

[Book Review]

*Identity, Language and Belonging on Jersey:
Migration and the Channel Islands*

Identity, Language and Belonging on Jersey: Migration and the Channel Islands. By Jaïne Beswick. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 273 pages. €79.99.

Following a short introductory chapter that provides background on methodology and the history of Jersey, chapter 2 of *Identity, Language and Belonging on Jersey* locates the book within the field of island studies while discussing concepts of islandness, land, and sea. Chapter 3 focuses on historical migrations, from Neolithic times to the German occupation between 1940 and 1945 during World War II. Over the centuries, there have been numerous migrations to Jersey, with most arriving from nearby cultures but some coming from further afield. While noting that the Viking settlers from Norman times adopted French, this would have been better explained in terms of linguistic hybridity, along with the branches of Norman languages in the Channel Islands. The author outlines political turbulence over the centuries with wars between England and France and with Jersey on the front line. From these times, migrations to Jersey included French Calvinists, Huguenots, Bretons, Normans, and many from the British Isles. The chapter outlines the growth of tourism from the UK to Jersey from 1823 onwards and especially the rise of nineteenth-century economic migration, which saw skilled workers arriving from mainland Britain, Ireland, Wales, and other locations. There are a few minor points about the status of Jersey that might have been better explained, such as Jersey's connection with the Crown. The chapter closes with a discussion of out-migration, which shows the pressure on some islanders needing to migrate for a better living.

Chapter 4 outlines the recent history of Portuguese travelling to Jersey to work as labourers in agriculture, and the shift to mass tourism in the 1960s and 1970s, which witnessed a similar migration to the burgeoning tourism sector. The island's population from soon after the war nearly doubled by 2020 to just over 100,000 as a result of migration, which was mostly from the British Isles, with migrants working in tourism as well as in financial services, the current dominant sector.

This author introduces some qualitative data in the form of short interview quotes. Different issues concerning the island's population are covered, which mostly relate to employment law, residency, and citizenship. This leads into the importance of the use of English in everyday life but also includes a discussion of the contemporary multicultural island, or at least some islanders. Just as Portuguese dominated the non-British Isles

migration from the 1960s, migrants from Poland have been especially prominent in the new millennium. It would have been useful to discuss multilingualism in more depth and detail.

Chapter 5 is about island identity. Of interest to island studies, the geography of small islands can have much influence on identity construction. Emphasis is given to the socio-linguistics of Jersey, looking at the idea of ethnic identity. There is a useful theoretical discussion pertaining to concepts of authentic islanders. Other topics of interest are nation (island) branding and how this links with cultural strategy and the promotion of certain island features. In particular, Jersey's traditional language, Jèrriais, has been given some support in recent years. In the face of financial migration to the island, the use of Jèrriais shows resistance to the hegemonic use of English and a reassertion of the island's Norman heritage. Jersey's traditional language was historically known to have several dialects but is nowadays taught with the dominance of one variety over the others. The author discusses more recent revitalization movements concerning island branding. The chapter is interesting with its qualitative interview quotes, which offer islander experiences of island life.

The contemporary migrations of the Madeiran Portuguese are the focus of chapter 6. Portuguese are considered a significant minority, but this should be viewed as part of a non-English-speaking first language point of difference as UK financial migration to Jersey is a large and sometimes hidden sphere of island culture. Consideration is given to movement to and from Jersey for economic migration. There is potential to look at movement within Jersey, between urban and rural locations and between different sectors. The idea of a "Madeiran Quarter" is discussed, but one wonders exactly where it is. A map would have been useful as well as more demographic information. We are told that it is in St. Helier, but is this a local Portuguese/Madeiran notion or one embedded in all areas of island life? There may indeed be such a concentration, but islanders with Portuguese roots are dispersed all over the island. We read of concerns over the number of Portuguese in Malet Street, but where is it? Interestingly, the St. Helier parish authority agreed to rename James Street to Rue de Funchal, which embraces a Jèrriais prefix and the name of the Madeiran capital, which is twinned with St. Helier (Funchal has a Rua St. Helier).

There is much in the book that is of interest to island studies. Of particular relevance is the discussion of population and the politics of space and place, some of which is drawn from Boleat.¹

The idea that a relatively small island can encompass such linguistic diversity is of interest. Some of the book's sections are very short, and one is left wanting more. It is good to have interview quotes, but a book that claims to look at identity, language, and belonging on Jersey could have covered more languages, cultures, and identities. The focus on Portuguese in the last main chapter is useful but limited. More could have been made of cultural differences, both horizontally and vertically. The book's subtitle is misleading. It is not about migration and the Channel Islands but rather concerns (in one main chapter) Portuguese/Madeiran migration to Jersey in the contemporary era.

There are several errors in the book that are troublesome, the main ones being: “Sociètè Jersiaise” should be “Société Jersiaise” (76, 78, 111, 153, 167, 172); “in contract to” should be “in contrast to” (23); “Jérriais” should be “Jèrriais” (69, 99, 149, 244); “The Institute of Island Studies” is an error (169); and “Benedict Andersen” should be “Benedict Anderson” (75). One final comment concerns the front cover. One might wonder why it has a photo looking out over the cliffs at Jerbourg Point in Guernsey (the second largest of the Channel Islands after Jersey). It seems that this is probably an unfortunate error when choosing a cover image from a stock source, but it is a serendipitous one as Guernsey (also with a complex history of migration) is visible from Jersey, and much migration has occurred between the two islands (and other Channel Islands).

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Notes

1. Mark Boleat, *Jersey's Population* (Jersey: Société Jersiaise, 2015).