

Call for Proposals:

Early Global Insularities

Viator Special Cluster (tentative publ. date 2024)

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Early Modern literatures are suffused with references to fantastical, miraculous, and topographical islands, from the isle of Avalon in Arthurian legend, to Dante's *Purgatorio*, to the pilgrimage site of St. Patrick's Purgatory in Lough Derg, Ireland. Some texts imagine islands as archipelagos and networks—linked coastal zones where merchants, missionaries, and migrants mingle in local ports. Islands can be replicable, itinerant, or phantasmagorical (St. Brendan's Isle), tied to the temporalities of liturgy or climate. They can, like the Fortunate Isles, float tantalizingly at the edges of cartographic knowledge and cultural epistemes, beckoning us beyond the thresholds of human knowledge. Other texts, such as Thomas More's *Utopia*, focus on the spatial autonomy of islands, emphasizing their disjunctive status as unique in culture or in social organization, exceptionalist in outlook or in ideology. Such sites, conspicuously separate from surrounding polities and politics, draw attention to cultural difference or utopian possibility, and can facilitate the nostalgic affect that transforms a kingdom such as England into a "sceptered isle"—fantasies that can be used to exclude other communities or reinforce endogenous practices. At the heart of the idea of islands is an exploration of the nature and extent of our relationship as individuals to society at large, and of cultures to one another.

Islands occupy a sometimes ambiguous place in center-periphery models, and it's our hope that by "centering" insularity as a topography, a literary conceit, and a disciplinary trope, we can explore both the range of "islands" in medieval and medievalist texts as well as the possibilities of working in an archipelagic scholarly community. In a time of climate crisis, the precarity of islands and archipelagos (so often the sites of colonial violence) brings a sense of urgency to our reappraisal of the historical ideation of insularity and the relationship of the local to the global.

We invite proposals on topics broadly related to our theme of "Insularity and Early Globalities" and especially encourage contributions from early career scholars and scholars whose work spans multiple geographical regions and linguistic traditions.



Possible topics include:

- Mythical islands in medieval, medievalist, or early modern literature
- Iberian *insularios*, coastal contact zones, and archipelagic regions
- Mediterranean studies, Blue studies, and ecological commentaries on coasts or islands
- Reflections on how geographical thought shapes premodern and early modern theories of race
- Islands, periodization, and disruptive temporalities
- Decolonizing approaches to early global insularities
- Disciplinary insularity and its discontents
- Reflections on teaching premodern or early modern literature from scholars working within "insular" institutional or geographical spaces

Proposals should be no more than 500 words in length and should be submitted by email to sara.torres@converse.edu and nahir@unm.edu with "Viator Proposal" in the subject line by 15 July 2022. The authors of selected proposals will be notified by 31 August 2022. Contributors will have the opportunity to workshop essays-in-progress in November 2022. Completed essays will be expected by 20 January 2023.