). Each island is accorded two pages, the first including the names of the island, its latitude and longitude, the country to which it belongs, its area and population, distances to other islands and the nearest mainland, a timeline of the island's history with an average of three entries, a small image of the globe indicating the island's location, and a long paragraph of text about the island. On the facing page is the author's map of the island in question, with topographical shading and pale blue seas. At the end of the book is a glossary (p. 135) and a good index (pp. 137-143).

The text about each island is typically a carefully crafted account of one episode in the island's history. For example, the text for Napuka in French Polynesia (p. 70) recounts a small part of Ferdinand Magellan's voyage across the Pacific in late 1520 and early 1521: the crossing was taking much longer than anticipated, the ship's stores were depleted, sailors were dying, and after fifty days without seeing land, they came to Napuka. However, the island provided them nothing to satisfy either hunger or thirst, and they named the islands the Disappointment Islands and pressed on. In other cases, such as in the text on Easter Island (p. 100), Schalansky gives a brief account of the island's general history, in this case the story of the *moai* or monolithic carved human figures made by the native tribes, their cutting down of all of the trees on the island, and the subsequent decimation of the population by smallpox.

The author's prose, as mentioned above, is evocative. Here is the beginning of her entry on St Kilda (p. 34):

St Kilda – you don't exist. Your name is just a faint cry made by the birds that make their home on the high cliffs at the furthest edge of the United Kingdom, beyond the outermost of the Outer Hebrides. Only when a north-east wind prevails can the voyage even be attempted. There are sixteen cottages, three houses and one church in the only

village on St Kilda. The island's future is written in its graveyard. Its children are all born in good health, but most stop feeding during their fourth, fifth, or sixth night.

The book is a translation of the original German *Atlas der abgelegenen Inseln* published in 2009, and the translator, Christine Lo, is to be congratulated for her excellent work. The book's subtitle, *Fifty Islands I Have Never Set Foot On and Never Will*, which was carried over from the German edition, is intriguing. The author was unable to travel from East Germany, so the fact that she has not visited the islands is not surprising, but why does she declare that she never will? Is none of the islands worth visiting? I believe that the goal is to emphasize the book's dreamy quality, its distinctly palpable quality of being the author's own creation, rather than a mere reporting of reality, and to distance it from the category of the guidebook, in which Schalansky has no interest, holding that an atlas is far more poetic (p. 23). This same emphasis may be seen in the book's lack of notes or a bibliography, and the author's statement (p. 20):

That's why the question whether these stories are 'true' is misleading. Every detail stems from factual sources. I have not invented anything. However I was the discoverer of the sources, researching them through ancient and rare books, and I have transformed the texts and appropriated them as sailors appropriate the lands they discover.

This is a book by an armchair traveler, for armchair travelers. In fact, the book that Schalansky's brings to mind is one published more than 500 years earlier, and which has been discussed in the book review pages of *ISJ* previously (3.2, November, 2008, pp. 277-279): the *isolario* or island book of Bartolomeo da li Sonetti, published in Venice in 1485. Sonetti writes in sonnets, usually one per island, and has the relevant map on the facing page, and Schalansky writes in a poetic prose and uses a very similar format. There are of course significant differences between the books: Sonetti addresses only islands in the Mediterranean, while Schalansky writes about the most distant islands in the world—and Schalansky's prose is much finer and more engaging than Sonetti's rather forced sonnets. But the *Atlas of Remote Islands* is a worthy heir to the mantle of the traditional *isolario*, or island book illustrated with maps.

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Mustapha Kamal Gueye, Malena Sell & Janet R. Strachan, editors (2009) *Trade, Climate Change and Sustainable Development: Key Issues for Small States, Least Developed Countries and Vulnerable Economies*, London, Commonwealth Secretariat, pp. v-180. Paperback. ISBN: 978-85092-881-5.

This book provides an interesting and original approach to trade and climate change concerns of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small and Vulnerable Economies (SVEs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDs). The purpose of this publication is to essentially bridge the gap between policy-makers dealing with climate change imperatives and at the same time engage with the key stakeholders.

The significance of small and vulnerable economies lies in the fact that climate change has a catastrophic impact on their continued existence with rising sea levels as a result of extreme climate variations. This will have a domino effect on their economies, which are highly sensitive not just to the vagaries of global trade, but also of changes to the productivity of key sectors from agriculture to fisheries, forestry, and most of all to tourism. These economies operate with major institutional and human resources constraints and a slight shift in either global demand or reduced productivity due to climate forcing will have a disastrous impact on their existence. The question is: how does one retain the competitiveness of these vulnerable economies? Would a move to a low carbon economy reduce their competitiveness in world trade? What will be the implication for livelihoods and anti-poverty programmes? How far trade policy towards mitigation of challenges posed by climate change be an effective vehicle for sustaining human development in vulnerable economies?

The book consists of six major chapters.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the likely impact of climate change on development in LDCs, SVEs and SIDS. In this context, there is a need to distinguish between risk and vulnerability where the majority may be exposed to the risk of climate change. However their spatial positioning, their coping capacity and the degree of exposure to the climate change will largely determine the degree of vulnerability. Thus actions taken by developed economies such as adoption of clean development mechanism (CDM) will have significant indirect effect on the vulnerable economies.

Chapter 2 highlights policy responses to trade and adaptation challenges under the umbrella of UNFCCC and WTO regimes, especially on the right to development. The danger is how this right is promoted and monitored. Arbitrary trade measures will be highly discriminatory and unjustifiable for those who are vulnerable. Recent work by Mike Hulme has highlighted how climate change has been transformed from a physical phenomenon, measurable and observable by scientists, into a social, cultural and political one. The language of “imminent peril” is deeply problematic. There is no common framework that allows for adaptation funds to be secured and disbursed dealing with the immediacy of climate change prognosis. Can we think of a supply-side capacity enhancement against the idea of a demand constraint when dealing with a low-equilibrium growth scenario? Economic shocks are far more difficult to deal with and their resolution will take precedence over ecological shocks.

Chapter 3 is suggestive that adaptation costs can be devastating and international climate change mitigation policies will increase the degree of vulnerability of SIDS and LVEs. This is because of their dependence on mono-crop culture and any variation in future climate regimes will have a devastating impact on their trade capability and their economy. This chapter does well to not stick just with the adaptation and mitigation formula, but extends the debate to include the importance of resilience in order to understand and appreciate the challenges of climate change.

Chapter 4 engages with technology options in maintaining standards for ensuring the availability of energy-efficient goods. The importance of minimum energy performance standards (MEPS) is increasingly becoming an important policy-enhancing imperative both for developed and the developing worlds. In fact, lessons learnt will have wide ranging impact for future collaboration on technology transfer between countries. Transparencies associated with product performance are critical to maintaining standards for health and safety. Here the role of governmental

regulatory bodies in ensuring standards is maintained would go a long way in realizing mandatory energy efficiency targets at both domestic and industrial levels. The tardiness of technology transfers from the rich to the poor has seen the dumping of substandard technology to poorer countries in the name of aid and knowledge transfer.

Chapter 5 describes mitigation options in terms of cropland management; pasture improvement, restoration of degraded lands and livestock management. Underwriting risks based on agricultural insurance is important; however, increasing corporatization of the insurance sector has put profit above everything else and has led to disastrous consequences in the world. The biggest challenge is the lack of codified property rights for the inhabitants to make a meaningful investment in the insurance sector.

Chapter 6 presents the role of climate-related border measures to sustain industrial competitiveness and brings to question the legality of WTO and other multilateral agencies. Regional trading bodies have been at loggerheads in the developed world to come to terms with the nature and form of industries to be covered under these measures. Thus, the ongoing conflict between EU and the USA is not resolved yet and USA is seen as a 'free rider' without any commitment to the issue. The non-ratification of the Kyoto Protocol is a case in point.

The conclusions are more prescriptive than necessary. The onus of securing the future in a climate-change riddled debate is largely on small developing economies, and suggests that "they need to ensure their trade and development policies are climate adapted" (p. 147). Why? What are the responsibilities for the 'free riders' in the G8 groups of countries? The level of ostentatious consumption and of wastage in the developed world continue to grow. The dumping of excess supply of goods and services and usually substandard products from food grains to obsolete technology into the developing world is common knowledge with no regulatory framework in place. The transfer of climate-related technologies to SIDS and SVEs and LDCs remain a pipe dream for the future given the drastic economic recovery challenges which face the developed nations. FDIs are yet to deliver on these promises. Institutional and market related barriers remain major bottleneck in the success of wishful ideas for the future. Indeed, climate change as a threat to human existence is a statement which needs to be balanced with the rhetoric promoted by large corporations and powerful governments in order to take advantage of the hype organized in the name of climate. In fact there is little evidence that developed countries have reduced the production of powerful SUVs in general. Clearly SIDS cannot be asked to subsidize for the comforts of the rich and the powerful. In fact, the carbon efficiency of products should be balanced with fair trade imperatives. Overall, the analysis presented a useful set of challenges facing the least powerful group of countries who will face the brunt of climate-related changes to their environment. This book does well to organize the dominant motifs and discourses of climate change, of adaptation and mitigation in an uncertain global scenario.

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Nathalie Mrgudovic (2008). *La France dans le Pacifique Sud: Les Enjeux de la Puissance*, Paris, France, L'Harmattan, 436 pp., ISBN: 978-2-296-05548-3. €39.00.

France's presence in the South Pacific dates back to the mid-19th century, when she acted as a global power competing against the British Empire through colonization. With time the global power status of both France and Great Britain, was progressively eroded, especially following the increasing influence of the two Cold War powers, the unfolding and aftermath of WW2 and, finally, the two colonial empires' dismantlement. However, both countries succeeded in maintaining a certain level of global influence thanks to their Overseas Territories spread around the globe. France has done especially well amongst the islands and archipelagos in the South Pacific.

Nathalie Mrgudovic's book focuses on the regional role that France has played in the South Pacific since 1966. This year corresponds to the beginning of nuclear tests in French Polynesia that ultimately triggered reactions from neighbouring countries, with mid to long-term consequences on regional geopolitics. The book is an adapted version of Mrgudovic's PhD thesis in political science which she defended at the Université Montesquieu – Bordeaux IV in 2006. It is subdivided into three sections, each of which discusses one of three consecutive phases of the French presence and influence in the South Pacific for the last four decades.

The first phase spans between 1966 and the early 1970s, and is characterized by President Charles de Gaulle's attempts to reaffirm France as a global power through a muscular national military policy. In the aftermath of WW2, there was a perception that the global power status was achievable by becoming a nuclear power, which befitted de Gaulle's political "dissuasion" doctrine based on two inter-related principles: (i) there is no true national independence without the "supreme" weapon, and (ii) there is no diplomatic equality without geostrategic equivalence. The French nuclear program started in 1949 in Algeria. However, when the latter achieved independence in 1962, France had to move its nuclear research infrastructure and test fields elsewhere. To this end, French Polynesia was regarded as the option that more consistently suited the national geostrategic policy. Nevertheless, as soon as the French atmospheric nuclear tests at Moruroa and Fagataufa began, concerns for their environmental and public health impacts were increasingly raised in the region.

As a consequence, in 1973, New Zealand, Australia and Fiji decided to undertake legal action against the French nuclear tests through the International Court of Justice, thereby opening the second phase of the period under scrutiny. This phase is characterized by highly conflicting relations between the South Pacific countries and France. The ensuing international tensions were also echoed by local independence claims, as in the case of the Kanak people in New Caledonia. The general opposition to the French presence in the South Pacific represented an opportunity for building cohesion and a sense of common purpose among the regional states, but also for revealing the substantial heterogeneity between them. Indeed, significant disparities in resources, land sizes, populations, economies and military capabilities were highlighted, particularly between two main groups. On one side there were the Australasian countries, New Zealand and Australia, which had a status of regional powers that enabled them to embody the claims for regional denuclearization on the international global stage. On the other side, there

were the small island developing states, where increasingly organized Melanesian movements exerted a political leverage on local to regional spheres. In this regard, the constitution of the South Pacific Forum (SPF) was instrumental in building up a regional vehicle for cooperation, which was in staggering opposition to the French nuclear presence. This opposition became more vehement during the 1980s when France adopted an even more threatening and repressive attitude towards the populations living in the territories under her control. The 1988 Ouvea crisis in New Caledonia is one harsh example of this repressive approach.

But this same year opens the third phase characterized by constructive and cooperative attitudes. A change of government in France brought to power a new Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, who acted as a driving force of a new foreign policy approach based on regional development rather than on military assertion. This resulted in an increasingly improving relationship between France and the regional countries. The new approach included three main orientations: (i) the recognition of the self-determination aspirations of New-Caledonian Kanaks, (ii) the ending of nuclear tests in 1996, and (iii) the establishment of specific diplomatic instruments aiming the improvement of the relationships with the South Pacific States. Among the latter instruments it is worth mentioning the financial contributions to regional organizations, particularly to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) of which France became one of the three major contributors. France also played a central role in the European Union when aid programs for ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) countries were developed. Thus, in this third phase, France not only joined regional organizations, but also became an important partner and stakeholder for regional stability and development.

These three phases of the French presence and influence in the South Pacific are described in astounding detail in Mrgudovic's book. The author excels in unraveling the complexity of the multifaceted subject, showing a great ability in unceasingly linking local or regional events and issues to more global, geopolitical dynamics. Moreover, Mrgudovic shows great rigour based on an impressive review of documentation. The author's style is direct and without intellectual frills, which makes the book an interesting read for scholars and an accessible one for a more general public interested in South Pacific geopolitics. Twelve annexes at the end of the book add some interesting information about the French nuclear tests as well as the statutory evolution of the Pacific territories that have progressively acceded to sovereignty.

Interestingly, the book contains a foreword written by former Prime Minister of France, Michel Rocard, who was instrumental in initiating the third phase of the studied period. Rocard acknowledges the stunning erudition exuding from the book, which he defines as a crucial text filling a gap in the literature about the South Pacific.

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There Once was an Island: Te Henua e Nnoho (2010) Movie directed by Briar March, On The Level Productions, New Zealand, 1 hour 20 minutes, www.thereoncewasanisland.com.

Climate change is frequently highlighted as being one of the most important challenges facing islands, especially low-lying atolls. Tuvalu, the Maldives, and Kiribati are high profile cases that have garnered international media attention, frequently focused on the capital city atolls. This leads to discussions, rightly or wrongly, of migrating due to climate change—evacuating entire islands or entire countries.

Many smaller and more isolated islands are potentially already experiencing climate change impacts, with the islanders having moved or actively considering a move. Papua New Guinea (PNG) has several such atolls, especially in the eastern part of the country off the coast of Bougainville.

In 2006, Carteret Islanders formed a non-profit association to work through voluntary relocation options. They do not claim that climate change is definitely causing the problems on their island. They do recognise major environmental change trends that make it difficult to continue living in their homes.

The same is true for Takuu, an atoll lying to the east of the Carteret Islands and approximately 250 km northeast of Bougainville. With the community's consent, filmmakers spent time on Takuu in 2006-7 and 2008, documenting the islanders' perceptions of environmental trends and their discussion regarding relocation. For the second trip, at the islanders' request, two scientists came to work with them, undertaking research into the situation on the atoll, and discussing reasons for the environmental changes observed, what might happen in the future, and the options available for dealing with the changes.

The atoll's population of around 400 live on the island of Nukutoa. Off-island communication is through radio and satellite phone (when the phones are operational). The only off-island transport for goods and people is one ageing, government-run ship that calls every 3-7 months, without a regular schedule. Even when the ship plans to depart and stop by the atolls, maintenance and labour issues mean that it is almost always delayed.

The film depicts the island lifestyle, a mixture of traditional and modern practices. One ex-patriot islander, now living and working in Port Moresby, the PNG's capital, is followed for her return to Nukutoa and her interactions with her family. The idyllic aspects of an isolated island community based on traditional knowledge are ever-present, but are not romanticized in either the images or the commentary.

For instance, children are taught English in school along with traditional dances and rituals by adults who continue to preserve their indigenous culture. Scenes show the islanders smoking while eating traditional foods, using plastic chairs, and wearing an "I love NZ" T-shirt—yet also pursuing traditional fishing and construction practices, often supplemented with modern materials that improve the activities.

The film also documents recent changes to the shoreline and creeping salination of the giant taro plots on an adjoining island. As the giant taro has started to die due to saltwater infiltration, Nukutoa's food supply is undermined and traditional ceremonies, which rely on the taro, cannot be performed.

The filmmakers and scientists were (un)lucky enough to be on Takuu in December 2008 when severe king tides struck the region, causing extensive damage. Nukutoa was not spared, with many houses being inundated and the local school nearly destroyed. That event, as a possible harbinger of climate change's impacts, brought poignancy to the discussions on what to do about the island community's future.

The film is a stunningly realistic portrait of the difficulties that small, isolated island communities face regarding decision-making in the face of environmental and social change. Some changes are due to the islanders' own actions, such as building sea walls that end up promoting further shoreline erosion. Other changes are due to larger forces, such as the combination of climate change and natural island geomorphological dynamics.

As with the Carteret Islands, the people of Takuu cannot say definitely why the changes that they witness are happening. They know that they must deal with those changes and they are willing to take control of their own choices. *There Once Was an Island* documents that thinking and discussion in a decidedly non-judgemental manner. Instead, the situation is presented through the islanders' eyes for the viewer to consider.

Many youth already do not return to the island after going to Bougainville for secondary school. Without a reliable and regular boat service, livelihood prospects are limited, food can run out, and acutely or chronically ill people cannot be evacuated for treatment. Yet moving to Bougainville brings conflict with locals there, a cash economy, expected loss of identity and culture, and exposure to malaria.

The film's approach is excellent, permitting the viewer to judge for themselves what they see and hear. Melodrama is avoided and reality is emphasized, giving the production a high credibility while bringing the islanders' plight and strength to the world.

Consequently, many facets of debate are opened. The film notes how Christianity—along with guitar-accompanied hymns—was introduced relatively recently by an island ex-patriot. That has split the community. But neither Christianity nor traditional practices are complimented or derided. They are simply part of island life.

Similarly, part (but not all) of the impetus for relocation comes from an expatriate islander. Is it good to balance islander views with an outside impetus (although originally from the island) in order to make society-altering decisions about their future? Or is it typical of external, top-down development not serving the interests of the people most affected? That is for the viewer to consider and to discuss.

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The making of *There Once Was an Island* was supported by the community who wanted to show the challenges being faced on the atoll, as well as to preserve its cultural elements for posterity. The production team has superbly achieved that goal, providing an outstanding example of how the world can learn about an isolated island society that would otherwise be forgotten, in the midst of culture-changing choices.

We should pay attention. If climate change projections are correct, many more people, islanders and non-islanders, shall soon be facing similar decisions.

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