REIMAGINING THE JUAN FERNÁNDEZ ISLANDS

Cruise Tourism and the Commodification of Nature

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the arrival of cruise ship tourism to the Juan Fernández Islands (Chile) in the first half of the 20th century, considering how this particular form of tourism reconfigured the economic and cultural image of the islands. Bringing together domestic and international advertising and voyage accounts, we assess how the Juan Fernández Islands were incorporated into both Chilean and foreign tourist discourses as an idealised paradise. We highlight how cruise ship tourism marketing rebranded these islands as a 'romantic' and exotic destination, reinforcing colonial ideas of isolation and remoteness. In so doing, we underline how cruise tourism facilitated new forms of engagement with the island environment that were distinct from the islanders' aquapelagic relationality at the interface of water and land. We also showcase how the tourist industry exacerbated the exploitation and commodification of the islands' natural environment, developing a cultural identity for Juan Fernández that also saw the renegotiation of their place in Chilean national identity, thus contributing to the history of small islands and their modern cultural representations.

KEYWORDS: Juan Fernández Islands, cruise tourism, Pacific, Chile, aquapelago

Introduction

Scholars have previously identified the role of islands as sites where fantasies are projected of idealised, idiosyncratic and untouched forms of life and living (Baldacchino, 2012, p. 55). Located 670 km from the South American Pacific rim, the Juan Fernández Islands (Figure 1), nowadays part of Chile's V Region of Valparaíso, have stimulated the imaginations of generations of writers on account of their being a hideout for European pirates and privateers during the early modern period, recounted most famously in Daniel Defoe's classic novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). The archipelago consists of three main islands, Robinson Crusoe

Island (formerly known as *Masatierra*) Alejandro Selkirk Island (formerly known as *Masafuera*), and Santa Clara Island. Of these, only Robinson Crusoe and Alejandro Selkirk are currently inhabited, with the primary settlement being the port town of San Juan Bautista on Robinson Crusoe. The projected population of the islands in 2021 was 1053 people (Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, 2020).

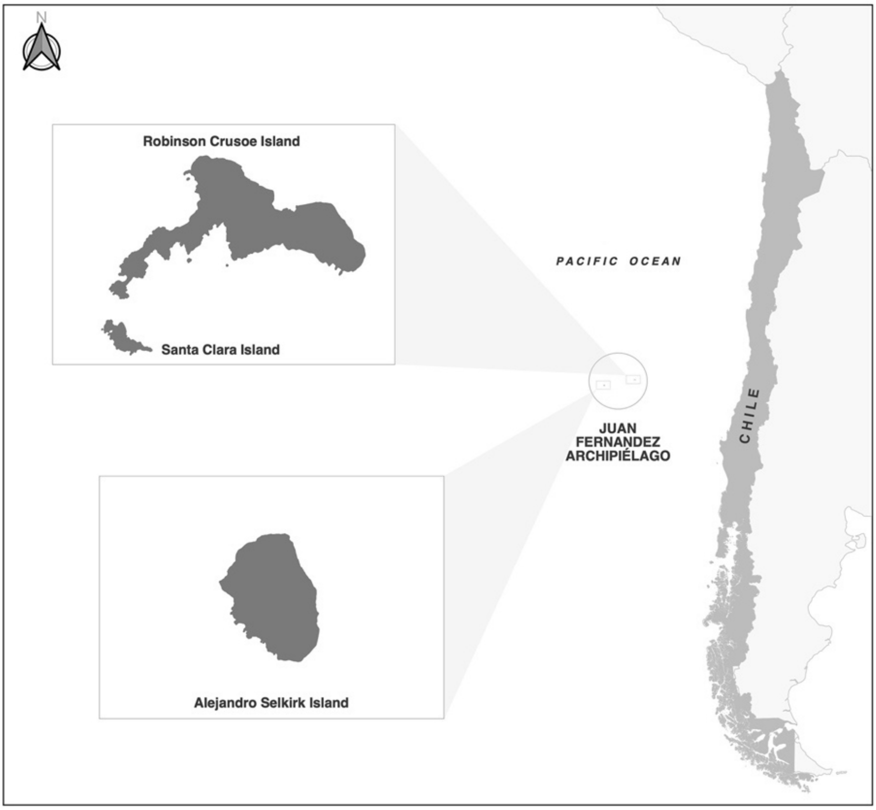

Figure 1 - Map of the Juan Fernández Archipelago.

The islands' high levels of endemism, combined with their distance from the South American mainland, and their relatively late occupation by humans, have made Juan Fernández an ideal receptacle for idealised visions of nature untainted by human presence. With the advent of steamships and increasing demand for leisure tourism into the 20th century, from 1922 Juan Fernández became a sporadic port of call on cruises around South America. The archipelago's native flora and fauna provided unique souvenirs, and its connection to an English literary classic made it popular with Chileans, U.S. tourists, and Europeans alike. In the materials promoting these trips, and published accounts of tourist visits, we encounter an active romanticisation of the islands' past as a buccaneers' hideaway. In this article, we examine how the arrival of leisure tourism in Juan Fernández has introduced the islands into new commercial networks and obscured the inhabitants' relational practices in the context of an aquapelagic society (Hayward, 2012). We further underline how the connections brought about by cruise ships have inserted the Juan Fernandez archipelago into new and reconfigured transnational and transoceanic relationships. In this panorama, we therefore trace the role of the archipelago as a "malleable platform for the practice of some form of exclusivity that needs to be protected from mainland interaction or contamination" (Baldacchino, 2012, p. 57); in this case, the islands' 'unspoilt' nature.

Prior to tourism, from the late 19th century, fishing was the most important economic activity conducted by the islanders. In particular, fishing of the Juan Fernández rock lobster (*Jasus frontalis*) was the backbone of the islands' economy. By 1949, around 400 people lived on Robinson Crusoe Island, and around 20-30 people lived on Alejandro Selkirk Island (Castedo, 1949a, p. 54). The local population today is a mixture of Chilean and European settlers, as well as descendants of penal colony families who were sent to the island both during the late 18th century, and by the Chilean government after independence in the 19th century. As we highlight, their relationship with the surrounding sea and their telluric connection with the islands' landscape converged in a unique aquapelagic assemblage and identity.

In line with Gillis' concept of "ecotones", coastal environments "where two ecosystems overlap" (2012, p. 9), Juan Fernández islanders live at the "pourous and connective" interface between land and sea (Gillis, 2014, p. 156). Having transitioned from settlers to an "endemic" population (Brinck, 2007), their way of life fosters a close relationship with the ocean, understanding the sea as a projection of their lived space. Moreover, Juan Fernández islanders engage with the ocean in both horizontal and vertical terms, using it as a connecting surface but also harvesting their main source of income and sustenance from its depths. Cruise ship tourism, however, transformed the island's connection with the South American continent, and reconfigured the economic and cultural image of the islands. The perceived 'remoteness' of the islands became their key selling point in Chilean and international tourist discourses as a vestige of nature uncorrupted by mankind that featured species such as the Chonta palm (*Juania australis*) that could not be found elsewhere in South America. As such, the vision of Juan Fernández constructed 'on the continent' came to predominate in literary and visual depictions of the region from the first half of the 20th century (Carmona Jiménez, 2021, p. 59).

By focusing on the arrival of cruise tourism in Juan Fernández, this article considers how this particular form of tourism connects the islands to continental spaces and inserts them into national and international tourist imaginaries. We argue that cruise tourism facilitates a form of engagement with the island environment distinct from the islanders' aquapelagic relationality and creates new ways of exploiting and commodifying nature, developing a cultural identity for Juan Fernández that also saw the renegotiation of their place in Chilean national identity, and evidencing the "commodification of the natural world for capitalist gains" (Scribner, 2021, p.80). We highlight the distinct relationship the cruise ship creates with the aquatic and aquapelagic environments encountered and reaffirm the role of the sea in the development of leisure travel imaginaries that persist today. We begin by discussing the nature of Juan Fernández as an aquapelagic space, and how this understanding frames tourist interactions, while also introducing the context of early 20th century cruise tourism in Chile. We then examine portrayals of Juan Fernández's main island primarily using travel accounts, newspaper articles, and advertising. We conclude by exploring how cruise ship tourism created new ways of profiting from the islands natural elements, and transformed their natural environment into a space to be consumed.

Tourism and Juan Fernández's aquapelagic environment

The concept of the 'aquapelago' has been influential for understanding island communities' relationships with the "transitional zone between land and sea" that they inhabit (Hayward, 2012, p. 1). Drawing on the work of Pacific Ocean scholars who understand this body of water as a "sea of islands" (Hau'ofa, 1994), the 'aquapelago' describes dynamic connections between both human and nonhuman entities in their island homes that continue to evolve in response to pressures imposed by forces such as globalisation, imperialism, and, increasingly, global heating. It is a space "generated by livelihood", as Suwa asserts, which is particularly important for understanding the role of tourism in aquapelagic space (2012, p. 13). Lindsay Bremner has previously used this concept to approximate the changes wrought by the introduction of tourism in the Maldives, noting how this caused the Indian Ocean to become

> *not less, but more enmeshed in human affairs by becoming more economically, technologically and digitally mediated. New aquapelagic performances combining infrastructures, technologies and global imaginaries produced new species of islands, new kinds of oceans, new typologies of architecture and new kinds of humans, constantly reassembling the unstable continuum between geological, hydrological, human, animal and technological life according to the laws of value.* (Bremner, 2016, p. 26).

Drawing on Hayward's earlier description of the aquapelago as a "performed entity" (2012, p. 6), here Bremner highlights the potential of tourism to facilitate new modes of interaction, as spaces are understood through an economic lens that privileges the experience of visitors to the space. The arrival of tourism also brings distinct imaginaries into conflict: the existing aquapelagic relationships of permanent dwellers are often overwritten in the hegemonic narratives of the visiting populations to present destinations that align with exoticised ideals, and, in the specific case of Juan Fernández, tap into the cultural imaginary of pirates and castaways. Donald Macleod has termed the process by which an island has both its national and local identities manipulated to attract visitors "cultural realignment", noting the particularly problematic treatment of islands as vestiges of cultural "uniqueness" that are bounded and isolated by bodies of water (MacLeod, 2013, p. 76). Such an understanding cultivates a vision of islands as "locales of desire, as platforms of paradise, as habitual sites of fascination, emotional offloading or religious pilgrimage" (Baldacchino, 2012, p. 55), a kind of *tabula rasa* onto which the fantasies of the tourist can be projected. It is such an idealization that prevails in touristic depictions of Juan Fernández.

The history of Juan Fernández has long been defined by processes of commodification and extraction. Like the Galápagos Islands, the Juan Fernández Islands have only been colonised by humans "within the last five centuries" (Burke, 2020, p. 60). Thought to have first been sighted by its namesake Spanish navigator Juan Fernández (c.1539-c. 1604) in 1574, the archipelago was sporadically inhabited until the late 19th century. Venegas and Elórtegui have previously identified two main phases of early Spanish occupation: from approx. 1574-1590, and from 1591-1616, when resource exploitation began in earnest (2022, p. 391). Logging, fishing, and sealing were undertaken by Indigenous people who had been forcibly relocated to the islands from the continent (Venegas & Elórtegui, 2022, p. 408). This early settlement was temporary, though, and the islands remained largely unoccupied following the second phase, becoming a hideout for European pirates in the 17th and early 18th centuries. Permanent occupation did not occur until the 1750s when the Spanish Crown formally established a military colony to prevent rival European nations from colonising the islands and gaining access to the Pacific. The main island of Robinson Crusoe was occupied by military men and their families, as well as a small penal population.

When Chile became independent in the early 19th century, the republican government cemented the islands' place as part of Chile's territorial sovereignty (Woodward, 1969, p. 127). The islands were initially used as a penal colony but in the late 19th century the Chilean government also began to lease the islands to private enterprises, accelerating the exploitation of their marine and terrestrial environments. This establishment of commercial fishing was crucial in the construction of the islanders' identity, being inextricably linked with the sea and its nonhuman inhabitants. The islands were leased to Swiss-born entrepreneur Alfredo de Rodt (1843-1905) by the Chilean Government in 1877. Rodt established commercial lobster fishing which was subsequently taken over by Carlos Fonck and Company of Valparaíso, who set up canning facilities and regular shipping of products to the port city. Writing in 1904, U.S. travel writer Marie Robinson Wright hinted at the promising future of industry in Juan Fernández: "it may some day hold as high a place in the practical world of business as it now holds in the imaginary realm of fiction" (Robinson Wright, 1904, p. 429), although canned fish was not the only significant export product for the early Fernándezian economy.

Prior to the establishment of Chilean industry, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Juan Fernández Islands were already becoming connected to circuits of economic exploitation in the wider Pacific. Trade of the endemic sandalwood *(Santalum fernandezianum*) and the local fur seal (*Arctocephalus philippi)* pelts connected the islands to a transnational network of Pacific Island consumption, linking them with places such as the Marquesas, the Hawaiian, and the Fijian Islands. Alejandro Selkirk Island was transformed into a transoceanic sealing enclave starting in the 1790s, when sealers from the US and Great Britain began to hunt the local fur seal in order to sell its desirable pelts in Eastern markets (Igler, 2013, pp. 115-117). The species was decimated to the extent that by the 1820s, it was almost extinct. While this population was able to recover, though, the exploitation of the Juan Fernández sandalwood was unfortunately more devastating. The tree began to be felled for its aromatic timber in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and its exploitation peaked in the 1830s as it was commercialised in Asian markets (Johow, 1896, p. 131; Venegas & Elórtegui, 2022, p. 412). By the early 20th century, it no longer grew in the wild on the islands (Skottsberg, 1918).

The arrival of tourism would build on both the existing connections to the Chilean mainland and to other Pacific islands. Tourism had long been considered important by Chilean politicians and intellectuals. In his lengthy treatise on Juan Fernández, for example, influential Chilean statesman Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna popularised the idea of the islands as a romantic vacation spot (Vicuña Mackenna, 1883). He believed that Juan Fernández's future was intimately linked with the development of tourist infrastructure, and Vicuña Mackenna's musings on the islands' 'edenic' qualities would have a significant impact on how the archipelago was viewed in (and from) continental Chile. His views are echoed by journalist Jorge Guzmán Parada who, in the 1950s, pondered the ideal conditions Robinson Crusoe Island provides for vacationing. In particular, he highlights how the proximity of the Juan Fernández archipelago to the continent and its everlasting spring weather makes tourism a potentially important source of income (Guzmán Parada, 1951, p. 226). Although they are writing many decades apart, both Vicuña Mackenna and Guzmán Parada emphasise how tourism not only represents an economic opportunity for the development of the islands but is also instrumental for geoestrategical purposes. The sporadic fishing operations and penal colonies had meant that the islands were not securely settled, and tourism provided an opportunity to change this while also creating an additional income stream. Guzmán Parada, for example, compares their potential to the success achieved by the Hawaiian Islands as a tourist destination (1951, p. 226). Especially in mid-century narratives, Juan Fernández's environment is depicted an ideal setting for leisure: the island's temperate climate, impressive vistas, and unique flora and fauna together provided the "most pleasant setting for the coexistence of animal, plant and human life" (Castedo, 1949b, pp. 53–54). Tourism represented the opportunity to capitalise on this unique nature, and to make it known to both global and domestic audiences, where in the latter context, it would also facilitate the incorporation of Juan Fernández into the national geographical imaginary and the projection of Chile into the Pacific, as we will explore in the final section.

The first tourist cruise arrived at Juan Fernández on 5th January 1922. Aboard the Pacific Steam Navigation Company (PSNC)'s RMS *Ebro*, around 240 tourists were taken to the port of San Juan Bautista. While this was not a Chilean operation (the British PSNC being a subsidiary of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company), the stop was added as part of the northbound leg PSNC's New York-Valparaíso route and featured many distinguished guests. The excursion attracted the cream of Chilean society, as Italian writer E. C. Branchi, who was on board, attests:

> *Never has a steamer taken such a fantastic mixture of humans from the heart of the* [Chilean] *Republic as that which is travelling aboard our transpacific ship. Chile's 'high life' has congregated on this deck.* (Branchi, 1922, pp. 126–127).

In fact, the steamer was unable to accommodate all those who wished to visit the islands, and the PSNC sent the RMS *Essequibo* to repeat the visit from Valparaíso the following month (Unattributed, 1922a, p. 11). The *South Pacific Mail*, one of the leading English-language newspapers in South America at the time, reported that passengers requested that the ship's captain sail around the islands before anchoring in port so that they might "admire its beauties and form a complete idea of the whole" (Unattributed, 1922a, p. 11), a long detour which took from the morning until the late afternoon, reflecting the high levels of curiosity aboard. While Juan Fernández was not a regular stop off on the Valparaíso -New York route, it was added periodically to the itinerary and accompanied with special marketing that focused particularly on the archipelago's connection with Defoe's novel. In PSNC ephemera as in the English language press, the islands are already referred to as 'Robinson Crusoe's Islands', prior to the official renaming of *Masatierra* to Robinson Crusoe Island and *Masafuera* to Alejandro Selkirk Island by the Chilean Government in 1966. This difference in toponyms is just one example of the ways in which tourism has encouraged the Chilean state to 'realign' the image of the islands with the image projected onto them, most notably by a British shipping enterprise.

Despite the success of the first tourist excursion, in the 1920s tourism in Chile was still a nascent industry hampered by a lack of infrastructure. This was compounded by the fact that it was relatively unknown as a tourist destination, both for domestic visitors and on the international market. After the first tourism law was passed in Chile in 1929, which promised to "[m]ake known, both within and outside of the Republic, the tourism centres and natural beauty of this country" (Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, 1929), the government sought to promote recently-annexed and remote regions of Chile both to the metropolitan population and abroad (Booth, 2010), producing bilingual English-Spanish promotional materials such as the photobook *Chile, país de belleza/Chile, country of beauty* (Servicos de Turismo, 1937). Maritime transportation for tourists to Juan Fernández was more readily available from 1936, with both U.S. owned Grace Lines and the PSNC making the trip from

Valparaíso. The fact that the islands became accessible via the likes of the luxurious PSNC MV *Reina del Pacifico* complete with cocktail lounge, library, and ballroom, made them an ideal cruise destination both for short visits from the continent and as part of a longer South American itinerary, as such a trip could provide elements of "[f]antasy, escape, conspicuous extravagance and pampering" (Pirie, 2011, p. 73). Long cruises were also an aspirational activity: drawing on the practices of 18th century European aristocracy, partaking in a lengthy transatlantic or bicoastal American voyage was a way for businessmen to flaunt their wealth by taking up the leisure habits of high society (Williams, 2003, p. 136). This was highly attractive to upper and middle-class Chileans as well, who saw partaking in tourism as directly relevant to class mobility and maintenance (Booth, 2013, p. 134).

While Chile was not a well-known tourist destination in the early-mid 20th century, the Juan Fernández Islands' connection with the English literary canon superseded this issue. In Chile, British culture and capital had had a hegemonic influence since independence (Estrada, 2006, p. 65). Given the profile of the novel, it is likely that many English speakers would have read or at least heard of Robinson Crusoe, and while Defoe situates his hero in the Caribbean, the possibility of seeing the place where Alexander Selkirk, on whom the epic novel is based, had actually spent his four years and four months, gave the Juan Fernández Islands an appealing place in the domestic and international tourist markets. The role of privateering literature in shaping island imaginaries is not unique to Juan Fernández: Hayward and Kuwahara have identified a similar process unfolding in Takarajima in Japan which is thought to have been the inspiration for the titular location of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *Treasure Island* (1883) via an erroneous connection to the Scottish pirate Captain Kidd (c.1645-1701) (2014, p. 25). Notably, they highlight how even beyond the success of the novel in English and in translation in Japan, it became "productive for islanders to accommodate the association themselves" (Hayward & Kuwahara, 2014, p. 28), thus reinforcing the island's connection to the exploits of a mariner who likely never set foot there and recalling the specious renaming of the individual Juan Fernández Islands in 1966. Alexander Selkirk actually spent his exile on what is now Robinson Crusoe Island, and not on the Island that today bears his name, Selkirk's literary incarnation having been deemed more important by the Chilean Government on account of its potential to attract tourists. Interestingly, though, it is a statue of Selkirk that stands to welcome visitors today in San Juan Bautista (Robinson Crusoe Island) (Arana, 2010, p. 295), documenting an embrace of this connection for the tourist market.

Chile had to market its desert and frigid extremes in creative ways in the early 20th century, creating the 'Chilean Switzerland' in the southern region of Los Lagos, for example. In contrast, 'Robinson Crusoe's Islands' were already alluring in the imaginations of many wealthy cruise goers keen to signal their familiarity with British and maritime cultural icons. This allure was not limited to the anglophone and anglophile markets, though. Since independence, many Chilean writers and statesmen have pondered the place of Juan Fernández as one of the nation's Pacific outposts. During the early republican period, the country's political projections were directed towards the continent. By the end of the 19th century, however, Chile's oceanic projections had become more important. After winning the War of the Pacific, fought against Peru and Bolivia (1879-1884), Chile became a regional power in the South Eastern Pacific, further consolidating its power via the annexation of Rapa Nui (Easter) Island in 1888. Following this, Juan Fernández became an important part of the political discourse that defined Chile as a Pacific Ocean country and an insular nation. As they became incorporated into the national imaginary, the Juan Fernández islands closely tied the country to Pacific Island geographies, projecting Chilean power further away from the South American continent. Rising up from the sea as a volcanic island, though, the high levels of endemic species meant that the appearance of the Juan Fernández Islands was unsurprisingly not contiguous with that of continental Chile. The presence of the Juan Fernández sandalwood tree, in particular, revealed a possible connection with Asia and Australia, as it is not found anywhere on the American continent (Gálvez, 1942, p. 59). Chilean Writer Benjamín Subercaseaux, for example, highlights this aesthetic disjuncture, noting how the islands are "a land older than America" where one feels that "Chile is in its infancy" (Subercaseaux, 1944, pp. 200, 203), invoking their millennial past. They are "so near and yet so far" from Valparaíso, mused G. Mallett in the *South Pacific Mail* (1921, p. 13). Although cruise tourism was thus a key part of Chile's Pacific agenda, as Juan Fernández became a more popular and a more accessible destination, the distance between continental Chile and the islands would, antithetically, be further emphasised.

Fernándezian Relations: Lobsters, 'Romance' and Cruise Ship Spatialities

While the livelihoods of the inhabitants of Robinson Crusoe Island, and indeed of the fictional Robinson Crusoe himself during his stint as a castaway, are directly tied to the sea, cruise ships actively reject engagement with the ocean, "attempting to remove and control the natural forces into which they come in contact" (Cashman, 2013, p. 3). Writing predominantly of the contemporary mega ship, Cashman argues that the cruise ship is paradoxical in its ability to "form a unique type of aquapelagic assembly and to provide its antithesis" (Cashman, 2013, p. 2). Although the *Ebro* and *Essequibo* predate the introduction of ship stabilisers in the 1930s, which helped passengers "forget they were in an aquatic environment" (Cashman, 2013, p. 3), we can still see how early cruises facilitated non-engagement with oceanic and aquapelagic spaces. When visiting Juan Fernández, for example, tourists still slept in their cabins and mainly dined on board. It is further telling that the guests onboard the first cruise in 1922 asked the captain to sail around the island so that they could view it. Instead of spending more time on the island itself interacting with the natural environment, they requested a view from the safe and comfortable setting of the deck. As Cashman continues "confinement and exclusion" defines life onboard a cruise ship (Cashman, 2013, p. 8), which is at odds with the lived experience of an aquapelagic society such as the inhabitants of Robinson Crusoe Island whose livelihood was directly tied to fishing.

The January 1922 visit marked the introduction of what is today one of Juan Fernández's primary industries. The arrival of cruise tourism also represents the conversion of the distinct spatialities of the aquapelago and the liner, as an episode from the first visit reported in the *New York Tribune* demonstrates. Titled 'Robinson Crusoe Isle Lobsters, Big as Bull Pups, Attack Ship', the article describes events recounted by a Mr. Browne, who explains that upon arriving in Cumberland Bay (on Masatierra/Robinson Crusoe Island), the *Ebro* was swarmed by "lobsters as big as bulldogs climbing up the anchor chain and threatening the lives of every one aboard" (Unattributed, 1922b).[1] The Mayor, Alejandro McTush y Córdoba, "dressed in his bright seaweed suit and with a half coconut shell tipped over one eye", calls off the "attack", and explains to the passengers that the 200 or so inhabitants are waiting in the woods "to pray for the safety of the lobsters". The author goes on to explain how McTush y Córdoba demonstrated his method of luring the Juan Fernández rock lobster into lava pits as a cooking method (Unattributed, 1922b, p. 20). While this tale conforms with stereotypical Euro-Western notions of unruly Pacific creatures that represent the border between "the known and the unknown and the natural and supernatural" (Byars & Broedel, 2018, p. 3), the response of the islanders evidences a different kind of relationship that is representative of the "sacred, untouchable, memorised, and/or identified" elements that constitute an aquapelagic society as a space that is "generated by livelihood" (Suwa, 2012, pp. 15, 13). The tourists are deeply unsettled by what they perceive to be an invasion of crustaceans that belong in the ocean onto the territory of the cruise ship - the *terra* root of this term being particularly key here.

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[1] This article was reprinted in the *South Pacific Mail* on March 16th 1922, p. 18.

The lobster invasion disrupts the notion of the luxury liner as a space that replicates and is aligned with land-based amenities, such as ballrooms and smoking lounges, forcing the guests into a confrontation with the perceived threat of unfamiliar nonhuman life-forms that in this account, extends to the islanders as well. The description of the inhabitants waiting in the woods evokes images of an Indigenous ambush, and harks back to the European explorers killed on the shores of Pacific Islands such as James Cook and Ferdinand Magellan. Although many of these people would have been recent settlers from continental Chile or Europe, the article frames their interaction with the Fernándezian environment as naïve: they are "uncertain" about the impact of "a combination of steel and high class South Americans" on their primary food source, and have taken to "praying" for the safety of the lobsters (Unattributed, 1922b, p.20). This seems a reasonable response in the face of a massive, unfamiliar craft, the first large vessel to have visited the island in forty-two years. What we can identify here, then, is the fashioning of the quaint yet threatening island space as in need of "protection from mainland interaction or contamination" (Baldacchino, 2012, p. 57), that draws contingently on the "contrived exoticism" inherent in ocean cruising itineraries (Pirie, 2011, p. 73). The islanders' relationship with the rock lobster represents a connection that the tourists perceive to be primitive and unnatural, while the crustacean transgression further disrupts the fallacious binary of land and sea creatures.

This connection of cruise tourism to European exploration of the Pacific is a key part of the 'romance' that features heavily in tourist descriptions of Juan Fernández. A PSNC pamphlet advertising a 1937 'Sunshine Tour' around South America from Liverpool via the Strait of Magellan and Panama Canal on the *Reina del Pacifico* highlights that the archipelago is "rich in romantic associations" (Figure 2). This sentiment echoes longstanding descriptions of the islands' 'romantic' appeal attested to by earlier Chilean authors such as Vicuña Mackenna, who quotes English Naval Officer George Shelvocke's 1726 description of Juan Fernández as "perfectly romantick" in his lengthy treatise on the archipelago (Vicuña Mackenna, 1883, p. 153). In the PSNC pamphlet, this 'romance' is connected explicitly to Defoe's work, and the whimsy of voluntary exile. By partaking in the cruise, visitors can follow in Selkirk's (and Crusoe's) footsteps, spending their own short period on the island before returning to the safety of the liner. Thus Selkirk's arduous journey from Europe is replicated in the leisure tourism context. Dean MacCannell has highlighted that a symptom of the transformation from industrial society to modern society is the transformation of work into a "touristic curiosity" (MacCannell, 1999, p. 6): notably, visitors are following a trip Selkirk undertook as part of his employment as a coxswain. As such, Juan Fernández's enduring global connections, underpinned by labour, are refashioned from trade and privateering routes into cruise itineraries. The transoceanic journey required to reach the islands is no longer arduous and dangerous, but rather, an experience to be indulged from the safety of a liner that strives to offer all the comforts of life on land.

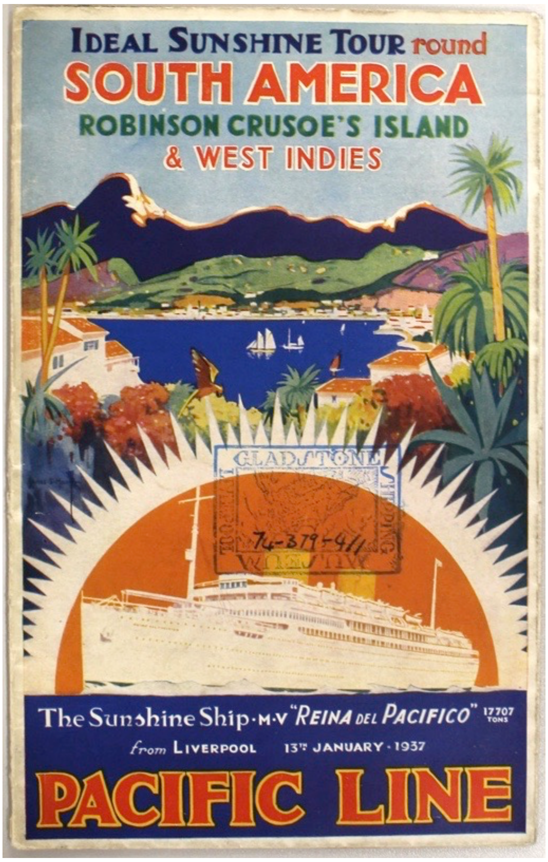
IDEAL SUNSHINE TOUR round
SOUTH AMERICA
ROBINSON CRUSOE'S ISLAND
& WEST INDIES
GLADSTONE
74-379-4/1
The Sunshine Ship · M·V "REINA DEL PACIFICO" 17707 TONS
from LIVERPOOL 13TH JANUARY · 1937
PACIFIC LINE

Figure 2 - PSNC Pamphlet advertising a 'Sunshine Tour' to Juan Fernández. (Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool.)

The idea of 'romance' is also referenced in descriptions of the islands' natural environment. Robinson Crusoe Island, for example, is described as a "mystery… rising sheer out of the immense Pacific" whose aspects "combine to lend the island a unique atmosphere of romance" (Pacific Steam Navigation Company, 1936). 'Robinson Crusoe's Island' is the central feature of this advertisement for a tour lasting almost three months with stops including Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, and Havana. When folded, the pamphlet's cover displays an idyllic print looking across Cumberland Bay towards the island's main peak, El Yunque. The whitewashed houses with picturesque blue shutters appear uniform across the town of San Juan Bautista, and the endemic Chonta palms and a male Juan Fernández firecrown hummingbird (*Sephanoides fernandensis*) frame the foreground. The bright blues, greens, and oranges coupled with the rays that emanate from the 'Sunshine Ship' below the Fernándezian scene imply a tropical paradise. Here Juan Fernández functions as a stand-in for the 'sunshine' destinations of the entire tour: it is crowned as the highlight of the voyage and the nature it offers is pristine. Although dwellings and some small yachts are present, no humans are visible in the image, rendering it distinct from the tour's other urban destinations. In this way, an idealised vision of Juan Fernández is integrated into the South

American cruise itinerary, opening up new global connections with Europe and the major cities of the Americas.

This vision is not unique to anglophone promotional materials and accounts: Chilean accounts of visits to Juan Fernández also emphasise heroic and romantic depictions of the islands. Vicuña Mackenna maintains that they are an "isolated eden" (1883, p. 8), and the rugged coast, undulating landscape, and evergreen forest provide the backdrop for the drama of past shipwrecks and castaways. Notably, Vicuña Mackenna uses Juan Fernández to reflect upon the human condition, civilization, and wilderness (1883, pp. 230, 282, 532, 616, 632). These idyllic images were later reproduced in Chilean early-mid 20th century accounts that highlight the island's unspoiled nature: Branchi, for example, describes it as an "azure Eden" and a "green oasis" (Branchi, 1922, pp. 101, 132). In 1949, the Chilean travel magazine *En Viaje* published a three-part series by Spanish-Chilean historian and writer Leopoldo Castedo chronicling a month-long visit to Robinson Crusoe Island titled 'Man and nature in Juan Fernández'. In a similar vein to Vicuña Mackenna, Castedo enshrines the paradaisical nature of the island, noting that unlike in the rest of Chile, there is no "great chapter" in its history detailing the battle against geography and nature (1949a, p. 54). Instead, as he concludes in the final instalment, the island's inhabitants have themselves been influenced by nature, creating a society where there is no illness or incarceration, and a strong work ethic prevails (Castedo, 1949c, p. 47). As such, Castedo maintains the vision of Juan Fernández from the continent established by Vicuña Mackenna of a remote, mysterious place that is distant from Chile both geographically and culturally. Reflecting the changeability of depictions of island residents (Baldacchino, 2012, p. 57), for Castedo, the inhabitants are living a charmed life that he perceives to be free from the pressures of modern life – a stark contrast from the threatening woods-dwellers described in the *New York Tribune*.

Crafting a consumable space: Juan Fernández and the commodification of endemic species

The image of Juan Fernández propagated by the press and in tourist materials was not new. It reflected a scientific tradition that for decades had depicted the archipelago as a unique environment filled with exotic creatures such as the Juan Fernández hummingbird, blessed with exquisite seafood, and awash with ancient flora. Naturalists in particular constructed an image of the archipelago as an emblematic example of insular oceanic nature, connecting the islands' flora with the entire Pacific Basin and spotlighting links with places such as the Hawaiian Islands, New Zealand, Patagonia, and even the Antarctic continent. In the 19th century, the Juan Fernández Islands attracted scientists from Europe and the Americas who wished to study the natural history of Pacific islands and the ecology of insular environments. Expeditions such as the HMS *Challenger* voyage sponsored by the British Admiralty (1875), the Chilean botanical expedition led by Friedrich Johow (1891-2) and the Swedish Pacific Expedition (1916) all remarked upon the unique natural history of the islands. They also praised Juan Fernández's natural beauty: Henry Moseley from the *Challenger* expedition was astonished by the islands' appearance, and the Swedish naturalist Carl Skottsberg went as far as calling Juan Fernández "the queen of an ocean" (Moseley, 1879, p. 537; Skottsberg, 1911, p. 148). Botanists and naturalists were drawn to the islands due to the high levels of endemism, particularly the vascular plant flora.

Stuessy (2020, p. 23) contends, for example, that Robinson Crusoe Island "contains the highest density per km^2 of endemics on any ocean island". The endemic species of the islands thus became “siren calls” for naturalists in their attempts to understand botanical and evolutionary mysteries (Stuessy, 2020, p. 291), with the islands themselves being conceived as natural laboratories, an ideal work space for botanical research. In parallel, geologists such as Alexander Caldcleugh and Juan Schulze came to view the archipelago as a testing ground for theories about the formation of oceanic islands, and for the study of subsidence and erosion phenomena. Naturalists, though, tended to emphasise the landscape of the islands, disregarding the importance of the oceanic environments for the ecology of the archipelago and the human communities that inhabit this space. Juan Fernández therefore came to be valued for its terrestrial features, rather than for the ecotonal nature of its environment.

To follow in the footsteps of hero-explorer figures such as Johow or Skottsberg was an important selling point (Schell, 2019). The press, for example, marketed Juan Fernández to the “energetic tourist, forester or mountaineer”, specifically, individuals who sought “primitive conditions” (Unattributed, 1921, p. 9) Unlike on the continent where Chileans were able to domesticate the land and stimulate agricultural production, Juan Fernández emerges in Chilean discourse as the ultimate wilderness, a space that humans cannot tame. In his *En Viaje* article, Castedo remarks how “the human history of Juan Fernández is a living example of how a social being has tried to destroy a paradise, a Rousseauian utopia of coexistence, fortunately, without success” (1949a, p. 55). The lack of tourist infrastructure was thus marketed as a positive feature that was reflective of an uncontaminated natural environment where humans could be at one with nature.

The construction of an idealised depiction of nature was not only a means of commercialising the islands for touristic purposes. The advent of cruise ship tourism also offered new opportunities for exploiting and commodifying the islands’ natural elements. In this vein, discourses of Juan Fernández’s nature fit well with Cheer, Cole, Reeves and Kato’s characterisation of the critical relationship between small islands and modern tourism: islands “have always maintained allure as sights of paradisiacal conceptualisations and the embodiments underlined by nature, remoteness and the ‘island vibe’ fit neatly into the touristic endeavour” (2017, p. 41). In the case of Juan Fernández, endemism was transformed into a selling point for tourists keen to have an ‘exotic’ experience. Endemic flora, such as the Chonta palm, the luma tree (*Myrceugenia fernandeziana* and *Myrceugenia schulzei*) and the local sandalwood were used to produce souvenirs that could be purchased by tourists. For example, islanders used Chonta wood and collected fossilised sandalwood to make walking sticks and aromatic boxes (Looser, 1927; Gálvez, 1942; Unattributed, 1921, p. 9). They also cut down endemic ferns for tourists to use to decorate their homes (Ramírez, 1935). Local animals were also sold as souvenirs, most notably the Juan Fernández firecrown hummingbirds, which were desiccated by the islanders. They were popular with tourists on account of their attractive colouring and species dimorphism–red males and blue females–both with metallic ‘crown’ plumage (Looser, 1927, p. 243). *The South Pacific Mail* highlighted the local hummingbirds as a key attraction for nature lovers, remarking how unique this species was (Unattributed, 1921, p. 9). The tourist discourse thus transformed this bird species from an object of natural historical study into a static commodified object of curiosity. Today, it is critically endangered.

Islanders profited financially from the new dynamics introduced by cruise ship tourism. By listening to the radio, the locals could find out when tourists would be arriving, and prepare the souvenirs in advance (Gálvez, 1942, p. 60). In the press and in publicity, tourism was depicted as a natural extension of the islanders’ hospitality. Guzmán Parada, for example, remarked how “all the inhabitants of the port crowd the boats, squeeze into the docks and climb into our little boat, to offer us their unreserved hospitality and cheerful cordiality”

(Guzmán Parada, 1951, p. 225). In turn, tourists were expected to buy these souvenirs, and, as travel accounts record, they gladly did so, bringing Chonta sticks, sandalwood memorabilia, and even lobsters back to the ship (Branchi, 1922, p. 124). In this project of transforming the island into a consumable and commodified space, elements of the underwater world were also marketable as goods, although they figured less predominantly than terrestrial items. Seafood became a key feature of tourist visits, where "[t]he lover of fish diet can secure his meal ashore, and he be regaled with rich luscious cod and lobster" (Unattributed, 1921, p. 9). Significantly, seafood dishes would be many tourists' primary haptic and sensory engagement with the sea, representing one of their only forays into the islanders' aquapelagic society (Hayward, 2012; Suwa, 2012).

As an idealised vision of nature, Juan Fernández was also advertised as a hub for botanists and amateur naturalists. In particular, tourists participated in the epic narrative of how Johow and later Skottsberg came across the last living sandalwood specimens. For decades, naturalists from Europe and the Americas had struggled to understand why it started to decline in population in the early 19th century. Obsessed with this question, Johow conducted several expeditions to islands in the 1890s, and he and his crew were able to find one of the last living specimens on a Fernándezian peak. By analysing this tree, Johow concluded that the local sandalwood had become extinct due to intensive human exploitation as it was felled and sold to international markets (Johow, 1896, p. 130). The epic tale of how Johow was able to unravel this mystery was regaled to visitors by Pedro Arredondo, a local islander who guided the botanist through the lush forests and steep summits (Gálvez, 1942, p. 59). Yet this story was not framed as a cautionary tale about human depletion and overconsumption, rather, its aim was to entertain tourists and underscore the idea of naturalists as modern heroic figures that struggle against nature in their quest to understand it. Furthermore, narratives such as Johow and Arredondo's tended to overemphasise the local connections with the land, invisibilising the importance of the waterscape for their livelihood and everyday activities.

There were, however, early critics of the impact of tourism on the Juan Fernández Islands, particularly among the scientific community, which was concerned about biodiversity loss and the overconsumption of endemic species. Chilean naturalist Gualterio Looser, for example, underscored how intensive tourism had had a considerable impact on the islands' environment. Even though he had experienced cruise ship tourism to the island himself, embarking three times between 1925 and 1927, Looser noted in 1927 how in the two years since his first visit, the Chonta palm had all but disappeared. He opined that the Chonta was in grave danger, and feared that its continued exploitation would result in its disappearance (Looser, 1927, p. 242). Similar critiques were levelled by the Chilean biologist Filomena Ramírez. Writing in 1935, Ramírez argued that if the exploitation of the local palm was maintained at its current rate, the Chonta would inevitably meet the same fate as the sandalwood (1935, p. 58). Ramírez, though, went further in her criticism. At the April 1935 meeting of the Chilean Society of Natural History, Ramírez presented a article that detailed the extinction risk of the Chonta palm, advocating for the production of improved knowledge about the islands' environment and the need to implement conservation policies. As Looser had previously noted, she contested that tourism accentuated the overexploitation and overconsumption of certain endemic species. Today, many of the flora exploited for tourist consumption, including the Chonta and the Luma, remain extremely vulnerable.

The designation of the Juan Fernández Islands as a National Park in 1935 did not have an impact on the social and cultural representations of the islands or their economic activities for at least three decades. Cruise ships continued to stop in Cumberland Bay without regulation. The decision to transform these islands into a protected area was entangled with geopolitical aims, economic development projects, including the promotion of tourism, and efforts to preserve endemic nature. As Magdalena García and Monica Mulrennan's recent research has demonstrated, the Chilean state developed their first national parks "to assert political sovereignty over remote territories and resources" (García & Mulrennan, 2020, p. 199). Environmental protection also offers new ways of controlling people's activities and behaviours. Baldacchino has previously connected the creation of island imaginaries to political control (2012, p. 57). In the case of Juan Fernández, the creation of the national park provided the opportunity to protect the forests and control the economic production of the islanders. Indeed, the 1935 decree that established the islands as a national park specifically prohibited the exploitation of the Chonta palm and endemic ferns, recognising the unique nature of the Islands (Ministerio de Tierras y Colonización, 1935). Yet this protection was not enforced: Juan Fernández's nature continued to be exploited in order to create souvenirs into the mid-20th century, as Guzmán Parada's account attests (1951, p. 226). As Federico Freitas has acknowledged, "establishing protected areas only on article made sense, as national governments could reap the benefits of a token of 20th-century-modernity – the national park – without incurring the political and economic costs of implementing it" (Freitas, 2021, p. 7). All things considered, the creation of Juan Fernández Archipelago National Park offered the opportunity to reinforce Chilean sovereignty over the islands, bringing them 'closer' to the national imaginary and integrating them as one of series of idiosyncratic natural environments such as the Patagonian forests and the tropical islandscape of Rapa Nui. Remoteness then, was not perceived as hindrance to national unification, but an asset for projecting Chile further into the Pacific.

Conclusion

Returning to Macleod's notion of "cultural realignment", this article has shown how the arrival of cruise tourism in Juan Fernández led to the refashioning of its identity in hegemonic cultural contexts as a remote, edenic outpost untainted by human influence. In spite of the predominant image of isolation, the creation of Juan Fernández as a quasi-tropical cruise destination inserted the islands into new global circuits of travel that built on the successful transatlantic and transpacific shipping routes developed in the 19th century. The cruise liner in particular, as we have demonstrated, implies a negotiation of aquapelagic space that can make tourists feel uncomfortable as what they perceive to be stable boundaries between land and sea give way, especially in the disquieting liminal space of the shore, which as Gillis has emphasised, has often been a site of transformation, terror, and the supernatural (2012). As such, we can see how the visions of Juan Fernández in travel accounts and tourism marketing fail to account for an understanding of island life as inseparable from water and the perceived transgressions that such an understanding entails. While the tourists understand the water-land boundary as static, the islanders' multifarious relationship with the rock lobster proves that this is not the case.

Cruise tourism discourses reproduced colonial imaginaries that focused on land-centric depictions of the island's nature. These discourses engaged with triumphalist representations of the islands' past and created romanticised depictions of its unique nature that focused on its connection to an English literary hero. The Chilean government's decision to rename Masafuera as Alejandro Selkirk Island, a place where he never set foot, in order to reserve 'Robinson Crusoe' for the primary tourist destination of Masatierra, where he actually resided, betrays the perceived importance of this historical connection and its ability to reach across bodies of water. The Juan Fernández Islands' historical relationship with the Chilean state is thus complex, particularly as the nation has long struggled to negotiate its maritime image. Chile has constructed its identity with its back to the Pacific Ocean; the country's oceanic character and insularity did not start to figure in the national geographical imaginary until long after independence (Peliowski & Valdés, 2014). Yet, as Chile became a regional power following its victory in the War of the Pacific, national discourses started to emphasise the importance of its Pacific positionality. Juan Fernández thus became an important player in the national agenda. In this context, tourist practices were instrumental to the country's maritime claims, giving more importance to oceanic islands such as Juan Fernández and Rapa Nui, which had long been considered remote, marginal and unimportant for the country's development. Chilean Pacific islands began to be branded as exotic and romantic destinations, a taste of paradise that represented the interface between the national territory and maritory.

Finally, the overexploitation and overconsumption of species endemic to Juan Fernández, such as the firecrown and the Chonta palm tree, can be seen as cautionary tales documenting the impact of modern tourist practices on small islands. While each visit only brought a few hundred travellers, early-20th century cruise tourism had a remarkable impact on the island environment. Early criticism of tourism levied by naturalists such Looser (1927) and Ramírez (1935) showcase the rapid declines caused by uncontrolled commodification. As tourist activities are still of economic and social importance in the Juan Fernández archipelago, it seems pertinent to close by reflecting on the enduring cultural and environmental impact of tourism. Thankfully, conservation policies covering both marine and terrestrial environments implemented by the National Park administration in recent decades, and active efforts to create sustainable economic practices, particularly in lobster fishing, have helped to preserve the island's endemic species. Unlike in the first half of the 20th century, current environmental and social discourses understand the island as a fluid, continuous, and porous space at the juncture of land and sea where human and nonhuman agents interact, i.e. as an aquapelagic assemblage. The creation of the Juan Fernández Islands Marine Park in 2018 by the Chilean government, which builds on the conservation efforts of the terrestrial national park, showcases a recognition of the ecotonal character of Juan Fernández's natural environment. It is our hope that this will prove to be a successful policy, and that lessons will continue to be learnt from the past.

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