A
Return
to the
Island

A Return to the Island
edited by Helena Lugo

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Map of the island of Utopia. Woodcut by Hans Holbein, from the 1518 edition of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia,* printed in Basel

The island
of Utopia is 200 by 500 miles.
It is crescent shaped like a new moon.
The sea enters and spreads into a broad bay.
The bay is quiet and smooth like a big lake.
It has 54 cities, all spacious and magnificent.
Each city is divided into four equal parts.
There are 6000 households per city.
Homes are redistributed every 10 years.
Everything in Utopia is as similar as it possibly can be.
The citizens share a common language and customs.
There are mirrored institutions and laws.
Agriculture is the most important job on the island.
In Utopia everything belongs to everybody.
No one owns private property and money is useless.
Nobody possesses more than they need.
They value what is useful like steel, not useless like gold.
They excel every other people having a high level of culture.
They take their meals in common.
Utopians spend most of their leisure time reading.
Happiness can only be found in good and honest pleasure.
They worship a single power: unknown,
eternal and inexplicable.
The laws are few, fair and obvious.
Slaves are criminals or captured in wars.
People are easygoing, cheerful, clever
and fond of leisure.
There is no other place as
prosperous and happy.
They have no worry about
the future.

A B C D E F G H I J

K L M N O P Q R S T

U V W X Y Z

To the editor:

What am I to do when this urge for disappearing becomes uncontainable, definitive?

Regarding what you've asked from me -writing something for your publication- I'm afraid I won't be able to do it. One often imagines that a better world is either already gone or yet to come. I myself like to believe that Utopia is an unreachable region because it is happening right now: while I'm writing this, and then, while you're reading it.

Utopia is the unyielding present.

I find it comforting to think that every moment that doesn't belong to us, and that passes away as imperceptible, is in every case, the best of them all.

So I hope you understand the reason why I can't offer you anything. However, I promise you that when the last letter of my name gets lost, you will receive a letter: a blank envelope, with no stamp and no remittent address. By then, you will know that I've found the island. I ask you not to look me up, neither when you receive the letter, nor 500 years later.

I'm sorry if this is getting too personal, but is there any other way to do it?

If you consider this text suitable for your book, you can publish it entirely. As for the credits, I'm more concerned with disappearing than appearing.

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Anonymous, *Letter to the Editor*, 2016

A Return to the Island
Helena Lugo

Remembrance restores possibility to the past, making what happened incomplete and completing what never was. Remembrance is neither what happened nor what did not happen but, rather, their potentialisation, their becoming possible once again
Giorgio Agamben[1]

[1] Agamben, G. (2000). *Potentialities. Collected Essays in Philosophy.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

ocated beyond the known world, there is Utopia: an island that does not exist. In spite of its inexistence, it is five hundred miles long and its coasts are surrounded by the water of a pacific lake. Its cities — with a fictional urban layout and planning — are inhabited by imaginary people that live in a continuous state of perfection. No one lacks anything and no one possesses any more than they need; there is no place as prosperous or happier.

Five hundred years have passed since Thomas More published *Utopia* in 1516; a moment that founded a territory as unknown as indispensable on any map among cartographies spanning time and space, as the concept itself became oblivious to being a better place and transformed into a symbolic, unattainable better future. Thus, fictional and isolated, Utopia's lack of place endures somewhere non-existent and yet always present as, even elusive to the outside world, it remains a most sought-after destination.

The naming of the island — as ironic as eloquent — reveals the many impossibilities that it portrays, for More knew that if such a place existed, it could only be *nowhere*. Thus, in an attempt to unveil from its origin the only possible *dénouement* of his fiction, he coined the term *utopia* from the greek *ou* (no) and *topos* (place), meaning *no place*. Corroborating that in *there* everything is denial, the rivers flowing are *anhidros* — without water —, the princes ruling are *ademos* — without people — and the explorer relating the utopian forms and ways of living is named *Hythloday* — without sense. Nonetheless, it is within these logomachies that some sort of rational delirium is manifested: as the unknown territory proposed by the author is not limited to the fantastic. Instead, it is a jigsaw of facts and fictions divided into two parts. The first one takes the state of unease and discomfort of medieval England as a starting point; examining philosophical, political and economic questions. The second one is a travel narrative that describes the system of a newly discovered territory named Utopia, where everything is as perfect as imagination made it possible. It

details the customs, habits and government laws of a lost territory that overcame the reality of that time and even our own, five centuries later.

This encouraging viewpoint against a rejecting world, partially dispossesses *Utopia* from its literary condition and fills it with a political force. The comparison that More traces from the real to the imaginary reveals the necessities of the time in the form of desires; elucidating both the limitations and potentialities of his society. Therefore, the Republic pictured by the English thinker is not only an idyllic literary work, a remote island, an elusive concept of perfection or a critique, but — most of all — due to its intrinsic political condition, it also offers the opportunity to harbour conscious dreams.

Leaving behind the nostalgia for a seemingly irretrievable lost territory, *A Return to the Island* departs from a fundamental question: *where is the island and, with it, the promise of a better future?*

Modernity announced utopia as a romantic unified impulse. We were never as close to envisaging a better world in the light of scientific and technology developments. The idea of progress set a process in motion that constructed skyscrapers, urban superstructures and launched space missions that even made us think that the island could be found elsewhere in the universe. However, the idea that the future will improve the human condition no longer prevails and modernity has proven unable to deliver on its promises. Victims of a fictional horizon, the imaginaries envisaged in the past were superior to anything dreamt of now.

Currently, every projection of the future quickly turns into a lack of alternatives that leave us only with dystopian scenarios. Art and architecture stopped looking at the horizon and began looking at the past; the way the advent was conceived was no longer directed towards a utopian way of thinking, but to its ruin. The possibility of creating another island with its own territory and language has vanished: 'it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism'[2]. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the End of History was also announced, as the debate concerning whether the system should be communist, fascist or capitalist ended up recognising that the latter had come to stay[3]. And now, there only remains 'the universal belief [...] that the historic alternatives to capitalism have been proven unviable and impossible, and that no other socioeconomic system is conceivable'[4]. It is within this paralysis of the political imaginary that the future has been cancelled[5]: the lack of alternatives has led us to elude utopian thinking. Where is the island that, despite being immaterial, remote and inaccessible, suggested a path to follow?

[2] Phrase attributed to Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Žižek in Fisher, M. (2009). *Capitalist Realism, Is There No Alternative?* Winchester, UK: Zero Books, p. 1

[3] Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The End of History and The Last Man.* London: The Free Press.

[4] Jameson, F. (2007). *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions.* London: Verso, p. xii

[5] Williams, Alex and Nick Srnicek. (2013). *#ACCELERATE MANIFESTO for an Accelerationist Politics*, Critical Legal Thinking, p. 2

Trying to defy the absence of More's ideal Estate, this publication makes an active search for the island, but rather than looking out for a region, it embarks on a temporal search: it swerves towards the past. If utopia is no longer located in the times yet to come, it is pivotal to turn backwards and ask what is left behind whilst tracking the traces left from one place to the other. The return implies the recovery of a seemingly lost time. Because if utopia is nowhere, it is left up for us to find it[6]. Its lack of place and time is a void that, precisely exhausted by its emptiness, conveys the promise of adopting infinite forms. It is an uninhabited signifier (or rather a placeless signifier) that lingers, persists and comes back to be signified once again.

A Return to the Island drifts among increasingly dystopian landscapes, so as to remap an imagined territory that, through the revision of former notions of utopias and its failures, acts as a rhetorical exercise that glimpses at imaginary past and future spaces in order to create social, economical and political alterities. The book encompasses the metaphor of a sea voyage divided into four parts: The Island (the promise of what is lost), The Sea (a place of contemplation and terror), The No-Time (to be forever sailed) and The Horizon (that perfect world we go blind looking for). This embarkation allows a poetic and political exploration amidst imaginary and real geographies.

Artists, writers, curators, philosophers, theorists, musicians and storytellers were invited to act as explorers and return to the island from a contemporary perspective. The contributions address the disparity between the idealism in Utopia and the material reality, whether in art, sociology, politics, urbanism or gender, in order to draft comparisons with our current situation. The project, which has developed and formulated itself through newly realised works, revisits the ideals of modernity along with its broken promises and lost futures so as to reveal what remains, what is still being looked for and what has disappeared to never come back.

The idea of *the island* works as an umbrella that exacerbates our needs in the shape of desires and pipe dreams, precisely because it is secluded, in the hopes that isolation leads to beginning. After all, the island seems like a place where utopias can indeed happen. They see the world from the distance, as if they wouldn't belong to it, but simultaneously, they can't escape from it; they are isolated, yet not alone. As recalled by Mexican writer and poet Alfonso Reyes, one frequent condition of utopias is to be islands: 'Islands were the missing Atlantic regions named by Plato; island was where Calypse offered Odysseus oblivion and restless love; island was

that of San Balandran, ancestor of the Penguins; islands were those seeked territories feared by smugglers during the era of the great discoveries; island, that of Thomas More...'[7]

These pages are an exhibition space that acts as a refuge for *utopian thinking*, understanding the *utopia* as an *artistic* practice in itself; a perfect concatenation indeed, for the idea of *art* is inherently linked to *utopian ideals.* The content is both exegetical and generative; it is critical as much as it is inventive — it does not abandon itself completely to rationality nor to fiction, but it is located in the space between, where the fiction aspires to be real and the real is critical to our present.

A Return to the Island suggests that by making an active search of this fictitious place and looking at its traces and past, it can illuminate the variegated pathways on how we are to envisage the future. This publication — besides functioning as a register of utopian thoughts — seeks to promote the construction of utopias through a place that is essential to imagine the future: art.

[6] More, Thomas and Stephen Duncombe. (2012). *Open Utopia.* Brooklyn, N.Y., London: Minor Compositions, p. xix

[7] Reyes, A. (1998). *La máquina de pensar y otros diálogos literarios* (The Lullian Circle and Other Literary Dialogues.) (Felipe Garrido Ed.) Mexico: Asociación Nacional del Libro, p. 129

I. The Island (the promise of what is lost)

Thinking about utopia has been possible only when the historical reality of situations, societies and states has appeared totally overloaded, providing no opening, no way out towards a different horizon. One had therefore to look elsewhere. An island. No one knows precisely where, but somewhere other than here and now

Yves Charles Zarka[8]

More's eccentrically timeless and spaceless approach is ignited with an overwhelming capacity to radiate suggestions and thus, acquires an unparalleled seductive capacity. Among the disenchantment of 16th century England, he painted the image of an ideal, perfect state; a terrain where fantasy operated and — more importantly — where a radical form of otherness, difference and totality was portrayed. For this reason, his Republic had to happen on an island: a place that, despite being lost, preserved the hope of being found. This first section of the book tackles Utopia in its simplest form; artists and writers aim to relate to the island through both, its futility and its idealistic constitution. Rodrigo Red Sandoval's *No Title* is inspired by the way in which the Utopian territory was created: the order of King Utopus to create a moat separating a piece of the continent. By wilfully reconfiguring geographic territories, we can create symbolic ones where confines are flexible, capable of change and rupture. It is in this place, where the conjunction between physical and symbolic displacements made of fictions might coincide with the real.

As Red's image announces the beginning of a voyage through symbolic territories on the island, Richard Noble's text, *The Promise of what is Lost*, evidences how these explorations are strategies that work as a powerful hope device, with which humanity can engage in the service of daring our current (and never-ending) injustices and inequalities. As understood by Noble, More's commonwealth is rather a poetic articulation which, instead of being a geographic land, takes the form of an immaterial loss that if recovered, 'can orient us towards a better future'.

One of the most basic principles in Utopia is common property. *Everybody Belongs to Everybody* is Manuel Mathieu's take on this idea, with his characteristic flow of transformation and destabilisation of the perception of images. His drawings also represent an abstract bestiary of what Utopian inhabitants might look like, living in a place where identity is not defined by what *they are* but by what *they have* — a space where individuality is blurred by the commonwealth.

Going deeper into the island's rules, Sara Rodrigues's *Nonsense Peddler* aims to elucidate an anthropological insight into civilian life. She created an exegetic score, inviting people to send various recordings of their daily life and surroundings, as well as talks and opinions following instructions in tune with utopian ideals. Her piece is a compilation of sonic fragments about the ways people live their lives, seen through the lens of More's ideas. The score questions the totalitarian aspect of communal life and wonders what we could possibly take from it.

Rodrigues's inquiry is seconded by Rhiannon Firth's text, *The Utopian Model of Social Change*, which is both a diatribe against and a defense of More's Utopia. While it accepts its totalitarian nature, it also exposes that anti-utopian visions distance from radicality in order to become conciliatory. This mediocre view of the world, unlike utopian models, does not lead to an *education of desire*, which is crucial to understanding our current *status quo* and establishing ambitious political dreams. As romantic as it is revolutionary, this text is an invitation to think of Utopia as a way to negotiate and identify our desires by 'engaging with impossible futures'.

In tune with the lifestyle of the island communist rules, Sigrid Holmwood explores the relationship between painting and the figure of the peasant; a provocation to the hegemonic concepts of Western modernity and progress. *Everyone Must Farm in Utopia* is inspired by Agriculturalism, also known as the School of Tillers movement during the warring states period in China, which advocated peasant utopian communalism and egalitarianism. They, just like the Utopians, believed that everyone should farm, including the emperor. She poses this reflection as a more egalitarian, communal and democratic society where we could establish a different relationship with nature.

In an exploration of the island that takes a language perspective, Ruth Beale's *Seed Becomes Tree Becomes Forest* explains the way Utopia is doomed from the beginning, since its meaning is synonym of impossibility, and states that the lack of strategies that might have once led to its realisation overshadows its political condition. However, language might offer an escape. Beale evidences how Utopia's multiple meanings can slip out of reach, and therefore, they can shade light on how we are to relate to it.

Beyond the geography and lifestyle of the island lays that which separates it from the continent and, along with it, a possibility to find both a continuity of history inasmuch as to tell it otherwise. Although the promise of the island does not comprise or afford even a glimpse of it, its possible existence insists upon one performing an act of faith.

[8] Zarka, Y. C. (2011). 'The Meaning of Utopia'. The New York Times at https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/08/28/the-meaning-of-utopia/

II. The Sea (a place of contemplation and terror)

We are far from any land, and alone, with our sails and engines. Alone also with the horizon. The waves come from the invisible East, patiently, one by one; they reach us, and then patiently, set off again for the unknown West, one by one. A long voyage, with no beginning and no end… Rivers and streams pass by, the sea passes and remains. This is how we must love it, faithful and fleeting
Albert Camus[9]

Throughout history, utopia has had but one constant: escaping into a horizon of intelligibility. The greater the crisis in which a society finds itself, the more distant it seems from creating a discourse that dovetails rationality with disenchantment. Digging into the past in order to return to the last time utopia became fairly visible, the artworks in this chapter explore how the notion of utopia adjusted to its precepts and aesthetics, regaining vitality during modernity. Each artwork traces the way in which the future became present, the promise became myth and the progress became ruin.

[9] Camus, A. (2013 [1938]). *The Sea Close By*. London: The Penguin Group, p. 4

Using the Titanic as a metaphor for modernity along with the wreckage of its promises, Carl Gent's *Marine Snow I* suggests the construction of utopias standing on top of other ruins. He proposes a fictitious landscape — flooded and adrift — where not only one, but many boats have sunk. From the bottom of the sea, the search for the coast is located in the same place where we locate our utopias: an unattainable horizon.

With little hope, Guillermo Roz's approach delves into the inescapability of the present (the one and only possibility we have of making things right without previous rehearsal), just to disclose the fact that, historically, the utopia of knowledge and democracy, along with that of More, have failed. In *Ceci n'est pas une Utopie*, individualism has taken over a collective desire for a better present, future and even past. If there indeed is an island, it is impossible to find for we are all surrounded by the sea.

In a sort of geography ahead of its time, Gustavo Abascal's *Continental Apport V* makes utopia elusive under visual terms. He creates a discouraging map which is impossible to be read or represented, challenging the definition of utopia as an island that was once mapped, but never located. Abascal creates a self-contradictory cartography obliterating its representation as a symbol of utopia's well-suspected fatal fate.

Following this dystopian and disenchanted standpoint, Ting-Ting Cheng's *There Is No Utopia Without Dystopia* appeals to the utopian ideals of Plato's *Republic* and its relationship to the future — a reference of major importance to More. She extracts several sentences from the Socratic dialogue containing the word *will* to scrutinise his ideal Estate. What she finds is a slow conversion of a utopia into a dystopia.

Isaac Torres's *Hansautopia* uses the example of the Tiergarten in Berlin as a symbol of the many architectural projects that began as a sign of progress and urban renovation in postwar Germany, but ended up being obsolete. Under the disguise of communist development, this place is now occupied by one of the main global fast food chains — an eloquent destiny for communist ideals within a capitalist system.

While the Tiergarten in Berlin became a space diametrically opposed to the one of its original intention, the utopic space explored by Tania Ximena is now completely abandoned. *79º North*, set in Pyramiden, Svalbard in the Arctic Circle, is a vestige of the revolutionary constructivism in a Norwegian territory frozen in time by the arctic weather, the Cold War and capitalism. Once a late expression of Soviet planning and the utopic vanguard, Pyramiden is now inhabited by emptiness.

Precisely in this 20th century quest for Utopia, certain historic junctures legitimised the use of violence. *Towards a Representation of Utopia* by Michailangelos Vlassis-Ziakas presents these historical phenomena in images that reveal the instant in which utopia is indeed achieved in the form of a dystopia, as that is the only possible way to materialise the idyll: 'history appears to prove two things: one, Utopias, once politically realised, are staggering in their brutality; and two, they are destined to fail'[10].

[10] More, Thomas and Stephen Duncombe. (2012). *Open Utopia.* Brooklyn, N.Y., London: Minor Compositions, p. ix

The artworks in this chapter seem to sail aimlessly amidst merciless water, seeking an invisible horizon. However, even from the sorrow of failure, the utopian potential transformed into ruin might be re-inhabited and re-attempted. We need to start thinking of utopia not as something that is meant to fail but as something that has happened to fail. And maybe, just then, we can keep on sailing.

III. The No-Time (to be forever sailed)

We will sing to the infinity of the present and abandon the illusion of a future
Franco Berardi[11]

There are only two possible temporalities for utopias in our imaginaries and both of them are located in unreachable spans of time, either a nostalgic irretrievably lost past or an ever-postponed future — they navigate without intended course. The notion of *no-time* refers to an emancipation of the future. It is a revolutionary gaze in which we no longer locate a better world in a time yet to come (for that only delays its realisation), nor in an idealised past (as that only romanticises what never happened); instead, we locate it in the *here* and *now*. The *no-time* is about learning from history and making transformations for the present, without the hopes of a better world for generations to come.

[11] Berardi, F. (2011). 'The Future After the End of the Economy'. e-flux, no. 3

In an actual attempt to map the nowhereness of Utopia, Cansu Çakar's *Something We Made*, offers a paradoxical vision. Her bucolic landscape of nowhere can be read as a parody of the nowhereness (*ou- topos*); a rather abstract landscape where nothing is really clear, although it has been mapped. She positions her preoccupations into an unlocated territory, conveying that these sort of fictions are something we have constantly been mapping throughout time. However, the dangers of the nowhere are quickly transformed from place to time.

Delving into the notion of time, Dimitra Gkitsa's *No Utopia for the Precarious* makes a reflection on the critical condition of our time and the biopolitical forms of control that originate and maintain collective suffering. Through Maurizio Lazzaretto's idea of debt and labour, Judith Butler's take on biopower and Franco Berardi's slow cancellation of the future, Gkitsa's text is as much a reflection on the institutionalisation of precarity as it is a plea to stop thinking about the future and try to find solutions that will no longer get lost in the horizon, but find their realisation in the present.

Making a temporal exploration of sorts, Derzu Campos creates a graphic with the use of big data, representing the number of times throughout history that the word utopia has been used. Navigating through historic and temporary conjunctures that anxiously interrogate fate, he produces an atemporal imagery that confronts us with the broken promise of our once utopian landscapes. Nonetheless, this acknowledgement is as much a recognition of failure as it is a reminder of the impulse and energy that once made us believe in the meaning of utopia: a souvenir of how the word has been transformed throughout five centuries.

Louis Moreno's *Amaurotism, or Utopia Intolerance* wonders about the current *zeitgeist* of our utopias: who could actually have a utopian attitude in the midst of an established and well-consolidated neoliberalism? The answer takes us to another voyage across the sea, only this one does anchor in an archipelago of startups. It is the reign of the free market; political control has been successfully eluded and, just like Utopia's capital Amauroton, it is a place *more equal* than the others. Nevertheless, the inequality that separates Utopia's capital from the rest of the island is defined by both the pursuit and achievement of happiness. Utopia may be considered a failure to some, but Amaurotism has almost completely fulfilled the utopian dream (unless utopian desire and thought leads our exploration elsewhere).

Uprooting questions about gender into More's imaginary, Nina Power's *Hertopia* transfers More's pun between *no* place and *good* place to that of a *feminine topos*, by asking what a true feminist utopia — one no longer envisioned by a male gaze — would be like. The island remains unmapped, as no topography yet exists. Unfortunately, contemporary feminist radicalism can be seen as less radical in the pre-Marxist communism that More envisioned. Should Utopia exist, a more horizontal, emancipated and egalitarian society for women would be its defining achievement.

Finally, Bill Balaskas's *The Leadership Has Failed* explores Rosa Luxemburg's last words where she admits defeat. However, they are followed by a takeover, reflecting a strong belief in the ability to transform the world through the power of the masses; namely, a quite optimistic view of the human condition. Through sleep masks that have Luxemburg's phrase written on them, he uses the metaphor of sleep as a loss of consciousness where art is the only antidote that can make us regain it through symbolic and metaphorical small acts.

'The No-Time (to be forever sailed)' abandons the idea of the present as a historical transition towards Utopia, and aims to pragmatically enact these belief systems. The chapter bets on the cultural collapse of the future and instigates the actualisation of such radical social changes. It stops postponing the realisation of utopias and urges us to engage with the past in order to understand how former failures have shaped our present; as if what happens now could shape what's next, but never living in the illusion of an unreachable future.

IV. The Horizon (that perfect world we go blind looking for)

For if we envision a horizon to be, simply put, the 'line' demarcating (either in spatial or temporal terms) that which is not yet within our grasp — something perhaps even not yet imaginable, obscured, or indeed declared impossible by the dominant order — could we not find in the notion of horizon a new and potentially liberating significance?
Maria Hlavajova, Simon Sheikh and Jill Winder[12]

[12] Hlavajova, Maria, Simon Sheikh and Jill Winder. (2011). *On Horizons: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art*. Utrecht Rotterdam: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, p. 8

Utopia intervenes reality by establishing that which is missing. Although history has taught us that, among the spectrum of ideologies that aim to transfigure the world, some fail more spectacularly than others, our approach to utopia cannot end when failure is accepted and recognised. It is from these ruptures that the past is able to adopt a future embedded with hope: Utopia's multiple attempts show the existence of moments where the horizon has become visible.

Looking for possible outings among these processes of modernity disenchantment, the last section of the book is driven by the idea of a *horizon of possibility* within the history of social change. *Love in the Multiverse* by Himali Singh Soin is the depiction of two horizons, the first one overshadowed by the dark, the second one illuminated by daylight. Her images are followed by a series of poems filled with metaphors of the return and the no-place; stories that, just as horizons, are filled with inferences, entanglements, deep voids and mystery.

Adolfo Vásquez Rocca dives into the novel *The Invention of Morel* written by Adolfo Bioy Casares in 1940; a narrative that, just as many other imagined worlds, occurs in an island that suggests a technological utopia. His text, *Simulacra, Seduction and the Voyages of Immortality* is a comparison between Hythloday's and Morel's island; an analysis of the museum as a place of memory and simulacra, a space for infinite simulations navigating throughout eternity, a place to rehearse utopias that, if repeated enough, might become true.

Following this perpetually unending search for a better time, Suzanne Treister's *Hexen 2.0* tarot card deck is a metaphor for the construction of destiny, (dis)enchantment and hidden knowledge, so as to find and foresee a future that collects all of our actions. She follows Benjamin's statement on how 'nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history'[13]. Hence, her work discloses the need to re-do our concepts and restructure our discourses through rationalism and divination. Mark Pilkington makes a tarot reading on Utopia using Treister's researched tarot. His reading consists in thinking of the present, past, hopes and futures of utopia, so as to start imagining possibilities and relocating horizons.

[13] Benjamin, W. (2008). *Tesis sobre la historia y otros fragmentos* (On the Concept of History and Other Fragments.) (Bolívar Echeverría, Trans.) Mexico: Ítaca, p. 37

Stepping on solid ground, Legacy Russell's short tale *Yoshino Maru* is an optimistic one, even when sadness transpires in every sentence. Set on an island, surrounded by water, it contemplates the individual within a constant struggle for survival: a search for hope in a world of self-erasure, where even if we are doomed to our finitude, we are blindly driven to look for a better world.

Aware that the island of Utopia has never belonged to this world, but to the realm of speculation and imagination, Rodolfo Sánchez's text is both a revision of the disenchantment that has led to the creation of utopias, and an unveiling of the potentiality contained in the idea of changing space and time to create better societies — even if those territories are figments of our imagination. *Outside the World, the Only Worthy Conquest* proves the existence of utopias in the only place able to sustain them: idealism.

Equally as hopeful but in the realm of abstraction, Richard Melkonian's *Iona* is a composition that relates every part of the world and makes it work into a natural order. Its title refers to the Hebridean island of Iona: an outcrop of Atlantis that still crests the waves[14]. The score means to imitate nature in its modes of operation, by creating a holonic social system enacted through music-making.

[14] Conrad, P. (2009). *Islands: A Trip Through Time and Space*. London: Thames & Hudson, p. 57

And where Melkonian thinks of utopia as sound, Alejandra Arrieta's *Becoming Utopia* thinks More's ideal *Estate* as a *state of being*. She aims to appeal to different sensations through music, poetry, emotion and fate. Her text is an invitation to stop *looking* for and *become* the place — deterritorialise instead of territorialise somewhere, in order to save us from the inconsistencies of the physical world. The way she understands utopia is almost as an aesthetic experience: an ungraspable yet sublime sensation that can actually happen as long as we decide to.

Finally, Alex Stursberg's *Habitat Island Two* is the register of a performance made in 2016, in Vancouver. It is a floating island that mimics the topography of this man-made area located in False Creek, erected in order to represent what was once there. Though it contains much native plant life, there never was an isle there to begin with. The piece explores the human need to build aits and, simultaneously, reveals the impossibility of recreating the natural world.

Artists and writers approach the horizon in a variety of forms: as a place of desire, expectation and even transformation; as that line where the unrepresentable takes place; or as a common ground, common fiction or shared island. However, any understanding of the horizon depends on where one stands, not only geographically but also symbolically, historically and politically. The possibility of the horizon also implies that not everything is determined and, instead, it brings a transformative potential to the place towards which one looks.

A Return to the Island contains the promise of what is lost, but also the promise of what is yet to come. It takes us back to the effort of making something: an effort linked to intention and desire as well as means, access, responsibility and hope. It attempts to remind us of our capacity to keep navigating, even if we seem to be too close to the abyss. Moreover, it suggests that if we sail plenty enough, we might soon dock *nowhere* and only by then will we know the extent to which a work of literature can anticipate or inaugurate reality, and overflow More's imagination. Because, if we have learnt anything from Utopia, it's that the commencement of *any* world begins, precisely, in *nowhere*.
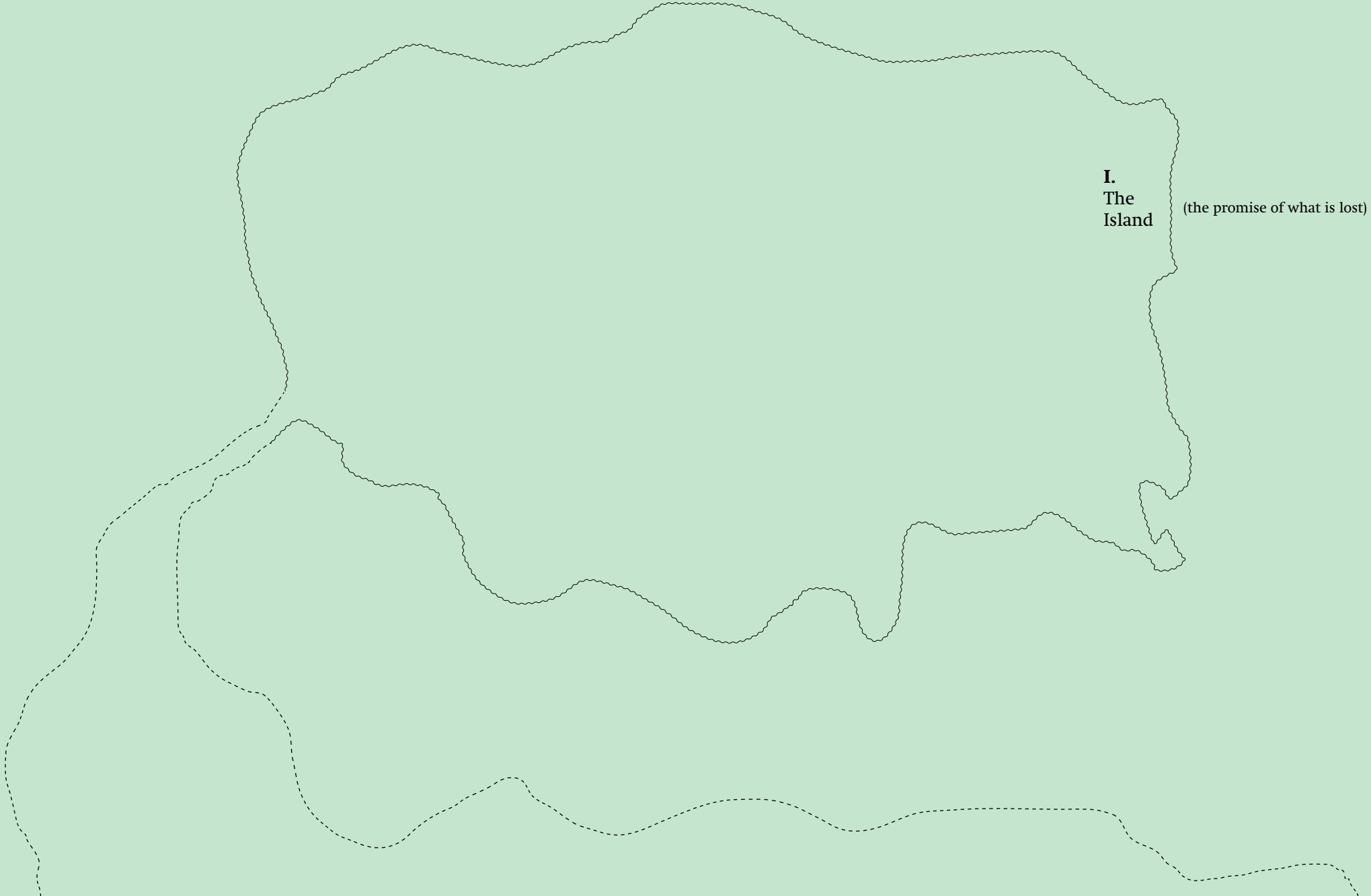
I.
The
Island   (the promise of what is lost)

garrison. The other rocks are hidden and therefore treacherous. The channels are known only to the natives, and so it does not easily happen that any foreigner enters the bay except with a Utopian pilot. In fact, the entrance is hardly safe even for themselves, unless they guide themselves by landmarks on the shore.

were removed to other

an enemy's

engineering that

trong forces from coming ashore.[3]

the report goes and as the appearance of the

ws, the island once was not surrounded by sea. Utopus,[4] who as conqueror gave the island its name (u to then it had been called Abraxa)[5] and who brought the rude and rustic people to such a perfection of culture and humanity as makes them now superior to almost all other mortals, gained a victory at his very first landing. He then ordered the excavation of fifteen miles on the side where the land was connected with the continent and caused the sea to flow around the land.[6] He set to the task not only the natives but, to prevent them from thinking the labor a disgrace, his own soldiers also. With the work divided among so many hands, the erprise was finished with incredible speed and struc eighboring peoples, who at first had vain, with wonder and terror

.2, 1236b–37ª
118,

of his 365 heavens.

6. On a similar achievement of Xerxes at Athos, see Hdt. 7.22–24. Strab. 7.331, Dio Chrys. *Or.* 3.31.

The island contains fifty-four city-states,[7] all spacious and magnificent, identical in language, traditions, customs, and laws. They are similar also in layout and everywhere, as far as the nature of the ground permits, similar even in appearance. None of them is separated by less than twenty-four miles from the nearest, but is so isolated that a person cannot go from it to a day's journey on foot. From each city three citizens meet to discuss the affairs island once a year at Amauro- the very center of the coun- for the representatives chief as well as the

cities that each

has at   side, and

on some sides   which

the cities are   to

extend its territory,   the ten-

ants rather than the

Everywhere in the   suitable

distances from one   equipped

with agricultural   inhabited by

citizens who   there. No rural

household   men and women,

the soil. Over them are serious in mind and ripe group of thirty households rules a

fifty-four, Lupton (*Utopia*, p. 119, n. 1) adds the City to the fifty-three counties given in William Harrison's *on of England* (1577).

8. 'Darkling City,' a term apt for foggy London.

9. Agriculture comes first because food ranks first among the state's needs (Arist. *Pol.* 7.7.4, 1328b).

10. 'The Head of a Tribe.'

The Promise of what is Lost
Richard Noble

Loss is a common experience. For individuals, things, memories, abilities and loved ones are all lost in the course of time. But as a species we also lose things: ways of being together, thought paradigms, religions, nations and civilisations. And loss can be hugely important. It often defines us, both individually and collectively, as when one loses a loved one or when a nation loses its autonomy. However, loss is not always negative. Loss also contains promise: lost treasure, lost knowledge or lost civilisations all entail promises of something new and empowering; the recovery of something that was valuable once and could be valuable again; something that orients us towards a better future.

In Western cultures, it is a consistent trope to look for the future in what we have lost. In the loss of Christ, men — Christians — find a risen redeemer and the meaning of human history. In the lost civilisation of Atlantis, writers such as Plato and Francis Bacon found inspiration for their utopian visions. In the lost or neglected texts and architecture of ancient Greece and Rome, the humanists looked for the key to understanding how to build a better world, out of their superstitious and impoverished medieval present.

Five hundred years ago, at the beginning of the 16th century, Thomas More wrote a short book about a 'lost' island, which he named somewhat mischievously *Utopia*, a pun on 'no place' (that may also be a pun on *eu-topos*, meaning 'good place'), was said nonetheless to be located somewhere off the coast of Nova Scotia, in what was called by 16th century Europeans the 'new world'.

The 'new world' was a world of many 'lost' civilisations recently 'discovered' or 'found' by Columbus, and then colonised by a host of adventurers, missionaries and reformers. These civilisations were 'lost' only in the minds of Europeans, of course; lost in the sense of not having heard the true word of God, and so simply outside the true trajectory of human history. More's early modern European contemporaries tended to believe the newly 'discovered' peoples of the 'new world' to be savages bereft of God's grace, and therefore, not on the same human level as Europeans. John Locke, 150 years after More, described the new world as a 'state of nature', a place where all land was held in common, ready to be transformed into the private property of European Christians by their willingness to improve it through their labour. The so-called 'new world' was a *tabula rasa* onto which Europeans could project their fantasies and aspirations.

More was typical in this respect; he used the trope of a 'new world', or more precisely, a lost world newly discovered, to project his own ideas of how 16th century Europe could be better. But for More, it is merely a literary or philosophical device. The Utopians are anything but savages, and the new world he describes is no potential field of enrichment for striving Europeans, but rather a mirror in which they can see the limitations of their own societies and the betrayals of their own potential. The narrator of More's story, a ship's captain and explorer called Raphael Hythloday, is said to have inadvertently 'found' this hitherto unknown island nation of Utopia. He recounts to More a place similar in size and climate — if not in shape — to England: fortified by the sea and a rugged coastline, with a fertile interior and 54 cities (or city-states, to be more accurate), 'all spacious and magnificent, entirely identical in language, customs, institutions and laws'[1]. These, in turn, echo the 54 counties of Tudor England.

[1] More, T. (1975). *Utopia: A New Translation, Backgrounds, Criticism*. (R. M. Adams, Ed. & Trans.) New York, London: W. W. Norton & Co., p. 35

The parallels between the geography and organisation of Utopia and England are, of course, intended. More wants his readers to think of England when they read his descriptions of the institutions and customs of Utopia, because he wants them to reflect upon the gap between the two. Utopia is in many respects the opposite of late medieval England. The key principle governing its organisation is equality: property is held in common, the necessities of life are distributed according to need, no one is allowed to own more than they can use, and individual self-interest is, as far as possible, totally subsumed into society's common interest. Utopians wear the same clothing and receive a common education; they eat in common messes and share the basic labours required to produce the material necessities of the community. There is no wealth, no luxury in the hands of a privileged class, no extraction of surplus labour — except from slaves, who are either criminals from Utopia or neighbouring states, or soldiers captured in war.

There is much debate about More's exact critical target in Utopia. He is ostensibly telling us what Raphael had told him about a fictional city, so in law at any rate he cannot be accused of advocating equality, republicanism or the non-Christian religion of the Utopians. But of course it is a critique, even if his target is somewhat oblique. Utopia is in fact a kind of amalgam of values Europeans had lost and, in More's view, needed to regain or reclaim.

One of these values is the wisdom of the ancient world. More was a humanist, thus his ideal Estate recalls the newly rediscovered wisdom of the ancient world that defined the humanist movement. More's friend, Erasmus, and the earlier Italian humanists like Petrarch and Poggio Bracciolini, had been busily hunting down, transcribing and translating

lost or neglected ancient texts, like Plato's *Republic* or Lucretius's *On the Nature of Things*. These ancient texts had become a treasure trove of rationalist pre-Christian philosophy and literature that armed the humanists with the critical tools to accuse the deeply irrational and authoritative doctrines of the universal Church.

Utopia must be seen in this light. More uses his narrative to recover a number of ideas from the ancients. The emphasis on equality and the absence of luxury, on the communal raising of children and the submersion of family loyalty into loyalty to the state, all echo Plato's description of the measures necessary to preserve the rule of the philosopher kings and maintenance of justice in his *Republic*. Raphael claims that the Utopians have made virtually all the same discoveries as the ancient philosophers, and that in ethics, their main preoccupation is the meaning of, and means by which human beings may achieve, happiness. Raphael remarks: 'On this point they seem over-inclined to the position which claims that all or the most important part of human happiness consists of pleasure'[2].

[2] More, T. *op.cit.*, p. 54

More refers here to the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius, whose *On the Nature of Things* had been discovered in a remote monastery in Germany, nearly 100 years before, by Poggio Bracciolini, who transcribed it and circulated it widely amongst humanists. Lucretius argued that the highest goal of human life was the enhancement of pleasure and the reduction of pain, and that all human life should be organised to serve the pursuit of happiness. But for Lucretius, the enhancement of pleasure did not mean hedonism. It meant rather a rational ordering of one's desires; one not plagued by delusion, by the mad intensity of sexual desire or competition for status, or by the fear of death or the gods or the afterlife.

[3] Greenblatt, S. (2012). *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began*. London: Vintage Books, pp. 183-202

For Lucretius, happiness is possible only when human beings recognise their own insignificance, so that they may be liberated to enjoy the wonders of their existence[3].

More's *Utopia* does not go so far as Lucretius. The Utopians have gods and they believe in an afterlife, even if it isn't quite the one that More, as a devout Catholic, believed in. But overall, Utopia is a society organised around the principle that people should strive collectively for happiness. The great socio-political enemies of happiness: war, oppressive and irrational authority, vast material inequalities and competition for relative status are all as far as possible eradicated by the institutional legal structure; while the great individual barriers to happiness: overweening pride, hedonism and existential fear, are all submerged into a culture and ethos of collectivism devoted to the common good of society. But

unlike Lucretius, the Utopians may not, under threat of slavery, deny the existence of a providential god, nor the existence of an afterlife in which a life well lived is rewarded. In More's view, for an entire society to achieve the happiness consequent upon the pursuit of rationally ordered desires, fear has to play a role in that ordering. Without it, most people would abandon the rigours of rational desire and fall into unhappiness and conflict.

More's *Utopia* provides a mirror in which his contemporaries can read the limitations, absurdities and injustices of their own society. It is suffused with irony, a sort of self-distancing device that says to his readers: 'imagine if this were true, if this place actually existed, would we continue to condemn ourselves to the savage inequalities and injustices we currently put up with? And even if, as we know, it isn't true, can't we still learn form it?' It is these questions — or more precisely, the literary form of posing an imaginary alternative to challenge the present *status quo*, rather than the specific Catholic humanist content of More's descriptions of Utopia, as interesting as these are — that constitute his primary legacy to the present. Utopian strategies that raise questions about our present arrangements in order to orient us to a better future remain an important part of our intellectual and creative toolkit, in art (both visual and literary) and in philosophy.

But they do so, I would argue, as much for our sense of what we have lost as for our sense of what we might achieve in the future. All utopian constructions of any complexity draw, as More's did, upon a sense of lost potential or lost opportunity. What we have lost in our present arrangements is usually an idea or a potential rather than a concrete empirical reality. No society had ever rid itself of inequality, or of the narcissistic brutality of the rich towards the poor, or of the primacy of familial loyalties. Nonetheless, More tries to imagine a world in which such things are eradicated, and the human happiness they make impossible, recovered. All utopian strategies operate this way; they instantiate the promise of what is lost in our present arrangements, and recover some kind of hope for the future.

Manuel Mathieu, *Everybody Belongs to Everybody*, 2016

Nonsense Peddler (hythlos daiein)

The score is to be performed by anyone that wishes to take part and has access to an audio recording device of any type.

Each number on the map is associated with a set of instructions. Each group of instructions should be recorded as a single take of 1 minute, with the total number of takes amounting to 10.

⠇⠇ = record the sound stated

≺≡ = speak / state (possibly whilst you are recording another sound)
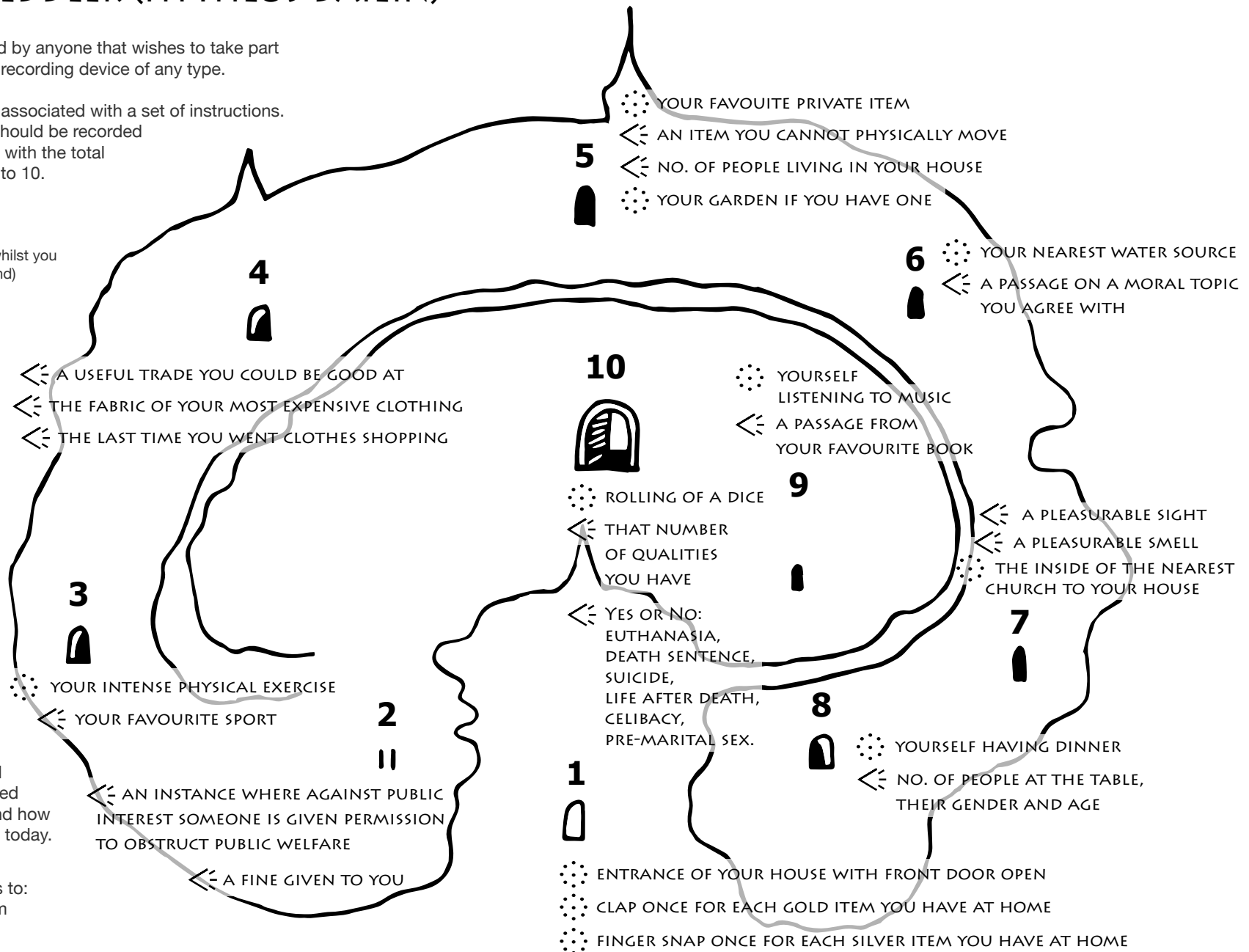
Each submission will be credited and will culminate in a larger sound piece to be produced for assessing the ideas related to Thomas More's Utopia and how we can make sense of them today.

Please send your recordings to:
sara_rodrigues@hotmail.com

5
⠇⠇ YOUR FAVOUITE PRIVATE ITEM
≺≡ AN ITEM YOU CANNOT PHYSICALLY MOVE
≺≡ NO. OF PEOPLE LIVING IN YOUR HOUSE
⠇⠇ YOUR GARDEN IF YOU HAVE ONE

6
⠇⠇ YOUR NEAREST WATER SOURCE
≺≡ A PASSAGE ON A MORAL TOPIC YOU AGREE WITH

4

≺≡ A USEFUL TRADE YOU COULD BE GOOD AT
≺≡ THE FABRIC OF YOUR MOST EXPENSIVE CLOTHING
≺≡ THE LAST TIME YOU WENT CLOTHES SHOPPING

10

⠇⠇ YOURSELF LISTENING TO MUSIC
≺≡ A PASSAGE FROM YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK

⠇⠇ ROLLING OF A DICE
≺≡ THAT NUMBER OF QUALITIES YOU HAVE

9

≺≡ A PLEASURABLE SIGHT
≺≡ A PLEASURABLE SMELL
⠇⠇ THE INSIDE OF THE NEAREST CHURCH TO YOUR HOUSE

3

≺≡ Yes or No: EUTHANASIA, DEATH SENTENCE, SUICIDE, LIFE AFTER DEATH, CELIBACY, PRE-MARITAL SEX.

7

⠇⠇ YOUR INTENSE PHYSICAL EXERCISE
≺≡ YOUR FAVOURITE SPORT

2
II

⠇⠇ YOURSELF HAVING DINNER
≺≡ NO. OF PEOPLE AT THE TABLE, THEIR GENDER AND AGE

8

≺≡ AN INSTANCE WHERE AGAINST PUBLIC INTEREST SOMEONE IS GIVEN PERMISSION TO OBSTRUCT PUBLIC WELFARE
≺≡ A FINE GIVEN TO YOU

1

⠇⠇ ENTRANCE OF YOUR HOUSE WITH FRONT DOOR OPEN
⠇⠇ CLAP ONCE FOR EACH GOLD ITEM YOU HAVE AT HOME
⠇⠇ FINGER SNAP ONCE FOR EACH SILVER ITEM YOU HAVE AT HOME

Sara Rodrigues, *Nonsense Peddler*, 2016

The Utopian Model of Social Change
Rhiannon Firth

Our age is an age of compromises, of half-measures, of the lesser evil. Visionaries are derided or despised, and 'practical men' rule our lives. We no longer seek radical solutions to the evils of society, but reforms; we no longer try to abolish war, but to avoid it for a period of a few years; we do not try to abolish crime, but are contented with criminal reforms; we do not try to abolish starvation, but to set up world-wide charitable organizations
Marie-Luoise Berneri[1]

The above statement written in 1950 seems even more relevant today. This contemporary anti-utopian attitude is most famously summed up by the figurehead political scientist Francis Fukuyama, in his statement that in liberal democracy we have reached 'The End of History'[2]; that the great ideological battles died at the end of the Cold War with the triumph of the West. Utopia is derided, on the one hand, by Liberals who argue that anything other than piecemeal reform within existing systems is totalitarian and oppressive[3]; and on the other hand, it comes under attack from Marxists. Marx criticised his contemporaries, the Utopian Socialists, who attempted to set up small anarchistic communities, saying they were unscientific in their analysis of existing conditions, and did not properly locate their means of social change in the class struggle[4]. Colloquial use of the term 'utopian' tends to associate it with both perfection and impossibility — with derogatory undertones. The underlying assumption is that since human beings are imperfect and have very different needs and desires, any attempt to institute a blueprint of utopia would necessarily be oppressive and totalitarian: since perfection is impossible, there is no point in trying.

Nothing could be more different to this anti-utopian attitude than the methodology used in Thomas More's *Utopia*, wherein we see a portrayal of a world where private property is abolished; euthanasia is legal; human equality, co-operation and solidarity are taken to be self-evident facts of nature; psychological difference is revered and celebrated; divorce is permitted; there is a welfare state with free hospitals and religious diversity; and tolerance reigns. Many of these ideas would be considered radical today, and whilst one might imagine they would be perceived to be even more so in More's 16th century, their portrayal in his novel shows that they were at the least comprehensible to the contemporaneous audience.

Utopianism is an approach to social change that starts from the premise that there is something very wrong with the world, and proceeds to dream and imagine how things might be if they were radically changed. It poses a productive and creative tension between critique (of the *status quo*) and desire (for something different), whilst introducing an element of uncertainty and contingency — or (im)possibility: the good place that we can desire and imagine, that nonetheless is no place.

In fact, the colloquial association of utopia with a static and finite blueprint and an infinitely perfectible human nature does not even apply to More's *Utopia*. Lucy Sargisson[5] argues that the novel is full of acknowledged irreconcilable tensions. Its humorously conscious imperfection is personified in both, the name of the visitor — Hytholoday, a compound of Greek words signifying 'peddler of nonsense' — and on the three-way word pun on which the novel is based — Utopia: the good *(eu)* place *(topos)* that is no *(ou)* place[6].

Whilst More's *Utopia* is radical and visionary, there are aspects of it that leave the modern reader at least somewhat uncomfortable and shifting in their seat. A liberal reader might balk at restraints on free speech and travel. A cosmopolitan reader might feel anxious about the homogeneity of households and towns. And most contemporary readers feel intensely uncomfortable about the use of slavery.

This tension highlights a contradiction inherent in many utopias: that freedom is given (from above) rather then taken (from below)[7]. This contradiction is based on two conventions employed in many utopian texts. Firstly, in an authoritarian approach to social change: arrangements are imposed from the top-down. And secondly, in a totalising epistemological approach: truths are singular and self-evident, based on laws of nature rather than contested and constructed. In More's Utopia, this manifests as sparse yet strict laws, and even stricter social conventions that keep citizens in line, alongside unshakeable assumptions about human nature and 'natural' gender relations and hierarchies: 'Wives take orders from their husbands, children from their parents, and in general the younger from the older'[8]. This is unlikely to be a world in which many of us would like to live.

Whilst we might not agree with many of the key facets, reading More's *Utopia* can still be exhilarating and has the ability to liberate our imaginations from the constraints of contemporary political stasis and the paralysing neoliberal consensus in mainstream media. Whether or not we believe any particular utopia could, or should, be achievable in practice — and in the case of More's utopia, we might think that such faith would

[1] Berneri, M. L. (1950). *Journey Through Utopia*. New York: Schocken Books, p. 1

[2] Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press.

[3] Popper, K. (2002 [1945]). *The Open Society and Its Enemies (Volume I)*. London and New York: Routledge.

[4] Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels (1998 [1845]). *The German Ideology*. New York: Prometheus Books, p. 26

[5] Sargisson, L. (1996). *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism*. London, New York: Psychology Press, p. 24

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 24

[7] Berneri, *op. cit.* p. 2

[8] More, T. (1975). *Utopia: A New Translation, Backgrounds, Criticism*. (R. M. Adams, Ed. & Trans.) New York, London: W. W. Norton & Co., p. 45

be stretching it somewhat — utopianism as a mode of social and aesthetic practice serves an important political function: *the education of desire*[9]. More portrays concepts and practices that transgress the fixed binaries, assumptions and truth-claims of the hegemonic society. The no-place of Utopia creates an estranged, ideal environment from which new and different social arrangements can be imagined 'in a space free from the constraints, norms and codes of present society'[10]. This process allows for much more critical and radical imaginings than are available within the sites and spaces of contemporary reformist politics. Put simply, utopias help us to think and to desire differently, and to think and desire *more differently* than we might in any other space.

Rather than viewing utopias as blueprints that must be instituted from the top-down by a political elite, we can reconceptualise the utopian impulse as a means of expressing and educating desire. Thus, utopia is not always about the future, nor about impossible blueprints, but rather is an experimental impulse that is endemic to the present of everyday life. The Theorist Ernst Bloch interpreted practices as diverse as medicine, fairy tales and architecture as utopian[11]. Utopia is about creating practical change in the present by engaging with impossible futures.

It is hard to talk about utopianism without mentioning the political philosophy of anarchism. Similarly to utopianism, anarchism has often been associated with the impossible and the perilously idealistic, yet seeds of anarchist utopias can be found all around us in everyday life[12]. The Utopian Socialists, whom Marx criticised as being hopelessly idealistic, followed a model of social change similar to anarchism. Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier and Robert Owen, living in the early 19th century, drew up detailed plans of imaginary societies and formed communities based on them, believing that if these were appealing and convincing, then people of all classes would voluntarily join them. This utopian approach to social change from the bottom-up is anathema to both ideas of revolution and policy reforms imposed from above.

Anarchism is an approach to social change that eschews top-down, vanguardist revolutions led by political elites in favour of grassroots experiments and voluntary communities that try new forms of politics in the *here-and-now*[13]. This is based on the anarchist understanding of the corrupting nature of power, which cannot be destroyed from above since hierarchical revolutions tend to create new oppressive hierarchies. The state is not a 'thing' that can be identified and destroyed in one fell swoop through revolution, but rather is a particular form of relationship between people[14], or something more akin to an internal psychological state: a system of beliefs and values[15]. Thus, for anarchists, the way to create sustainable

revolution is through practicing non-hierarchical relationships in the here-and-now — by being the change we want to see in the world, and by decolonising our minds from oppressive thought structures.

Whilst More's Utopia, with its strict social hierarchies, could hardly be seen as anarchist, read alongside other utopias it may well have an important role to play in a Critical Pedagogy of Anarchism. Critical Pedagogy, based on the work of Paulo Freire[16], is a form of education that does not take existing circumstances as limiting. It is based on the premise that all knowledge is partial and that education for liberation requires the co-creation of knowledge amongst equal and autonomous participants. Reading utopias such as Thomas More's *Utopia* side-by-side with other utopias can facilitate us to understand, critique and discuss with others our own position in current society, and to form and negotiate our own political desires and dreams. Hence, by bringing these into the world, Utopia can inspire action to change our real-world circumstances for the better.

[9] Thompson, E.P. (1988 [1955]). *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

[10] Sargisson, *op. cit.* p. 50

[11] Bloch, E. (1986). *The Principle of Hope (Volumes 1–3)*. (N. Plaice, S. Plaice and P. Knight, Trans.) Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

[12] Ward, C. (1973). *Anarchy in Action*. London: Allen and Unwin.

[13] Landauer, G. (1978 [1911]). *For Socialism*. (D.J. Parent, Trans.) St Louis: Telos Press; Buber, M. (1996 [1949]). *Paths in Utopia*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

[14] Landauer, *op. cit.* p. 141

[15] Stirner, M. (1993 [1844]). *The Ego and Its Own*. London: Rebel Press.

[16] Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Education.

Seed Becomes Tree Becomes Forest
Ruth Beale

In 2016, tech giant Apple had an FBI court order which demanded that they unlock the iPhone of San Bernardino attacker Syed Rizwan Farook. The order was overturned on the basis that code is subject to the same liberties of free speech as any other written word.

Language in the techno-utopia, at least the version promulgated since the 1990s dot-com culture, is given the same libertarian treatment as individual freedom and commerce. In imagining the perfect society, language is subject to debates about liberty, freedom, exclusivity, conformity, tradition, protection and futurism.

In Iceland, around 100 applications a year are sent out by parents who wish to give their children an unrecognised name; half of these are rejected under a 1996 act that aims to preserve the Icelandic language. In France, it is required by law to use French in all commercial and workplace communications. The perceived threat of Anglicisation has prompted efforts to safeguard the position of French around the world.

Linguistic conservatism as a reaction to linguistic imperialism is not unfounded. In 1536, the Act of Union decreed that English was to be the only language of the Courts of Wales, and those using the Welsh language were not to receive public office in the territories of the king of England. The English authorities sought uniform administration and a Welsh ruling class fluent in English. What does it mean now to teach Welsh to those whose own families have never spoken it? Is it right to reset the balance? Does Wales need to look back in order to look forward?

In Esperanto, the most widely spoken constructed language in the world, grammar is regular but its rules allow speakers to borrow new 'roots' as needed. Adaptation is built into its usage with the assumption that the logic prevails (although critics complain of its inherent sexism and eurocentrism).

Linguist Braj Kachru's conception of English divides it into a 'norm-providing' inner circle (UK, US), followed by a 'norm-developing' outer circle (mainly New Commonwealth countries), and an expanding circle of Business English speakers, happy to bend the language to their own needs: to perform an 'alchemy of English'. International Business English and 'Chinglish' dispense altogether with grammatical accuracy in favour of a lowest common denominator of communication. Thus, the future of the language is not determined by the rule-makers.

The 2016 review of the Oxford English Dictionary included over 300 new entries, such as *blu-ray*, *twerking* and *photobombing*, as well as the mind-boggling *sinigang*, *oophagy* and *crokinole*. Words are gathered up as they evolve, staking out culture as it emerges, always trotting to keep up.

Cultural theorist Raymond Williams's conception of culture proposed that subjects morph as quickly as the words describing them, so we create and name culture simultaneously. This idea was not top-down, but rather led by an understanding that everyone contributes to and can, therefore, interpret culture. Had *utopia* been one of his keywords, he might have charted the way our understanding and conception of better societies has been charted by that word: how we have named whilst imagining it.

The naming of objects is how we establish a relation; it is a means of expressing our concerns and our being. Heidegger, the grand philosopher of *Being and Time*, said it is not that things do not exist if we don't name them, but that their presence in the world is diminished. To describe it is to bring it into a kind of being.

Before the 16th century, orange did not have its own word and could not be named in English. It was referred to as yellow-red (*ġeolurēad*), yellow-saffron (*ġeolucrog)*, or simply red, leaving us with the linguistic anomalies of robin redbreast, red hair and the red deer. Orange's firm place in the rainbow spectrum now makes it hard to imagine a world where it was not named or placed.

More's utopian 'language' is not really a language, or even an alphabet; it is a type, with all the streamlined efficiency of modernity, whether the London Underground's Johnston typeface or Miedinger's Helvetica. It could even be interpreted as a cipher or code, a substitution and transposition. It does not capture the possibilities of language to reinvent culture itself, or indeed to chart these differences — but it does propose a futuristic rebrand.

In the same century in which orange became a thing, Thomas More coined his *utopia*. Derived from the Greek *οú* (not) and *τόπος* (place), strictly meaning no-place, it has since narrowed in standard usage to mean a perfect place or society — usually imagined, often in the future. Eutopia, derived from the Greek *εú* (good or well) and *τόπος* (place), might technically have been a better fit. Yet More's Utopia aptly shows the non-place as ungraspable, slipping constantly out of our reach, mirrored by the slippery nature of language itself.
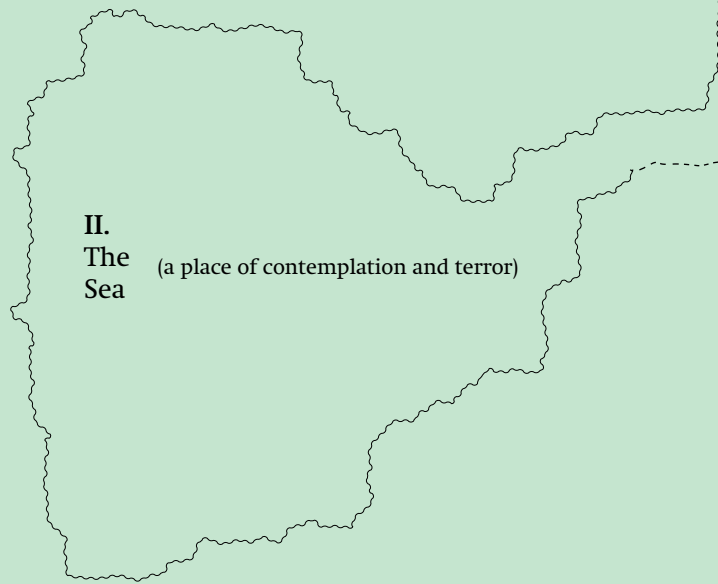
**II.
The
Sea** (a place of contemplation and terror)
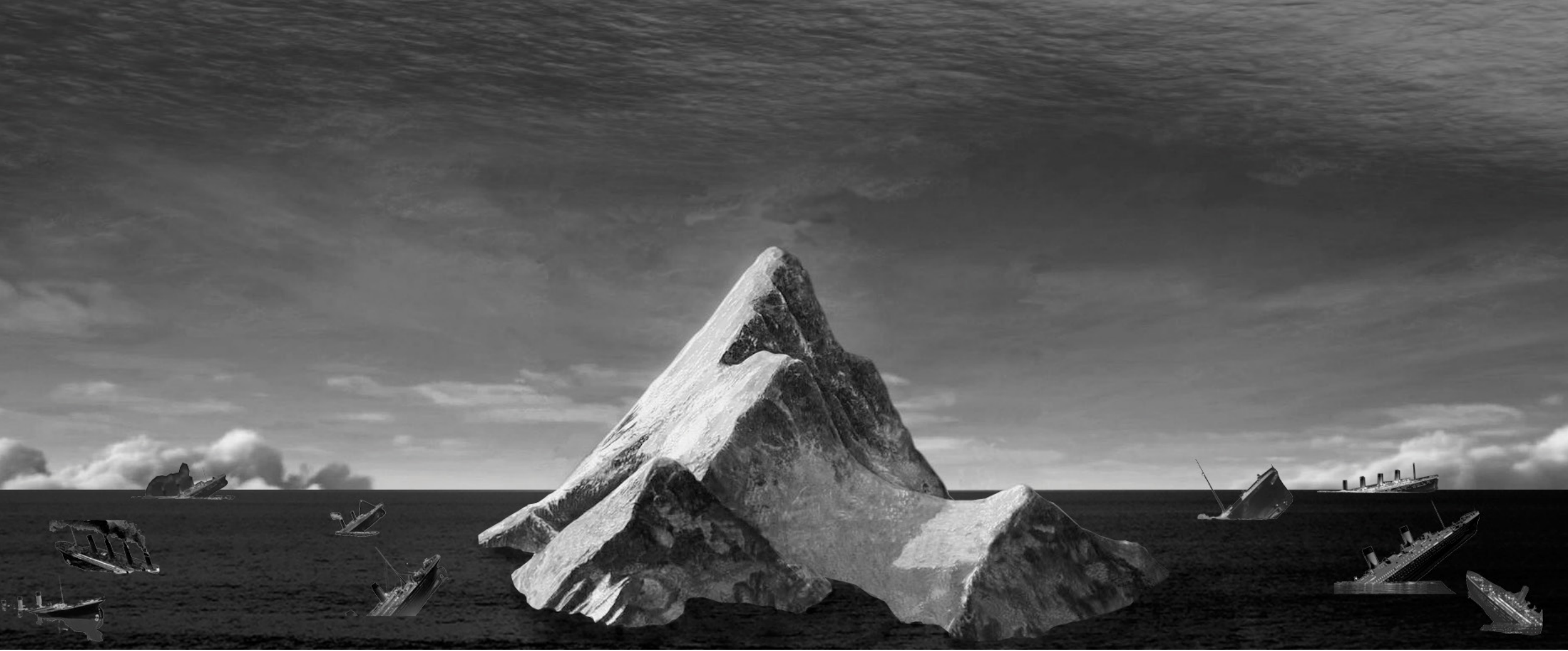
Carl Gent, *Marine Snow I,* 2016

Flood the World as Fast as You Can
Carl Gent

ere are my directions towards the island known as Utopia, as recounted to me by a dear, exotic friend: the best way to find Utopia, or build one, is to make sure it is surrounded by other failed utopias. You can use various different examples or multiple copies of a single failure. I have chosen the crashing and slow sink of the R.M.S. Titanic, which struck an iceberg in 1912.

It is important to note that while ruined utopias are important, you should not build *your* utopia directly on top of other ruined utopias. This will doom your project at an alarmingly fast pace.

An island is a good place for a utopia because it gives you a clear outline of where it happens, and it delineates a zone that is decidedly *not* a utopia. In the case of an island, this zone is the body of water surrounding it. It can be anywhere with distinct edges — an oasis, an iceberg, a nation-state or a gated community. But what is most useful about an island, however, is that the boundary often becomes a place of contemplation and terror (the sea).

Bodies of water are also excellent for populating with ruins.

To make my island, I have taken the mountain from the Paramount Pictures logo and extrapolated predicted sea level rises. (Paramount also distributed the 1997 movie *Titanic*, so they probably won't mind me using their logo if I'm promoting their movie.)

Good tip: it's best not to name your utopia. The moment you do this, it's already kind of over. It becomes history. But if you do need to use language to refer to it, I'd recommend using generic words such as the island or the union. This can become tricky over time if you don't see or think of other islands or unions. You end up thinking The Island or The Union. If this starts to happen, you may try meditating on your utopia's opposite. Again, it's useful to not name this place.

Your utopia is almost ready. Whether it's island, union, cult or whatever, collect some heavy armaments and head to the pinnacle of it. (For me, this was the top of the paramountain.) Once there, erect your artillery — which, of course, must have an excellent range — and begin shooting down the wreckages of those other failed utopias.

Do this slowly and exactly. Enjoy the process, as you will soon realise that this is precisely where your utopia resides.

As the wrecked embodiments of older, stupid ideas sink into the central maw of the deep sands, the stratosphere, the charnel-house, the unforgiving gyre, the eternal ice or the ocean's abysses, think about this: these ruins will hit a barren world.

You have provided structure and material to the wasteland. A focal point. An oasis. A thriving ecosystem sitting in a vast desert. Future generations of rusticles and coccolith; cultures and languages will spark and splinter. Where once was botched purity comes wreckage, and from wreckage blooms dissent and intercourse. Unknown warfare and splendour forever locked to you and your naïve dreams of social cohesion.

This is a good thing. Sit back and enjoy the sun, rain or snow. This is utopia.

X

Ceci n'est pas une Utopie
Guillermo Roz

*'It is demonstrable,' said he, 'that things cannot be otherwise than as they are;
for as all things have been created for some end, they must necessarily be created
for the best end. […] and they, who assert that everything is right, do not express
themselves correctly; they should say that everything is best.'*
Voltaire[1]

lenty has happened since *utopia* was coined as a term to define an idea conceived as many times as imagination makes it possible, with the small variations of each space-time condition, each intellective process, each collective or individual aspiration. Two millennia have passed since its failure and, nonetheless, this has not prevented, under any circumstance, to continue feeding the fantasy in which the idyll acquires names, places, identities, languages, cultures, sensations and traditions; lost romances on the coast of an unavoidable island in the distance.

[1] Voltaire (1981). *Cándido, Zadig* (Candide, Zadig). (M. I. Azcoaga, Trans.) Madrid: EDAF, pp. 31-32

It is easy to go astray in the seductive nature of possibilities, to get rid of the precedents that hold the ground of a present time that cannot but leave unsatisfied the desire of something else — anything else, but better than this. Perfectible? Perhaps. But the place that it leaves for ideals seems as non-existent as the island of Utopia itself.

Utopian scenarios, in their own way, have been formulated, defended and pursued by illustrious characters throughout the history of ancient and modern civilisations. Each of them has faced discordant and imperfect presents that serve as raw material for the construction of a universally satisfactory society. These cases can be traced from the beginning of time, revealing the common denominators that configure the generalised image of what is considered, to a greater or lesser extent, the ideal of perfection.

It is the case of Plato, whose quest for the perfect City in the *Republic* compendiums ended up defending an idea that is nowadays punished for its rampantly aristocratic tendency. It is the case of this Western civilisation, facing the obstacles of what once seemed the best idea of Enlightened reasoning — same idea that ignited the fuse of the French Revolution — and introduced to the modern era the idea of 'the power of people'. Today, the utopia of democracy has failed.

During the 18th century, the age of Enlightenment and reason, the project undertaken by encyclopaedists found a foothold in the paradigm of conservation and dissemination of knowledge. The unified power of information projected a society in which the sheer opinions of the majority — simple impressions without any foundation or transcendental value, in Plato's words — held the potential to become the foundation of a prosperous future, where wisdom prevailed. Nowadays, the massification of knowledge has led to collective hysteria, where tiny glimpses of a possible truth have so many nuances, so many angles, it is impossible to objectively distinguish what is authentic from what is not. It has created an inapprehensible monster that moves between the real and the virtual world, leaving behind a trail of nothing, except confusion. The utopia of knowledge has failed.

To say that the world, understood as a product of the human being, is an entity clothed in contradictions, seems like a simple realisation. However, it becomes impossible when an unbeatable need to explain what occurs, to aspire to something else, absolutely takes over the psyche and produces imaginary scenarios that, for better or for worse, reduce reality to a plain simulacrum; a perpetual dystopia throwing infinite 'would-haves' and 'what-ifs'.

When the fictitious professor of metaphysico-theologo-cosmolonigology, Pangloss, taught the young and innocent Candide that this was the best of all possible worlds, the pupil could not but react with wonder and happiness, even when adversity left no room to prove that in fact it was. But, what was the teacher referring to? What was he trying to explain from that determinist knoll? In short, that since this is the only known and constructed world — the only attempt of an exercise without rehearsal — it can only be this and not anything else. Still, just like Candide, we ask with that discontented curiosity of when we cannot explain the chaos in which we live in: what would Master Pangloss say? Could it be any different?

Plenty has happened since *Utopia*, and yet it is as valid as any contemporary idea. To return to the island is to return to a place in which the world and its things found a shared imaginary of prosperity, virtue and nobility. The collective aspect of well-being is shown as the most valuable attribute of the habitants of the island, for this is precisely what allows the indivisible essence of their happiness. So, how not to look back? When in the present, the processes of individualisation make the utopia of one the dystopia of the other. Currently, there *are* islands. Yes, there are as many as there are imaginations to conceive them, but a sea of individuality surrounds them. If there's anything beyond, it is difficult to tell standing from the islands that we are. The utopia of More has failed.

Run into a Wall
Gustavo Abascal

Injustice constitutes the essence of social life
E.M. Cioran[1]

The past is always beautiful. So, for that matter, is the future. Only the present hurts, and we carry it around like an abscess of suffering, our compassion between two infinities of happiness and peace
Michel Houellebecq[2]

orals and ethics have changed through the years, along with basic needs. Technology, ever since its greatest social achievement (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and side by side with political correctness, leads a new model of coexistence. Social media turns into a digital arena where anyone can express a point of view — or at least that's what I've been told. Whatever blows in the air through ether is one thing, but what happens to the pragmatic? What about physical coexistence? No one has the same ideal for it. The 21st century has uncovered a terrible identity crisis and an exacerbated lack of collectivity.

It seems that to think utopianly about an ideal of living, considering all the different 'symbolic needs' and a thirst for 'justice', is a historical (and current) impasse. Wouldn't this new utopian regime of coexistence be questionable too? With our hesitant empirical kindness? With our excessive display of animosity? The *liquid modernity* bogged down.

Who will be the unblemished hierarch? Or the courteous one who can establish an equable paradise? 'Understanding, as we understand it, is misunderstanding', lapidated Canetti in *Auto da Fe*[3].

We know these naive questions *ad nauseam*, but do we consider them when it's time to propose an empathetic order? A natural order without exchange? Or a collective political existence without the ghost of capitalism? Wasn't it a 'sensitive artist' who founded the Friedrichshof Commune?

Contemporary art exploits political tragedy as an act of denouncement with an encoded language, just as politics does (not to mention the personal benefit that results from this). Both of them emerge as a solipsist bicephalous, inasmuch as they are right while the discourse and the work remain incomprehensible for the masses. The proposals they offer are unclear and stay only among the elite. Just like this text, which properly responds to its contemporary-art-related purpose.

[1] Cioran, E. M. (1992). *On the Heights of Despair*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[2] Houellebecq, M. (2015). *Submission* (L. Stein, Trans.). New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

[3] Canetti, E. (2003). *La Escuela del Buen Oír (Obras Completas)* [The School of Good Listening (Complete Works)]. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg.

In the perfect State, justice and happiness will coincide. There will be no danger. They will have salt and olives and cheese, vegetables and fruits, and chestnuts to roast at the fire. Then the fine arts must go to work — every conceivable instrument and ornament of luxury will be wanted. Union and force and rhetoric will do much. There will be dancers, painters, sculptors, musicians, cooks, barbers, tire-women, nurses, artists; swineherds and neath-erds too for the animals, and physicians to cure the disorders of which luxury is the source. And when children are born, the offspring of the brave and fair will be carried to an enclosure in a certain part of the city. The mothers will be brought to the fold and will suckle the children. And children ought not to learn what they will have to unlearn when they grow up. Our State being perfect will contain all the four virtues — wisdom, courage, temperance, justice. Then justice will be useful when money is useless. For everyone will do evil if he can, there will be some warlike natures who have this aptitude — dogs keen of scent, swift of foot to pursue, and strong of limb to fight. If they are poor, they will be mean; if rich, lux-urious and lazy. Luxury and avarice will turn them into wolves and tyrants. Our city will now require the slight addition of a camp, and the citizen will be converted into a soldier. The contest will be carried on by trained warriors against well-to-do citizens. In the first place our rulers will enforce the laws and make new ones where they are wanted, and their allies or ministers will obey. The spirit of law and order will raise up what has fallen down. We will answer that we are legislators and not book-makers. Education will correct deficiencies and supply the power of self-government. We will allow no one, old or young, to utter. An instance will make my meaning clear. Our unbelieving generation will be slow to accept such a story. We will inform them that their youth was a dream. A restorative process will be always going on. They will make no progress. And they will want a part of ours. I will lead the way, but do you follow. You will soon end by altering its laws. The rest will be hurried away to places unknown. No one knows what will happen to us.

Ting-Ting Cheng, *There Is No Utopia Without Dystopia,* 2016

Hansautopia
Isaac Torres

he Tiergarten is Berlin's main park. Its name can be translated as 'Garden of Beasts', and it was originally created as a hunting area made for the Prussian *bourgeoisie*: some sort of utopian forest for the delight and pleasure of a certain privileged social class.

In 1957, West Germany summoned the reconstruction of the Tiergarten's northwest area, which was destroyed during the Second World War and remained shattered, ten years later. It was named 'Hansaviertel', after the Hansa towns in the northern region of Germany.

The Hansa towns, or Hanseatic League, were one of the first commercial societies of the late Middle Ages, comprised by various ports and walled cities brought together by the idea of a common benefit. They enjoyed territorial and commercial autonomy, and even some sort of utopic anarchy in relation to the other kingdoms that surrounded the region.

The Interbau 57 was an architectonical utopia that called upon the creation of a housing complex. It would gather the most preeminent architects from all over the world, as a response to the large-hearted urbanisation development undertaken by Eastern Germany in the Stalinalle of early 1952.

Hansplatz is a district built as part of the Interbau 57; an open modern architecture museum that remains alive and active; a sign that utopias are transformed by and adapted along time.

The architecture, in principle, rises from the ground towards the sky. Just as utopias do.

Berlin's Pavilion, one of the buildings that was part of the Interbau 57, is occupied today by a Burger King that serves fast food to the marathoners running along the Tiergarten paths.

Flensburger Str.

Lüneburger

Bellevue

Schloß 5820

Hansa Pl.

Akademie d. Künste

Schloß Bellevue (Bundespräsidialamt)

park Bellevue

Hansa- (Bez. MITTE)

viertel

Engl. Garten

Bismarck Moltke Roon

Oswald- Schumann- Pl.

Straße

Spreeweg

2 5

Großer Stern

Siegessäule Bremer

Tiergarten

des 17. Juni

(Bez. MITTE)

Büffel- jagd

Lortzing Herkules mit der Lyra

Tier-

Rousseau- insel

Weg

Flora

garten

Eber- jagd

Großer

Großer Weg

Luisen- insel

Großer See

Weg

Adler-

Großer Weg

200

Kunstgew.

Dehler-Str.

K.-Adenauer- Stiftung

Tiergarten

Österreich

Saudi-Arab. Japan

Italien

Kulturf.

Canisius- Kolleg

LV NRW

Ägypten

Zoologischer

Pumpwerk

Rauch-

Ver.Arab. Emirate

Mexiko

LV Bremen

Gedenkst. dt. Widerstand

Staatl. Generalv.

In the far north, under the North Pole, in an archipelago named Spitzbergen or Svalbard as Norwegians denominate it, raises the miner city of Pyramiden, as a late expression of the Soviet planning and the utopic vanguard dismantled at the end of the contractual period.

Today Pyramiden is abandoned, the mines have shut down and the buildings are empty. It is a vestige of the revolutionary constructivism in a Norwegian territory, frozen in time by the arctic weather, the Cold War and capitalism...

Kjartan Fløgstad[1]

[1] Fløgstad, K. (2011). *Pyramiden, retrato de una utopía abandonada* (Pyramiden, Portrait of an Abandonded Utopia). Madrid: Interfolio, pp. 11-14

ISIS military extremist throws gay couple from a rooftop in Iraq, where homosexuality is sentenced to death.

The bodies of Benito Mussolini, Clara Petacci and other fascists were dumped on the ground at the Piazzale Loreto in Milan, Italy after their execution.

President Ferdinand E. Marcos proclaimed martial law in Philippines in order to suppress increasing civil strife and the threat of a communist takeover. The law was in force until 1981.

While utopias envisage the end of human suffering, quite often they radically establish a blameful other (e.g. a *status quo*, an ethnic group, an ideology) that must be inevitably confronted in order to achieve an imagined, ideal society.

Violence and conflict can be seen as ephemeral physical expressions of utopias: inseparable parts of the utopian imaginary which give to it a temporary presence in the real. Perhaps disputes and altercations, wars and even ethnic cleansings are utopian self-announcements — physical manifestations of imagined utopias in the geography of the real world.

UTOPIA1933
48° 16' 8" N
11° 28' 7" E

The establishment of the first regular concentration camp by the coalition government of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party) and the German National People's Party. Its purpose was enlarged to include forced labour and the imprisonment of Jews, as well as ordinary German and Austrian criminals.

UTOPIA1992
44° 45' 0" N
19° 13' 0" E

The Bijeljina massacre executed by Serb paramilitary groups in Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Bosnian War. The image is a variation of the famous Ron Haviv's image showing a member of the Serb Volunteer Guard kicking a dying Bosniak woman.

Members of the Ustaša – Croatian Revolutionary Movement (a fascist, ultranationalist and terrorist Croatian organisation), active between 1929 and 1945, murdered hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews, Romans, anti-fascist and dissident Croats in Yugoslavia.
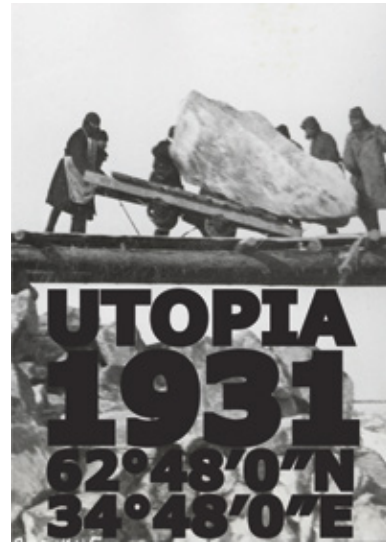
The White Sea–Baltic Canal was the first major project built in the Soviet Union by using forced labour, with an estimated workforce of 100,000 convicts. The construction of the canal led to 25,000 deaths.
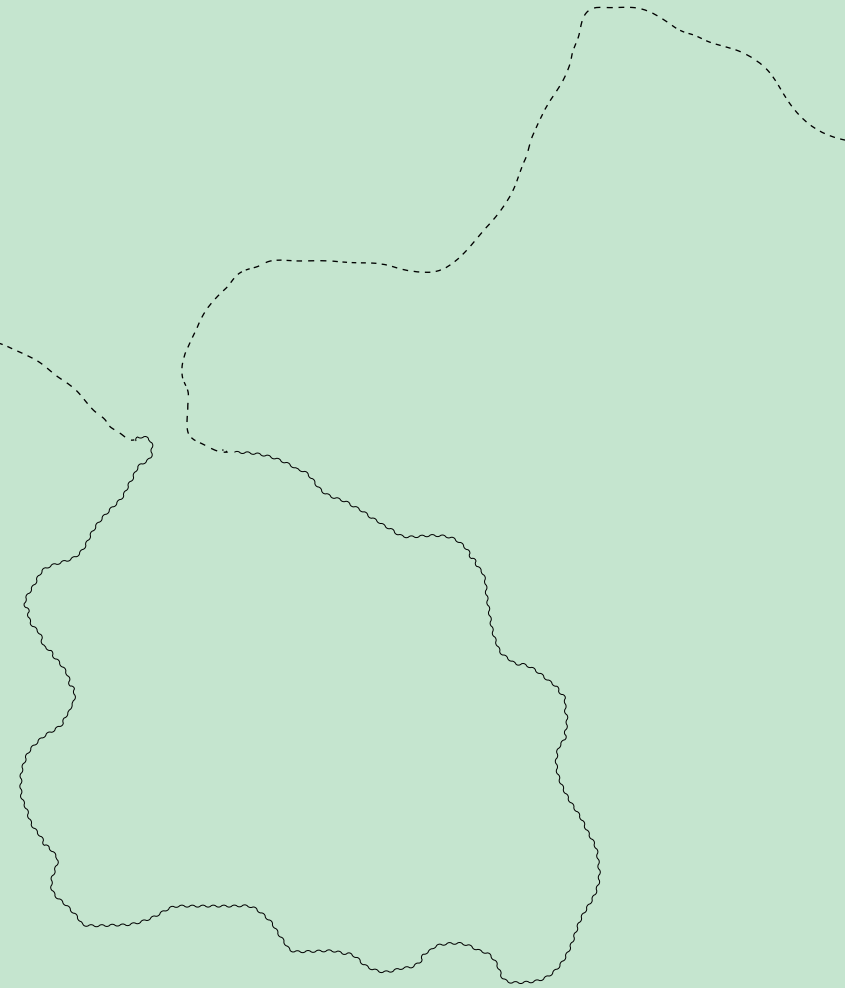

Nicolae Ceaușescu (General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party from 1965 to 1989) and his wife Elena Ceaușescu were executed at a military base outside Bucharest, followed by a one-hour show trial.

ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna) conducts a terrorist attack using a van bomb at the Madrid–Barajas Airport in Spain.

III.
The
No-Time

(to be forever sailed)

No Utopia for the Precarious
Dimitra Gkitsa

f you wander around the streets of Athens and you are a bit observant, you may notice the Greek word *βασανίζομαι* (vasanizomai) popping up on almost every wall and corner of the city. There is no accurate translation of this middle voice verb in English. 'I suffer', 'I torture myself' or 'I am being tormented' can be some possible — but still not precise — translations. The verb denotes an intense and continuous suffering in which mental and physical pain intertwine with and become indistinguishable from each other. The word *vasanizomai* began to appear on the Athenian walls in late 2009, right after the country's government-debt crisis started, and it soon filled the whole city; public monuments, parks, abandoned buildings. Coming in different sizes and styles, at times it is written with huge and bold letters that can cover the surface of a whole building, and other times it appears in small and discrete letters in hidden locations. Sometimes, the suffering becomes a scream that demands to be heard and seen, and other times it remains just a silent and timid whisper. In either case, *suffering* became the main word used in the vocabulary of the financial crisis. This single word shouts that it is not just the country suffering: it is every single individual who is struggling to pay their loans; all the young people who are facing unemployment; all those who are working under precarious conditions and are treated as if they are lucky for having even *that* job.

Thinking the occasion of this publication — five hundred years of Thomas More's *Utopia* — in relation to the reality of crisis, my main question here is not just: why should we still consider utopian vision relevant? But more crucially: is there even a future or a utopia left for the subject who lives in crisis and on a constant state of depression and mourning?

Suffering and self-blaming have become synonymous to the crisis. In these times of austerity, unpaid labour, unemployment, exploitation, competitive individualism and the constant reminder of failure are the new norms that define and shape life. Trapped in the vicious cycle of perpetual crisis, the vision or the belief of a coherent alternative, of another future, has disappeared. Occupy and Square movements and traditional forms of resistance are doomed to fail. In order to, firstly, understand the strategies in which neoliberalism shapes and maintains control, and secondly, wonder about possible tactics of creating spaces of enunciation within that structure, it is important to pay attention to how life itself becomes precarious; pay attention to all the subjectivities who suffer, to the bodies that become once again the domain in which abstract power relations receive concrete form and construct what Foucault calls 'docile bodies'. But, how does the financial crisis relate to the re-production of subjectivities? In which ways is the neoliberal capitalist 'governmentality' imposed and maintained? Furthermore, are there any tactics of transforming precarious life into a critical resistance, any methodologies of learning how to navigate in a reality that has lost its horizon and ability to imagine utopias?

In this new capitalist reality, there are only abstract mathematical implications, algorithms and markets that one cannot dismantle, understand their operations, avoid, or go against. However, although neoliberal governance operates at a distance, its consequences have direct psychological and corporeal consequences. Debt becomes a form of biopolitical power. Thinkers such as Lazzarato have detected that the political economy of crisis and debt is actually a strategy for controlling and producing subjectivities. The creditor-debtor relationship is the new central antagonism, replacing that of capital-labour. It is exactly because of these new abstract forms of exploitation that traditional acts of resistance are cursed with failure. During this late-stage capitalist reality, 'debt is the technique most adequate to the production of neoliberalism's homo economicus'[1]. Via the creditor-debtor relation, power is being directly imposed on life, making it more precarious than ever. This is a form of governance that takes place on a psychological, emotional and corporeal level, and debt is used strategically as 'a fundamental technology of biopolitical governmentality — a political and moral economy of life itself'[2]. The politics of debt knows no distinction between waged and unpaid workers, between the employed and unemployed, between material and immaterial labour. One way or another, we are all in debt. Anxiety, depression and silent suffering become a state of being that facilitates governmentality and the production of more and more docile bodies. This is not the symptom of late-stage capitalism: it is its operational and functional modality that allows no space for new utopist imaginations.

Within this reality, the crucial question is: do we still believe in the future? Are we still in the age of utopias? Can the precariat, after all these failures, hope for *anOther* alternative? If yes, what could be the forms of that alternative? We could define utopia, and future in general, not as time, but rather as an empty signifier of a promise — as a perception and cultural condition that is totally connected with the expansion of economic growth, progress, profit and development. More than anything, utopia is the hope for something that is beyond the limits.

[1] Lazzarato, M. (2015). *Governing by Debt*. (J. D. Jordan, Trans.) Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 70

[2] Butler, Judith and Athena Athanasiou (2013). *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*. Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press, p. 12

It is not a simple anticipation, but a never-ending waiting. Against this understanding of the future, theorists such as Berardi propose 'a slow cancellation of the future'. He writes that:

> Only if we are able to disentangle the future (the perception of the future, the concept of the future, and the very production of the future) from the traps of growth and investment will we find a way out of the vicious subjugation of life, wealth, and pleasure to the financial abstraction of semiocapital. The key to this disentanglement can be found in a new form of wisdom: harmonising with exhaustion[3].

[3] Berardi, F. (2011). 'The Future After the End of the Economy'. e-flux, no. 3

The progress that never arrives and the state of depression that occurs when being haunted both by the ghosts of failed utopias in the past and by the impossibilities of the present, make the process of envisioning a distant time more difficult than ever. We can understand thus, that learning to harmonise with exhaustion means to detach ourselves from the idea and illusion of growth or progress, which leads to an almost existentialist condition of precarity and vulnerability that affects every aspect of life. This is not about past or future, but rather about the no-time: about learning how to navigate without having a future or without envisioning a linear accumulation that would culminate in a *telos*. There is no *telos*. The suffering takes place now and here. And it is exactly *now and here* that needs to find its cure.

Let's go back to that middle voice verb: *βασανίζομαι* (vasanizomai), 'I suffer', which — written almost everywhere and experienced by almost everyone — soon becomes 'We suffer'. It is neither an active nor a passive verb. We do not know who or what causes that suffering. We do not know where the action is coming from. We are just experiencing its consequences in a collective level, through our living and being. But at the same time, like all middle voice verbs, 'vasanizomai' brings a transformative action. We do not only receive acts, but in a way we are actors too. We are *becoming* precarious. Still, precarity and suffering, when manifested in a collective level, can too become a transformative process able to bring vulnerable bodies together and convert the personal into the political, demanding not a better future but a different present, through a better understanding of the past embodied injustices. This is not about going *against*, but rather about being *with* and *within*. Maybe this is the only way in which the precarious state of being can lead to what Butler describes as 'bodies in alliance', able to share common suffering and to create or maintain spaces of resistance within the system. And this collective political awakening that would transform precarity into enunciation demands another strong engagement; 'it requires the rescue of the collective desires, to which the social dream gave expression, before

they sink into the unconscious as forgotten'[4]. So, abandoning the idea of future or utopia should not be confused with forgetting or disregarding the situations and circumstances that once demanded its realisation. The inability to create a new utopia should not be mistaken for the loss of past utopias into oblivion. Harmonising with exhaustion presupposes that we accept failure and all that remains from the past. It contains a direction both towards the *no longer* and the *not yet* of time.

[4] Buck-Morss, S. (2000). *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West.* Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 209

Five hundred years have passed since Thomas More conceived and established Utopia as some place out of this world, and we are still searching for that perfect society. Yet, it is precisely at this moment of precarity and suffering, at this moment where there is no space for new promises, that we should think once again of the island, or better to say, of the *islands*; of all these utopias of the past that remained an *ou* (no) *topos* (place), always lost somewhere in the vast horizon. A radical understanding of utopia in times of crisis would defeat all the categories currently in our disposition. In that understanding of utopia, there is no future because there is no *need* for a future. Any demand finds its fulfilment right in the present. Navigating a world without utopia means not being in an eternal search of the island, but constantly weaving a route where possibilities could reach their fulfilments *now and here*.
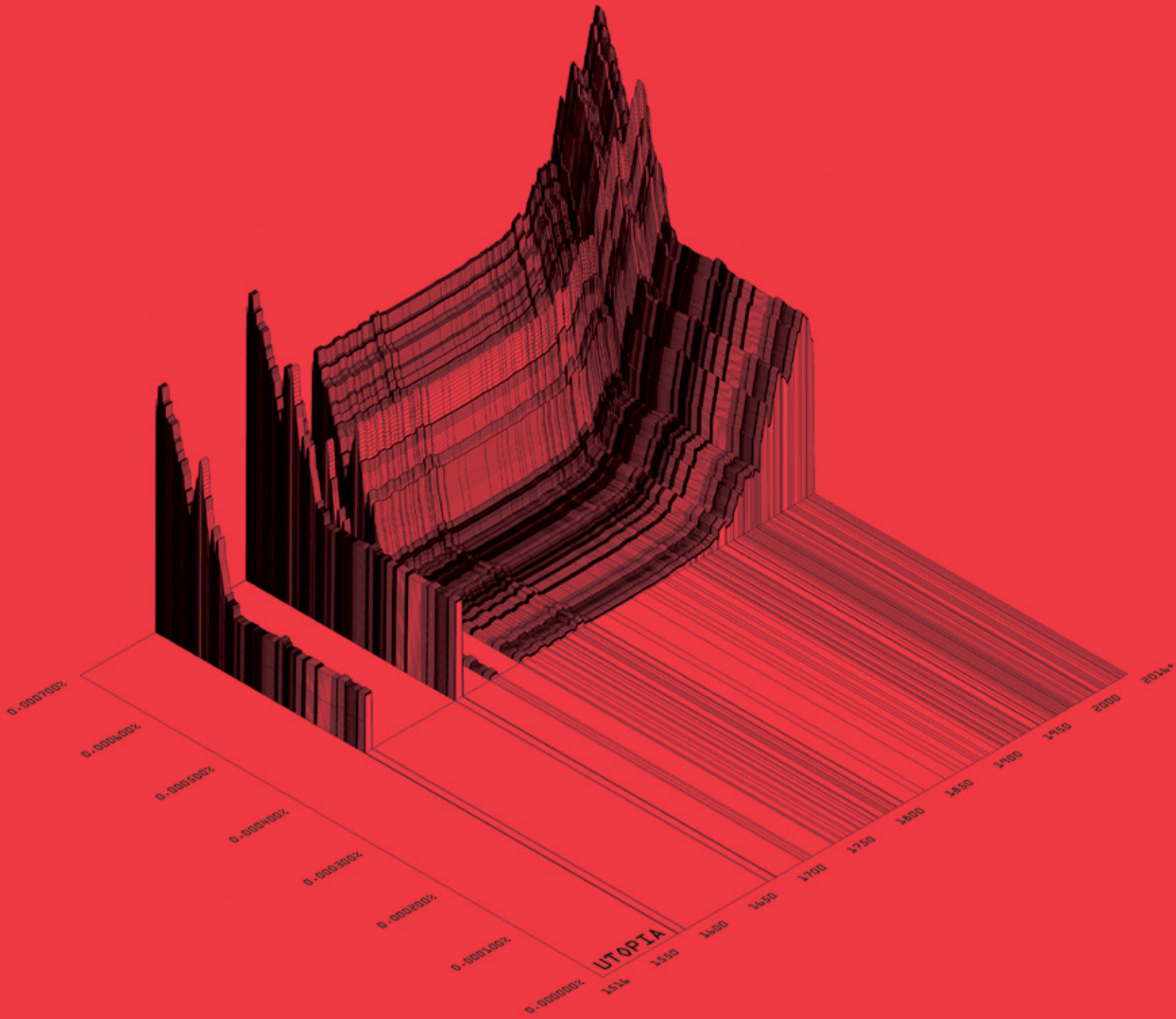
Derzu Campos, *The Time that Remains*, 2016
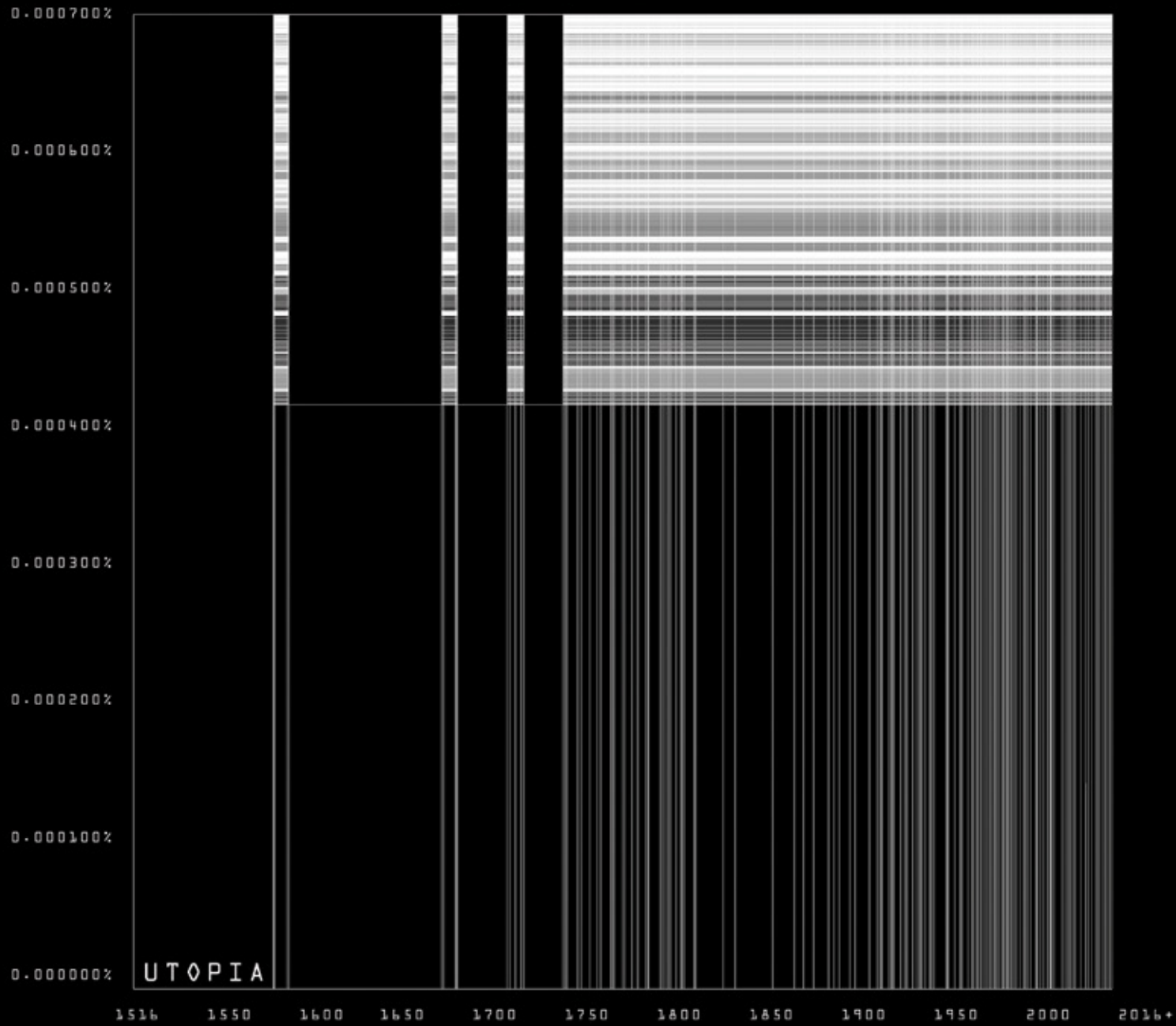
Amaurotism, or Utopia Intolerance
Louis Moreno

During the 20th century, utopianism became a byword for the failure of not only communism and socialism, but also urbanism. The intention to design and build utopia indicated, some said, the spectre of tyranny, whether manifested in the form of inhospitable cities or inhumane bureaucracy. What, though, is left of the utopian spirit in a period in which the purge of what Friedrich Hayek called those social 'totalitarians in our midst' became dominant? In other words, who is possessed by utopianism in an era of high neoliberalism? To answer this, I suggest we consider how the relatively benign notion of the 'startup' — the seed crystal of contemporary capital — is beginning to stake a claim on the space of politics. But before we assess the nature of this claim, it will be useful to define what inspires the desire for utopia.

In *A Philosophy of the Future*, Ernst Bloch said that utopia construction consists of an attempt to seize the moment when the present becomes the not-yet[1]. For Bloch, this mode of wishful thinking is fundamentally political: its utopian content is announced by an image of a society that has resolved the specific conflicts that determine what the future may become. What distinguishes utopianism is, therefore, only partially the description of exotic islands underpinned by bizarre institutions, perplexing occupations, astounding technologies, peculiar customs and so forth. All of these are important to separate what is mundane from what is utopian. But what indicates Utopia's true content — making Utopia literally *fabulous* — is a twofold disclosure about the limits of the ability to shape space and time. The first is based upon the degree to which the space of Utopia reveals how contemporary politics cannot resolve problems Utopians manage with ease. The second, more complex tendency is to delineate our practical inhabitation of a space swamped in a temporality that makes the future inaccessible.

The fact that Utopia is 'discovered' in 1516 is, thus, no accident; it marks a point when new technical and social processes seem to extend the horizon of civilisation, whilst intensifying the capacity to exploit life. The spirit of humanism is, in this respect, a reaction to a geographical growth of capital manifested in an emergent system of land enclosure and intensive agriculture. Furthermore, its tendencies turn docile sheep into monstrous livestock aiming to 'devastate and depopulate fields, houses and towns'[2]. As More explains in Book I of *Utopia*, this results in a

[1] Bloch, E. (1970). *A Philosophy of the Future*. New York: Herder and Herder.

[2] More, T. (1975). *Utopia: A New Translation, Backgrounds, Criticism*. (R. M. Adams, Ed. & Trans.) New York, London: W. W. Norton & Co., p. 88

floating human mass thrown off the landscape, which then becomes the locus of the landed gentry's brutal rule of law. Having returned from the New World, More's traveller Raphael Hythloday can easily see through the invisible sleight of hand which enables a monopoly class to claim that private interest is the source of commonwealth. While capitalism can implement all manner of experiments to accelerate the pattern of technological, cultural, sociological and even biological change, the realm of politics remains determinedly atavistic, wilfully primitive, and resolutely immune to transformation. The space of utopia appears, then, as a kind of future that cannot be tolerated by the current political economic system. All of which explains why More's famous remarks on the 'conspiracies of the rich who are advancing their own interests under the name and title of the common wealth' still remain — five hundred years later — weirdly contemporary.

What Utopia reflects is a kind of crystallisation of the political imagination, where political creativity is confined to a limited set of default states. Hence, it is also no accident that the traveller to Utopia is a maritime explorer; the ocean itself becomes, as in Fernand Braudel's great image of 'deep' time, the figure of some endless present. But Utopia is that one place able to elude the end-state, which — ever since Aristotle — has framed the art of government. While the classic forms of Principality, Aristocracy and Democracy were, as More's contemporary Machiavelli pointed out, easily transformed into their diabolical mirror image of Tyranny, Oligarchy and Anarchy, the Republic of Utopia realises an alternative. What gives Utopia its mythic qualities is not only its fantastic point of origin, but also its constitution in a territory deemed inconceivable by political ontology. Namely, a republic where the violent pursuit of territory, money and glory do not have to be regulated precisely because these tendencies constitute, in their very nature, an alien reality.

For Marxists like Bloch, the space of Utopia radicalises More's humanism, as it provides a speculative tool to carve out a new 'spaciousness in the flow of history'[3], where the pattern of progress no longer has to be bound to the coercive rules of capitalist temporality. And for Bloch's heir, Fredric Jameson, what the aesthetic work of utopia construction (of creating 'wish-images') consists in, is a speculative drive to swerve back and forth between a state of beguiling impossibility and the stagnating potential of the existing state. Therefore, science fiction becomes a realm of literature where a multiverse of utopian thinking might begin to spill over into reality, to influence the mundane order of things[4]. Only by dialectically shape-shifting between abstract and concrete states might it be possible to 'trick' the course of history into favouring a route that eludes a morbid dependency on capitalist competition and the state apparatus.

[3] Bloch, E. (1970). *A Philosophy of the Future*. New York: Herder and Herder, p. 123

[4] Jameson, F. (2007). *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. London: Verso.

However, while Jameson sees utopian creativity as the one area of the imagination capable of reinvigorating the politics of Marx, it is a little disconcerting to discover that those most possessed by the utopian impulse — largely based in California — look to revitalise the force of that social form which horrified More: monopoly power. Here, in Silicon Valley, what marks the utopian influence of digital 'wish-fulfilment' is not its basis in high-tech, but a commitment to establishing a clean break from the governmental condition. The so-called 'Seasteading Institute' — the brainchild of Patri Friedman, funded by the venture capitalist Peter Thiel — is perhaps the most notorious wish-image that the Valley has concocted[5]. If More's Utopia is a project to describe the best state of a common wealth, the new politics spinning out of Silicon Valley state that the future of the economy, ecology and society depends on replacing states with startups. Specifically, what Silicon Valley utopians like Thiel (who is also the co-founder of Paypal and the data 'mining' company Palantir) hold in prospect is an archipelago of urban city-states, socio-spatial 'platforms', in which the race to innovate the highest and best form of governmentality becomes a brand new sector of economic growth.

[5] See the Seasteading Institute's mission statement: www.seasteading.org/about/vision-strategy

Unlike the question posed by other futurists (like Google's Ray Kurzweil), new technology is not one of eschatology. Instead of simply submitting to the rapture of artificial intelligence, Thiel's anarcho-libertarianism holds firm to the basic principle taught by Hayek: individuals have rarely been able to realise the liberatory potential of capitalism precisely because it has always been impeded by social burdens imposed by the state. Yet, while the spectre of neoliberalism looms large (Patri Friedman is, after all, the grandson of Milton), Thiel's interests conflict with the competitive agenda that the Chicago School set forward. For Hayek, what made the state a hell on earth was, as Holderlin said, the fact 'that man tried to make it his heaven'[6]. Thus, the solution was to make the state bend to the will of the market mechanism. Only by liberalising the market, introducing it to fields that had never been thought of as sectors of competition, could one finally disrupt the bureaucratic drive to direct the lives of private individuals. Thiel, though, is not only hostile towards political institutions, he is also bored with the ideology of competition. What Thiel conceives — outlined in a manifesto called *Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future* — is a non-state space in which elite startups are free to pursue the zero-sum game of monopoly capital[7]. He presents a non-place realm, spanning the frontiers of cyber, outer and oceanic space, free of the interference of markets and governments. Far out to sea, the startup becomes a floating platform of knowledge creation, comprising an intellectual archipelago colonised by Stanford islands and maritime MITs, where the institutional norms, moral codes and territorial logics of nation states do not apply. Utopia becomes a place in which pioneering startups can 'propagate the machinery of freedom that makes the world safe for capitalism'[8].

[6] Hayek, F. A. (2007). *The Road to Serfdom*. (B. Caldwell, Ed.) London: Routledge, p. 24

[7] Thiel, Peter and Blake Masters (2014). *Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future*. London: Ebury Publishing.

[8] Thiel, P. (2009). 'The Education of the Libertarian' at www.cato-unbound.org/2009/04/13/peter-thiel/education-libertarian

The idea that the world should harbour a 'safe-space' for a new generation of capitalism has a ring of satire that Thomas More might have enjoyed. But the serious intent behind this project — combined with the monotheist language of going from 'zero to one' — signals a raw streak of paranoia. What is projected is not Utopia, but enclaves: manmade islands designed to entrench separation, not resolve contradiction. This may be more late Howard Hughes than Thomas More; even so, a parallel between the islands of More-Hythloday and Thiel-Friedman is worth entertaining, as it helps to clarify the kind of 'wish-fulfilment' determining capitalism's contemporary form. Whereas for More, Utopia was a method to expose the monopolistic impulse, Utopia today is precisely the platform through which monopolists seek to colonise a New World. In other words, utopianism has become the method through which a new generation of monopoly-capital is attempting to extract surpluses from a world increasingly intolerant of their activity. Thiel's utopianism could, therefore, be categorised as 'extra-superterrestrial', Marx's term for ideologies intended to leave the earthly plane precisely in order to revitalise their worldly base of power[9].

[9] Marx, K. (1970). *The German Ideology*. New York: International Publishers.

To conclude, let's take this mapping of Thiel's Utopia onto More's commonwealth one step further. We might remember that in More's Utopia all cities are of equal importance. Except there is one place more equal than all others: the city of Amaurot, whose name — a play on the Greek 'amauroton', meaning 'to make dark'[10] — represents a cipher for the City of London, one that still resonates some five centuries later. After all, what is contemporary London if not a zone of opacity that gives monopoly capital its liberty; a place in which the city's built environment can be used, and its financial engineers have license to conceal capital, to protect it from the social claims imposed by the state of democracy, the will of the people. In this respect, all that Silicon Valley's thought leaders have produced is something like a literal — almost charmingly over-worked — representation of the wish-image of financial capitalism: to use global cities and island *entrepôts* to transcend the realm of politics, accessing daily life only in order to impose tolls, extract rents, create scarcities and impose police order when the people assemble. In other words, the kind of desire that defines the bleeding edge of capitalism is not to build Utopia, but to defend Amaurot: a wonderland of no temporal duration that provides financial capital with its ability to remain eternally present and wilfully elusive. But if Silicon Valley and the City of London represent what we might call a spirit of anti-Utopia, or 'Amaurotism', then the Utopian project still remains vital, particularly for those looking for space in the political unconscious to overcome the real 'totalitarians in our midst' — the hostile force of finance capital seeking urban social platforms to elude political control. The spirit of Utopia might still be re-enchanted by projects in order to disrupt the fulfilment of Amaurotism: the wish for an eternal monopoly over the future of the city.

[10] More, T. (1975). *Utopia: A New Translation, Backgrounds, Criticism*. (R. M. Adams, Ed. & Trans.) New York, London: W. W. Norton & Co., p. 35

Hertopia
Nina Power

[1] More, T. (1975). *Utopia: A New Translation, Backgrounds, Criticism.* (R. M. Adams, Ed. & Trans.) New York, London: W. W. Norton & Co., p. 88

ore's *Utopia* invites us to think about what communism might look like (albeit a communism that includes slavery, the use of mercenaries in war and the death penalty for adultery). This, of course, is communism in the pre-Marxist sense: resources and work are equally shared; money, poverty and private property have been abolished; and the life of the mind is heralded as the pinnacle of human existence. It is a curiously Platonic kind of communism; people get up before dawn to attend lectures and toilet pots are made of gold — so little do the Utopians care for it. In this austere world, people are nevertheless generous, healthy and happy: 'no one is poor there, there are no beggars, and though no one owns anything, everyone is rich'[1].

But like in the case of all the places that exist nowhere, it is not clear how we are to take More's proposal — as whimsy, as serious suggestion, as satire? We need a way into his curious commonwealth: a perspective that cuts through and reveals the distance, not only between More's time and ours but between More's ideas and the world in which he wrote them. Thinking specifically about the role of women in More's utopia, their position then and their position now allows us to shine a light on these distances, and to think about what a true feminist utopia might look like: what would a world where women were not defined by men be? In a sense, this is one of the hardest things to imagine because there are so few resources for it in history. When Simone de Beauvoir declared women to be the 'second sex', she wanted it to be understood that women have never been able to position themselves because men have always closed off that possibility in different ways: women are property, their reproductive capacities are policed, their sexuality is judged as too much or too little, their education is granted grudgingly (and is still not granted at all in some places). What it might mean to be a woman is yet unknown, even now, five hundred years after More.

So what does More (or rather, how does 'Hythloday', the explorer who describes the island and whose compound Greek name means 'nonsense peddler') say about the women of Utopia? Every woman is a worker and each of them is taught a trade (though women are taught the 'lighter' crafts, such as working with wool and linen). Both men and women farm, and both are educated. Both sexes are equally and vigorously trained for war, though most of the time the Utopians prefer to pay mercenaries to do their dirty work. Women can also attend the early morning lectures — so far, so egalitarian. On the other hand, it is the women who move to their husband's households when they marry and act as their 'servants'. On top of the labour they do, they are also primarily responsible for childcare and cooking, a scenario that seems curiously familiar (though in Utopia, the labour part is never too onerous or lengthy, as there is no need to work to provide more than is necessary). Moreover, women are perceived to be weaker: on the odd trip out of the city, for which permission is needed, if women are present, a 'public slave' drives the oxen-powered-wagon; whereas groups of men alone simply dispense with the transport and go by foot. In intimate matters, premarital sex is banned and both men and women are brutally punished for it. A strangely explicit ceremony nonetheless takes place before the wedding day, where 'whether she be widow or virgin'[2] the woman is shown naked before their betrothed (to be fair, the men are too). As More puts it: 'When men go to buy a colt, where they are risking only a little money, they are so cautious that, though the animal is almost bare, they won't close the deal until saddle and blanket have been taken off, lest there be a hidden sore underneath'[3]. No one, not even the kindest Utopian, wants a women with syphilis. Very occasionally, women are allowed to become priests of their heterodox, panpsychist religion, 'but only a widow of advanced years is ever chosen, and it doesn't happen often'[4].

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 66

[3] *Ibidem.*

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 84

More's mixture of Platonic, Aristotelian and humanist ideas construct a commonwealth that is fair but differentiated — women can work, fight and learn, but they are still weaker and must orient themselves towards the domestic, acting as servants to their husbands. Nevertheless, in some respects, More's vision is more progressive than today's, where, in some countries, women's education is still seen as secondary; where they are barred from certain military duties, and are still not allowed to be priests in the Catholic and many other faiths (there are some 'equalities' worth fighting for more than others, perhaps).

At the end of the book, More, the narrator in conversation with Hythloday, suggests that there is a single reason why non-Utopians (that is to say, us) have failed to follow in their footsteps: pride. Pride is here described as '[measuring] her prosperity not by what she has but by what others lack […] Pride is a serpent from hell that twines itself around the hearts of men, acting like a suckfish'[5]. It is merely convention to gender sins in this way, but why is it that pride is a woman? Why are the men of earthly commonwealths held back by feminised sin? Must men always blame women for their worst excesses…?

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 90

What Utopia, then, can we imagine if our no-place were to be understood from the standpoint *of* women, and not just as the sex defined always-in-relation-to-men? Would the men disappear as they (almost) do in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1915 *Herland*? Or would we imagine taking equality to extremes and levelling the biological playing fields via technology — outsourcing birth to machines and freeing women from the labour of reproduction, like Shulamith Firestone's 1970s techno-futuristic vision in *The Dialectic of Sex*? Would it simply be to imagine the possibility of women defining themselves as existential subjects, condemned to be free by the human condition but not trapped in unfreedom by the patriarchy, as de Beauvoir hoped?

I can imagine certain things: what it would be like if traits that get associated with women, such as emotion and care, were not slandered and poorly paid (if paid at all) but aspirations for all humanity, so that to be associated with these qualities would be the greatest thing — a source of great pride. I can imagine a world where the male gaze is not the sole filter for the visual, where people are granted other qualities beyond their 'hotness' or otherwise. I can imagine a world in which reparations are made for the way in which women have been treated; though what form this would take I cannot imagine, especially if we, like More, abolish money. But perhaps women should be paid back before we do that, as should all the people hurt by a violent, patriarchal vision of the world. A true feminist utopia — a Hertopia! — would surely not have slaves or wars, yet it would not be boring either, but rather constantly inventive.

At the very least, it couldn't possibly be as bad as the past 200,000 years… could it?

Bill Balaskas, *The Leadership Has Failed*, 2015

The Imaginary Reconstitution of Leadership
Bill Balaskas

On 15 January, 1919, one of the most important Marxist theorists and revolutionaries of the 20th century, Rosa Luxemburg, was murdered by the members of a conservative paramilitary group operating in Berlin. A few hours before the incident that took her life, Luxemburg wrote: 'The leadership has failed. But the leadership can and must be created anew by the masses and out of the masses. The masses are the crucial factor; they are the rock on which the ultimate victory of the revolution will be built'[1]. Although Luxemburg's last text begins with an admission of failure, it still reflects a strong belief in the ability to transform the world through the power of the masses — a rather optimistic view of the human condition.

Almost a century after Luxemburg's murder, and in order to mark the quincentenary of the publication of Thomas More's *Utopia*, Somerset House, in London, commissioned British conceptual artist Jeremy Deller and the Fraser Muggeridge studio to design a flag that would encapsulate the notion of utopia and celebrate 2016 as a 'Year of Imagination and Possibility'. The flag that the artist and the graphic designers of the studio came up with featured a large, optimistic 'smiley face', very similar to the emojis that we use in our everyday lives when exchanging messages on our smartphones, tablets and laptops. For a whole year, the flag will overlook London's impressive skyline, which is increasingly defined by the presence of skyscrapers that (mainly) host the offices of international financial firms and banks. Although the flag's face is widely perceived as a symbol with a positive connotation, the most important question to be asked about its meaning refers neither to its emotional character, nor to the geographical direction towards which the smile is oriented (i.e. whether it is facing the City's skyscrapers in the east, or the Houses of Parliament in the west). Rather, the most pertinent question is associated with the flag's relation to time: is the face featured in the flag smiling to the future or is it smiling to the past?

In the *Communist Manifesto,* Marx and Engels break emphatically with the long-established idea that utopia belongs to a lost 'Golden Age', turning — instead — their attention to the future. Through this choice, they refute a well-known 'occupational disease of historians', as English broadcaster and historian A. J. P. Taylor has called the prevalence of the past in utopianism's association with time[2]. As it is exemplified by the *Communist Manifesto*, this orientation towards the future is of particular importance for the political character of utopianism; it lends to it elements of a distinct political methodology. In her 2013 book, *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*, British sociologist Ruth Levitas elaborates on the character of utopia as a methodology[3], by noting that it provides a critical tool for exposing the limitations of current political discourses about economic growth and ecological sustainability. It facilitates genuinely holistic thinking about possible futures, combined with reflexivity, provisionality, and democratic engagement with the principles and practices of those futures. And it requires us to think about our conceptions of human needs and human flourishing in those possible futures. The core of utopia is the desire for being otherwise, individually and collectively, subjectively and objectively. Its expressions explore and bring to debate the potential contents and contexts of human flourishing. It is thus better understood as a method than a goal[4].

Levitas complements this context by defining the three key aspects of the 'imaginary reconstitution of society'[5] that can materialise through utopianism. First of all, the archaeological mode of the reconstitution focuses on the 'excavation of fragments and shards'[6] from the past, which may belong to utopian traditions in politics, literature or the arts. The aim of the 'excavator' is not only to reveal those utopian accounts, but also to combine them into a coherent whole. Secondly, there is the ontological mode, which is concerned with the subjects and agents of utopia — namely, the ways in which utopianism may encourage people to change their social, political and cultural behaviours. Finally, the architectural mode focuses on the organisational and/or institutional structures that could facilitate the creation of a better society.

Rosa Luxemburg was murdered soon after expressing her faith in mass political action and its power to produce this better society. The continuation of her revolutionary path towards social reconstitution was interrupted by the utmost expression of political violence. In today's case, what predominantly interrupts our potential revolutionary paths is something that might appear to be profoundly different, but still remains deeply violent. Notably, in his seminal book *The Society of the Spectacle*, originally published in 1967, French Marxist philosopher Guy Debord argues: 'Spectacle is the guardian of sleep'[7]. The multiple facades of the sleeping masks could be considered as manifestations of that 'guardian'. In contrast to Luxemburg's assessment in her very last text, which begins with the recognition of failure and goes on to identify potentiality, the sleeping masks of the work remain confined to the level of acknowledgement, without alluding to any further steps to be

[1] Luxemburg, R. (1971). *Selected Political Writings of Rosa Luxemburg.* (D. Howard, Ed.) New York: Monthly Review Press, p. 415

[2] Taylor, AJP. (1967). 'Introduction' in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto.* UK: Penguin Books, p. 12

[3] Levitas largely builds her analysis on Fredric Jameson's theorisation of utopianism, according to which 'utopias have something to do with failure, and tell us more about our own limits and weaknesses than they do about perfect societies' in Jameson, F. (1988). 'Comments' in *Utopian Studies,* 9 (2), p. 74

[4] Levitas, R. (2013). *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society.* UK: Palgrave Macmillan, p. xi

[5] *Ibid.*, p. xvii

[6] *Ibidem.*

[7] Debord, G. (2004 [1967]). *The Society of the Spectacle.* London: Rebel Press, p.12

taken. Rather, and as the object on which Luxemburg's phrase has been embroidered suggests, what follows the realisation of failure is sleep — a sleep of political and social consciousness. This is a sleep that disrupts the main elements of utopia as methodology that Levitas puts forward, given that all the reconstitutional modes that she identifies require an active stance, both on past knowledge and on current social realities.

Today's work of art has to function as an 'antidote' to this sleep, for — by its very nature — the role of art is not that of expressing mere acknowledgements: there is always an implication produced by any (artistic) statement made. However, it is not the artist who will be ultimately called to materialise the implication, but rather the members of the audience. As Levitas notes, leadership provides the direction of the organisational and institutional structures that will nurture utopianism. In a historical conjuncture in which faith in all kinds of structures and organisations is limited, or — even — non-existent, a new kind of *cultural* leadership is called to replace our traditional understanding of political initiation, which appears to have indeed failed. Amid a context of severe economic and ideological crisis, politically engaged art could produce a fertile ground within which to explore those potentialities. Yet, just as the sleeping mask is an object of personal use, the exploration of alternative modes of social, political and cultural being is, before anything else, a personal exploration. The fight for the imaginary reconstitution of leadership is a fight against the passivity of (personal) sleep. Once this fight has been won, the imaginary reconstitution of society may begin.

IV.
The
Horizon

(that perfect world we go blind looking for)

Himali Singh Soin, *Love in the Multiverse,* 2016

Once, the universe turned upside down. A woman laughed, she
roared her laughter rumbled, cracked and burst open, jumped
outside itself, and broke into the earth. The wind spun, bent.
So strong it turned the whole earth upside down inside in.
Tomorrow, the witches say the laughter will settle down
and things will be the way they always were, in the
way they longed to be, again. We will eat soup
with the convex turn of our spoons, walk on
the memory parts of our brains, stargaze
with our feet, eat breakfast at midnight
and read the beginning last. We will
listen with ears to the mouthpiece
and claim the other before they
are ours. We'll work after we
play, live after we die. We
will collect time, let it go
and do for others with
no desire for return.
So the witches say
things will make
sense again
and come
to rest
and come,
sense again
things will make
so the witches say
no. Desire for return
and do for others with
will. Collect time, let it. Go
play, live after. We die. We
are ours. We'll work after we,
and claim the other before they
listen, with ears to the mouthpiece
and read the beginning last. We will
with our feet. Eat breakfast at midnight.
The memory parts of our brains stargaze
with the convex turn of our spoons, walk on.
Way they longed to be, again. We will eat soup
and things will be the way they always were in the
tomorrow. The witches say the laughter will settle down
so strong. It turned the whole earth upside down inside in
outside itself, and broke into the earth. The wind spun, bent,
roared, her laughter rumbled, cracked and burst open, jumped
once. The universe turned upside down. A woman laughed, she.

Abstract: Relationship to what we eat. See: Illusion of Choice chart.
Basic: See 'Opposable thumb'.
Catastrophe: See 'Dating App' and 'Soylent'.
Danger: That whose signals are always *en-route* and inherently too late.
Evolution: The breakdown of linearity.
Fusion: The marvelous multiplicity made from combining two unlikely objects or ideas.
God: Died in 1865.
Habit: Waiting for you.
Insistence: What keeps the person the same before and after an impediment.
Joy: Serum made from tears, commonly administered to Mars inhabitants.
Kairos: Time spent in daydreaming about the past or en-visioning the future.
Lists: A common early 21st century journalistic technique; see 'Viral' or 'Vice'.
Mass: Graves, Shootings, Negligence, Following.
Nuclear: That which gives way to what is impossible to recover.
O: Sound of nostalgia.
Present: The Con-Temporary moment in flux; existed since it was named until the end of the 20th century, when historians could no longer place it.
Queue: An originally British phenomenon that spread like a disease worldwide mid-21st century, when most of the world's water was rationed by Wanted Waterways Ltd.
Rhinoceros: Long extinct unicorn-like creature that could not fly, and thus was sent on a boat from India to Japan as a gift from a king.
Satellites: Defunct objects that measured weather patterns; most destroyed by atmospheric tear caused by climate control; to be differentiated from 'Star'.
To be: Is to not be.
Used: See 'Sale, 9.99'.
Verisimilitude: See 'Alien'.
We: See 'Post-human'.
Xerox: A company that monopolised the photocopying industry, so much so that the act was deemed after it. Went bankrupt in 2030.
Yes: The only, as yet discovered, word to which plants react.
Zed: Nostalgia.
0: Whole, void.

Unheard Of

A place where pianos are built into the wooden sides of houses, a place with rivers of treacle, clouds made of blankets, words that never refer to themselves, no words at all in fact, fortunetellers that work for love, a moon that has its own light, explorers that retire in rest, women that bathe with the rain of the desert and old men that walk alongside their own afterlives, spiral staircases in the garden, round rooms made of glass where rhinoceroses are mystical uni-horned kings, where decisions are made immediately and sequences are vasts apart; stories plotless, gooseberry wine and no philosophers, no roads, no margins — oracular advice in the tessellation of trees, blue, lots of blue, blazers without buttons, quotation marks that hover around things that are not true to themselves, toast that never falls on its buttered side, non-existent wishes because the word wish sounds like whish, and just like that, they disappear; blue oranges, televisions without news and free macaroons, a place about which people used to say, 'there isn't a better place than this', but what they didn't know was that those that lived there, lived there on one condition; a single clause, unsigned but implicit, in which they had to stay silent, which, at first, did not seem like a condition at all, rather another element of its ideal, a sign of the place, but sign sounds like sine which sounds like sein, a wave of being, silence like an observation, so that they looked into each other's eyes (obverse glances) and just as they began to signal one or the other would blink or look away, causing the whole conversation to crumble in forget, and the silence became turbid memory, revealing an inability to travel in time, sound without air but even when the river dried and the clouds cleared, the people felt no absence.

The new children were never told stories so they grew up thinking that the river was just a giant mark on earth in the shape of confusion, an s, tangled thought, distraction. When molecules clashed in unexpected explosions, no one heard them. The bell tolled, nobody left. Silence became oppression, silence became without touch. Mostly, silence became noise. Not grating — a thin lull thrumming a monotonous beat, a cluster of consonants clanging an atonal drone. It affected their eyes and like birds beating into glass they could not occupy the distance between themselves and their image.

They had not known sound, but if this was what sound sounded like, they began to imagine other places, places where they could hear what silence sounded like, every hemidemisemiquaver, every hertz, every micro, nano, pico, mega, giga, tera, brontosaurus of decibel. They imagined all the things they could have said, written, known. It was only in their imaginations, then, that they could re-conceive of silence. Silence, meaning preservation of language. And they liked it better. They didn't want to go back to the place better than all other places. So they stopped living where the pianos were built into wood and the rivers were made of treacle, and began to live only in their minds. They knew they'd meet each other again at some point, light years later, transverse waves in phantom space.

Simulacra, Seduction
and the Voyages of Immortality
Adolfo Vásquez Rocca

Some islands drifted away from the continent, but the island is also that towards which one drifts; other islands originated in the ocean, but the island is also the origin, radical and absolute
Gilles Deleuze[1]

[1] Deleuze, G. (2004). *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974*. London: Semiotext(e).

The notion of the island as a solitary place that contains memories, hopes and desires, has been extensively used in visual culture, literature and cinema as a recurrent metaphor where one can escape from the real world. Islands seem to offer a territory where things that usually have no place can happen. Such is the case of the novel *The Invention of Morel*, written by Adolfo Bioy Casares and published in 1940; a tale in which a fugitive starts a diary, just after some tourists arrive to the island where he hides.

After spending some time there and while watching the other inhabitants aloofly, he discovers that the characters are nothing but projections emitted from a machine capable of reproducing reality, which is powered by the motion of turbines connected to the sea tides. The machine acts as a scanner device that contains copies of people and projects them, putting into play one of the most suggestive hypotheses of all science fiction: the coincidence, in the same place, of an object and its representation.

The confusion that is created by the presence of an object and its replica suggests the possibility that the world is comprised exclusively of sensations. Therefore, the limit between reality and fiction is overtaken, reducing the world we know to our own perceptions and senses. The narrator of the novel makes an elliptical tracing of the island and the buildings found there, as well as a spectral radiography of the projected characters, to conclude in a delirious reflection on virtual reality and simulacra. Such ideas anticipate Jean Baudrillard's and Paul Virilio's[2] concerns around the voyages of immortality and the utopian character of representation. Amongst the buildings in the island, the Museum is the space containing the holograms: images that achieve the immortality of those whom they represent. It is in the Museum where Morel erects his technological utopia: a simulacrum in which an ideal world is recreated in infinite time.

[2] Virilio, P. (1998). *Estética de la desaparición* (The Aesthethics of Disappearance). Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama.

The foreseeing character of *The Invention of Morel* is even more evident after considering that the man who won a Nobel Prize in physics for inventing holography, Dennis Gabor, raised the possibility of using holograms to construct an image of the original object only seven years after Casares published his novel. The 'real' life, once duplicated by the machine, gradually loses ontological density until its weight of reality is equal to zero, whereas the projections take on a life of their own, assuming a strange status of pseudo-reality.

The main character of the novel defines his expectations in relation to this new reality until it becomes his own. In this artificial paradise, the narrator has nothing left but to be devoured by the screen and transform himself into a simulacrum. Within this seduction, he enters into the eternity of the archive; the hegemony of a new media ecology on the island is complete. The victory of the narrator's illusion is the end of any attempt to escape the final triumph of utopian technology.

The island of Morel is a sacred space where the utopia of eternity has been built. And this perpetuity found not only its place, but also its spectator: the gaze recreates the utopia and confirms its existence in the words of the novel that reveals it. Without the narration, the island would be a utopia without memory, a mutilated space, a space without ritual, an invisible space.

A relevant parallelism between the *Utopia* of Thomas More and *The Invention of Morel* is that both of them generate an ambiguous element in the core of their narrations. It is not possible to place them completely within the limits of pure narrative fiction, nor is it accurate to remit them to the sphere of critical-social discourse. Utopian literature combines the critique of the existing with the proposal of what should exist, projecting the latter towards another historical time and into an unreal place (u-topos), so that the poetics of language postpones the effectiveness of criticism.

That science responds to the desires, needs and frustrations of human beings is one of the many meanings of Casares's novel. The invention and the island of Morel remind us that both utopia and dystopia depend on the nightmarish or dreamy relationship that we establish with the environment we build and, where appropriate, in which the character is immersed. Perhaps contemporary art is yet another place where, as in literature, it is possible to reflect upon a failed utopia, until it becomes a reality.

QUEEN OF WANDS

KING OF CHALICES

XIII

DEATH

XIV

ARPANET

TEMPERANCE

UTOPIA

SEVEN OF CHALICES

LSD

NINE OF WANDS

FIVE OF PENTACLES

IBM BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL MACHINES

KNIGHT OF SWORDS

THE INTERCLOUD

GLOBAL DATA

TWO OF PENTACLES

KNAVE OF CHALICES

Suzanne Treister's *Hexen 2.0* read by Mark Pilkington, 2016

It Is Precise to Start with the Promise
Helena Lugo

The elusiveness of such sites — not only because of what is felt but not seen, but also because it was seen but went unnoticed — requires that one returns over and over again
Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett[1]

The Utopia card is at the centre; it is precise to start with the promise. Consequently, all the cards fall into place around it to explore the present, past, hopes and futures of utopia, and thus envisage an improbable, yet historical interpretation. Nonetheless, the reading is neither retrospective nor anticipatory, for tarot does not see either ahead or backwards. It is rather a deck of cards with symbols filled with the wisdom of times; a historical device that stores the knowledge of humanity and suggests a variation for the future.

Suzanne Treister's *Hexen 2.0* tarot deck offers a cartography of contemporary control societies through technology, politics and war; it is 'an investigation of the scientific underpinnings of what Michel Foucault called bio-political governance'[2]: a government that rules through information to achieve the subjugation of bodies. Thus, Treister's deck is a glance at unofficial history in order to criticise the methods by which institutions control data, exercising power over the physical and the symbolic body. Treister bets on knowledge to question this imposition by researching both, parallel stories and counterculture movements, using cartomancy as an act of sorcery and revelation. Each card is an overview of untold genealogies that allow a reading of a collective destiny, gathering procedures of mass intelligence in the service of a new epistemology[3].

Mark Pilkington's tarot reading offers an insight on Suzanne Treister's unrevealed cards through a rather esoteric approach to the island. This specific combination does not aspire to transcend a plan of realities; it rather throws possibilities that, as unrealisable as utopia, and much like a magical act, explore desires and outcomes with the potential of becoming transformation:

I. Present

Two of Pentacles — The Intercloud
Just as ambiguous as the location of the island, this card represents a two-edge situation on the current issue of utopia. On one hand, the huge cloud gathers the collective age-old memory and history; the utopia of knowledge seems closer when information conveys the impression of being available to everyone. On the other hand, there is no escape from the data; its governmental, political and military management is used to control the masses in favour of the dominant power, along with its capitalist and neoliberalist policies.

Knave of Chalices — Ken Kesey[4]
The anti-establishment attitude and vision posed by Ken Kesey and his followers — The Merry Pranksters — believed in LSD as a tool for revolutionary social and political change. They were into electronically amplified music, strobe lighting and psychedelic effects[5]. They would think of alternative structures opposed to the social guidelines by gaining insight through extraordinary states of mind, living communally and exploring ways of being together. This card may be a metaphor of the role of the artists; an optimistic and constant quest to find freedom through defying established ideas and deranging them in the hopes of finding some alternative structure where the future can operate. An arcadian vision of utopia; a system that no longer controls every aspect of life.

II. Past

Five of pentacles — Internet Governance
This card portrays Internet governance and its logical capitalist extension; the development and application of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures and programs that shape the evolution and use of the Internet. But with it, comes the debate of whether the Internet should or should not be ruled over. Designed as a form of calculation, this card symbolises the actual achievement of a capital-economy-based utopia. Following the two of pentacles, the authority of

[1] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (2012). 'The Museum, a Refuge for Utopian Thought' in Moyao, Arely, *et al. First Act*. Mexico City: Olga and Rufino Tamayo Foundation, Conaculta, p. 44

[2] Bang Larsen, L. (2012). 'Suzanne Treister's Radical Enlightenment' in Treister, S. *Hexen 2.0*. London: Black Dog, p. 6

[3] *Ibidem*, pp. 6 -7

[4] Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters lived communally at Kesey's homes in California and Oregon, and are noted for the sociological significance of a lengthy road trip they took in the summer of 1964, travelling across the United States in a psychedelically painted school bus called 'Furthur', organising parties and giving out LSD.

[5] Knave of Chalices in Treister, S. (2015). *Hexen 2.0*. London: Black Dog.

the Internet instantiates a strange form of governance without a leader, where the basic principles are not agreed upon. However, for a utopia to exist there must be control. This phantom management affirms that capitalism is the invisible hand and unique dominating system, the one and only utopia that seems to prevail supported by an immaterial force.

Knight of Swords — IBM
International Business Machines is the material form of the Two and Five of Pentacles; it is the rotation of the gear that makes the clock hands turn. Inventions by IBM include the automated teller machine (ATM), the PC, the floppy disk, the hard disk drive, the magnetic stripe card, the relational database, the UPC barcode, and dynamic random-access memory (DRAM). IBM instatiates both the utopian and dystopian destinies of these technologies, with the potential to create alternatives that ultimately, benefit a capitalist society.

III. Hopes and Fears
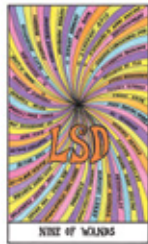
Nine of Wands — LSD
LSD is metaphor for the breaking down of control, an alternative to stop normative behaviours and social patterns. Its hallucinogenic effects within the members of the 60s counterculture, made possible an escape from the problems of society through changes in perception. This card connects with the Knave of Chalices (The Merry Pranksters); a shift in the mechanisms of culture controlling. However, this drug was also used as a chemical weapon, for its delirium can become an incapacitating agent. LSD embraces both the hopes and fears of utopia: the delusions and wild dreams construct alternatives as much as they destruct them.

XIV Temperance — ARPANET
Advanced Research Projects Agency Network was the network that became the basis for the Internet. The purpose was to communicate with and share computer resources among mainly scientific users at the connected institutions. ARPANET took advantage of this new idea of sending information and, in the 70s, made it possible to expand the size of the network, which had now become a network of networks. This card embodies the possibility

of either a positive or a negative outcome: an utopian ideal envisioning a socialist utopia where everything is shared, but that also portrays fear for the capacity of controlling and governing through shared information. The utopia not only depends on the basis of its structure, but on the ways we decide to envision the tools that we have: you have the dreamers, but you need the might — a military scale that brings it into creation.

IV. Possible Future Outcomes

King of Chalices — Stafford Beer
This card portrays what it would seem like a possible alternative to the dominance of the capitals. Stafford Beer was a British theorist best known for his work in the field of managing cybernetics. It was during the 60s and 70s that he developed the viable system model to diagnose the faults in any existing organisational system. He was part of a radical tendency within cybernetics of 'anti-control', who found in technology a tool to oppose the capitalist dominance; a transcendental state that would allow freedom and spirituality. However, he 'was an unruly individual who, in spite of his anti-authoritarian and spiritual engagement with cybernetics, was rather translated into a 21st century ambiguous *avant-garde* entrepreneur'[6].

[6] Bang Larsen, L., *op. cit.*, p. 8

XIII Death — John von Neumann
This card represents a terrifying biological dystopia: the control of nature instead of information — a venture into harnessing the ultimate energies, such as subatomic and nuclear weapons, in order to create a new culture, society and future where the forces of nature are under control. John von Neumann and The Macy Conferences are an attempt to transcend the human body and become data: tame life itself at a biological level. Although the conferences were created to improve technology, tackle social issues and restore the unity of science, they are also proof of the almost invisible line that separates utopia from its dystopian destinies.

V. Final Outcome

[7] Arendt, H. (2015). 'Queen of Wands' in Treister, S. *Hexen 2.0*. London: Black Dog.

Queen of Wands — Hannah Arendt

Although Hannah Arendt's thought arises from the bosom of barbarism, her politics is devoted to the pursuit of a place where *the human* is possible without injustice. This card is a final consideration that quotes a fragment of *The Human Condition* written in 1958, which questions whether or not humans are ready for the utopia that science and technology have always promised. This would imply a detachment from other human beings by means of the complete automatisation of labour through technological devices. The debate arises a philosophical/ethical question as the conservation of humanity wouldn't be possible in this utopia: 'The human artifice of the world separates human existence from all mere animal environment, but life itself is outside this artificial world, and through life man remains related to all other living organisms'[7]. Should we benefit from the automatisation of labour? Could we renounce utopia to make the human condition linger?

Pilkington's reading shows us that the ambiguities of More's utopia are shockingly in tune with our contemporary concerns. The *zeitgeist* that emerged from it is the unavoidable culmination of a rather dystopian landscape. The seven of chalices/Utopia card is between heaven and hell; as utopian dreams have no place for halfways, they either are or are not. The island has room for only one type of ideal, whether communist, capitalist, ecological, religious, gender, economic or technological. This interpretation, though, offers a glimpse of a world in which different motions and knowledges create compositions of possible futures and trace their effects back to our present[8]. In an *ars combinatoria* exercise, these tarot cards are both a re-enchantment of the world and a typology of some sort of machine that mixes, intertwines and infiltrates hidden knowledge.

[8] Bang Larsen, L., *op. cit*, p. 8

Treister, more concerned with the dangers of disenchantment than with the illusory projection of utopia, seeks to dream up possibilities. The dynamism posed by the reconfigurations of her tarot deck allows different readings that — including both the illusions and disappointments of history — elude its prevailing disenchantment. But as dynamic and changing the readings may be, the position of the place where we locate our utopias becomes immovable, definitive: utopia must be at the centre. It is precise to start with the promise.
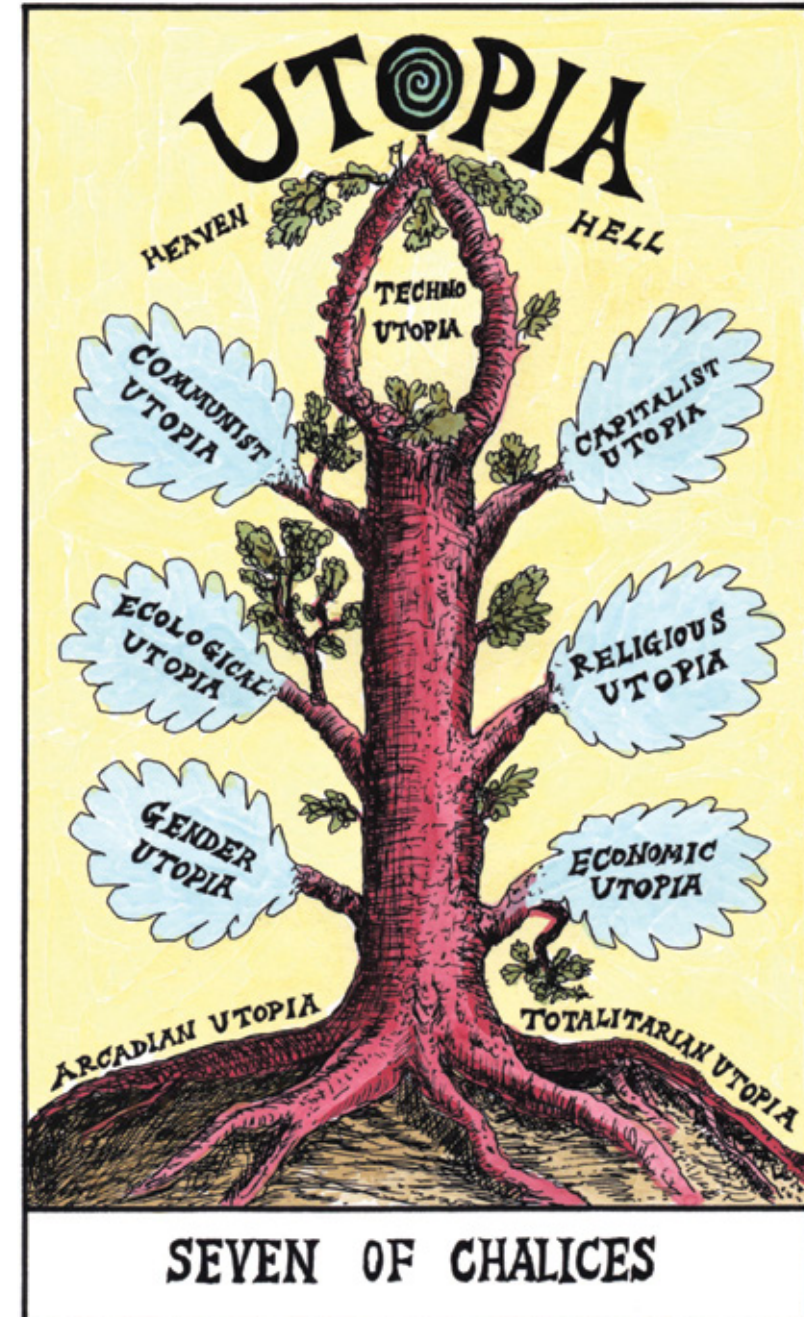
Yoshino Maru
Legacy Russell

y father always looks me square in the eye when I come home.

He looks me right in the face and he tells me, 'I'm not going to be around forever'.

I have been hearing this prophecy since as far back as I can remember; I've been waiting for him to die since the day I was born.

Around forever.

For a black boy who grew into a black man watching other black boys be boxed up, this island didn't offer much escape. Yet freedom came in finding ways to disappear within it. There is militancy in self-erasure — a power to it. Since the day I was born, I've been waiting for him to go to that good place, cut a slice of skyward and unfurl it like a ribbon.

His mother used to smoke Phillip Morris slim cigarettes in the apartment. This was back when they lived up on 125th Street, back when the island still had its dignity and the people did, too. My father had bad asthma as a child: weak lungs. I never met her — my grandmother — but she had several sons and daughters, and they lived in Harlem. My father was almost the youngest child. When he was born, they thought that with those weak lungs he was destined to expire.

Each day he woke up with the gift of air in his mouth; each day growing up he pushed it out in stripes between the bars of his teeth, and it escaped with a radiator-hiss. Each day has been a surprise for him to find himself still alive. More than 26 thousand days have passed and still, each day there is that early-morning taste of penny on his tongue, and eyes that open — two new moons.

My father tells me that he wasn't supposed to live this long, and so he got lucky. He started running as a kid to strengthen his lungs. Such movement of his body gave him a mobility that could take a boy anywhere, even off the island. But he never left. He stayed. He waited for me.

Years before Dad began his self-erasure, I discovered a dozen small tubes of conditioner estranged from Clairol Nice n' Easy. Silver with a black cap, they were tucked away on top of a stack of old PC Pro magazines in the bathroom. Mutinous grey. So, it was true: he wouldn't be around forever.

Around forever.

He began to disappear: that line around him that made him distinct from the world became blurred. Sometimes, if he is standing still and is very, very quiet, I can't quite make him out. Then, he sneezes, and everything shudders in the shape of a man. I put my hands on the borders of that outline and squeeze tight.

My father never learned to swim. On that island surrounded by water, black boys did not go swimming. People say now that in one hundred years much of the island will be underwater. When I go home, my father fries tomatoes, blends chickpeas and olive oil, slices bread. He puts an orange in my hand. He wonders what will happen.

Will all our boys drown?

'Dad', I say. 'Dad, you outlived Prince. You outlived Muhammad Ali.'

He is not listening; he is back in the kitchen shouting back at me about scuba gear, by any means necessary.

I ask him what luck is and he tells me that luck is utopia. Luck is the thing that brings us closer to that perfect world we go blind looking for.

Outside the World, the Only Worthy Conquest
Rodolfo Sánchez

Wherfore not Utopie, but rather rightely my name is Eutopie, a place of felicitie
Anemolius poet laureate and nephew to Hythloday by his sister[1]

I

Utopias have emerged throughout history at times when dreaming the impossible is shown as a viable alternative. If we were to contrive a biography, not precisely of utopias, but of the vitality that has encouraged the formulation of ideal societies, the recurring protagonists would be the disenchantment of the present world, the incarnated suffering of political, social and economic contradictions, and the despair of being in a society where the fullness of existence can only be yearned. If an artwork is indeed inseparable from the character that produces it, in most of the cases, utopias recapitulate everything they fail to denounce: the dismal perspective of individuals who, at different moments in history, have embodied the desire that every epoch has alienated, in its own way.

The mature Plato who, in *The Republic*, modeled an exemplary State and opted later to draw a constitution of men rather than gods in *The Laws*, was a man of disillusioned politics. He was a citizen of an Athens that would wage war every other year, and that had condemned his mentor Socrates — the wisest man in the Polis — to drink hemlock; the disciple was fully aware that a reform was not an option for the corrupt ruling group[2].

It might be enough to remember that Campanella's *Civita Solis* was conceived in the shadows of a prison of a Neapolitan fortress, where he was imprisoned right after the conspiracy he led — in search of an independent Republic of the Spanish Crown — was discovered, in his native and exploited Stilo, in Calabria. Many of his fellow conspirators had been hanged or dismembered in the port of Naples, and Campanella had barely spared the death penalty declaring madness partly well feigned by the vigil; a torture of sleep deprivation to which he was submitted during his inquisitorial process[3].

Looking at a broader picture, the utopian social projects of the 18th and 19th centuries attempted to respond to the uncertainty generated by the material and spiritual precariousness that engendered the emerging and unknown way of life of the industrial cities. This response was marked by the massification of mechanised anonymous work, along with its lethal economic dynamics of self-preservation, that ended up perpetuating the production of labour force through a permanent minimum maximum of retribution[4]. Thus, in the 19th century, More's idyllic four-hour working day clashed with the less romantic, but equally idealistic, capitalist day of 16 and 18 hours paid with wages below the minimum necessary to survive. The desire of individuals concerned with recovering the human face of a society subject to intolerable conditions of existence, has transpired from the agricultural-based cellular phalansteries to the geopolitical projects of the Saint-Simonians, supported by technology and the proletarian dictatorship of production in Marx.

The notion of utopia throughout the ages has been the claim raised against a suffocating pettiness erected as normality: whether for the social misery tolerated, the immovable *mise en scène* staged by the political charade, or the mere despotism of the ruling class. Here lies a second quality of every utopia: when, among humanity, iniquity ceases to feel like a trance and prevails as the substance of the social order, justice and happiness must be transferred to the realm of speculation and imagination.

II

This suggestion is not reduced merely to the idea that utopias are the result of the feeling of thinkers overwhelmed with the situation they inhabit, for dystopias — more typical of the 20th century— have been the product of painfully realistic personalities. However, it is the necessary location outside the limits, rather than outside the reality of the present and visible world, the feature that outlines the sad paternity of social dreams of perfection and bliss.

Putting aside the distinctions between the literary and the philosophical nature of utopias, it is possible to sentence the prevalence of the strategy of 'cognitive estrangement'. This presents to its viewers the silhouette of an impossible yet understandable territory, as a fundamental tactic of the utopian architect[5]. A literary precision could help to clarify this statement. In the field of science fiction, it could be said that utopia as a genre spreads over only two unique topics: the alternative island and the time machine[6]. However, if it can be recognised that in More's *Utopia* the extremely recurring topic of the imaginary voyage reaches the peak of its philosophical formulation by proposing an ideal society based on a rational project of strictly socio-political foundations, and regardless of its magico-religious roots — including Plato's Republic; then, the prototype

[1] More, T. (1935 [1923]). *Utopia with the 'Dialogue of Comfort'*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.

[2] Klosko, G. (2006). 'Politics and method' and 'Plato's political theory' in *POLIS*, University of Virginia. Department of Politics, Vol. 23. No. 1

[3] Ernst, G. (2014). 'Tomasso Campanella' in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/campanella/#Cala

[4] Servier, J. (1982). 'De la huída hacia la Luna a la revolución' (From the Getaway to the Moon to the Revolution) in *La utopía* (The Utopia). Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, pp. 61-85

[5] Suvin, D. (1984). *Metamorfosis de la ciencia ficción. Sobre la poética y la historia de un género literario* (Science Fiction Metamorphosis. On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre). Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, p. 123

[6] *Ibidem.* pp. 279-280

of social dystopia can also be admitted in H. G. Wells's *Time Machine*, supported by an elemental aspect, such as the biological degradation of humanity. A transformation carried out in both narratives performs the same movement: a change of situation in an intelligible order, that in geometric terms is a change of position, both in time and space.

Likewise, it is pertinent to note the inherited worldview embodied in the Renaissance dream and the modern nightmare. More, halfway between the decline of the medieval world and the birth of modernity, imagines — within the rigid and static order of the Christian world — a change of place that translates into a radical transformation of social organisation. Whereas Wells, influenced by his courses with Thomas Huxley, 'Darwin's bulldog', notices humanity and its evolution — the biological correlate of progress — in a regressive, degenerate and debased sense.

In addition to the inventory of the mapped universe, the unknown land has a specular character; even if it does not resemble the country itself — as travelers' news reported on the newly 'discovered' America — or even if it's too similar to Utopia — which in extension and division corresponds symmetrically to England. The spider cannot fully see its own web despite having built it and been able to stand on it, just as the eye can only be looked at from its reflection. Hythloday, the foreigner, has to disclose Utopia to unveil the Englishmen's vision of his own society and, at the same time, that of all the spectators who are able to contemplate the organisation of a country where equality and justice reign, from the myriad of imperfections and deficiencies of their own community.

Up to this point, the characterisation of Utopia and succeeding works that praise themselves for following the spirit of Lord Chancellor's work, lead to a first conclusion: utopia can be found in a change of place. It presents a different site from that in which one lives; better, more perfect and in accordance to the design of human virtue, where personal fulfilment takes place, but moreover, collective fulfilment is achieved. Thus, the island of Utopia is about a land that has been discovered, yet it's still remote; its path is accidental, just as the roads that recalculate the route are damaged — the essential, though, is the plethoric destination.

Utopia can murmur reforms; its prospect can even urge a revolution. Nevertheless, its true existence is located only in the dimension of ideality; its search cannot succeed nor fail, just as an objective that has never belonged to this world can be missed or grasped. Utopia exists indeed, as More affirms at the beginning of his text, yet we are never meant to find it. The binding question 'why to look for it?' is the impertinent

query of a more subtle and implicit ethical dilemma: whether to try to reach a dream or settle for inhabiting the nightmare. Utopia, the isle of a good Greco-Roman culture connoisseur, is the place that *cannot be* in the map but where everything that humanity *should be* takes place: it is a geography shaped irony. For the serious and the foolish who are equally lacking in delicacy, it marks a project or represents a hoax; yet for the sensible spirits, it is a clear sign of hope.

If we admit that More was sagacious enough to recognise the abyss between the European people and Hythloday's land, it is easier to glimpse at the idea that, in order to head down to some place, there is no need to know its coordinates: it is enough to distinguish it in the horizon. The closer or more distant we seem to be around it, the closer or more distant we will be to it. *Spes*, the latin word for *wait* but also for *hope*, is related to expectation, anticipation and spade; the distension of an interval, a length of time or space. Even hope — *hoffe*, its germanic equivalent — suggests a relation to a leap; a hop from one point to another, in this case, not to the indefinite, but into the expected.

The territory of our desires exists always in the distance. Five hundred years ago it was across the sea in search of a promise in unknown lands; nowadays — in a familiar and confined world — it lies in a certain old future: a world where liberty and equality finally restrain each other without struggle. To state that utopia is located in *hope* may sound like a naive apotegma, but it's just another way to acknowledge its condition of possibility. A happier place requires better human beings to exist; only an optimistic will — even if it comes from a disheartened character — can imagine justice reigning in the hearts of humanity.

Richard Melkonian, *Iona*, 2016

Becoming Utopia
Alejandra Arrieta

You are the music while the music lasts
T.S. Elliot[1]

[1] Elliot, T.S. (1941). 'The Dry Salvages', *Four Quartets*. London: Faber and Faber.

topia has never been about being found, but about being sought. It is about all the processes that lead to it and emerge from it. *A Return to the Island* presents this idea in landscapes of possibility; images infused with a virtual potential waiting to become actualised; fiction as the place where the process of creation and the process of experiencing such creation, act as a kind of resistance against reality. But it also inspects the island as imprisonment, as impossibility, as unreachable, as mere desire.

[2] *Ibidem*.

The river is within us[2].

Off the northeast coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts, there is a rock formation with a beacon that inspired T.S. Elliot to write the third of his Four Quartets. The 'Dry Salvages' emit a Gatsbyesque light on the skyline, rendering visible this islet of sorts across the sea. But the poem, rather than longing for the horizon, delves on the fluidity of water as a metaphor for human emotion and fate. A trap between past and future to be forever sailed, wherein lays no hope of ever reaching the island. Except through one process: overcoming time. This is in fact an everyday experience; a liquidness everyone experiences one way or another through the aesthetic experience of music.

[3] For Deleuze and Guattari, bodies are not fixed entities, but processes; centres of indetermination constantly affected and transformed by stimuli, in Massumi, B. (1992). *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Who hasn't felt that a song can make walls collapse and emotionally transport us to other spaces and times? Under the rhizomatic philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, one might even say that in this process we *become* music[3]. Music extends us, invades us, dissolves us, impels us. Our perpetual state of becoming makes evident, at moments like this, the inconsistencies of the physical world.

[4] Elliot, *op. cit.* 1941.

You are the music while the music lasts[4].

Elliot's line is eloquent in this respect: the duration of the particularly tragic aesthetic experience of music — of every fraction of time that divides the birth and death of music, and that allows us to overcome time itself — is placed upon our very bodies. And just as with music's predilection for constant reinvention, this ungraspable present moment has a tendency to movement. It reaches out to the motion of the *else* (whichever direction this might be). What unknown potential lies in that undeniable duration of time that divides past and future? And isn't Utopia a territory, hence, supposed to be somewhere in space? But why couldn't it be a matter of time? A matter of *matter*, even.

If Utopia is the unyielding present, it may be its very unyieldingness that *matters*: eternity dividing each mathematical fraction of a second; the sublime as it haunts your body in the pathos of the aesthetic experience. Matter, time and territory all at once, music can provide a taste of divine eternity with its fluidity. It is also the easiest way to understand the eternal recurrence: songs have a way of coming back. And it is this musical insistence through time, which gives birth to refrains and processes of territorialisation.

[5] *Ibidem*.

The sea is all about us[5].

A refrain[6] can be a nursery rhyme, a bird's chirp, Zarathustra's 'song of the earth' or a lovers' moan. It is not music, but 'the block of content proper to music'[7]. In other words, it does not have to be sonic, but it does have to be rhythmic. Rhythm provides the expression. It introduces difference within sameness. Tattoos, signatures, those colourful mating rites performed by birds: these are all territorial marks turned expressive. Moreover, this expresiveness adds 'home value'[8] to its territory. And when this happens, a second territory arises, deterritorialising the one already established. Thus, when we become music, we must aim not to become the first refrain, but the second one.

[6] The following statements are a brief explanation of the concept of the 'refrain' *(ritournelle)*, developed by Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

[7] *Ibid*. p. 349

The river is within us, the sea is all about us[9].

The territories created by refrains are as varied as a safe space for a baby to go to sleep or a nation that unites under an anthem. And all of these *could* be Utopian territories. They could sketch the borders of a perfect island, and the refrain sang by those likely Utopians would provide them with a sense of safety and unity.

[8] *Ibid*. p. 377

[9] Elliot, *op. cit.* 1941.

They could be. But they are not.

It is clear that Utopia is in fact happening *here and now*, but it only happens within a specific territory, created not by the song of the earth, but by whichever is the official tune of capitalist logic. It certainly happens in the archipelago of startups, which provides safety to the process of fostering new generations of capitalists.

But let us don't forget that the function of the refrain is twofold: it territorialises and deterritorialises with expressiveness. The need to relocate Utopia is not the need to find the territory, but to deterritorialise the current one. And it can be done with something as familiar to us as becoming the second refrain: becoming expression.

Becoming the very process of feeling, of being touched, of recognising our matter in that of others, of suffering along bodies and nations that do: that is the utopian process that provides a virtual territory waiting to become actualised through expression and creation — creation not only as art-making but also as the never-ending genesis of aesthetic experience.

Becoming doesn't achieve the goal in the other end because the process is what matters: becoming other, becoming the river, becoming music, becoming utopia.
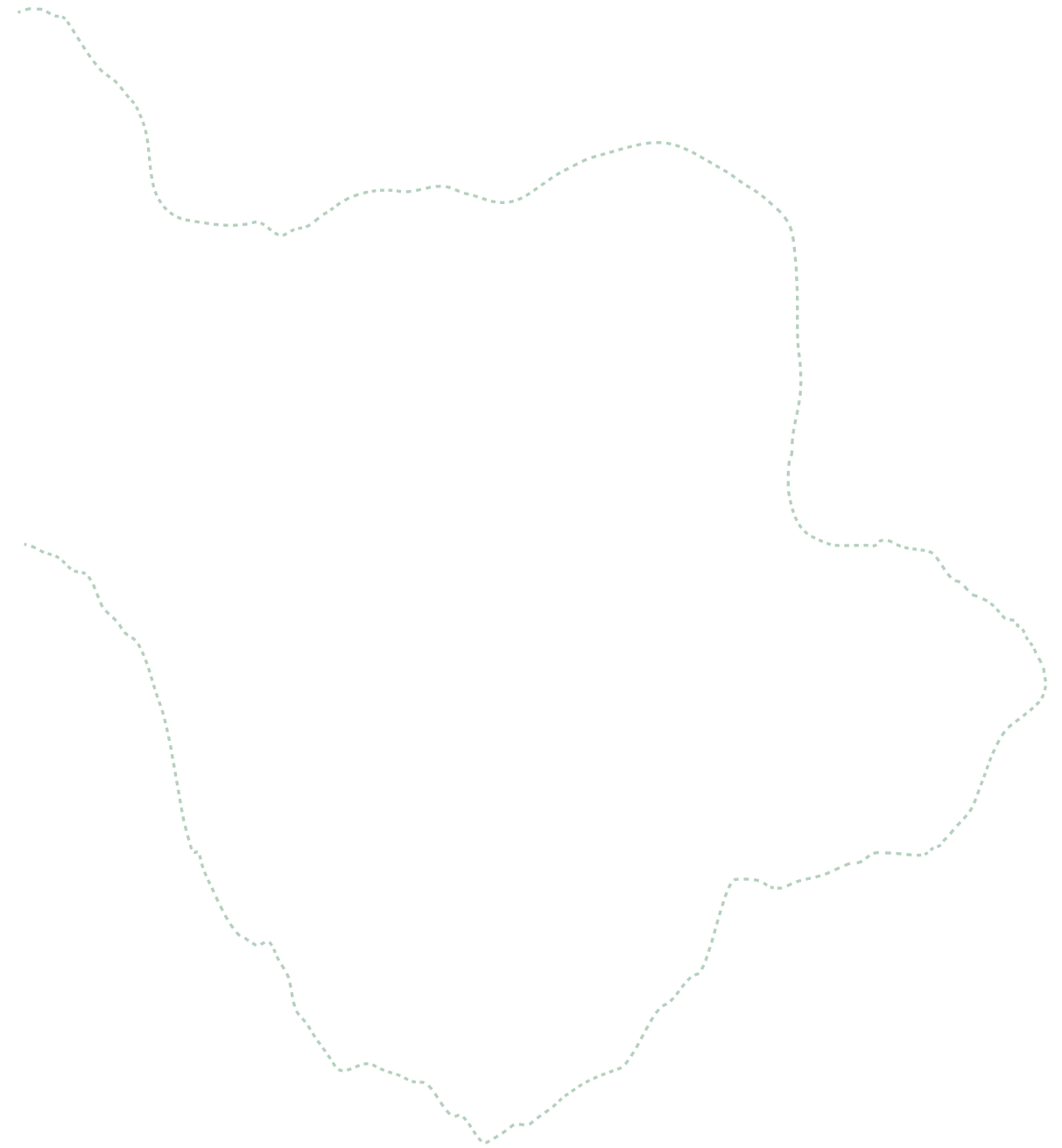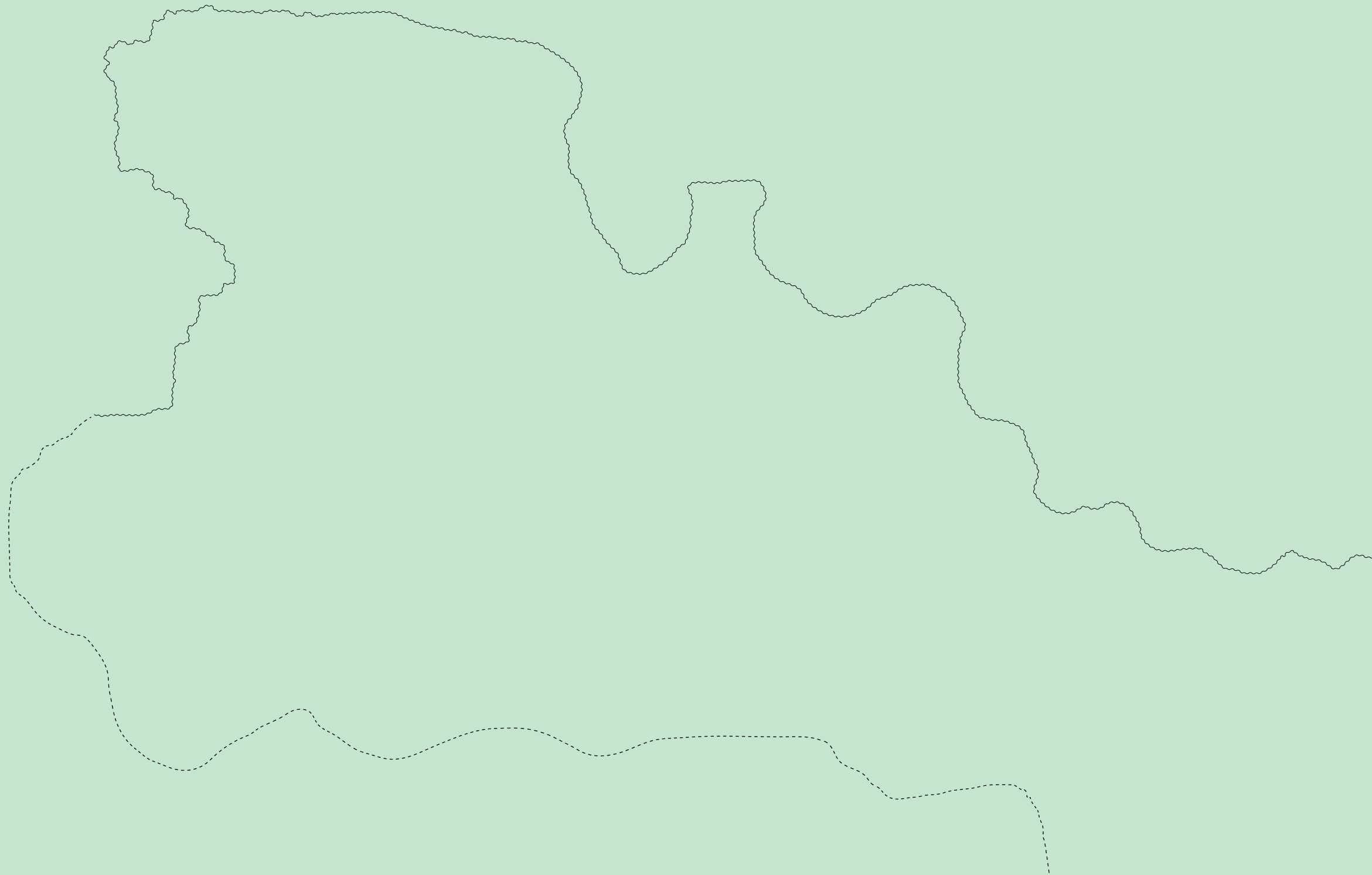
Afterword — or the Impossibility of the Representation of Utopia

As if coming from the Chinese encyclopedia imagined by Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, in 1682, the French historian and geographer, Michel Antoine Baudrand, aimed to create a category of the 'never was'; a list of places that had existed only in the imagination, yet whose fictitiousness had not prevented them from finding their way into maps. These places that never were and had never been, were part of unreal cartographies created before the entire world was mapped. Thus, the term *Terra incognita* used in maps in the mid-15th century to refer to unknown lands, was the recognition of being in an unrevealed world and, furthermore, it was the attempt to represent what was yet to be discovered.

The world that was not known was imagined and, most importantly, mapped, creating the *imago mundi* of an untravelled world. This 'unenlightenment' permitted the creation of different shapes, places, creatures and territories existing outside structures of verifiable knowledge. Faith and imagination were the parameters to understand the unexplored, whose many versions, at times uncertain, at times unwelcome, represented a land not yet — and not ever — known. The discussions about the shape of the world, the number of continents, and the inhabitants within it, were subjected to speculation and chance. However, they simultaneously were a reflection of the world that was indeed known, as these new worlds acted as deposits of desires, fears and hopes — revealing how reality was thought, signified and conceived. *Terra incognita* was not only the physical proof of territorial borders, but also of cognitive limitations and frontiers of knowledge.

Making a research of these unknown lands led me to rediscover the already hackneyed map and concept of Utopia, and to engage with its strategies, ideals and impossibilities. I wanted to map a contemporary Utopia; a book full of impossible cartographies and lands still to be discovered. I approached artists, writers and other thinkers to set sail and map the not-yet-found. Later in the journey, I realised that what I was asking for was utterly impossible; I requested artists and writers to represent the unrepresentable and to write the ineffable. *There is no utopia* — we cannot imagine or represent a better world, not at least the way More did, with a map, a language and an overview of how a whole new system would be like. The current certainty that we have about the world leaves no room for undiscovered lands.

The commissions, however, took another direction — a more interesting one in accordance to the current political, social and economic issues. Artists were focusing on small elements of the island, failed utopias, its political and philosophical concepts, its sadness and desires. *No proposition for a better world.* This anti-utopia attitude clearly distancing from Hythloday's enthusiasm, yet in tune with the unreacheable otherness that is proposed by Utopia, evidences how there cannot be, five hundred years later, another island as such. Hence, this collective voyage has strayed far and is lost, yet navigating with a clear destination.

A Return to the Island does not contain any radical idea for the future, nor does it make any proposition. It is a ticket to nowhere; a voyage that will take us to several places except, of course, to the island. However, I wish rather than expect that the artists, writers, musicians, philosophers and moreover, the readers of this book, are already far away travelling to unexpected, unknown and better directions, looking for the isle. I can assure they won't find it, but I hope that a glimpse of any horizon in the distance lingers and maybe, this time, it won't get lost.

Contributors' Biographies

Gustavo Abascal (b. 1979, Mexico) is a visual artist based in Mexico City. His practice explores thematics ranging from decay and transience, horror and the occult, to the social and existential consequences of a society based on violence, exploitation and consumption. His work is influenced by literature as well as underground, drone and industrial music. Some of his recent exhibitions are *El ideal larvado*, Museo de la Ciudad de Querétaro, Mexico; *Síndrome cultura*l, Arredondo/Arozarena Gallery, Mexico City (2016); and *La Nada y el Todo*, Impronta Casa Editora, Guadalajara (2014). He is represented by Arredondo/Arozarena Gallery in Mexico City.

Alejandra Arrieta (b. 1989, Mexico) is a writer based in Mexico City. Her work spans film and TV screenplays; pop culture essays; and art, film and music reviews. She received her MA in Film and Screen Studies with Distinction at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has curated film screenings such as *Moving Bodies/Moving Images*; and *Mexi-kino: Explode Art's Tower of Babel*, Chalton Gallery, London (2016). She is also the co-director of Centrosa Films, a film production company specialised in documentaries, art projects and moving image research. Her main theoretical interest is the conceptualisation of the musical quality of moving images as a politically relevant aesthetic experience.

Bill Balaskas (b. 1983, Greece) is an artist, writer and academic based in London. His practice is defined by the use of irony, humour and the interrogation of spectacle to explore subjects with a strong political character. He holds a PhD in Critical Writing in Art & Design from the Royal College of Art and is the editor of the Leonardo Electronic Almanac (The MIT Press). His texts have appeared in the Journal of Visual Culture, Third Text and Revista Arta. Recent exhibitions include *Gestures of Resistance*, Romantso Cultural Centre, Athens (2017); *PUNK: Its Traces in Contemporary Art*, MACBA, Barcelona; and *Remains of a Summer Bliss*, Kalfayan Galleries, Athens (2016). He is represented by Kalfayan Galleries in Athens.

Ruth Beale (b. 1980, UK) is an artist whose work considers the evocative relationships between culture, governance, social discourse and representation. Her practice includes performance, installation, film and socially-engaged processes. She is co-founder of Performance as Publishing and of The Alternative School of Economics. She has also performed and exhibited at Whitechapel Gallery, ICA, Turner Contemporary, South London Gallery, Modern Art Oxford, UK; MoMA Ps1, NYC; and Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland. She received her MFA from Goldsmiths, University of London.

Derzu Campos (b. 1980, Mexico) is a visual artist based in Mexico. His work explores apocalyptic scenarios through a mixture of science fiction and underground culture. He received his MFA from Goldsmiths, University of London. Among his recent exhibitions are *Mientras desaparezca*, LADRÓNgalería, Mexico City (2017); *de regreso a la isla*, Casal Solleric, Palma de Mallorca, Spain (2016); and *Between 9:00 pm and Home*, Chalton Gallery, London (2015). Grants and awards include Jóvenes Creadores, granted by the National Fund for Culture and Arts (FONCA); and the Deutsche Bank Award for Creative Enterprise (shortlisted).

Cansu Çakar (b. 1988, Turkey) is an artist based in Istanbul. Using traditional Turkish art techniques while addressing contemporary issues, she underlines the absurdity of the conflict between the traditional and the modern — an everlasting core issue of contemporary Turkish Republic. As such, Çakar's practice redefines the traditional format of miniature. Among her projects and exhibitions are *House of Wisdom*, Dzialdov, Berlin, Istanbul (2017); *Linear Transcendency*, The Lab - Darat al Funun, Amman, Jordan (2016); and *SALT WATER: A Theory of Thought Forms*, 14th Istanbul Biennial (2015).

Ting-Ting Cheng (b. 1985, Taiwan) is a visual artist and photographer based in the UK. Her work explores fantastic places and impossibilities through language, fictions and otherness. She received her MFA from Goldsmiths, University of London in 2015. Cheng was selected by Perspective Magazine in Hong Kong as one of the Top 40 artists in Asia. She received the Asian Exchange Prize by Asian Creative Award, Japan, and was commissioned by the 19th Contemporary Art Festival Sesc_Videobrasil in São Paulo (2015). Her recent solo exhibitions include *On the Desert Island*, Stuart Hall Library, London; *Tristes Tropiques*, Luis Adelantado, Valencia (2017); and *...as dramatic as...*, Xianger, Zhongli, Taiwan (2016).

Rhiannon Firth (b. 1980, UK) is an anarchist academic based in London. She is Senior Research Officer in Sociology at the University of Essex, where she conducts research and teaching at the intersection of Political Theory and Education. Firth received her PhD, funded by the ESRC, from the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham. Her thesis involved ethnographic work with intentional communities throughout the UK and was published as *Utopian Politics* (London: Routledge, 2012). She has since published articles on urban utopianism, critical pedagogy and methodology, utopian theories of time, critical cartography, pedagogies of the body and feminist consciousness-raising.

Carl Gent (b. 1985, UK) is an artist, musician and writer based in the UK. Their work seeks to unearth an approach to materiality that can erode fatalist binaries within modernist practice as an ecological approach to making, thinking and being in the world. They received their MFA from Goldsmiths, University of London. Recent exhibitions include *Our House of Common Weeds*, Res; *The Political Animal*, The Showroom, London (2017); and *de regreso a la isla*, Casal Solleric, Palma de Mallorca, Spain (2016). They also blog at Fashion Vacuum and perform as part of the drum and amplified sitar duo, Perple Celotape.

Dimitra Gkitsa (b.1989, Greece) is an independent curator and cultural practitioner based between London and Greece. Her practice is concerned with the production of normativity and public space, the relationship between the personal and the political, forms of labour and self-organisation in relation to contemporary art and curatorial practices. She is a PhD candidate in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London where she works under the supervision of Dr Jean-Paul Martinon. Recent projects include: *Legacies of Cyberfeminism* with Mihaela Brebenel, Goldsmiths Library & Res (2016); *Artists, What is Your Collective Value,* ICA; and *Machine Divas: The Archive*, ICA, London (2015).

Sigrid Holmwood (b. 1978, Australia) is a visual artist based in London. She works with an expanded form of painting that includes performance, video, gardening and pigment-making. She is interested in the construction and deconstruction of modernity through Western European paintings' relationship with the figure of the peasant. Among her projects are *Champagne Life*, The Saatchi Gallery, London (2016); *Peasant Painting*, Hallands Konstmuseum, Sweden (2013); and *The Astonishing Adventures of Lady Indigo*, Vitamin Creative Space, Beijing (2011). She is currently building a pigment garden in collaboration with Joya: arte + ecología, in the Sierra María los Vélez mountains, Almeria, Spain.

Helena Lugo (b. 1989, Mexico) is an art historian and independent curator based in Mexico. She received her MFA in Curating from Goldsmiths, University of London, and is currently Research Coordinator at MMAC Juan Soriano, Cuernavaca, Mexico. Her curatorial practice delves into fictions, absences, indetermination places and spaces that create alterities in order to think the way reality is signified, established and represented. Among her recent exhibitions are *Mientras desaparezca*, LADRÓNgalería, Mexico City (2017); *de regreso a la isla*, Casal Solleric, Palma de Mallorca, Spain (2016); and *Between 9:00 pm and Home*, Chalton Gallery, London (2015).

Manuel Mathieu (b. 1986, Haiti) is a painter based in Montreal. His work oscillates between figurative and abstract, with a thematic focus on the isolation of the individual. Making use of various techniques, he appropriates scenes from the collective consciousness, drawing them into new windows of perception. Among his projects are: *We Are All Very Anxious*, Dye House 451; *Truth to Power*, Tiwani Gallery (2017); and *49/50*, Fig-2, ICA, London (2016). He obtained an MFA from Goldsmiths, University of London. Mathieu's work has also been shown in the Museum of the Americas, the Museum of Civilization in Quebec and the Grand Palais in Paris.

Richard Melkonian (b. 1990, UK) is an award-winning, London-based, British-Armenian composer. He was commissioned by Mahogany Group for the Various Stages Festival, and composed The Finding, a new operatic work by Zoe Palmer, directed by Lucy Bradley and performed at the ICA (2017). He won the Mary Ryan Award for composition and was commissioned Contradictions for The Esperanta Ensemble (2015). He has also written several scores for films and has created pieces of sound-installation, visual art and performance art as part of various exhibitions, such as *Duchamp is Innocent*, Chalton Gallery, London (2015). He graduated from Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

Louis Moreno (b. 1975, UK) is an urban theorist and lecturer in the Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths, University of London. His writing and teaching explores the social, architectural and spatial ramifications of financial capitalism. He is currently working on a new book called *The Deregulation of the Senses*. He is also a member of the research collective freethought who co-curated the 2016 Bergen Assembly in Norway.

Richard Noble (b. 1958, UK) is a political philosopher who migrated into the field of contemporary art. He is Professor of Art and Head of the Art Department at Goldsmiths, University of London. His research interests are in contemporary art, utopian thought and utopian strategies in contemporary art, as well as issues that arise at the boundaries of art and politics. He is the editor of *Utopias* in the 'Documents of Contemporary Art' series, published by Whitechapel/MIT, and the author of several articles about contemporary art and artists.

Mark Pilkington (b. 1973, UK) is a writer, publisher and musician. He founded and runs the independent publishing house Strange Attractor Press, and edits its acclaimed Journal. An author of two books: *Mirage Men* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2010, with a documentary film released in 2013) and *Far Out: 101 Strange Tales From Science's Outer Edge* (New York: Disinformation Books, 2007); he has contributed to a wide range of publications, including Frieze, The Guardian, Fortean Times, The Wire,

Sight and Sound. Mark also records and performs electronic music as half of Teleplasmiste, and with other experimental music projects.

Nina Power (b. 1978, UK) is a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Roehampton. She has a wide range of interests including philosophy, film, art, feminism and politics. She is the author of *One-Dimensional Woman* (Winchester, UK; Washington, USA: 0 Zero Books, 2009), and *Das kollektive politische Subjekt – Aufsätze zur kritischen Philosophie* (The Collective Political Subject – Essays on Critical Philosophy) (Hamburg: LAIKA, 2015), a collection of her philosophical writings. Some of the publications to which she has contributed include The Wire, Frieze, Spike Art Quarterly, Radical Philosophy, Film Quarterly, The Guardian, Red Pepper, Strike!, Icon and Texte zur Kunst.

Rodrigo Red Sandoval (b. 1985, Mexico) is a philosopher and visual artist based in the Netherlands. His practice focuses on how human beings create symbolic structures in order to construct reality, dovetailing architecture, language and image. He has an MFA from Glasgow School of Art, and a current artist-in-residence at Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht. Some recent exhibitions include *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, ICA, London; *de regreso a la isla*, Casal Solleric, Palma de Mallorca, Spain; and *Probable Impossibilities*, The Glue Factory, Glasgow (2016). Awards include: Royal British Society of Sculptors Bursary (2017-2018) and Bloomberg New Contemporaries (2016).

Sara Rodrigues (b. 1990, Portugal) is an artist and composer based in London. Her practice encompasses sonic and audio-visual composition, performance, video work and installation to investigate small fragments of the world that lead to more complex forms of reality. She graduated from Fine Art at The CASS - London Metropolitan University and completed a BMus Music in composition and sonic art at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has exhibited and performed at Galeria Quadrado Azul, Porto and Lisbon; Galerija Miroslav Kraljevic, Zagreb, Croatia; Arbeit Gallery, Southbank Centre, Chalton Gallery and EnclaveLab in London.

Guillermo Roz (b. 1988, Mexico) is an editor, writer and style editor based in Mexico. Roz thinks of literature and philosophy as a map with which he moves around the world, avoiding its dead ends. He received his BA in Latin American Literature by the UAEM, Mexico. Some of his texts include: 'Ceci n'est pas une Utopie' (*de regreso a la isla*, Mallorca: Ayuntamiento de Palma, 2016); 'Del otro lado de la acera' (*Disculpe las molestias*, Mexico City: Ediciones, 2013); and 'Mexicanos norteamericanos y sus fronteras' (*Encuentro Nacional de Estudiantes de Lengua y Literatura*, Toluca: Uaemex, 2010).

Legacy Russell (b.1986, USA) is a writer, artist and cultural producer. Born and raised in New York City's East Village, she is the UK Gallery Relations Lead and Gallery Partner Programs Lead for the online platform Artsy. Her work can be found in a variety of worldwide publications: BOMB, The White Review, Rhizome, DIS, The Society Pages, Guernica, Berfrois and more. Holding an MRes in Visual Culture with Distinction from Goldsmiths, University of London, her academic and creative work focuses on gender, performance, digital selfdom, idolatry and new media rituals. Her first book *Glitch Feminism* is about to be published by Verso.

Rodolfo Sánchez (b. 1988, Mexico) holds a BA in Philosophy by the UAEM and is currently pursuing a BA in Communication at UNAM. He is interested in the recovery of archives and the research and dissemination of the History of Philosophy in Mexico. He has published articles and book chapters on colonial philosophy at UAEM and UNAM; he has also contributed to research-based projects about the Novohispano thought for the Institute of Studies about the University, and about modern history for the Research Centre on Social Sciences of the Colegio Mexiquense. He also carries out particular works of conservation and restoration of artistic and historical assets.

Himali Singh Soin (b. 1987, India) is an artist, poet and writer based between London and Delhi. Inspired by planetariness, her work explores nativism, nationality, love across borders and communication, through metaphors of deep outer space as a place of inferences, entanglements, deep voids, irrational law, alienation and infinite mystery. Recent performances and exhibitions include: *Interlude for a Summer Night*, Art Night London + Whitechapel Gallery, Arnold Circus, London; *Archival Alchemy*, Abrons Art Centre, New York City; and *Mientras desaparezca*, LADRÓNgalería, Mexico City (2017). She is also a regular contributor of Artforum magazine and has an ekphrastic series in Take on Art Magazine.

Alex Stursberg (b. 1980, UK) is a medium artist based in Vancouver. Working mostly with assemblage, using various forms of cultural iconography and material appropriation, his practice looks at relationships of value in society, demonstrating their interconnectivity and mutual dependency. He holds both a BA and BFA from Simon Fraser University, and recently received his MFA from the Glasgow School of Art. Among his recent exhibitions are *Aluminuminiuminum*, The Art School, Glasgow (2016); *Glory*, The Crying Room, Vancouver (2015); and *The Woods*, Rainbow Connection, Vancouver (2013).

Isaac Torres (b. 1982, Mexico) is a visual artist, urbanist and editor. His works explores the relationship between architecture, history and collective memories. He has been selected for the Young Art Biennale in Moscow (2012) and the Art Program of the World Bank (2010). His solo exhibitions include *Projects About Mexico City*, MUCA, Mexico (2013); *Mantras for an Insurrection*, SAPS, Mexico (2012); and *Exchange Value*, Alexandra Saheb Gallery, Berlin (2010). He is Art director of PIRA-ADM, an International Artist Residency of Centro ADM in Mexico City, and Director of El Asunto Urbano, an interdisciplinary platform dedicated to the promotion of initiatives related to art, architecture and urbanism.

Suzanne Treister (b.1958, UK) is a digital/web/new media artist based in London. Through the exploration of emerging technologies, developing fictional worlds and international collaborative organisations, her work focuses on the relationship between new technologies, society, alternative belief systems and the potential futures of humanity. Her work has been exhibited at: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Kunstverein München, Germany; V&A Museum; Fig-2, ICA; Tenderpixel, London; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Canada; P.P.O.W.; Bard Hessel Museum, New York; Bildmuseet, Umea, Sweden; and Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Adolfo Vásquez Rocca (b. 1965, Chile) holds a PhD in Philosophy and a Postdoctoral Research at the Philosophy department of the Complutense University of Madrid. His areas of research are contemporary philosophy, aesthetics and anthropology. He has published books, such as *Peter Sloterdijk: esferas, helada cósmica y políticas de climatización* (Peter Sloterdijk: Spheres, Cosmic Age and Politics of Climatisation) (Valencia: IAM, 2008) and *Rorty: el giro narrativo de la ética o la filosofía como género literario* (Rorty: The Narrative Turn of Ethics or Philosophy as a Literary Genre) (Mexico: H & M, 2009) among many other book chapters and indexed articles.

Michailangelos Vlassis-Ziakas (b.1987, Greece) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Athens. The central axis of his work is informed by political theory and sociology, and focuses on concepts that put social, political and cultural disruptions forward. He studied painting at the Athens School of Fine Arts and completed his Master studies on Museology at University College London Qatar (UCLQ). His work has been included on the Athens Biennale AB5to6 *OMONOIA* and ASFA BBQ (2015).

Tania Ximena (b. 1985, Mexico) is a visual artist based in Mexico City. She holds a degree in Fine Arts by La Esmeralda School in Mexico. Her work seeks to resignify and displace the traditional notion of landscape from something that is meant to be seen, to something that is meant to be inhabited. Among her projects and exhibitions are *First National Landscape Biennial*, Museo de Arte de Sonora, Mexico; *In/Humane*, Museo MARCO, Monterrey (2014); and *DRAW*, Museo de la Ciudad de México (2010). She recently received the first price at the 2nd National Biennial of Landscape (2017).

 * * *Letter to the editor* was written by an anonymous artist who would rather keep their identity concealed. Their artworks revolve around disappearances in an attempt to make art dissolve into life.

Acknowledgements

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Research Assistant
Alejandra Arrieta

Contributions
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Himali Singh Soin
Alex Stursberg
Isaac Torres
Suzanne Treister
Adolfo Vásquez Rocca
Michailangelos Vlassis-Ziakas
Tania Ximena

Advisors
Francesca Altamura
Norma Fernández

Design and Layout
Ernesto Corona
erco estudio

This book inspired the exhibition
de regreso a la isla at Casal Solleric,
Fundació Palma Espai d'Art, Majorca,
Spain curated by Helena Lugo, on
display from 14 July to 18 September,
2016.

Sir Thomas More