

**No Island is an Island: Some Thoughts on the Changing Meaning of Borders
in an Age of High Technology**
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No man is an island, entire of itself;
every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main;
if a clod be washed away by sea, Europe is the less,
as well as if a promontory were,and therefore never send
to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

—John Donne, *Devotions 1623*

No island is an island, entire of itself;
every island is a piece of the continent, a part of the main
if a fiber optic wire be washed away by sea, The Island is the less,
as well as if a power plant were,.... and therefore never send
to know for whom the micro-chip toils; it toils for thee (maybe)

—Anon., circa 2001

There are no more deserts. There are no more islands. Yet one still feels
the need of them. To understand this world, one must sometimes turn away from it;
to serve men better, one must briefly hold them at a distance.

—Albert Camus *The First Man 1994*

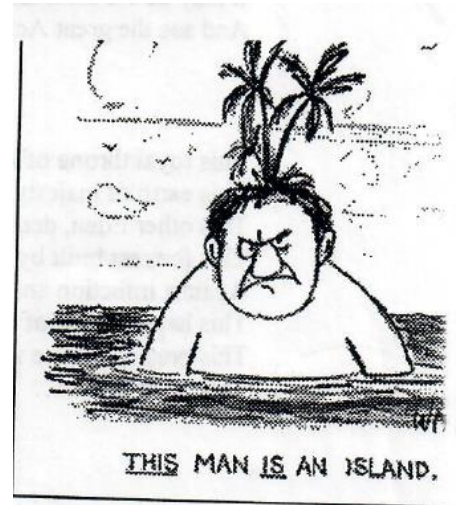
We are not alone.

—ET, 1978

You can run, but you can't hide.

—Ronald Reagan

...Before I built a wall, I'd ask to know
What was I walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was likely to give offense.



*Outline for a talk at Bainbridge Island library on the social meanings of living on an island.

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.

—Robert Frost *Mending a Wall*

It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles whom we knew.

—Homer, *The Odyssey*

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea....
This blessed plot...

—Shakespeare, *Richard II*

Oh, it's a snug little island!
Aright little, tight little island.

—T. Didbin, *The Snug Little Island* 1771-1841

26 miles across the sea
Santa Catalina is awaiting for me
Santa Catalina the island of romance, romance

—1950s Popular song

Claude Rains: "What brought you to Bainbridge Island, Mr. Blain?"
Humphrey Bogart: "I came for the waters."
Rains: "You were well informed."

—Paraphrase of lines in *Casablanca*

I find more and more that I don't like to leave Bainbridge Island very often. It worries me, now that I think about it, but no destination seems to me worth leaving home to get to.

—Andrew Ward, *Out Here*

The sedgy perfume, delightful to my nostrils, reminded me of “the mash” and south bay of my native island. I could have journey'd contentedly till night through these flat and odorous sea-prairies. From half-past 11 till 21 was nearly all the time along the beach, or in sight of the ocean, listening to its hoarse murmur, and inhaling the bracing and welcome breeze... .The attractions, fascinations there are in sea and shore! How one dwells on their simplicity, even vacuity! What is it in us, arous'd by those indirections and directions? That spread of waves and gray-white beach, salt, monotonous, senseless -such an entire absence of art, books, talk, elegance -so indescribably comforting, even this winter day -grim, yet so delicate looking, so spiritual -striking emotional, impalpable depths...

—Walt Whitman, *A Winter Day on the Sea-Beach*

I. FOUR VIEWS OF ISLANDS IN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

- 1) ISLANDS AS MYSTERIOUS, OFTEN DANGEROUS PLACES WHERE SUPERNATURAL FORCES AND BEINGS ABOUND
- 2) ISLANDS AS PLACES OF PENITENCE AND EXILE - THE INDIVIDUAL IS ISOLATED AND BANISHED FROM THE PACK
- 3) ISLANDS AS ISOLATED, INBRED, UNDERDEVELOPED, PRIMITIVE, TRADITIONAL, HOMOGENEOUS BACKWATERS - PLACES ONE WANTS TO ESCAPE FROM RATHER THAN ESCAPE TO
- 4) ISLANDS AS IDEALIZED OR UTOPIAN PLACES OF WARMTH AND PLENTY ONE IS DRAWN TOWARD, RATHER THAN PUSHED AWAY FROM AND AS PLACES OF SHELTER, PURITY AND ABUNDANCE

II. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF SMALL ISLAND COMMUNITIES

ON THE AVERAGE ISLANDERS RELATIVE TO THOSE ON THE MAINLAND WILL SHOW:

- A. A STRONGER SENSE OF A GEOGRAPHICALLY-BASED IDENTITY
- B. GREATER SELF-RELIANCE AND RELIANCE ON LOCALS FOR BASIC NEEDS
- C. GREATER HOMOGENEITY
- D. GREATER EASE IN SEEING OR IMAGING THE CONNECTIONS IN SOCIETY AND HENCE THE WORLD MAY APPEAR MORE UNDERSTANDABLE AND MANAGABLE AS A RESULT OF ITS SEEMINGLY MORE HUMAN SCALE
- E. GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY RELATED TO LESSER POSSIBILITY FOR ANONYMITY
- F. AND AS A RESULT OF THE ABOVE A GREATER SENSE OF COMMUNITY

III. AREAS WHERE TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING TRADITIONAL BORDERS

- A. PHYSICAL/SPATIAL/GEOGRAPHICAL BORDERS
- B. BORDERS OF THE SENSES/PERCEPTION
- C. TEMPORAL BORDERS
- D. BORDERS OF THE BODY AND THE SELF