

Introduction

ISLANDS AND AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA

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Islands have been extensively represented in cinema, television and various forms of video. Local community film and video productions and documentaries made by outside producers have often looked at the minutiae of island life and the nuances of living on islands. The expedition genre has represented journeys *to* islands (with the outsider's impressions as the key topic) and You Tube has provided multiple examples of personal travel videos. Many fictional and documentary productions have utilised familiar tropes of island paradises and their opposite, island 'hells' – places of confinement, menace and despair. Island paradises have been typically the subject of comedy and romance whereas hellish islands have often been featured in genres such as horror, action and SciFi. Reality television has also drawn on these paradigms and islands have been widely represented in music videos. Despite this plethora of representations, Island Studies – and its journals – have paid little attention to the topic. This has been as true of *Shima* as any other publication. Over the last 35 issues, *Shima* has only published 22 articles on the topic (as referenced below).¹ Book length monographs and collective volumes have also rarely focused on islands in audiovisual media. In order to redress this, *Shima* launched a dual initiative. This comprised the publication of a CFP for the theme section of this issue in September 2023 and the related organisation of a conference on Islands and Audiovisual Media at University of the Faroe Islands, Tórshavn, on June 26–28 2024, held in collaboration with SICRI (the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative).²

¹ Biana (2022); Biancorosso (2007); Cattermole (2008); Cooke (2012); Corsi & Brigand (2019); Coyle (2012); Crocker (2008); Fitzgerald & Hayward (2016); Giuffre (2016); Hamilton Ferris (2019); Hayward (2007); Hayward (2019); Hayward (2022); Hayward & Hill (2024); Hong (2023); Inkol (2021); McKinnon (2016); Mini (2021); Noveliss (2023); Riquet (2020); Shaw (2023) and Welsh (2008).

² While no Island Studies journals have published special issues or theme sections on islands and audiovisual media prior to this one, *Post Script: Essays in Film and the Humanities* published a theme issue on Islands and Film guest edited by Ian Conrich, Kseniia Kalugina, Laura Sedgwick and Roy Smith in 2018 that included seven articles. It should also be noted that there have been a number of books published on audiovisual productions made on individual islands (e.g. Rosenthal, 2003 - on Catalina Island), about the shooting of individual films on islands (e.g. Blake, 1975 - about the making of sequences of *Jaws* [1975] on Martha's Vineyard) and concerning the cinematic invention of fictional islands (e.g. Brown, 2000 – about the creation of Summerisle in *The Wicker Man* [1973]).

Six of the articles appearing in the theme section of this issue (Biana, 2024; Chatterjee, 2024; Gaini, 2024; Kinik, 2024; Mclean, 2024; Russell, 2024) are extended versions of papers delivered at the Tórshavn event, while the others are the result of a CFP for the journal. The calls for the conference and theme issue were deliberately inclusive, inviting submissions that addressed one or more of the following aspects:

- The representation of actual islands in one or multiple audiovisual texts
- The representation of fictional islands in one or multiple audiovisual texts
- The representation of islands in particular genres and/or national cinemas
- The relationship of island-themed audiovisual productions to broader social political factors and histories
- Gender issues in island themed audiovisual productions
- Colonial and postcolonial discourses in island-themed audiovisual productions
- Island community media productions and/or organisations
- Ethnographic approaches to island themed audiovisual productions
- Reconstructions of historical island life in audiovisual productions
- Issues of film/video style with regard to representations of islands

These themes are ably covered in the variety of articles included in this theme section, which range from comprehensive overviews of television broadcasting systems and their role in creating archipelagic identity (Rodrigues, 2024, discussing the Azores) to representations of specific islands in individual feature films (Chatterjee, 2024, on Ram Setu; Gaini, 2024, on the Faroe Islands; Mini, 2024, on Corfu). In between these two poles, several articles examine the representation of islands or archipelagos in particular series of productions, including experimental cinema (Mclean, 2024, on Orkney), documentaries (Agnoletto, Di Quarto, & Nocente, 2024, on Capraia), various types of film (Rosi, 2024, on Makronisos), music videos (Constandinides & Kouvarou, 2024, on Cyprus) and Korean drama series (Biana, 2024, on The Philippines). Others address particular aspects such as representations of Quebec whaling (Kinik, 2024) and of the use of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques as the setting for Peter Brook's experimental drama *Lord of the Flies* (1963) (Russell, 2024).

The material in the section illustrates how islands' status as discrete geo-spatial entities with distinct socio-cultural histories and characters renders them appealing topics for representation and consumption. All the articles in this section concern audiovisual works that explore the specificities of particular islands and archipelagos in ways that identify nuances and subtleties to familiar aspects of island life (small communities, limited employment options, 'island time,' or the experience of being castaways or imprisoned) in particular locales. These films, and the perspectives the authors take on them, stress the diversity of islands and island societies. Additionally, the articles examine both stereotypical and unconventional depictions of island life, showing how media have contributed to shaping people's perceptions of insular places. Finally, the articles in this section utilise a variety of methodological approaches (anthropological theories, comparative studies, identity construction approaches, geopolitics, ideological and historical discourses), suggesting the various ways in which media portrayals of islands can be interpreted and offering a foundation for further research.

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