To what End, Paradise?
Notes for an island

A tall man in a white suit standing in the sunset on the shore. In his hands he holds objects of a remarkable complexity, surely these are not the product of man, such wonders, technological marvels. These can only be things from another realm, gifts from the ancestors, artefacts to be revered above anything else, such precious cargo. Over time the news of these developments spreads, through networks of communication, technology at once item and myth spreading and purporting its own worth. Gradually movements form and cultures develop, a new localism[1] derived from the article itself and also the promise it delivers, technology indistinguishable from magic[2]. A tool offering a sense of freedom, be it through accessibility, mastery, or even transparency. On occasion the man was seen again, at least according to those who were there at the time. The promise of the cargo reiterated and refreshed in the collective imagination. Driving aspiration and desire, binding an identity of place through shared will to possess and realise these objects, bringing wealth and prosperity to the island.

On the 5th of July 1774 British explorer James Cook landed the HMS Resolution on the south pacific island of Tanna, naming the islands now known as Vanuatu the 'New Hebrides' surveying and claiming them for the British crown. From one island to another, the borders of a small island in the north Atlantic extended to the shores of this tropical island paradise deep in the southern Pacific. Through these 'discoveries' and claims the concept of the island becomes a more fluid notion. What was physically contained or separated from its surrounds by it's geographic situation is also constructed through the psychology and mindsets of those who experience it, both native and alien to it - the explorer, or outsider, the individual looking in. In this way the scale of the island is relative to the known - i.e. that which is understood and realised by the inhabitants and indeed visitors, whilst conceptually existing as a framework, a set of ideas and notions, running parallel to the physical. This ideology in turn can be reinforced through the creation, collection and dissemination of artefact, things from or arriving on the island, fragments purporting to tell and disseminate the story, myth and existence of such a place, thus extending its borders in the minds of those who are aware of its existence.

Meanwhile in northern Europe many young men from the island in the north atlantic were embarking on their own personal explorations, across the English channel to mainland Europe in search of culture, embarking on their journeys, an individual quest taking in the popular cities and high society of mainland Europe as part of the romantic grand tour, extolling the myth of a classical beauty whilst at the same time buying, commissioning and acquiring antiquities as a kind of inverse cargo to bring back to the island. This classical and revivalist 'cargo' was brought to the island along with a sense of fabricated nostalgia, an idealised vision of classical perfection, something at which to strive for, yet ultimately does, and can not exist, an alternative island, out of reach.

The cargo or technology for which we so desire can be viewed as a microcosmic representation of the island, or the land. In so much as it holds the promise of the gods, be it though representation of classical perfection, pillaged and brought from on place and supplanted in another or the means, or tool with which to plot ones escape. Ones own journey either travelling towards a supposed paradise or utopia, or creating this in ones own surround. Technology forms a belief system, a way of living. Agricultural practices can start to re-interpret the land as technology, individuals re-addressing their direct relationship with the landscape in a very littoral way.[3] There is however an element of escapism here and the questions regarding scalability and sustainability of such approaches over a larger scale do not tend to be addressed, or remain to be seen beyond the idealistic view, rooted in a nostalgic sense of tradition and history.

The will to escape and extend beyond our 'known' and everyday to explore and inhabit is perpetuated through these traditions and the folklore and tales from the past. There is a romantic idealism attuned to the individual immersed in the landscape, or indeed immersed in a natural sublime.[4] The exploits

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[1] Localism - de-centralised region or local centric approach, see also UK Localism Act 2011

[2] Clarke A. Hazards of Prophecy: The Failure of Imagination, 1973

[3] Permaculture, investiture in agricultural technologies, the biological,

[4] *Snow Storm – Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth making Signals in Shallow Water, and going by the Lead. The Author was in this Storm on the Night the Ariel left Harwich*, Turner J.M.W., Oil on Canvas, 91x122cm, 1842

of these characters are recounted through popular culture that is seared into the collective imagination fulling the desire to venture beyond the island, crossing the borders imposed upon us as part of this quest for a sort of fulfilment. At an individual scale this can be achieved, presently technology and the tools available at our disposal do provide a lens to the future, to these distant lands, or even potentials. Where does the will to extra terrestrially derive from? Is it simply not enough to be present in our direct situation? The scale of the island is constantly evolving, a mutable form from the nation state, or even constituent island - the individual[5] to the notional 'spaceship' earth[6] travelling through the cosmos as a mechanism containing and through its occupation and maintenance, sustaining life.

Perhaps it is a motion to the very very far away[7] that drives us beyond our current states, and our terrestrial bind. Advanced technologies are making the prospect of venturing beyond our earthen landscape a real possibility. There is a shift in ownership also, the rights in space and possession of extraterrestrial bodies bound up by the 1967 Outer Space Treaty[8] states that; *'Outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means.'* [9] As such no nation state is able to own anywhere in space, however due to the commercial proliferation of extraterrestrial ventures, and privatised space exploration we have a new occupation and ownership of artefacts, new islands formed from technological devices occupying space, forming new territories beyond the realms of the nation state. This post national view is manifest in the creation of Asgardia[10] a privately backed utopian vision for a new extraterrestrial nation, dual citizenship can be applied for whilst on earth, once 100'000 citizenship applications are received the state can apply for official United Nations recognition. Technology/ cargo, once more fuelling a collective idealism and forging a togetherness, science fiction becoming scientific and social reality.

The creation of ones own state or place is not unique in scale to the extra terrestrial, the micro-nation enjoying specific status as a result of geographical positioning. Individuals have made, created and inhabited their own insular nation states, from the hedonistic 'Isola delle Rosa' [11]situated 500 meters clear of Italian territorial waters to the North Sea Principality 'Sealand' [12]situated just clear of the British coastline. What constitutes these places and defines them in addition to their physicality is the concept and place of these in the imagination, these micro nations as island containers for our dreams and ideas, a place where (indeed in the case of L'isola delle Rosa) ones wildest dreams and fantasies *could* take place..   The island as construct for fantasy does not even have to extend offshore, the view that 'an Englishman's home is his castle' purports this ideology, ones home becoming a citadel within the landscape where the owner, or master holds court and sets the tone for the place. In socio-economic terms this starts to get a little conflicted where the wealthiest individuals are in turn those with the most 'power' over their place, resulting in the traditionalist invention of environments[13] through to the creation of classical behemoths to modernist 'utopia'.

The island becomes an embodiment for a paradise, a vessel for dreaming and a place where some of these ideas might come true. the search for these places and constant will to create or realise can lead to a cycle of attempting and ultimately failing to realise the ultimate goal. As you move closer to paradise it moves further away, can we ever really reach this as a finite point? In this way 'paradises' shift, places that

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[5] Tillmans W. *EU Campaign*, 2016 http://tillmans.co.uk/campaign-eu
MEDITATION XVII, "No man is an island….", *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions,* Donne J. 1624

[6] Operating Manual For Spaceship Earth, Buckminster Fuller R. 1968

[7] www.vvfa.space , Friend, Rakotoniaina et al. 2014 -

[8] Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, United Nations, 10th October, 1967

[9] p.11 United Nations Treaties and Principles on Outer Space, United Nations, New York, 2002

[10] https://asgardia.space/en/page/concept

[11] Micro-nation, 44,10'48"N 12,37'00"E, Adriatic Sea, Declaration of Independence 1st May,1968, Dissolution Feb 1969

[12] Micro-nation, 51,53'42.6"N 1,28'49.8"E, North Sea, Declaration of Independence 1967

[13] Poundbury, Dorset, England, built by HRH Prince Charles to the values of an imagined 'traditional' England, his own model society, mixing stylistic cues and urban design ideas in a corner of the larger island that he will one day 'inherit'.

never were, but exist only in our imagination, points beyond our comprehension, places to aspire to but that are in actuality invisible.[14]

The journey to demarcation to define and map the borders of the island becomes a challenging task, in particular in the present. The explorer charts the known, venturing around the edges, transforming an imagined landscape into new charted territory, this land always existed, however not necessarily in the minds of those who were not there. As we see more fluidic or soft landscapes emerge through the blurring of boundaries between the digital and physical worlds this surveying becomes impossible,[15] the internet expanding at exponential rates, borders and territories taking on the transitory roles. The network can become technology for dissemination as well as technological territory, through the power of the media exerting its pressure on the definition of traditional 'physical' territory and states. The rise of political popularism across the globe owes no small debt to the power of this engine driving fake news articles, spreading fabricated figures[16] and detail to a population hungry for direction and frustrated by the status quo. The island here becomes a container for self, in the case of the small island in the north atlantic a reassuring symbol of who we are, or rather who we might want to be, or even (nostalgically) want to become again. An flawed ideology trading off supposed values of an idealised golden age.[17]

Perhaps it is how we choose to encounter and relate to the island, the potential of the paradise, that defines our identity within the landscape. The thrill of the unknown, the challenge of futures that we don't yet know how to define, allowing ourselves the opportunity to expand our own islands beyond their natural shores. Alongside this exuberance is the potential of the glitch, the inconceivable, and the terror of it actually happening.[18] Followed by the wait for what comes next.

When asked about this mysterious man on the shore, and when he will return heavy with the promised cargo the islander replied; "he has not come in more than sixty years,"
"don't you think thats a rather a long time?," asked the explorer
"I can wait," he said, " for you have waited over two thousand years for your cargo, for me sixty years, is not so long." Technology as tool and artefact, belief source and binder, a means to paradise.

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[14]'Ile de sable, New Caledonia, Phamtom Island, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/22/sandy-island-missing-google-earth

[15] http://www.no-mans-sky.com/ Science fiction game set within generative constantly expanding virtual environment

[16] £350M a week promised to National Health Service by Leave Campaign politicians http://news.sky.com/story/lets-see-the-163350m-for-the-nhs-say-mps-10630640

[17] https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/sep/07/pro-eu-protest-planned-for-last-night-of-the-proms

[18] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ma3SAUqnUMA Uk Independence Party Leader Nigel Farage, speech 23rd June 2016