

BOOK REVIEW

Van Duzer, C. – 2004. *Floating islands: A global bibliography [with an edition and translation of G.C. Munz's Exercitatio academica de insulis natantibus (1711)]*. Cantor Press, Los Altos Hills, California. xiii + 400 pp. (ISBN: 0-9755424-0-0)

The book by Chet Van Duzer is a clear example of how an apparently narrow topic can result in a broad, impressive source of multidisciplinary information. The author has started by editing and translating an 18th-century dissertation on floating islands, *Exercitatio academica de insulis natantibus* (1717), by Georg Christopher Munz, a theologian, scientist and poet from Nuremberg. This text is the framework that supports an impressive set of notes, comments and bibliographic references, both modern and classical.

The Latin and English versions of the “*Exercitatio...*” are followed by a section (of an extension similar to that of the commented text) containing emendations to errata in the Latin version, plus detailed notes and comments on Munz’s bibliography. In many cases the notes include quotations in the source’s original language, with the corresponding English translations.

The notes on Munz’s “*Exercitatio...*” are followed by a 280 page bibliographic section containing about 1,500 citations, a truly vast variety not only of documents (from magazine articles to scientific papers and books, electronic journals and web-pages) but also of languages. The references are alphabetically arranged either by the first author or, when the information source precludes this, by the title or key words of the documents. Careful annota-

tions add helpful information about the main topics dealt with in the references, further implemented by the inclusion of two practical indices, thematic and geographical, plus two appendices, one that provides further data on floating islands not described in print, and another on early accounts of the appearance of new volcanic islands.

Van Duzer has carefully and exhaustively examined the existing information on almost every feature of floating islands, from their origins and characteristics to historical, mythological or literary considerations and human uses. Nevertheless, in my opinion the book has some omissions. One is plainly evident; ice islands are almost completely ignored here due to their non-biological origin despite their singular role in polar ecosystems. The other, probably more justifiable omission is the ecologically significant man-made marine floating structures, either for mariculture purposes (mussel rafts, fish cages), or conceived to attract some commercially exploited fish species (fishing aggregating devices, FAD’s).

Apart from the mentioned flaws, which affect the book only from the point of view of marine sciences (in this context the book is above all a piece of curiosity), the outcome is a serviceable tool for those interested in any aspect of limnology-related floating islands, as well as an impressive demonstration of scholarship and erudition. As a summary, this is an interesting, useful as well as singular book.

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