

have been fruitless. Trees lose in winter what they have gained in the summertime. The acacias, for example, grow shoots one year and then the old shoots dry out the year after to make way for new ones. Peach trees flower but none of the flowers leads to fruit because of the violence of the wind. The most progress has been made in raising animals but one must not forget that there is only water inside the craters and that the few pigs that were brought here almost all perished. How will sheep fare? Time will tell but one has already died of an intestinal ailment<sup>24</sup>.

Father Hippolyte Roussel, SS-CC  
Missionary on Easter Island (1869)

Father Alazard adds, "N. B. Easter Island is today annexed to Chile. It is no longer under the jurisdiction of the Apostolic Vicar of Tahiti<sup>25</sup>. Since 1892, the island has been entrusted to the pastoral care of the Archbishop of Santiago, Chile. The last missionary of the Sacred Hearts of Picpus to visit this mysterious island was Reverend Father Isidore Butaye, of the Apostolic Vicariat of Tahiti. He spent eight days there, from January 27 to February 4, 1900. The population had reached 231 inhabitants of whom 213 were natives."

Father Ildefonse Alazard SS-CC

#### FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> There is no evidence that pigs arrived with the settlers. If they started out with them, these animals did not survive the sea voyage.
- <sup>2</sup> *Toromiro*: *Sophora toromiro*, a tree now extinct on the island.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ngaoho*: a bush, *caesalpinia bonduc*, used as a medicine; the fibers were used for rope.
- <sup>4</sup> *Mahute*: the *broussanetia papirifera* tree; the bark was used to make clothing.
- <sup>5</sup> *Naunau*, sandalwood, was, according to tradition, on the island at one time but it disappeared prior to 1880.
- <sup>6</sup> La Pérouse left the goats; Callao is a port in Peru.
- <sup>7</sup> Tuberculosis
- <sup>8</sup> While Father Roussel arrived on Easter Island in 1866, let us not forget that he was preceded by Brother Eugène Eyraud, who landed there for the first time on January 2, 1864, and returned later on March 23, 1866, together with Father Roussel.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ua* or *paoa* are names of clubs. *Hau* was used to make rope.
- <sup>10</sup> *Mata'a* is a stone spear point.
- <sup>11</sup> Roussel is in error; the interior was settled, but sparsely.
- <sup>12</sup> Tuberculosis of the lymphatic glands.
- <sup>13</sup> The Reverend Father Roussel arrived on Easter Island on March 23, 1866. Thus, it was in 1869 that he prepared this manuscript which was sent to Valparaíso, where it remained until 1914. We owe our access to this manuscript to the kindness of Reverend Father Félix Jaffuel, the Provincial of South America.
- <sup>14</sup> To declare a *rahui* on a thing or a place was render it tabu, forbidden.
- <sup>15</sup> *Mahute* is not made from reeds, but from the *broussanetia papirifera* tree.
- <sup>16</sup> Also, land that belonged to those who were kidnapped by slavers and taken to Peru was up for grabs and ownership was disputed by the survivors.
- <sup>17</sup> There are no documented instances of any foreigners being eaten.
- <sup>18</sup> (Roussel footnote) The wise men who were able to read and write *rongorongo* had disappeared by the time the missionaries arrived, having been carried off by slave traders. A single one of their pupils, Métoro, made it back to Tahiti, where Monsignor Jaussen

heard directly from him the meaning of the hieroglyphics and songs that were written on the few tablets that were saved from destruction. Monsignor Jaussen has written a paper on this extremely interesting question. It was published after his death under the title, *Easter Island. History, Writing and the Repertoire of Signs on the Tablets or Intelligent Hibiscus Wood*, 32 pages, Le Roux, Paris, 1893.

- <sup>19</sup> (Roussel footnote) Mrs. Scoresby Routledge published, in 1919, a splendid volume, *The Mystery of the Easter Island*, which is really, we have to say, the last word in terms of the ethnography of this mysterious island. Among the numerous engravings that illustrate the text, there are many *ahu* with reconstructions of displays of the dead. All the curiosities of Rapa Nui are, moreover, broadly represented, as well as the various sites on this little island. There are two engravings that we found particularly moving: one shows the village of Hanga Roa with its chapel, and the other shows a group of natives in front of the very door of the church. Alas, they have no priest to instruct them and to administer the sacraments. It was only very rarely that the island received a visit from an almoner of the Chilean Navy and he did not speak their language.

<sup>20</sup> French understatement?

<sup>21</sup> The quarry, Rano Raraku, is at the east end of the island, close to the south coast.

<sup>22</sup> (Roussel footnote) We should not interpret the phrase "household gods" to mean that these statuettes were actual idols. To date, nobody has been able to prove that they were ever the focus of a religious cult and thus remain full of mystery for ethnographers. In addition to the giant stone statues, the Rapanui also had wooden statuettes, carved in greater detail. The ribs and backbones were exaggerated and faces carved in a grimace. These were shown off at festive gatherings, together with other curiosities sculpted by their artists.

<sup>23</sup> I suspect that the reason these two words are in italics is that they were inadvertently transposed. The text would make more sense if the author said that he believed that the statues were rolled rather than dragged, if "rolled" were interpreted as "moved on rollers".

<sup>24</sup> The sheep did, eventually, become acclimated and they made up the major agricultural production of the country by 1926.

<sup>25</sup> An Apostolic Vicar is a special delegate, sent from Rome, in lieu of a Bishop.

## REVIEWS

### "EARTH ISLAND"... TEN YEARS LATER

A comparative review of *The Enigmas of Easter Island* by John Flenley & Paul Bahn (Oxford University Press, 2002); 256 pp., ill., 16 color plates (\$21.00).

Review by Shawn McLaughlin

AT FIRST GLANCE, Flenley and Bahn's *Enigmas of Easter Island* appears to be a new book on our favorite subject. But don't be fooled. It's *Easter Island Earth Island* with a new title and some significant updates. Why there's no explanation for the title change (and a reversal of author credit) is one of the enigmas here, but that doesn't diminish the usefulness of this "new and improved" (well, "improved", anyway) volume. Since Frank Bock wrote a cogent review of the 1992 edition of this book [*RNJ* Vol.6(2):41, June 1992], my job here will be easier, as I'm going to focus on what's different about this edition, published

ten years after the first one.

As before, the book is organized intelligently and appropriately into sections like "European Discovery", "The Original 'Boat People'", and "The Aftermath", along with chapter titles like "The Island and its Geography", and (one of my favorites), "Orongo: The Scramble for Eggs". To make the comparative review easier, I've used those section and chapter titles to help identify areas where major changes have occurred.

#### EUROPEAN DISCOVERY

As relatively little has been uncovered during the past decade regarding the island's *early* history, not much has changed in this section, though there is an amusing paragraph commenting on Roggeveen's "curious habit of baptizing islands with trivial names".

The authors do relate that Roggeveen's visit didn't seem to frighten the islanders and conclude that this might be proof of previous visits by outsiders. I wonder, however, if it was simply a matter of curiosity being stronger than fear. And what did the islanders have to fear at that point anyway? Or, moreover, it was only *after* ill-fated contacts in the years following Roggeveen's visit that the islanders *did* show signs of fear – so, if anything, this suggests little or no prior contact.

#### THE ISLAND AND ITS GEOGRAPHY

Gone are references to the number of sheep on the island but there is a note about the introduction of goats. And one observation – another of my favorites – pertains to the extinction of rabbits on the island: "This may be the only place in the world", the authors say, "where rabbits were eaten before they could multiply!"

#### WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

This chapter is by far the most intensively updated and not too surprisingly; a lot of new information has been uncovered in the past ten years on this subject. Heyerdahl figures prominently, of course, and there is brief mention of his research at the Peruvian site of Túcume in the 1990s but the vast majority of the commentary reinforces what we've all known for some time – namely that the Easter Islanders are descendants of eastern Polynesians. The evidence is overwhelming and the authors begin by dispelling antiquated notions: "Geiseler, in 1882", they state, "reported one story that the ancestors had come from Rapa and landed at Vinapu, and another that they had come from the Galápagos and landed at 'Anakena, but generally they were believed to have come from the west". They cite Métraux's insistence that the Salmon/Thomson data concerning an origin in the east was "extremely questionable and undoubtedly of very recent date". A slight modification to another favorite line from the 1992 edition of the book reveals just how subtle some of the changes are and reinforces the need for objective analysis in evaluating origin theories: "All the recorded folk tales from the island need to be taken with a large pinch of sea salt" (the 1992 edition read "marine salt").

Where Heyerdahl is discussed the authors are uncompromising in their analysis of his theories. For example, they inquire rhetorically that, since Heyerdahl accepted that the island was full of Polynesians when Europeans arrived, and since Polynesians were also clearly there from the start, what hap-

pened to the South Americans? And they go on to note that, "Heyerdahl had nothing to say about the total absence of South American metalwork on Easter Island". And while some may find it a bit heavy-handed, they include a quote on Heyerdahl by Paul Theroux that is at the very least well said: "In a lifetime of nutty theorizing, Heyerdahl's single success was his proof, in *Kon-Tiki*, that six middle-class Scandinavians could successfully crash-land their raft on a coral atoll in the middle of nowhere".

But it's not all Heyerdahl-bashing. Instead, the authors openly discuss the idea that ocean-going sailing rafts, and perhaps even an actual vessel, was taken to South America by Polynesians (but not the other way around). They briefly discuss the *Hokule'a*, a sailing canoe that departed Hawai'i for Easter Island in June 1999 and eventually reached it (after 17 days of sailing from Mangareva) – though they also observe this vessel may not be truly representative of ancient Polynesian sea-going canoes.

Although the authors removed a line from the 1992 edition that claimed "No South American Indian trait has been found in skeletons from the island", they do state unequivocally that Easter Island's artifacts are clearly Polynesian in origin, thoroughly ensconced in the eastern Polynesian context, and displaying no cultural break. One nugget of proof: The earliest European visitors described Easter Islanders' canoes with an outrigger attached – and since the outrigger is an Austronesian-speaking people's invention, this is another indication of where the islanders came from. There is a brief discussion, with Steven Fischer added to the linguistic fray, about the existence (or lack of) of a pre-Polynesian language as an aspect of the so-called "second wave of Polynesian immigrations".

One of the more curious changes in this section of the book from its 1992 counterpart pertains to the sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*). Because Heyerdahl drew associations between the South American and Polynesian terms for this tuber (*cumara* and *kumara*, respectively), he believed it reinforced his theory of Amerindians in the Pacific. In response to this, *Easter Island Earth Island* stated that the Quechua word for sweet potato is *apichu*, not *kumara*. The authors go on to claim that, "nowhere on the South American coast was there a people cultivating any kind of sweet potato under a name even remotely resembling *cumar* or *cumara*". Here the authors are citing Donald D. Brand (listed erroneously as "D. E. Brand in the "Further Reading" section) – "The Sweet Potato: An Exercise in Methodology" in *Man Across the Sea: Problems of Pre-Columbian Contacts* (C. L. Riley, et al., eds., University of Texas Press, 1971). But in *The Enigmas of Easter Island*, the authors reject Heyerdahl's assumption by stating now that the Quechua word for sweet potato is *kamote* rather than *apichu*. What difference does this make? Well, for one thing, over the course of ten years Bahn & Flenley cite Brand when it comes to his statement about cultivation of the sweet potato under the names *cumar* or *cumara* but not necessarily when it comes to his statement about the preferred Quechua term for the sweet potato itself. Brand himself notes that *apichu* and *kamote*, as well as *ajes* and *batatas* (the latter derived from the species name) are all legitimate terms for the sweet potato – and even acknowledges that both *cumar* and *cumara* at least appeared in dictionaries as words for the sweet potato. So why the change from *apichu* to

*kamote* is unclear; it's like trying to have your sweet potato cake and eat it too.

This is not meant to substantiate Heyerdahl's theories. I'm merely pointing out differences between the two Easter Island books and making some clarifications in the way the arguments are presented. In direct contrast to Brand, for example, J. Alden Mason's *The Ancient Civilizations of Peru* (Penguin, 1988) asserts that "The sweet potato, a plant of unquestioned American origin, was found by the earliest European explorers under cultivation in Polynesia where it was known by the same name as in Peru, *kumara*". Some contemporary books on Quechua and modern or ancient Peru include *kumara* as a legitimate variant for sweet potato. Brand (and by extension Bahn & Flenley) would have us believe that people like Mason and these contemporary sources are simply incorrect, and that may very well be. But what Brand was really emphasizing, and what Bahn & Flenley don't really devote enough meaningful space to, is word usage among the *coastal* people of Peru, where Quechua wasn't spoken and where, logically, there would not have been any Quechua word for the sweet potato. That doesn't mean there weren't any sweet potatoes or even that *cumar* or *cumara* weren't used for these terms elsewhere in Peru – only that the *coastal* people didn't use this term. Indeed, *cumar* and its variant *cumal* were common words for the sweet potato among the Quechuized Indians of the *Andean highlands*. All of this might have been clarified had Bahn and Flenley included this subsequent statement by Brand: "Polynesians could not have obtained the sweet potato with such a name on the *coasts* of South America, nor was there a *coastal* people to take the sweet potato with such a name into Polynesia" [emphasis mine]. Thus, beyond sheer linguistic coincidence (which is always possible), if *cumar* or *cumara* has any relationship with the Polynesian *kumara* (and I'm not saying it does), it could be because of contact between Polynesians and South American Indians of the Andean highlands. Whether this ever occurred or not, of course, necessitates asking to what extent Heyerdahl's theories were confined to coastal South America (both geographically and in terms of ethno-social population contacts) – a somewhat different discussion.

This section of the book also includes an extensive discussion involving Gill, Chapman, and Stefan, especially with regard to Gill's theory about Marquesans sailing to South America, staying for some years, and then sailing west to Easter Island, bringing Amerindian traits with them. (Among other things, this theory was borne out of Gill's observation that rocker jaws are less common on Easter Island than anywhere else in Polynesia). However, evidence from the Rapa Nui Rendezvous conference of 1993 at Laramie, the Albuquerque Congress of 1997, and the Hawai'i Congress of 2000 – including the fact that there is a total lack of South American DNA on Easter Island – makes this theory interesting but untenable. As Roger Green has emphasized in a recent synthesis of the evidence, "virtually everything – whether oral traditions, biological anthropology, simulated and real voyaging, flora and fauna, or archaeological material – now points firmly to east Polynesia, and particularly to what he calls a 'Mangareva interaction sphere source'".

## HOW DID THEY GET THERE, AND WHY?

While not as extensively updated as the chapter on where the islanders originally came from, this chapter devotes some interesting space to what it took to reach the island in the first place and how likely it was any subsequent contact (in either direction) was achieved. Lewis and Finney stress that while it is possible that many (as opposed to a single or only a few) canoes reached Easter Island, it is far more unlikely that there was regular, two-way contact between the island and elsewhere (which reinforces Mulloy's view of isolation as a central fact of Rapa Nui prehistory). There is some discussion about the El Niño phenomenon as a possible facilitator in creating favorable weather conditions for an ocean voyage. Yet, even with this new information on hand, tens of thousands of simulated voyages were successful only about 30% of the time in even reaching Easter Island. The authors do point out another interesting reason why Mangareva and not the Marquesas may be the original "homeland" of Easter Islanders: A journey from the Marquesas to Easter Island entails traveling across 2,000 miles of open ocean but a journey from Mangareva to Easter Island is only 1,450 miles, with numerous atolls along the way.

## LIVING ON AN ISLAND

Here the authors bring us up to date on palm root molds in volcanic soil, recent discoveries about palm nuts, and Orliac's examination of charcoal fragments – the latter being particularly fascinating in so far as she found evidence of thirteen more species of tree and shrub now extinct on the island, most of which have living relatives in the rainforest. "It may thus be concluded", the authors state, "that rainforest existed on Easter Island when people first arrived". Further research into the palm molds, especially on Terevaka lava flows dated to 400,000 years ago, indicate that palms were on Easter Island for a very long time.

While there isn't a lot of new information on fauna, there is mention of research by Steadman in which it appears that Easter Island was once among the richest seabird islands in the world. Yes, *was*. Finally, there is a brief discussion as to the meaning or purpose of human bones discovered in *hare moa* – rather than indicating the *hare moa* were used solely as ossuaries, the presence of the bones may indicate they were placed there to increase egg yields by application of spiritual power.

## THE RIDDLE OF THE QUARRY

One particular paragraph in this chapter put a broad smile on my face, because it asked a question I've been wondering about but haven't seen addressed elsewhere (unless I've missed it; readers, let me know!): "One of the unfathomable mysteries of the island is why the sculptors did not simply cut out rough blocks, and then haul them to a more comfortable working place. And why did they do most of the carving before moving the statues, and even before bring them down the quarry slope?"

## ROCKING OR ROLLING: HOW WERE THE STATUES MOVED?

While the debate continues to rage regarding methods of *moai* transportation, there are some updates that deserve mention: Love has examined about half of the 25 miles (40 km) of roads from Rano Raraku to other areas of the island and found them to have been constructed in various ways, including carv-



ing, channeling, leveling, and paving. Interestingly, some of the modifications would make using wood rollers and sledges difficult. Pavel Pavel experimented with a 9-ton *moai* and 2,000 pounds (800 kg) of potatoes as lubricant (which is in keeping with oral traditions of islanders using sweet potatoes for this purpose). There is the story of an Indonesian group effort to move a 46-ton stone in which the *real* focus of the event was lots of food, drink, music, and community spirit – inspiring one to think about the social purposes the *moai* served. And, finally, there is a brief treatment of Vince Lee’s highly practical approach to moving *moai* using a wood lattice system (which required 12 men to move a 6-ton rock compared to Van Tilburg’s minimum of 48 men to do the same). In the end, the authors state what I’m sure we all realize: The mystery of *moai* transport remains intact.

#### PLATFORMS AND PUKAO: ERECTING THE STATUES

With regard to *ahu*, the authors discuss the overall increase in platform size and sophistication over time as well as the “latest orthodoxy”, which states that ceremonial sites began c. AD 1000-1100 and continued up to 16<sup>th</sup> century. The question is again raised of how the *pukao* found themselves on top of the *moai* and another experiment by Pavel Pavel provides a reasonable answer: By being dragged up a sloping wood ramp (there’s even a nice sketch of the method). There is also a discussion of whether some of the *moai* – at Tongariki, for example – were painted while upright on their *ahu*.

#### CRASH GO THE ANCESTORS

This section of the book in some ways deals more with corrections than simply updates. The authors challenge (or at least address) the notion that earthquakes may have caused statues to fall by observing first that there are no oral traditions with reference to this – and, second, when an earthquake of magnitude 6.3 occurred in 1987, it had no effect on re-erected *moai*. They note that though in recent years the anthropological evidence for cannibalism has come into question (globally), its possible existence on Easter Island cannot be totally discounted.

There is an extensive discussion of tree pollen research and a fairly definitive report that deforestation on the island began 1,200 years ago (AD 800 or earlier) starting at Rano Kau and appearing at other sites later. The faunal evidence, together with the change in diet (as determined by osteological analysis) from one that was calcium-rich, and no doubt derived from fish, to one that was carbohydrate-rich, suggests an inability to fish was the cause – and the main reason for this would be lack of wood for canoes. (This is further reinforced by accounts of visitors who described Easter Island canoes as poorly made.) Subsequent agricultural developments may have included a lithic mulch to facilitate crop growth and improve soil drainage.

While the final significant difference in this chapter from the 1992 version probably belongs in the section entitled “Orongo and Rongorongo”, the authors do correct a statement made in the first edition that knowledge of *rongorongo* was lost as a result of the Peruvian slave raids of 1862. In 1992 the passage read, “The Peruvian slave raids of 1862 removed the last islanders who could truly understand the tablets – knowledge of them was confined to the royal family, chiefs and priests, and every person in authority was carried off to Peru”. Now it says

quite clearly that this story is a myth and that “Many of the older people [who might have had knowledge of *rongorongo*] seem to have avoided the raid, but most if not all of them later succumbed to the smallpox and virulent pneumonia brought back by one of the few survivors”.

#### ORONGO AND RONGORONGO

Oddly enough, despite Fischer’s 1995 announcement about deciphering *rongorongo*, there’s very little in the book about this apparent breakthrough. Of course, the authors observe that though Fischer’s claim was sanctioned by Barthel, “it failed to convince some other researchers who have fixed ideas of their own about the script”. Perhaps Bahn and/or Flenley are among those “other researchers”?

It is noted that the term *rongorongo* didn’t exist on Easter Island before the 1870s (it probably came from Mangareva where “*rongorongo*” was a class of high-ranking experts charged with the memory and recitation of sacred chants), which indicates the *concept* certainly came to the island from eastern Polynesia. The evidence strongly favors the notion, however, that the script as carved into wood tablets did not exist prior to the first European contacts. There is continuing debate about this, of course, along with other aspects of script interpretation.

#### THE LAST ENIGMA

This chapter was the epilogue of the 1992 edition and was entitled “The Lessons of Easter Island”. The “Preface to the Second Edition” states that “Amid the wealth of literature that has been devoted to Easter Island’s past over the last decade, there have been a number of papers which question the picture we outlined of massive deforestation caused by human factors. These criticisms are answered in this new edition of our book”. Since the original title of the book was *Easter Island Earth Island*, the microcosm model seemed particularly appropriate. So with the change in the title – including its subtitle “Island on the Edge” – one might expect that the authors had second thoughts about the extent to which the lessons of Easter Island could be applied to the rest of the world. Yet they discuss at length the island of Tikopia (in the Solomons), inhabited for about 3,000 years but utterly self-sufficient, with a zero-population growth philosophy. Tikopia is “proof”, one might say, that sustainability is possible. “Is there still a message from the Pacific about sustainability on Earth?”, the authors ask. They think so, indeed: “The message to Earth is clear: communicate, control, conserve – or face a grim future”.

To be fair, the authors do acknowledge that there are manifold reasons for why the Easter Island civilization collapsed: prolonged isolation, climatic changes, European influences, and over-use of resources. At the same time, they rationally dismiss the theory of the “Little Ice Age” as a possible contributor to deforestation – because the timing (1400s) doesn’t equate with Rapanui collapse (in fact, just the opposite is true; when the Little Ice Age was at its peak, so was life on the island). Similarly they question theories that El Niño caused or escalated catastrophic change on the island by citing, among other things, the fact that the El Niño of 1997 went utterly unnoticed on Easter Island. In other words, while the central thesis of the book has shifted slightly, the same message as the 1992 edi-

tion applies – and thus I still don't know why the title was changed.

That's not really a complaint, just a matter of curiosity. I *do* have a few complaints, though: For one, the book is printed on a less expensive paper compared to the 1992 edition, and thus the black & white photos and illustrations don't look as good. And for some reason – and it may apply to my copy only (it was the only one in stock at the British Museum's bookstore when I managed to latch on to it covetously) – numerous photos appearing in the color plates have problems with color balance and saturation. Rano Raraku is an iridescent green, for example, but so are the *moai* (which is especially true of the *moai* at Ahu Nau Nau). Tsk. There *are* some nice aerial shots, including a view of Orongo, another of Papa Vaka, and yet another of Vinapu. One other complaint, and it's really a stylistic one, pertains to a modification of the text wherein the authors discuss the felling of the last tree on the island. In the 1992 edition, the line read, "The person who felled the last tree could see that it was the last tree. But he (or she) still felled it". Great stuff here. However, the line in this 2002 edition reads, "The feller of the last tree on Easter Island *knew* it would lead ultimately to disaster for subsequent generations but went ahead and swung the axe". The "feller" of the last tree? Really! An improvement this is not.

The good news is the index is more extensive, there is a List of Illustrations and a List of Plates, and instead of the woefully inadequate and cumbersome Further Reading section of the 1992 edition (which combined notes and references), there are separate sections devoted to notes and a bibliography. Strangely, the Sources of Illustrations section disappeared since the 1992 edition.

Bock asked in his 1992 review of *Easter Island Earth Island* if another book on Easter Island was needed. He answered affirmatively. And I agree, especially as it applies to this latest manifestation. *The Enigmas of Easter Island* is a meritorious follow-up that belongs on the bookshelf of every Rapanuiophile and indeed anyone with a keen desire to understand this Earth island.

## EASTER ISLAND

Jennifer Vanderbes, 2003

New York: The Dial Press. 308 pp. hardback

ISBN 0-385-33673-X

Review by Scott Nicolay

*EASTER ISLAND* MAY SEEM like an unusually plain and predictable title, given that the island is the primary setting for most of the story, but it in no way reflects a lack of imagination on the part of the author. Instead, Jennifer Vanderbes extracts every nuance of meaning from these two simple words in this, her first novel – a complex and subtle tale of isolation and redemption.

The novel is the story, or stories, of two remarkable women, Elsa Beazley and Greer Farraday, who are separated by more than half a century, but whose lives parallel each other in many ways. Both are brilliant scholars, but both labor in times when a woman's prospects in academia were much more se-

verely circumscribed than they are today (in Elsa's case, almost totally). Their personal lives, inextricably linked to their research (both are married to older men who are also their scholarly mentors) are shattered by deception and betrayal. And of course, both of their lives change forever, though in different ways, on Easter Island. Vanderbes juxtaposes their individual narratives masterfully, and in the end brings them poignantly together, giving the book a structure that is almost musical. Providing an additional counterpoint to the story, though without cluttering it in the least, is the desperate (and doomed) World War I journey of the German fleet under Vice Admiral Graf Von Spee. In the end, this thread also combines with the others in unexpected ways.

RNJ readers will have little difficulty recognizing most of the actual historical events and research that provide the basis for the novel, particularly the Routledge expedition (on which Elsa's adventure is modeled, although loosely) and John Flenley's research on the island's pollen cores (Vanderbes gives Flenley's discoveries over to Greer, although not without acknowledging Flenley at the back of the book, who may be happy he did not have to go through all that Greer does). Those who have read Routledge may also recall the visit of the German fleet in 1914. However, these are merely departure points, and Vanderbes goes far beyond them. In the process, she rearranges historical events to produce a sort of parallel-world version of Easter Island, where the island and its people are the same, but the history of the research conducted there is completely altered, largely to fit the dramatic structure of the novel. Things are familiar up to the visit of the USS *Mohican* (though credited to Cook (sic), with no mention of Paymaster Thomson). From then on, things change: not only is there no Routledge (and Vanderbes tells us early that her version of the British expedition disappeared, thus leaving a tremendous gap in Easter Island scholarship), there is neither Métraux nor Heyerdahl. All this allows Vanderbes to reveal details of the island's prehistory at her own pace, and through her own characters.

All these characters, along with a fairly extensive supporting cast, are portrayed vividly, and Vanderbes fully engrosses the reader in their lives. There is another character whose portrayal is perhaps even more remarkable: Easter Island itself. Vanderbes truly brings the island to life in the pages of her novel, and as those who have been there will know, it is not a place whose qualities are easy to convey to those who have not experienced them. Indeed, on page 30, she writes: "Amazing how little attention people paid to the narrative of the land itself. As though sixty-four square miles of stone were just a stage for late-arriving human actors, whose performance, in geological time, had happened in the blink of an eye." Vanderbes does not neglect this narrative, instead, she weaves it in as an additional thread in her skillfully woven tapestry, and the story of the island, "the perfect microcosm", as Greer envisions it before her arrival, provides not "just a stage" but a vital foundation for the entire novel. Like Elsa, the island's hopes once were dashed by war and catastrophe, but like Greer, it still holds new life in old seeds, and it is her story that brings us into modern times, when regular airline flights have opened a new chapter in the island's history – and its economy, and ended its isolation to a large degree.

Though at least one critic has suggested that the tragic be-