

Rachel Dowse
United Kingdom
r.e.dowse@hotmail.co.uk

Pippa Marland, *Ecocriticism and the Island: Readings from the British-Irish Archipelago* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2022), 276 pp.

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Between 2007 and 2015, Clutag Press published the creative writing journal *Archipelago*. The cover art showed a drawing of the British Isles from an angle rarely displayed—with Scotland and Ireland front and centre, the southeast disappearing over the horizon. On reading the title and blurb of *Ecocriticism and the Island*, this image was the first that came to mind, so it is fitting that it's mentioned by Marland in the introduction to this book, an expansion of her 2016 PhD thesis. Divided into five parts, this book uses wide ranging research, as well as personal interviews with some of the authors, to explore the ways in which island studies and ecocriticism can productively engage with each other.

Part one is an examination of Tim Robinson's *Stones of Aran* (1985) from an ecocritical perspective, taking Robinson's concept of "The Good Step" as the starting point of an examination of Robinson's Aran Diptych. Marland explores how Robinson's approach to the island of Aran can inform aspects of ecocritical debate around the Anthropocene, helping us to grapple with the "derangements of scale" (45) explored by Timothy Clarke, with the island as a mediation between the global and the local. Marland concludes with the concept of "psycho-archipelagy", noting the similarities between Robinson's approach and that of psychogeography, specifically Debord's concept of the *derive* as opposed to later interpretations of the form, while highlighting the island-specific nature of his search for total knowledge.

The second section focuses on the Welsh island of Bardsey, and two literary accounts of life there published over forty years apart: Brenda Chamberlain's *Tide-race* (1962) and Christine Evans' *Bardsey* (2008). These chapters focus more on the tensions that arise when a work is aware of the stereotypes and popular image of islands. Bardsey has a long and well-mythologised history, and Marland examines the way Chamberlain and Evans work with and around "its weighty history and the overtly conflicting evidence of animacy and mortality" (75). These two chapters examine the difficulties of writing about a place with such weight of narrative already attached, and Marland concludes that while Chamberlain ultimately loses contact

with the island on its own terms and reverts to myth, Evans works both in dialogue and beyond Chamberlain – starting with the mythic but following with regeneration.

Part three comprises a close reading of a single chapter, rather than a whole work, relating to Orfordness, a shingle spit on the Suffolk coastline with the dubious honour of being both a nature reserve and a test-site for nuclear warheads. Marland examines the Orfordness chapter in W.G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* (1995), showing how Sebald converses and contrasts with Rousseau's description of Ile Saint-Pierre in the 'Fifth Walk' of *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1782). Marland argues that Orfordness stands as a rebuff to the concept of the remote island idyll, whose invention she (perhaps reductively) credits to Rousseau, and that it is therefore the "ideal location for investigating the tropes and tensions of islandness." (122). The second half of this section is an analysis of the melancholy of Sebald, and how this relates to memory, using the Orfordness chapter as a starting point. The argument is that this examination of melancholy and memory can be applied to islands, thereby relating theories of material affect to ecocriticism and showing, in direct dialogue with Serenella Iovino and Serpil Opperman, how the material power of things can be examined in the context of the Anthropocene. It is in this chapter that Marland veers closest to demoting the island (in this case, Orfordness) to a backdrop, rather than subject, of her ecocritical examination of Sebald; nonetheless, the analysis of the melancholy of Sebald's writings in relation to memory is illuminating.

Part four deals with two texts that explore the unlikely relationship between London and two islands off the coast of Scotland. Stephen Watt's *Republic of Dogs/Republic of Birds (RD/RB)* (2016) explores parallels between London's Isle of Dogs and an island in the Outer Hebrides, while Amy Liptrot charts a path between London Fields and Orkney in *The Outrun* (2015). Marland uses these texts to emphasise the ways that 'remote' islands can have "community of memory" (151) with places as unlikely as Britain's metropolis. In her discussion of *RD/RB*, Marland highlights the parallels Watts draws between the Isle of Dogs and South Uist in the 1980s: although one is surrounded by the richest postcodes in Britain and the other by the North Atlantic Ocean, both suffer from similar levels of deprivation. Building on the discussion of memory in the previous section, Marland highlights the ways in which both Watts and Liptrot create links between seemingly different locations through their perceptions and experiences, although the section on Liptrot feels weaker, devolving into describing the text without directly engaging with it.

The final section is an examination of the unhomely and uncanny, or *unheimlich*, in islands, as a way of responding to the Anthropocene. This time, Marland uses Kathleen Jamie and Robert Macfarlane's accounts of uninhabited Scottish Islands to bring together the ideas of island time, geography, materiality, and representation discussed throughout the rest of the book. A close reading of Robert Macfarlane's description of the Sula Sgeir *guga* (gannet chick) hunt in *The Old Ways* (2012) and of Kathleen Jamie's discovery of a plastic doll's head in the sand dunes of the uninhabited Monach islands as described in her essay 'Findings' from her collection of the same name (2005) reveals the ways in which the modern and ancient can collide in

unsettling ways in these spaces. Marland argues that in *The Old Ways*, modern sensibilities collide with the ancient practice of the gannet chick hunt. Meanwhile in Jamie's text, the stereotypically "ancient" island is confronted with the presence of the detritus of the Anthropocene. This chapter brings together the different strands of argument made throughout the rest of the book, combining them into an image of islands as models of flux and change, in no way stuck in amber or isolated from the rest of the world.

While Marland's arguments can occasionally lose focus, like the *Archipelago* cover art, this book repositions islands from the margins to the centre of the ecocritical map.