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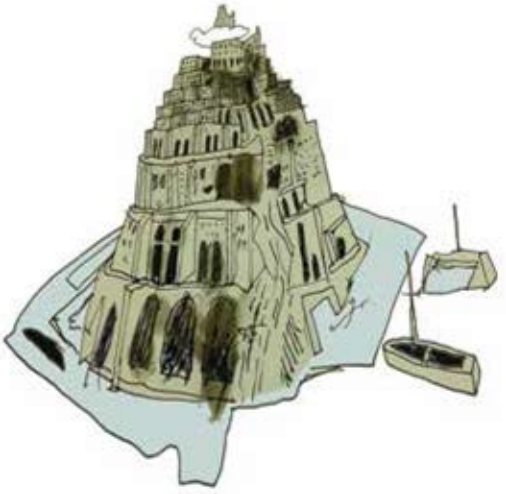
ISSUE 04
ISLAND



Cover Image:
Milenko Prvački
Babel-Island, 2015
mixed media on paper
15 x 15 cm
Image courtesy of the Artist

ISSUE 04:
ISLAND

ISSUE is an international art journal focussing on exploring issues in contemporary art. With an emphasis on Asia and Singapore this annual publication is an inter- and trans- disciplinary journal that curates research articles, essays, interviews and creative expressions on a range of disciplines from contemporary art, film, music and theatre.

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Re-marking Islands

> Humans can live on an island only by forgetting what an island represents...
>
> Dreaming of islands – whether with joy or in fear, it doesn't matter – is dreaming of pulling away, of being already separate, far from any continent, of being lost and alone – or it is dreaming of starting from scratch, recreating, beginning anew. Some islands drifted away from the continent, but the island is also that toward which one drifts; other islands originated in the ocean, but *the island is also the origin, radical and absolute*.
>
> Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts,* 2004

Issue 4 focuses on islands. Inviting artists, scholars, art historians and curators, this volume provides an approach to reading and meditating on islands, thereby contributing to emerging discourse on islands as a subject of inquiry and creative practice.

Islands are nature's debris and as Jacques Derrida remarkably says, "there is no world. There are only islands." (Derrida, 2011) Broken away from the whole since the beginning of human consciousness, islands have been creations of nature's wrath. Yet with human evolution, the idea of a relationship to the concept of an island as an imaginary to articulate the human condition resides most poignantly in John Donne's oft-quoted opening line of his poem "No man is an island." Yet, at once, visualised often as a castaway, exotic, uninhibited, fearful, lonely, et cetera, an island is a potent compression of a country, a nation. Islands are imagined, visualised and romanticised in many ways but it is but an object and an objection in the vast seas. For example, while islands, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, remain ports of commerce, they are but negotiation sites for socio-cultural identities and transmigrational practices over the centuries; they do not represent the idyllic but rather a microcosmic world-making in the mirror of the great continents. The emerging contemporary island is a heterotopic space, and while integral and key to 21st century world-making, it is a site of geo-political determinism.

There is newfound energy in trying to contextualise island identities, cultures and contexts: island studies (Baldacchino 2007); nissology (McCall 1994); performative geographies (Fletcher, 2010) and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982) – all providing valuable insights to the place, presence and purpose of islands and their relationship to the adjacent, the historical, the sovereign and the political. But the agency of island cultures cannot be read merely through the lens of geo-political determinism or through the narratives of discovery or cultural representations. There are complex anthropocenic conditions of ownership (China's claim over the Spratly Islands), war (ethnic wars in Sri Lanka), conservation (Madagascar's palms verging towards extinction), and nature's calamity (rising sea-levels could see Maldive islands disappear). Against this backdrop remains old 18th and 19th centuries concepts of being castaway or even exiled from civilisation, variably captured in literature and film, where the island remains the place to test human fortitude and deliver a philosophical exposition of the human condition.

Contemporary world re-fashions this condition of neglect, exile and the dark into an adventure for the urban individual. American television perpetuates this adventure through reality shows such as the long running machiavellist *Survivor*, hedonistic *Temptation Island*, Discovery channel's docu-drama *Naked and Afraid*. They reinforce a notional belief that western society's disconnect with itself and nature can be remedied through these enterprises which reveal nothing more than the dark side of human behaviour. Then, there is the romanticised notion of an island getaway, exalting solitude. With the flurry island holidays from Jamaica, Hawaii, Bali, Phuket, Fiji, Mauritius, et cetera, the lure of basking in the sun, sand and the sea remains a populist tourist adventure, reduced to vagabondic lifestyle of braided hairstyles, beach massages, water-sports and seafood, but impactless on the consciousness of lived experience - one that was seeking solitude in the first place.

Recent times have seen an increasing number of islands for sale, on Google, to the wealthy to build their own paradise. But can paradise be regained through real estate? I extrapolate this trend to provide us with a possible canvas for emerging trend in global land acquisition. In *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (2014), sociologist Saskia Sassen eloquently raises the cruelty of the global economy. Foreign and domestic governments' rapid investments to faciliate a ready supply of natural resources is displacing cottage economies, localised communities and nature. On one level, this could be read as a socialist cry for anti-capitalism yet, the subjected and subjugated are expelled from their natural habitat as the financialisation of the non-economic sectors of society takes root. She notes, "What is new and characteristic of our current era is the capacity of finance to develop enormously complex instruments that allow it to securitise the broadest-ever, historically speaking, range of entitites and processes" for "seemingly unlimited multiplier effects...To do this, finance needs to invade – that is to securitise – nonfinancial sectors to get the grist for its mill." (9). Sassen's reading, does not directly speak to islands. But they are the incubators for the further

perpetration of countries, continents and economies. In this emerging trend, the inalienable gets alienated, and loneliness becomes the close companion of the island and its inhabitants.

If at all, alienation and loneliness remain critical to the understanding of the human condition on an island. Alienation and alienability prospects the loss of connectivity (often realised through bridges) and economic potential, dependence on natural resources for sustenance, existential challenges of nation-building and population sizing and balance. These continue to plague many island nations as they negotiate the probability that islands are more vulnerable for disappearance through political acquisition, wilful neglect of resources and economies and people uprooting and migrating. Loneliness besets.

The vast literature around loneliness and soltitude informs a human craving for consolidation – a life of the ascetic revisited. Often both are unfortunately conflated. Solitude purges the mind of clutter and searches for meanings whilst loneliness craves affect and searches for ways of meaning-making. There are not many islands that seek solitude but there are many that are lonely seeking to exert an identity and place themselves with a dialogue with the rest of the world. The dialogue is not necessarily convivial. It can also be adversarial. Loneliness can beget self-affection and interiority that develops a carapace against the belief that the world out there is harsh, cruel, total. Derrida's reading of this in the *Beast and Sovereign* (2011) maps the possibility that loneliness and islands draw attention to the consideration that there is no such thing as a common world, a unified world. Loneliness can be ambiguous and Derrida considers the possibilty of the affected and the disaffected drawing closer in this loneliness to a common unity.

Perhaps, that is the fear, that one day the island will be alone. But the island as signifier propounds that it is not the central site but a signifier of the all things that it is not - that comes to interplay in the concept of being an island. The island differs by being unlike that continent, peninsula or hinterland adjacent to it, seeking to define its existence amidst a sea of trouble and possibilities. The island is that which is not. Its lack provides its strength. Its strength lies in its loss.

Philosopher Gilles Deleuze, known for bridging geography and philosophy in his seminal works with Félix Guattari, provides an ontological perspective. The island is the "origin, radical and absolute," breaking away from essentialist doxa such as castigation and loneliness to a place where the incidental and adventurous come to play. Drawing from geographers, he articulates two kinds of islands: Continental islands which are accidental and derived and Oceanic islands which are originary and essential, both revealing "profound opposition between ocean and land" (Deleuze, 2004). Underlying this articulation is the inherent conceptual and existential divide that separates the real and harsh reality of being from a romantic notion of the idyllic. For Deleuze, these planes enmesh.

The constitutive qualities of the enmeshed planes form the basis of this volume of *Issue*. These essays, conversations and

exhibition have been curated to re-mark the 'island' and provide an aesthetic, yet interdisciplinary, interrogation of the theme. *Issue 4* speaks of the complex issues that I have raised above and it seeks to provide a rich palimpsest of unarticulated approaches to understanding the island as phenomenon.

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The Island is I: A Brief Biography

Royal Society et al. '*The eruption of Krakatoa, and subsequent phenomena'. Report of the Krakatoa Committee of the Royal Society*. London, Trübner & Co., 1888. Plate 1: Lithograph of 1883 eruption of Krakatoa.

The first island I remember hearing about as a child was of Krakatoa obliterated in 1883. Too young to fully comprehend the horrific loss of life, I was fascinated instead by the factoids that accompanied it. That the explosions were heard halfway around the world. That weather patterns were disrupted by clouds of dust, ash that orbited the globe, and that the shock waves circled the planet seven times. That spectacular sunsets were visible all

around the Earth for a year, and in the British Isles, those sunsets would be captured by landscape painters. That the force of the final explosion (always measured in comparison to nuclear blasts) made an island disappear. And so my first island was not an island at all.

The second was Bikini Atoll. To my unformed child-brain, this was a human experiment made to imitate nature, like the helicopter and the dragonfly. I imagined radioactive clouds in colours of similar spectacular sunset, and wondered if particles still lazily circumnavigated the globe. I knew some had made landfall in India. But I was disappointed that no island had disappeared. At the very least there should have been a Santorini-like caldera. Unsurprisingly there was very little information about nuclear tests available to an inquisitive child living in India during the Cold War.

To redeem this deficiency, at 10 I wrote a little handbook for island explorers. Heavily influenced by my parents' library of 17th -19th century naturalists and explorers, this was a manual for intrepid naturalists and discoverers, very much of the here-be-monsters genus. It contained a way to identify and classify islands, and not mistake them for continents, as Christopher Columbus did. I modelled my imagined islands after conventions of the genre of course, but also after walnut shells, spacecraft from *Star Trek*, funny hats and birds' nests. The frontpiece though, was a trough-like depression of sunken nothingness, ringed by coral reefs that kept the sea out. This void-as-island was what I imagined the aftermath of an explosion to be.

From lost atolls, vanishing archipelagos, to mist-shrouded and obscure outcrops, the general instability and unknowability of islands has always been the stuff of books of adventure, to which I was also quite addicted as a juvenile. Insulated from the prosaic world outside, I spent my childhood happily marooned in my parents' library. I already knew that only on islands would the likelihood of first discovery, of original encounter, of mapping the inconceivable be truly possible. Discovering a continent was to me not a revelation on par with the strange weirdness of islands like the West Indies, Galápagos, of the islands of the South Pacific. This silly guidebook was very much the awkward, faintly ludicrous imagining of a half-grown child, and is thankfully lost. But since I'm writing about it, exactly three decades later, here is a poor mnemonic reconstruction of a page.

Rao, Shubigi. *Reconstructive drawing of lost handbook.*
Medium: pen, ink and poor memory. 2015

And in the 30 years intervening between those first thoughts and this reconstructive scribble, this is what I think I know about the island:

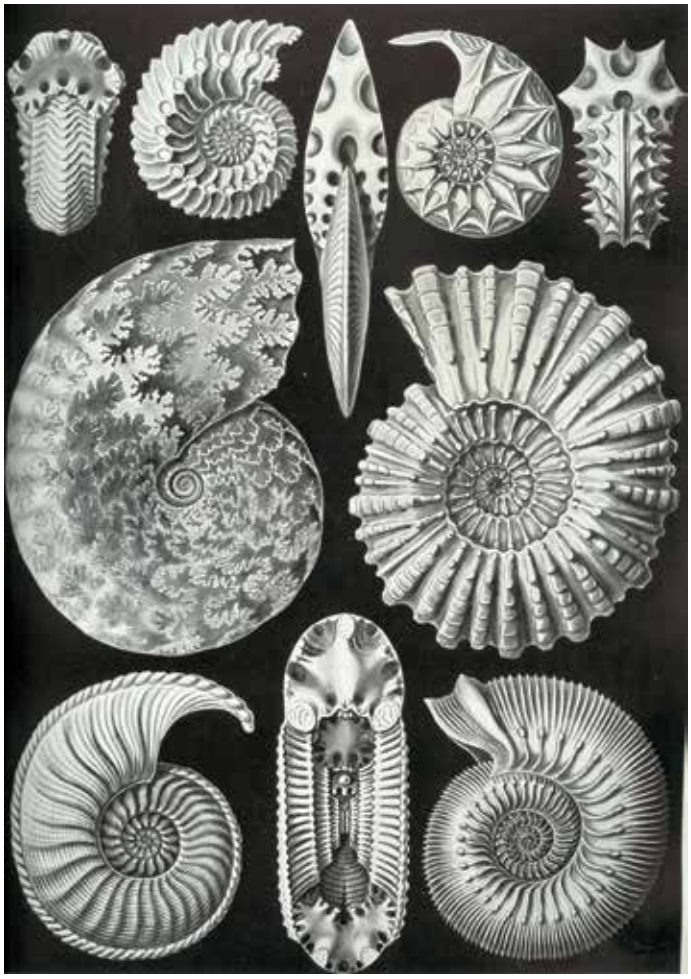
The island is Singular, like the racialist ethnographic and anthropologic device employed when speculating upon the unfamiliar and unknown. It is the reduction of disorder and divergence to a solitary specific as representation of the native, the observed, the other. It is singular too, in its stubborn peculiarity, in how no one island is like another, or like anywhere else. It shares this conceit with every human ego, and so, being us but at the periphery, perhaps the Island is also the Id.

The island is our planet. It is also possible that there is no planet like our island Earth[1]. It is a microcosm of densely packed time, holding in its strata every accident, incident, upheaval, motion, and collision. Current continents were once islands, vast floating landmasses breaking apart, Pangea becoming Gondwanaland, the latter becoming India, pushing smaller unfortunate island strings out of its way, on its inexorable drift northwards to ram

[1] We are not wholly convinced of that. Perhaps there are parallel universes, but then again, even an infinitesimal difference in each would render all earths different and therefore unique.

into Asia. The scar of that prehistoric collision is the Himalayas, which is where I grew up and where I found my first ammonite. Imprint, fossil of a prehistoric marine animal carried on that remorseless migration, 50 million years ago, marooned 3000 metres above sea level. The summit of Everest, the highest point on Earth, is composed of marine corals and limestone. The tectonic plates are still moving, and they were what triggered the deadly explosion of Krakatoa. Such is the story of our planet, the island. If its geology is compressed time, then its creatures are the offspring of migration and place. The island as we know it is on the margins. Breeding on its surface are the peculiar offshoots of its self-containment, and whatever stray embryonic-pods the wind and waves, deposits of guano, soles of shoes and even a spade[2] may bring. Whether teeming or barren its animated life is as much a product of its anomalous inner geography as its latitude. It holds within it the knowledge of progression of all life, extinct and extant. And like our planet it is totality hot-housed in isolation, a blip in the immensity of time, an oddity floating in vast space.

[2] In a book from my childhood I read an account by Sir John Hooker where, leading an exploring party on "a lonely uninhabited island at the other side off the world" they found some common English chickweed. Following the patches of the plant, they came upon a mound covered in it. The mound was the grave of an English sailor who had died at sea, and Hooker realised that the chickweed seeds had probably been carried, and transplanted by the gravedigger's spade.



Haeckel, Ernst. *Kunstformen der Natur.*
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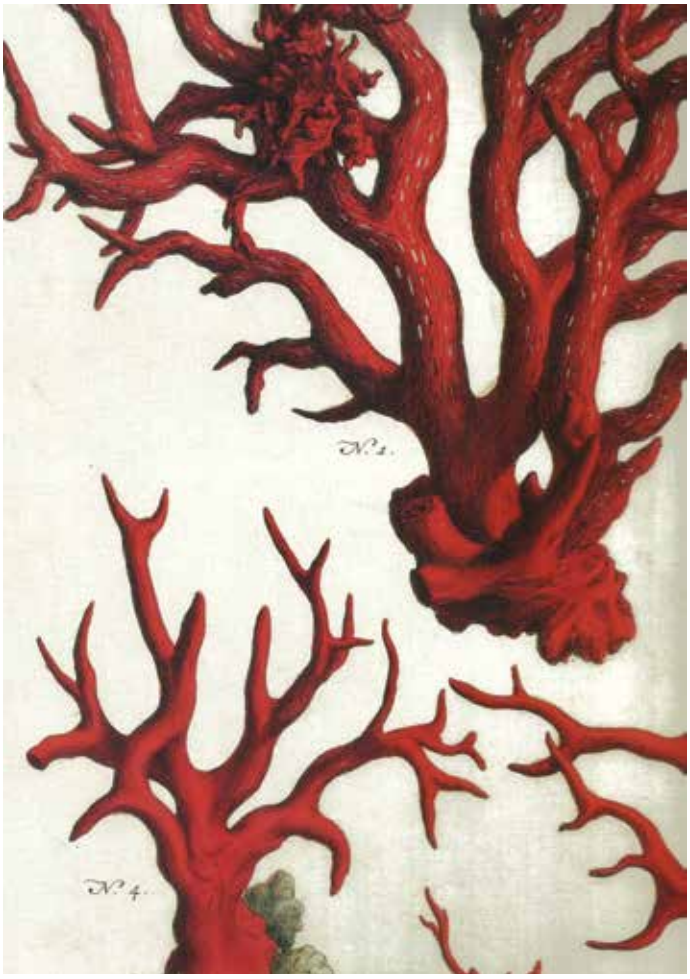
Plate 44: Ammonitida

The island is cataclysm. Volcanic eruptions destroy in an instant, as they did in the case of Krakatoa. Underwater volcanic eruption, effusion and lava flows painstakingly accumulate till they emerge, sometimes as entire island chains. Anak Krakatoa is a prodigious child that grows 13 centimetres a week. Upheavals can take place over epochs, and are no less dramatic. Atolls, archipelago and reefs are not always volcanic or the outcrops of submerged islands. Even the Bikini atoll reefs, site of so much radioactive death-dealing were built on the fossilised remains of dead coral. Charles Darwin recognised that in the Tahitian reefs, and wrote his first scientific treatise on it. But before him was Johann Reinhold Forster, who a century earlier recognised that the atoll rings that lay just below the surface of the ocean, visible and fragile, were built solely of tiny animalcules, coral and other calcareous creatures that lay their foundations on the ocean floor, miniscule organisms growing in rings as bulwark against the ocean, tenaciously growing in layer upon layer, endeavouring for millennia to reach the light.



Seba, Albertus. *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri accurata description.*
1734-36. Print of 'Coral'.
Photographed by Shubigi Rao at Artis Library Amsterdam, 2014

The island is out of time. We call our planet Earth when it is mostly water. We have islanded oceans from our consciousness, since we are terrestrial creatures.

Those islands that are far from territorial flexing may appear on maps but are largely immune to the daily mayhems of the continental human. Consider this too, that the out-of-time island has resisted easy demarcation, continental taxonomies and concerns. This island feels the diurnal and seasonal shifts more keenly, shifts that we have largely electrified and artificially cooled or heated away. And yet how far removed are we really? The highest mountains on earth were once shoreline. The Great Barrier Reef is mountain, submerged. The general instability of islands renders them risky propositions, even when deemed to be of strategic importance. The territorial claims of nations can find easy scapegoats in islands, even when they are rocky outcrops barely large enough to hold a flag-wielding human. We creep closer with our reclamations and reshaping of shorelines, foreign sand and soil suffocating coral reefs that never emerged to make it to island status, terraforming the sea into submission. We make bridges and causeways, and they are never enough. We make bombastic declamations like the Palm Jumeirah. But we forget that our demarcations and empires are merely attempts at staving off the inevitable. We are as out of time as the islands we claim.

The island is an ideal/wrecking yard/clearing house/beachhead. It isn't just the best place to test an unused nuclear arsenal. It is where the writer goes to summon the monstrously fantastic, whether of the pulpier variety (from the *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, and surely the horror of *The Raft of the Medusa*), or the impossibly abstract (Thomas More's *Utopia*, is set on an island, after all). The island has played site and situation to countless scenarios, tales, fables, from utopian and dystopian, cautionary and moralistic, to fabulous and escapist. Popular culture would tell us that no good comes of breaching that ideal world. The island is only perfect when inviolate. Once we breach the hermetic immune system of the island it can rarely survive in its prior form. Still we dash ourselves on its rocks, beach ourselves on its sands, wash up on it shores. To be marooned (surely the desperate wish of every beleaguered washed-up writer) has a terminal allure, the possibility of untrammelled conjuring within that bounded frame, but piquant with the possibility of no return. From Crusoe to Cristo, the island has been set piece, narrative device, analogue for travail and struggle. Shakespeare frequently hurled his characters' ships on rocks, forcing their reinvention. All our literary shipwrecks are the dashing of aspirations, of dramatic turns in the narrative. If the idea of a shipwreck seems laughably quaint in the contemporary, think of the appositely named *Lost*, where the island provides the setting for an outrageous, thoroughly implausible, infuriating and completely addictive set of time- and place-warping situations (at one point the island snaps out of existence to reappear elsewhere, like the Slavic Buyan), intermeshing contradictory timelines and narrative, impossible characters (one being composed of well, malevolent smoke). As a writer, try pitching that, sans island, to a TV production studio or channel. To me the anxiety of *Lost* had a distinctly

nuclear-ticking-clock flavour, where the inexorable countdown always reset, and the ever-present unidentifiable menace was the constant, curiously unreal spectre of MAD.[3] The island of *Lost* was a Cold War relic, because islands are where we rear our monsters, even the dead ones. The rejuvenation of the Jurassic had to occur on an island and over three sequels no less, with a fourth due this year because apparently we can never have enough of giant lizards on islands. It is on islands that we find our King Kongs and we inevitably, foolishly import them into the mainland with justifiably dire consequences. Sometimes they import themselves, as barbed stabs of our consciences, like Godzilla and other *kaiju*. Invariably they are larger than life, because only on islands thar still be monsters, and as *Lord of the Flies* showed us, frequently those monsters be we.

[3] Mutually Assured Destruction, a hellish and hysterical way of preserving the Cold War détente.

Seba, Albertus. *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri accurata description.* 1734-36. Print of 'Seven headed hydra'.
Photographed by Shubigi Rao at Artis Library Amsterdam, 2014

The island is ~~epiphany~~ myth-maker. The island is the X marked on a map, it is always the site of buried treasure, bodies and secrets. Perhaps the biggest secret treasure to be found was in the Galápagos. The legendary voyage of the HMS Beagle still captures popular imagination, and the finches of the Galápagos will always credited as having triggered Darwin's epiphany. Like all stories of secrets and treasure it perpetuates a falsehood, that of the Eureka moment being the turning point in great endeavour. That buried treasure is discovered in a cinematic moment of inspiration belies the actual labour and intensive study. The 19th century Dutch naturalist Maria Sibylla Merina's illustrated masterpiece on metamorphosis in insects was the outcome of living in Surinam. In Darwin's case, after the famous Beagle voyage it took two decades of painstaking work, tackling irreconcilable, irreducible and prevailing ideas, of intensive study into disparate subjects that led to the development of his theories. Leonard Mlodinow mentions one by-product of his output being a 700-page monograph on the lowly barnacle. And yet it is telling that to formulate the story of all life on our planet, Darwin (and Alfred Russel Wallace in the Malay Archipelago) had to read the island to comprehend the mainland.

Merian, Maria Sibylla. *Over de voortteeling en wonderbaerlyke veranderingen der Surinaamsche insecten*. Amsterdam, 1705.
Film still by Shubigi Rao, at Artis Library Amsterdam, 2014.

Barnacled artefact collected on East Coast of Singapore in 2003 by Shubigi Rao, pictured here with notes and observations. Collection of Shubigi Rao.
Photo courtesy of Michael Lee

The island is bewitched. Cargo cults, cannibals and cooking-pot missionaries.

The island is a gag. The default sites for nuclear tests are the Nevada desert and the atoll – the deserted and the island. These are the tired tropes of poor interview questions and hoary jokes, and countless cartoons with a single coconut palm and bearded castaway. It is situation comedy at its simplest and yet most enduring.

the picture, and for a long time men have wondered how they were made. We know now that they are actually made of the hard parts of the bodies of countless millions of tiny living creatures belonging to the animal world. The stuff we call coral is really made of the skeletons of these little animals, all joined together. Coral islands have gradually grown around the shores of old volcanic peaks, as a result of the life and death of these tiny animals. They only live in water, and so when the coral ring comes to the surface and makes a coral island it stops growing. The tiny animals on the outside of the coral colony get most food, and so grow more quickly and their bodies are piled up faster than

A CORAL ISLAND MADE BY LIVING CREATURES
in the way described on this page

nothing like so strong. But if the wind becomes a great gale the oak will break; the willow and the rush will bend as they did in much less wind, and when the gale is over they will come upright again because they are elastic. If you strike a piece of string with a stick it will bend, but will not break; if you strike a thin stick with a thicker stick the thin stick will break. That is what happens in a gale of wind.

There is a very good lesson for us here. There are people who are like the oak; they are strong and can stand a great deal, but they are rigid, and do not know when to yield or give in, and the time will come when they will, so to speak, break, whilst other people who are less strong will recover. But the wisest people

Mee, Arthur; Thompson, Holland. *The Book of Knowledge.*
London: The Educational Book Co. 1918. Vol. 4, p 921
'Islands made by coral animals'.
Collection of Shubigi Rao

The island is our brain. There are many realms left to explore – the vast ocean seabed with its bizarre creatures of the deep and teeming microbial life, the immeasurable universe, and the inscrutabilities of the human brain. This floating walnut, dreaming in the sun, with its insular climate and life, is a self-contained bubble yet sensitive to all stimuli that lap up on its shores. It is the repository where our worst fears and our escape plans cohabit. Lush and arid all at once, our brains grow rings of sharp reefs as we mature, so that it is only when we identify ourselves as discrete, when we recognise the isolation of our carefully maintained inner climate that we are truly, and finally adult.

The island is language. Discrete and idiomatic, it develops its own peculiar grammar, slippery dipthongs and plosive sounds, and it resists easy translation. The forked tongue of the natives of fabled Taprobane was divided such that "with one part they talk to one person, with the other they talk to another"[4]. The colloquialisms of the Galápagos have entered our vernacular, even as we wreak havoc on theirs. The 400 remaining Jarawa of the Andaman Islands call themselves *aong* or 'people', but to their traditional enemies *Järawa* means 'foreigner', and that is how we know them. The animated patois of island life is the curious idiosyncrasy of the Australian marsupial, the oxymoron of the flightless bird, the preposterous absurdity of the blue-footed booby, the mythic genealogy of the komodo, the irrational idiom of the duck-billed platypus, and the indecipherable metaphor of the Singapura Merlion.

[4] Diodorus Siculus, in Thomas Porcacchi's *Isole più famose del mondo.* Venice: 1572

The island is memento. Here in Singapore, we are the Island, but our 60 stepsisters are also islands, though we sometime forget their names. These outcrops, addenda to the main-

Island, offer possibilities of what-was and what-we-probably-miss-but-can't-quite-name. Some offer day-trips to nostalgia, epigrammatic non-airconditioned escapes to be Instagrammed when back on the main/is/land. Some can be cycled-through like a visiting dignitary touring the provinces, marvelling at the trees (fruit growing! durians!), fearful of its feral fauna, exclaiming at the 'simple lives' of its natives. Pulau Semakau now offers recreational activities, but I hear that no one is nostalgic for it, this future midden-heap, a more densely packed, stratified snapshot of the cremated detritus of our lives.

The island is sinking. And with all things finite and doomed it carries its own mythology and wishful imaginings, of paradisiac absolutes like Atlantis, and the hellish come-uppances of morality tales, sinking into that long sleep of the deep. One wonders how a sunken Venice would be reimagined, mythicised in future lore. Would the biannual descent of the hedonists of the art world be held responsible for its punishment by submergence? Would disaster tourism prevail, and its piazzas be thronged with rubberneckers in rubber-suits? Would its lost frescoes, domes and sighing bridges become an underwater theme park for intrepid honeymooners? Would it be a cautionary tale of the castles-built-on-sand variety, of building on terra that is barely firma? Or would it perhaps be of the foolish but undeniably Romantic human spirit railing against the inevitable tide?

Garbage on East Coast beach, Singapore 2003. Photos courtesy of Shubigi Rao

The island is mobile. India was once an island (and still moves north at about an inch a year), which makes me an islander twice over. There was the perpetually peripatetic, mythic Taprobane, a cartographic anomaly, an ambulatory Never-land till it was banished by modern thought, along with other phantom islands. The legendary Sargasso Sea is now rivalled by massive floating islands of micro-plastic and other garbage in the Pacific. There have also been sightings of one composed solely of ping-pong balls, and another of Lego pieces, and of rubber ducks that have been sporadically washing up on beaches since the 1990s. Not all our new mobile islands are flotsam - we have (Mobil) oilrigs, floating platforms, carriers and patrolling navies. Colossal container ships, super tankers too massive to dock, waiting patiently offshore, occluding the horizon all along Singapore's eastern shore. I hear that modern shipping is a marvel of technological navigation. I also hear that if you're a castaway, the likelihood of being crushed under the hull is higher than being rescued, because you are too small to be sighted on today's impressive navigation systems. When I think of stowaways I think of Darwin's barnacle, the scourge of shipping, and how the increasing acidification of the oceans thanks to fossil-fuel use will result in its destruction. I think of how the barnacle is the catalyst of its own obliteration – by

reducing speeds, ships are forced to burn more fuel, further acidifying the oceans. This may be one of the very few happy outcomes of climate change, another inexorable force that will eventually submerge islands, make islands out of lowland, and set people and cultures adrift and unmoored. The Maldives will probably cease to be islands in my lifetime. We now have a neologism – climate-refugees.

The island is death. There have always been floating islands of people. The year I was born, they began to call them boat-people, because to us of the mainland they are stateless and therefore nameless, and, like the island, they are marginal, marooned and are all too often items to be quarantined. There are people lost at sea, not far offshore from where I write this in my territorial bubble. They say Singapore is also an island, and therefore too small to allow landfall. Malaysia and Indonesia will tow in these islands of the disposed, confine them for a year and then, resettle them elsewhere or repatriate them to the hell they fled. As I write this I think about the news today, where they discovered that those who had previously survived months of being marooned at seas finally made landfall, only to be sunk in mass graves.

The island is organism, single-celled. The island is interlude. The island is playground. The island is prison, penal colony. The island is escape. The island is freedom. The island is knowledge, a library. The island is a lie. And like all impossible, irresistible fictions, unknowable and perfect, lost in the instant it is found, the Island is singular.

All The Same But Different:
Between Islands

Prologue

There are two island stories to be told, historically interlaced through the scientific voyages of the HMS Beagle that had begun in the 1820s. In 1835 when Charles Darwin visited the Galápagos Islands, he was to see and gather the materials necessary to completely rewrite the theory of evolution. As a result, in 1859 he published his most famous work *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. But to this, we should add the Falklands and the islands of Tierra del Fuego, an archipelago of islands lying to the south of Argentina and Chile.[1] Captain FitzRoy moored the Beagle, enabling Darwin to go onshore for some weeks on the islands and Falklands, collecting fossils, plants and animals. As a result of this preliminary work, he decided to do comparative studies to better understand how similar species adapted to different environments. The Beagle then continued on in its long five-year journey up along the western coastline of South America to where the Galápagos lay.

The Galápagos Islands is the point of reference for the Galápagos Syndrome (*Garapagosu-ka*), a term of Japanese origin, which refers to the isolated development of a globally available product, a phenomenon experienced by Japan as a relatively insulated nation.[2] The term arose as part of the dialogue about Japan's position as an island nation, and the subsequent anxiety it produced about being isolated from the world at large.

The Galápagos Islands lie 600 miles west of South America, off the coast of Ecuador and were first discovered by Europeans some 300 years ago in 1535. The bishop of Panama, Tomas de Berlanga, had sailed to Peru to settle a dispute between Francisco Pizarro and Diego de Almagro after the Spanish conquest of the Incan civilisation in the Andes. The bishop's ship had encountered strong currents that had carried him out to the Galápagos.

In 1570, the Flemish cartographer Abraham Ortelius charted the Galápagos Islands[3]. Calling them the '*Isolas de Galápagos*' (Islands of the Tortoises), Ortelius's recognition was based on sailors' descriptions of the many tortoises inhabiting the islands. There are 10 main islands, and some smaller ones, all formed from the volcanic rock basalt. But the Galápagos Islands were rarely visited and by the 17th century, were ideal bases for

[1] The Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, who circumnavigated the earth in the early part of the 16th century, named the islands 'Tierra del Fuego', after seeing the campfires of the Fuegan tribes along the coastline. In the late 19th century the Reverend Thomas Bridges (1842-1898), the first permanent white resident of Tierra del Fuego, published the first dictionary of the native Fuegan language.

[2] The term was originally coined to refer to Japanese 3G mobile phones, which had developed a large number of specialised features and dominated Japan, but were unsuccessful abroad.

[3] Abraham Ortelius is known as the creator of the first modern atlas.

pirates who preyed on transiting galleons and coastal towns. The Islands also drew whalers and sealers, with the promise of fur seals and capture of giant tortoises, which could be kept alive in the hold of ships for up to a year with no food or water. As a result, the tortoise populations were decimated, causing the extinction of several species.

Darwin was initially a 'Creationist' until his return from the Galápagos Islands. Up until Darwin's work, evolution had been defined as changes in heritable traits of biological populations over successive generations. The Frenchman Jean Baptiste de Lamarck (1744-1829) had proposed a theory of transmutation and evolutionary processes, calling his theory "transformism" rather than "evolution". Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace, the British naturalist, questioned how characteristics could be passed onto offspring. Departing from de Lamarck's theory, they proposed alternatively a process of natural selection and branching tree of life. This gave rise to the theory of diversity at every level of the biological organisation, including the level of species, individual organisms and molecular evolution.

The Beagle

In late December 1831, FitzRoy, with his crew and the young Darwin, left England to take a five-year scientific and geographical voyage around the world. FitzRoy was also a naturalist and had wanted another naturalist to help with the collection and identification of specimens. Darwin was available and had been recommended. He was only 22 years old and fresh out of university, but he had been educated to become a naturalist and was a trainee pastor. Darwin had also studied informally with the great Scottish geologist Charles Lyell. As a boy, he knew the Latin names of a great many plants and animals, and avidly read Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne* and other books, including that of Humboldt and his exploration and discoveries in South America.

At the start of Fitzroy's return voyage to the region in 1831, Darwin had had some experience of collecting beetles and small sea creatures, but regarded himself as a novice in natural history. With a strong interest and training in geology, his plan for the Beagle voyage was twofold — to continue his own investigations of geology and marine invertebrates, and to collect specimens of other organisms that might be new to science.

Tierra del Fuego and the Fuegans

The ship's first stop was the desolate Cape Verde archipelago off the coast of Africa, distinguished by is volcanic landscape. They then travelled up and down the West and East coasts of South America. Darwin collected specimens from the rain forests of Brazil, and the Andean plains between Chile and Argentina, and both the Falkland Islands and Tierra del Fuego that lay around the southern tip of Chile and Argentina.

There were others on board the Beagle, most significantly three Yahgan Fuegans, who were being returned home to their native land Tierra del Fuego, after having been taken to London by

FitzRoy, the year before.[4] They were nicknamed by the sailors as 'Fuegia Basket,' a nine-year old girl whose original name was Yok'cushly, 'York Minster' (or El'leparu) and 'Jeremy (Jemmy) Button' (or O'run-del'lico), a 14-year old boy, who was paid for with a mother-of-pearl button in exchange.[5] The capture of these Fuegans followed an incident in which some Fuegans had stolen one of FitzRoy's whale-boats. After recovering the boat, FitzRoy decided to take the young Fuegans to England, including another young Fuegan man, 'Boat Memory'. FitzRoy's plan was to educate them as part of an evangelical experiment. 'Boat Memory', however, died of smallpox on arrival in London, while the others were 'educated, civilised and Christianised' and taught to speak English. They were subsequently presented to King William IV and Queen Adelaide.

[4] FitzRoy's first survey of the Tierra del Fuego region was from 1826 to 1830.

[5] In 1855, a group of Christian missionaries visited Wulaia Bay on Navarino Island to find that Jemmy Button still had a remarkable grasp of English. Some time later in 1859, another group of missionaries was killed at Wulaia Bay by the Yaghan, supposedly led by Jemmy and his family. In early 1860, Jemmy visited Keppel Island, giving evidence at the enquiry into the massacre. He denied responsibility. Some years later in 1863, the missionary Waite Stirling visited Tierra del Fuego and re-established contact with Jemmy. From then on, relations with the Yaghan improved. In 1866, after Jemmy's death, Stirling took one of Jemmy's sons, known as Threeboy, to England.

The Galápagos Islands

Three years and nine months after leaving England, the ship stopped over in the Galápagos Islands for five weeks, from 15th September to 20th October 1835. Darwin spent about five weeks on the islands: Chatham Island (now called San Cristobal), Charles Island (now Floreana), Albemarle Island (now Isabela), and James Island (now Santiago).

The Beagle anchored first off Chatham Island and, while Captain FitzRoy was surveying the coast, Darwin made five landings. Starting on the 16th September, near what is now Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, Darwin's Notebook suggests that his main interest quickly became the exploration of a "craterised district". He made detailed geological notes of the craters, their formation and the lava flows around them. He also noted that three-quarters of the plants were in flower, an essential point for botanical collecting. During one landing he found 10 plant species. The islands were already famous for the iguanas, giant tortoises and finches to be found on them and Darwin was equally impressed. He initially made brief entries on the local reptile life, including the tortoises and iguanas, with a characteristically personal remark: "Met an immense Turpin; took little notice of me."

Darwin's first field-note on a bird of the Galápagos was to prove historic. On the day he studied the "craterised district" on Chatham Island, he also jotted down: "The Thenca (is) very tame & curious in these Islands."[6] The point of interest in Darwin's field notes is how he linked the Galápagos bird with its counterparts on the mainland, asking himself whether there might be similar likenesses between the plants of the continent and those of the archipelago. He wrote: "I shall be very curious to know whether the Flora belongs to America, or is peculiar."

[6] 'Thenca' is the Spanish name for the thrush-like mockingbird from the west coast of South America.

The Beagle next sailed to Charles Island, where Darwin spent three days exploring and collecting samples of its various animals, plants, insects and reptiles. He made a few short entries in the field notebook. One of the birds he found was another mockingbird. As he was to record later, he found that it differed markedly from his Chatham Island specimen, and from that point on, he paid particular attention to their collection, recording the island where he had found it.

Further, Darwin was told by the local prisoners that each island had its own peculiar tortoise. They weighed up to and over 90kg, big enough for Darwin and others to ride like a horse, and the staple meat for the islanders and visitors alike. They seemed to live a long age and was informed that "the old ones seem generally to die from accidents, as from falling down steep precipices." Darwin let this local wisdom pass him by, thinking at the time that the tortoises were originally imported by man. Likewise he seemed little impressed by the iguanas, not realising they were unique to the island chain. In a conversation about the giant Galápagos tortoises of which there were small numbers on Charles island, the English Vice-Governor, Nicholas Lawson (who had met the Beagle crew by chance when they landed), observed that the tortoises on different islands showed "slight variations in the form of the shell." Lawson claimed that he could tell from which of the islands a tortoise had come.

On 29th September the Beagle reached Albemarle Island and the next day the ship anchored in the inlet Darwin knew as Blonde Cove, (now Tagus Cove). Darwin landed on 1st October to examine the volcanic terrain, as well as collecting plants and animals, including another mockingbird. On 3rd October the Beagle moved round to the northern end of Albemarle, and then sailed eastwards to survey the coasts of Abingdon (now Pinta), Tower (Genovesa) and Bindloe (Marchena) Islands. On 8th October the Beagle reached James Island. Darwin went ashore with three others from aboard the ship. During their time there, Darwin explored the inland region and collected specimens with help from the others. He collected evidence to support his theory of the generation of different lavas from the same magma through "fractional crystallisation". He was also struck by the extraordinary numbers of giant tortoises and made detailed observations of their drinking and feeding habits and calculated the swiftness of their movements. He and his companions were given tortoise meat and found that it was delicious in soup.

Darwin initially missed the evolutionary clues hidden in the finches, finding them very hard to tell apart. In fact, he was not even aware that they were finches at all. He was more interested in how tame they were and surmised they had only recently encountered man, and did not yet have the instinctive fear for people. Darwin found he could even prod them with his gun and many would still sit still. The mockingbirds caught his eye, noticing that some of these were different on different islands, but also that they were all similar to mockingbirds on the mainland. He collected specimens as he had done on the other islands, labelling them separately. Although he collected many finches, he did not label them by island. Fortunately for his later studies, FitzRoy and Syms Covington, (a young cabin boy who had become an assistant to Darwin) were keeping more meticulous records.

Darwin noted that the unique creatures he saw were similar from island to island, but perfectly adapted to their environments which led him to ponder the origin of the islands' inhabitants. But still the significance of this find did not sink in; he wrote in his Journal of Researches (2nd ed., 1845):

> I never dreamed that islands, about fifty or sixty miles apart, and most of them in sight of each other, formed of precisely the same rocks, placed under a similar climate, rising to a nearly equal height, would have been differently tenanted.

Returning home

As the Beagle sailed home towards England during June and July 1836, Darwin had time to prepare and organise into sets the specimens that he would need to hand over to other experts for examination. He took his specimen lists and zoological notes and drew up separate sets of notes for mammals, birds, insects, shells, plants, reptiles, crustaceans and fish, expanding on his former entries. He needed an expert ornithologist's verdict on his birds, especially his judgement that the three Galápagos mockingbirds should be counted as separate species, and wrote about the mockingbirds in his notes to accompany the specimens. He noted that while the specimens from Chatham and Albemarle Islands appeared to be the same, the other two were different. On each island, each kind had been exclusively found but their habits were indistinguishable. He then developed his brief comment in his zoological notes about the parallel between the mockingbirds and the tortoises.

> When I recollect the fact that [from] the form of the body, shape of scales and general size, the Spaniards can at once pronounce from which island any tortoise may have been brought; when I see these islands in sight of each other and possessed of but a scanty stock of animals, tenanted by these birds, but slightly differing in structure and filling the same place in nature; I must suspect they are only varieties. The only fact of a similar kind of which I am aware, is the constant asserted difference between the wolf-like fox of East and West Falkland Islands. If there is the slightest foundation for these remarks, the zoology of archipelagoes will be well worth examining; for such facts would undermine the stability of species.

In the summer of 1837, he started a series of private writings on the subject, focusing on geology more than natural history[7]. Through 1837 and 1838 Darwin thought to himself about the fixity or mutability of species and the implications of the Galápagos mockingbirds for the possibility that they might change. He then began to write his *Zoology of the Voyage* (1838-1843), noting: "This bird which is so closely allied to the Thenca of Chili ... is singular from existing as varieties or distinct species in the different islands. ... This parallels that of the tortoises." Darwin was beginning to detect deep patterns in the distribution of species that reach between whole classes of the animal kingdom. Darwin had written in his first note on the 'Thenca' in his field notebook: "I certainly recognise South America in ornithology; would a botanist?" When he first noticed the bird on Chatham Island, he thought of parallels with other species and he was already collecting the plants of the island for an analysis of their links with the flora of other regions.

[7] Darwin had written to his sister Catherine "there is nothing like geology; the pleasure of the first days partridge shooting or first days hunting cannot be compared to finding a fine group of fossil bones, which tell their story of former times with almost a living tongue." (April 1834). The total bulk of Darwin's Geology Notes (including Paleontology) were nearly four times greater than that of the Zoology Notes and Natural History.

From this work, it became clear to Darwin that, over time, different species adapt to their environment. He was intrigued by the fact that each small island had its own characteristic species of bird, lizard and tortoise. Because the islands' physical and climatic conditions were relatively similar, he reasoned that they were not responsible for these differences. Instead, he concluded that the differences were related to feeding habits. This theory helped form the basis of Darwin's unprecedented works on biological adaptation, natural selection and evolution. Darwin had not opened his notebooks on transmutation (evolution) until after his return to England. The Galápagos Islands gave him food for thought about bio-geography, because he recognised that the animals had to come from elsewhere (in this instance, western South America), but only later did he tie these thoughts to evolutionary ideas about adaptation and speciation in isolation. His argument was that if individuals vary with respect to a particular trait and if these variants have a different likelihood of surviving to the next generation, then, in the future, there will be more of those with the variant more likely to survive.

The Galápagos Islands impressed Darwin more for what they said about bio-geography and adaptive differentiation than what they said about natural selection. The iguanas came in more than one form; there was a marine and a land iguana that were unique in the world. Darwin managed to decipher the marine iguana's unique ecology from his observations, concluding that they fed on seaweed at the bottom of the sea around the coast. Darwin did not recognise the finches as finches, thinking they were different kinds of wrens, ground finches, and other birds. Darwin set about sorting his specimens, and as a result, figured things out. He needed help to classify all his many specimens and these experts often spotted what Darwin missed. From them he learned that each island had its own finch species.

Darwin offered his collection of bird specimens to John Gould, an ambitious young bird illustrator who was rapidly building a reputation as an ornithologist. Gould responded swiftly and positively with a series of presentations of the specimens at meetings of the Zoological Society of London. Gould confirmed Darwin's suggestion that there were three species of mockingbird in his Galápagos collection, though he changed the grouping of two of the specimens. He also pointed out to Darwin that the many birds he had identified as finches and collected on the different islands, often without recording which, should be grouped together with a number of other birds Darwin had identified as wrens, 'gross-beaks' and 'Icteruses' (relatives of blackbirds) as "a series of ground Finches which are so peculiar as to form an entire new group containing twelve new species." Darwin was fascinated at once by what the new grouping revealed about possible evolutionary adaptations in the archipelago but, found that he could not study the distribution of the finches between islands because he had failed to identify from which of the several islands he had collected many of his specimens.

As he developed his ideas about evolution in the late 1830s and early 1840s, he became more and more confident in biogeography and adaptive differentiation's power to explain[8]. However, the

[8] Darwin had also read Malthus's *Essay on Population* (1798) in 1838 and started applying Malthus's ideas to natural organisms by the 1840s.

evidence on which these ideas were based needed to be built up before he could apply them to other cases. The three species of mockingbirds on three of the islands would not be enough to persuade. He had given his collection of Galápagos plants to John Stevens Henslow shortly after his return to England. Henslow had been Darwin's mentor at Cambridge University and introduced him to the study of the geographical distribution of species. Moreover, he had explained the special interest of the links between the flora and fauna of oceanic islands and the continents they were close to, and the Galápagos was an obvious case for further study.

In 1843 as a result of Henslow not having enough time to study, Darwin arranged for the young botanist Joseph Dalton Hooker to take over the collection of specimens he had brought home from Galápagos. Darwin was eager to hear how many species were shared with South America and how many were unique to the Galápagos and more so, how many were unique to a single island. Hooker found that the flora had many close and clear links with the plants of South America, and his conclusions on the distinctiveness of the archipelago and individual islands were astonishing. Of a total of 217 species collected, Hooker found that 109 were confined to the archipelago and 85 of those were confined to a single island.

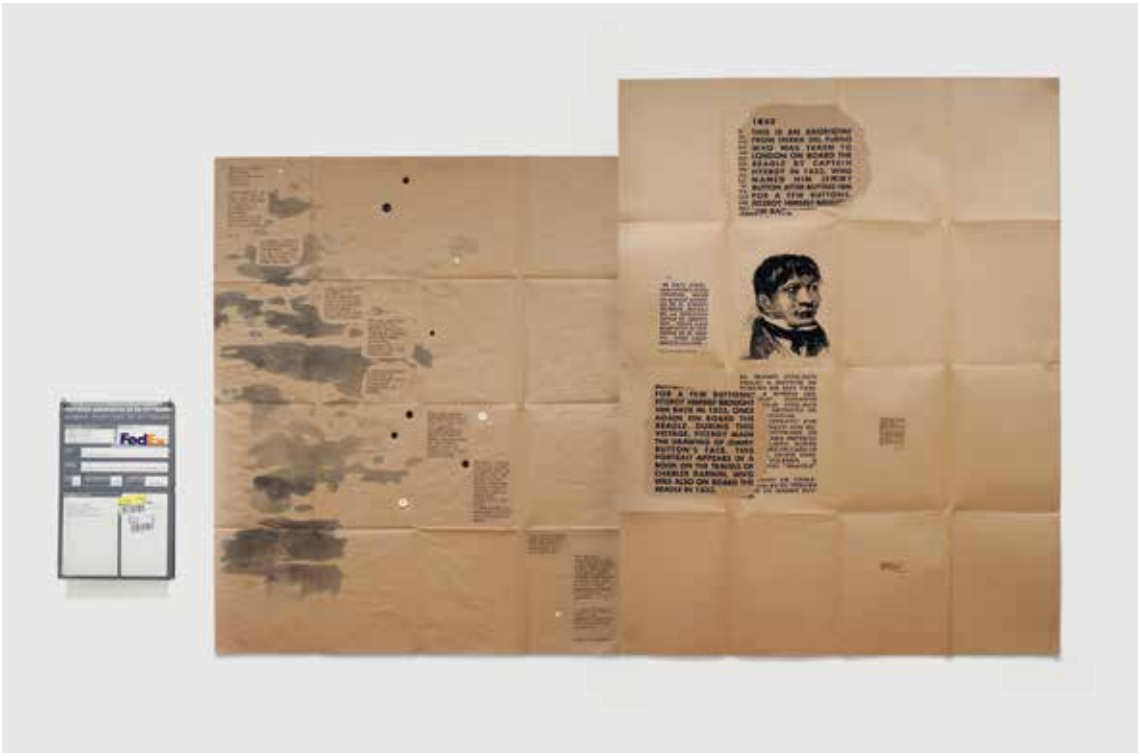
After studying Covington's and FitzRoy's more carefully labelled specimens, Darwin could see that each island had its own unique species, some endemic to particular islands, all with unique bill shapes and sizes. He concluded in his Journal:

> Seeing this gradation and diversity of structure in one small, intimately related group of birds, one might really fancy that from an original paucity of birds in this archipelago, one species had been taken and modified for different ends.

By this time, some 10 years after he had left the Galápagos, Darwin explained that when he compared together "the numerous specimens, shot by myself and several other parties on board, of the mocking-thrushes", he found: "to my astonishment, I discovered that all those from Charles Island belonged to one species ... all from Albemarle Island to [another] and all from James and Chatham Islands to [a third]." (*Journal of Researches*):

> The distribution of tenants of this archipelago", he wrote, "would not be nearly so wonderful, if for instance, one island has a mocking-thrush and a second island some other quite distinct species... But it is the circumstance that several of the islands possess their own species of tortoise, mocking-thrush, finches, and numerous plants, these species having the same general habits, occupying analogous situations, and obviously filling the same place in the natural economy of this archipelago, that strikes me with wonder.

In 1845, Darwin published a general account of his observations as *The Voyage of the Beagle*. He then published books on the *Structure and Distribution of Coral Reefs* visited during his



Viajar, sin Embargo
Airmail Painting No. 178 1986-2007
tincture, buttons, ink and photosilkscreen on two sections of kraft paper
80 x 115 1/2 in/203.2 x 293.4 cm
Image courtesy Alexander and Bonin, New York

trip, as well as the *Geology of South America*. Darwin's eventual conclusions, stemming from his first question about the birds and plants of the Galápagos, were to feature in one of the most important passages in *The Origin of Species*:

> The relations just discussed ... [including] the very close relation of the distinct species which inhabit the islets of the same archipelago, and especially the striking relation of the inhabitants of each whole archipelago or island to those of the nearest mainland, are, I think, utterly inexplicable on the ordinary view of the independent creation of each species, but are explicable on the view of colonisation from the nearest and readiest source, together with the subsequent modification and better adaptation of the colonists to their new homes.

These words capturing one of his key points about evolution by natural selection. For those born with characteristics that make them best suited to their environment are most likely to survive and successfully produce offspring.

> Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving,

namely, the production of higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.

Conclusion

Many years later the Chilean artist, Eugenio Dittborn, was reading Darwin's account of his trip on the Beagle and saw FitzRoy's drawing of Jemmy Button. Dittborn subsequently produced a series of airmail paintings that included images of the Fuegans, in particular Jemmy Button (see *Airmail Painting No.178*, 1986-2007). He went on to use the image of Button again and again as in *Airmail Painting No.102* (1993). They became what Guy Brett described as " 'a graphic mark' (that) is also a 'life trace'."[9] This idea becomes of central importance in defining the character of Dittborn's Airmail Paintings and his practice.[10]

Moreover, the idea of exile as an allegory of these works is related to the notion of displacement, and that of travel. One of the critical values of Dittborn's Airmail Paintings is the restoration of their subject. By transferring the images from one referential field to another, Dittborn makes the sources of these found images interconnected and recombines their links with history, redressing the official archive. Transit becomes the possibility for of the subject's survival. Nelly Richard notes: "While the Chilean State tried to put out of circulation some determined subjects to condemn them to oblivion, Dittborn's Airmail Paintings put back into circulation images of subjects condemned to forgetfulness. The artist became a kind of "guardian of memory," the one which was suppressed by the official apparatus."[11]

A story of islands then.

[9] Brett, Guy. *La Casa, the Letter, the House: (transperipheria) 5 Airmail paintings from Chile: Eugenio Dittborn*. Sydney: Australian Centre for Photography, 1989.

[10] See Dittborn, Eugenio. *Mapa: The Airmail Paintings of Eugenio Dittborn* 1984-1992. (London ICA, 1993).

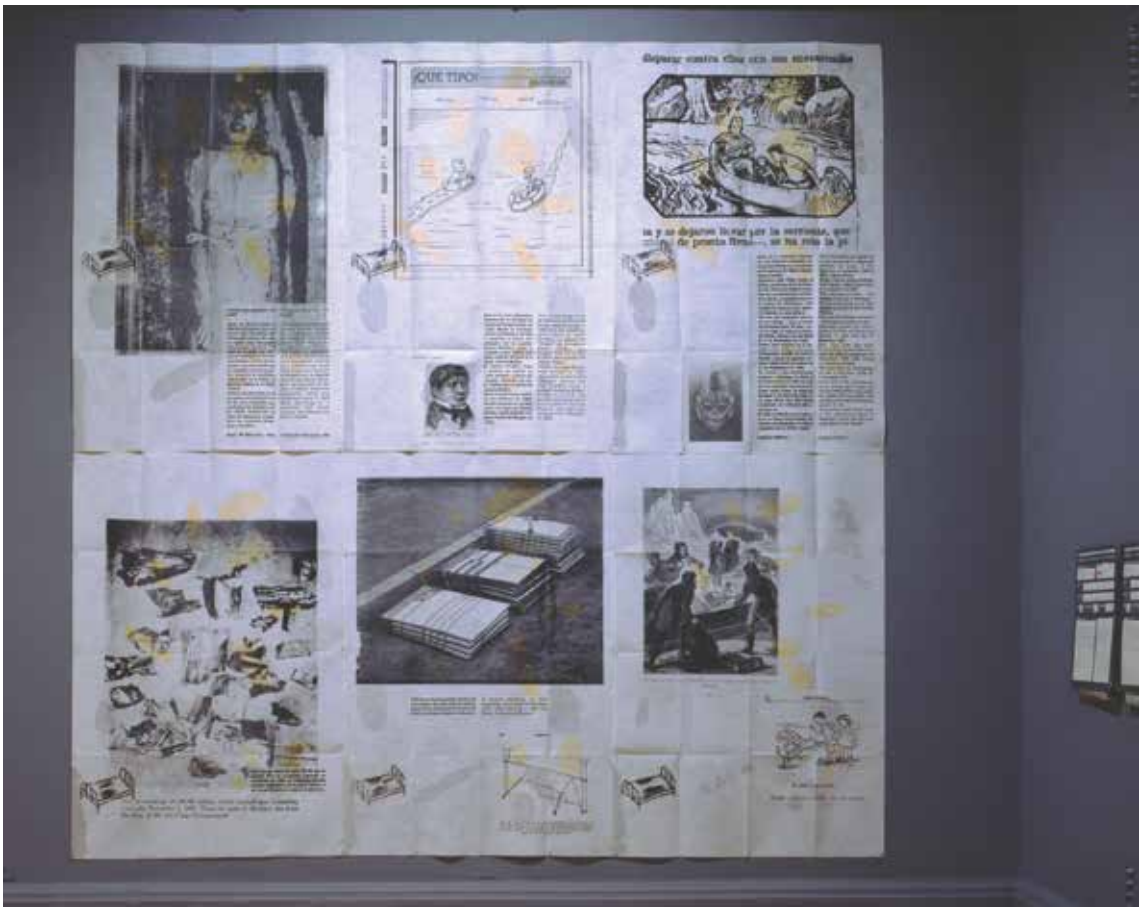
[11] In Richard, Nelly. Margins and Institutions. Melbourne: Art & Text, 1986.

This article is based on a series of readings:

Charles Darwin: *The Voyage of the Beagle*. First published 1839.

Grant, T & Estes, G. *Darwin in Galápagos*. Princeton University Press, 2009. And various websites: (i) Darwin's Finches Wikipedia; (ii) The Galápagos Geology: A Brief History of the Galápagos; (iii) Galápagos Islands History and Charles Darwin.

To Return (YVR)
Airmail Painting No. 102 1993
paint, stitching, charcoal and photosilkscreen on six sections of non woven fabric
165¼ x 165¼ in/420 x 420 cm
Image courtesy Alexander and Bonin, New York



To Return (RTM)
Airmail Painting No. 103 1993
paint, charcoal, stitching and phototsilkscreen on six sections of non woven fabric
165¼ x 165¼ in/420 x 420 cm
Image courtesy Alexander and Bonin, New York

On the Island named *Aham Brahmsmi*:
Ruminations on a Fluid Island-Self

"Who is thy wife? Who is thy son?
The ways of the world are strange indeed.
Who art thou? Whence art thou come?
...behold the folly of man:
In childhood busy with toys
In youth bewitched by love
In age bowed down with cares...
Birth brings death, death brings rebirth
Where then oh man is thy happiness?
Life trembles in the balance
Like water on a lotus leaf"[1]

This was the articulation of the question of life, existence, and self, emphatic in the scheme of Shankara[2], a sixth century philosopher from south of India. As evident, the verse resonates a sense of self as a perpetually fluid island, appearing with birth, submerging in the sea of life, and disappearing by death, only to reappear in due course. To correct, it is the upheaval of fluid island-self marked by endless changes in the stages of existence. This is very similar to the ideas of Buddha who also suggested that life, pleasure, rebirth and the cycle from birth to death to rebirth is indicative of suffering, which can only end when this cycle itself is broken by achieving nirvana or the Buddhist state of ultimate bliss beyond which there is no life, death or resultant suffering. However, we exist in the world because we are without nirvana and hence we are subject to perpetual changes. How can one make sense of a self in this utterly helpless flux? With this question, the philosopher Shankara travelled the length and breath, from south to north, of ancient India, learning and critically engaging with scholars of various schools of philosophy. Thus, he reached a village named Mahishi, in the Maithili speaking region in the north, now situated within the official map of Bihar abutting the borders of Nepal via river Kosi. Mandana Mishra, a renowned scholar of *Mimamsa*, one of the old schools in philosophy in ancient India, lived in Mahishi. Mandana was a proponent of the awakening of self within social institutions of conjugal life. In other words, for Mandana, the vocation of a householder was superior to that of a monk, a renouncer ascetic. Shankara offered to debate with him on this issue. Mandana's wife, Ubhaya Bharati, a scholar of repute too, was the judge of the debate between the two scholars. The prolonged debate that entailed elaborate logical arguments resulted in the defeat of Mandana Mishra. Shankara proved that

[1] Quoted from George, Vensus A. *Authentic Human Destiny: The Paths of Shankara and Heidegger.* Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1998. pp. 3.

[2] There is an evident lack of consensus among scholars on the exact life-period of Shankara. However, it is unanimous that Shankara's rise came in response to the already established Buddhism and exceeding decline of what is referred to today as Hinduism.

the ultimate goal of self is to recognise the limits of *apara vidya*[3], the knowledge imposed by the perceptions embedded in social existence. This is the domain of *maya* (approximately translated as worldly illusion and creative energy), which the self ought to be transcending to arrive at the superior *para vidya*, self-realisation of the indwelling *Brahman*, the absolute truth! However, upon the defeat of Mandana Mishra, the judge of the debate, wife of Mandana Mishra, Ubhaya Bharati, announced: the debate was not over yet! For Mandana was a householder and he was only one part of the full unit. The other part was his wife, who must be defeated in debate for the complete defeat of her husband. Thus the debate with Shankara continued. The very first question Bharati raised was about the intricacies of sexual-conjugality in the life of a householder. In other words, it was about the socio-cultural and sexual embeddedness of a self. Shankara, being a renouncer-ascetic, had little knowledge of conjugal life and its sexual dynamics. He expressed his unawareness of the issue under question and requested Bharati to lend him a little time to undertake adequate research. He returned and answered the questions of Bharati satisfactorily. He was the victor indeed.

But the above episode is not to be read only as an instance of Shankara winning an intellectual debate. The secret of the episode is in the socio-cultural embeddedness, institutional bonding, and the mundane conjugal life of a householder. The crux of the story is the prerequisite acquaintance of an island-self with pleasure and pain of living. Mere knowledge of the transcendental self could not make for truth; the mundane *maya* also holds keys to opening doors in the passage of the transcendence. This could be deemed the becoming of a fluid island-self.

At this juncture, it is imperative to ask: how does it all surface in our contemporary visual worldview? Could this instance from conjectural past be of any significance in our contemporary socio-cultural landscape? Are we islands named *Aham Brahmsmi*? And if we are, what is the undercurrent sociability thereof? A humble proposition is that one is the island-self named Aham Brahmsmi with deeper socio-cultural undercurrents connecting Shankara's *apara vidya* and *para vidya*, *maya* and *brahman*, mundane and absolute!

This process of becoming a fluid island-self must not be confined to the discursive trope of the written text alone. It must unfold in the domain of the seen, even though seeing does not become believing! As a proposition, the following are a few images from contemporary India. Some of them echo undying social stereotypes. But then, the latter is the easiest tool, to continue and discontinue, toward further creations in art, poetry, literature, and aesthetics. The trope of modernity too provides for continuity and discontinuity.

[3] In terms of Indic philosophy and religiosity, *apara vidya* refers to knowledge acquired through existential learning compared to *para-vidya*, which is knowledge acquired through engagement with the absolute truth.

On a Visual Trope

The following photographs from contemporary India present a familiar socio-cultural landscape. However, this visual familiarity allows for a critical engagement with the undercurrents of an island-self.

An Island Faraway
Photo credit: Dev Pathak

An island faraway seems static, in a frozen frame, muffled in tides and clouds. However, could one deny the inherent dynamics? An island faraway tends to sail across the river along with the sailing canoes.

Sailing across the River
Photo credit: Sasanka Perera

Folks carry wind, dust and essence of a faraway island with their selves. With sailing canoes, the fluid island individual self crosses beaches and barriers. Trembling on the waves, however, they tend to find repose, vanity of meditation.

An Island named *Aham Brahmsmi*
Photo Credit: Dev Pathak

The repose is as momentary as is the identity of self. For liminal can seldom be permanent. The journey continues in quest of self, and one finds oneself amidst myriad structures.

Amidst
Photo Credit: Dev Pathak

Do myriad structures enslave an individual self entirely? Or there is some room for individual manoeuvring amidst building blocks? And hence the quest continues through the veils of *maya*.

Maya's Self
Photo Credit: Dev Pathak

Maya entails creative energy and hence the process of becoming as well as unbecoming continues. It often leads to many gods and ways of performing devotion.

Ritualised
Photo Credit: Sasanka Perera

Devotion is however not merely for surrender. One worships a god and one becomes an extension of divine. The mortal divine indulges in regenerative plays.

Play with *Maya*
Photo Credit: Dev Pathak

Many more appendages to the island-self stem from the play with *maya*: the pleasure of winning and pain of losing, the joy of union and sorrow of separation, anguish of falling and ecstasy of rising!

Meditation on the Ruins
Photo Credit: Dev Pathak

An island-self reaches an inevitable destination. Some ruins already in existence and some decay in the offing, meditation of the island-self is to reach a reckoning leaving little to regret!

Moreover, this is crucial to fathom this phenomenon in the discursive framework of modernity, selectively looking at literary imaginations. This is not a comprehensive perusal of the vast corpus of knowledge on modernity. Instead, this is a modest attempt to put some more bones and flesh to the notion of Fluid Island-Self. This is to reason with humane attributes of the metaphorical island named *Aham Brahmsmi*!

Unlike the fluidity of the island-self, the scheme of modernity had put existence into strict binaries. In contrast with fluidity, it perceived either an otherworldly ascetic or a this-worldly householder. This was the famous binary opposition of an entirely (En)lightened self of Immanuel Kant or a totally chained cavemen of Plato. The liberated self had to live a monastic life, away from the hurly burly of socio-cultural happenings. And the chained men had to be the pragmatic individuals of this world, capable of engendering the structure in which they lived. But then, some of these chained cavemen also appeared to be a little strange. For example, Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray! Gray was a man of this world. But he did not follow the principles of the cave, or the social codes of sexual liaisons. Seeking for liberation from this world's dictums, he committed 'sin' since he did not walk into an ascetic's monastic world. His liberation was not-liberating since he was sexually and selectively anarchic only in pursuit of hedonism. His anarchy was for the pleasure within this world. Unless his anarchy led him away from this world it was not appropriate in the modern scheme. The adverse impact of the hedonistic anarchy is visible on the portrait of Gray, which he hid in the attic. He did not want to see, quite peculiar of a modern man, his withering self, reflected in his portrait. He too seems to be aware of the misery of being in-between. Wilde makes Gray repent endlessly in the scheme of modern binaries. Either he has to be of this world or of the other world, and not at all a character in-between. In sum, Gray must be consistently an island-self totally chained in this world and hence unmoving.

But then, beyond Wilde's modern scheme, Gray also presents a case of a fluid island-self. Though it manifests only in Gray's sexual rampage it is anarchy of self directed toward hedonistic pleasure. If we omit the lamentation of Gray, an imposition of Wilde, it is a perfect case of modern man's ambivalence.[4] This is what makes an island-self to be fluid. Thus, the Cartesian Cogito, intellect free from sensuous body, seems a mere philosophical utopia. For, the scheme of modernity also entailed ambivalence. It allows a protagonist to be in an anarchic pursuit of self with or without hedonism in perspective. The scheme of modernity thus also deals with uncertain, strange, and spontaneous individuality. Moreover, the "modern man in search of a soul"[5] created beliefs, mythology, gods and demons of its own. With evident skepticism toward the doctrines and systems of traditional belief, the island-self moves on to find meanings even in the world of utter meaningless. Hence, there is a meaning for even a Sisyphus despite absurdity abounds. There is awareness that everything is like mere cobwebs – meaningless in one breath, but enchanting in the other – for the modern men including Camus' Sisyphus and Wilde's Gray. This is the peculiar

[4] Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and Its Ambivalence.* London: Polity Press, 1993.

[5] Jung, Carl G. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul.* London: Routledge, 2001.

ambivalence on which scheme of modernity is precariously hinged. The ambivalence of modernity surfaced in art and aesthetics, poetry and literature abundantly. It became thereby possible to juxtapose emotional and intellectual, irrational and rational, subjective and objective, aesthetic and scientific. The Janus- faced modern existence!

At this juncture, it is imperative to briefly turn to the 20th century Hindi poetry for a synoptic comprehension of the elaborate imagination of self in consonance with the imagery of island. Amidst the plethora of poetic imagination in modern India, Agyeya's poetics unfold a pertinent argument.[6] Take for example, the poem *Nadi Ke Dweep (Island of a River)*:[7]

> We are the islands of the river; The river gives us shapes- angles, interior, and exterior; She makes us all rounded; She is the mother; But we are islands; and not streams of the river; Ours is a quiet surrender, stable and still; For, if we float along; we won't exist; We would erode if we move; And yet we could not be her currents; We would be only mud; And muddy her water as we flow! It is ideal to remain an island; And this is not a curse upon us; This is our decent destiny; We are offspring of the river! Seated in her lap, we are related to the mainland.

The Conqueror Island-Self
Photo Credit: Dev Pathak

The island-self thereby wins over the avalanche of desires, the manifestations of *Maya*. The typical aspiration of a scholar, philosopher, ascetic, such as Shankara, to attain the self-realisation of *Aham Brahmsmi*!

This is important to highlight a few key terms in this poem: island, river, shapes, mother, stream, erosion, mud, and mainland! Through these key categories, Agyeya attempts to disclose the deep dispositions of a modern mind. The fear of violating the structure represented by the river, the mother, who shapes an island-self is important issue. The destiny of the static island is not a curse and hence it must not be overcome. And, the island

[6] His full name is Sachiddanand Vatsyayan and has attracted scholars from the post-colonial tribe. Hence, he was the central muse of a symposium (see http://agyeya.berkeley.edu/conference.html).

[7] Translation is mine. This is an abridged version of the poem. This poem also states the experimental and innovative direction, which the stream of poetry in Hindi called *Nai Kavita*, literally meaning New Poetry, had started. See Brajendra Tripathi. "The Social Context of Nai Kavita", Indian Literature, vol. 55, No. 6, 2011. 257-264.

is still connected with the mainland by the virtue of being true child of the mother river. The poem extolls the solitary island and its ability to remain an uneroding entity. If it erodes, it will be only mud and muddy the flow of river. The poet articulates a modern aspiration, in continuity with the scriptural role of the capable intellect, to stand firm in front of manifold temptations and not give in to various desires. Only then, a man could be appropriate in this world and the other world.

But then, this is not the only component of modern man's disposition. In the anthology of Agyeya, there are several verses to add another kind of human aspiration. Almost resonating the scheme of ambivalent modernity, and adding fluidity to the uncanny certitude of *Aham Brahmsmi*, Agyeya's *This Solitary Lamp* reads:

> This solitary lamp, of warmth and affection; Proud and prejudiced, as it may be; Give it to the row of lamp!

Or another important poem, from the anthology titled *Kitni Navon Mein Kitni Baar (Many Times in Many Boats)*:[8]

> From faraway lands, so many times; many rocking boats I embarked; so many times I came toward you; my very own little flame! Amidst the fog, I may not have seen you; but in the faint flickering light of the fog; I could recognise your halo; many a time, patient, assured, unrelenting, un-tired; My unknown truth, many times!

[8] This was conferred Jnanpeeth National award, a prestigious award for literary contribution in India, in 1978.

Wandering Time Seeking Self
Photo Credit: Sreedeep

As time ticks away, the self seeks to reach out! It is difficult to ascertain whether this wandering is inside or outside the self. Be it as it may, it reveals an aspiration of the fluid island-self to be in a quest.

Sting of Solitary Being
Photo Credit: Dev Pathak

Needless to say, the quest of an island-self could amount to several existential stings. This eventuates for an island-self into a sting of being. Pristine, pure and petrified ¬– connected with the mainland and yet not able to traverse the passage!

These by no means represent the whole of poetic currents in modern India. That would solicit a discussion on poetic imagination of self in the works of other significant poets, such as Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh among others. The above synoptic view is only to aid in grappling with the idea of island-self in modern context. This establishes not only Janus-faced modernity in India. More importantly, this also underlines human aspirations rendering island self humanely vulnerable. If there is a notion of *Aham Brahmsmi* presiding the island-self, it is vulnerable to the slippery passages. Even though, Mandana Mishra and his wife Ubhaya Bharati conceded defeat in the debate with Shankara the philosophical proposition of the defeated holds significance: an individual self is socio-culturally embedded while also free to pursue the higher aspirations! This is also reflected in the scheme of modernity wherein liminal is as crucial as relatively durable positions of individuals. The in-between spaces of existence thereby become important for the island-self named *Aham Brahmsmi*.

Concluding Sociologically!

In more than 2000 words, the above rumination attempts to offer an irritating answer to the equally irritating sociological antinomies. These are the antinomies of self and society, individual agency and social structure, social physics and non-social metaphysics. One can say that Pierre Bourdieu did it long ago. Yes, but Bourdieu failed to think of the divide between physics and metaphysics, didn't he? Even though many other antinomies were addressed, an unhindered puzzle remained untouched: Who is a self in social context? Is it a mere socio-cultural determination with clear morphology or something

more? Emile Durkheim, an early academic in classical sociology, thought of sacred as a collective representation. Thereby, everything religious or metaphysical became components of culturally constructed 'sacred canopy' of Peter Berger. An individual self under the sacred canopy lost its individuality. This has been perpetual in sociological reasoning. Even the advent of individualistic perspective, mostly attributed to late modernity, could not come around the real issue: whether a man is only a physical accident in the frame of social biology or there is something more? It seems the question of a self as an Island named *Aham Brahmsmi* has been totally relegated to the spheres of poetry and literature, art and aesthetics! As if this were a nonissue in typically modern social science, however some psychoanalysts, the renowned renegades of Sigmund Freud, tried to engage with the issue. Well, the 'serious' anthropologists and sociologists do not find anything significant about psychoanalysis as such. If anything, it is merely a particular methodological approach and that too heavily contested. Forget about psychoanalysis, social scientists and sociologists in particular are too methodical to even traverse the terrain of individual-islands! They would ask whether they have a methodology to support their observations about *Aham Brahmsmi* (pun intended)! Hence they have not been able to deal with the myth of living Sisyphus of the modern world though Levi Strauss claimed to lay the cornerstone to understand the myths of the whole world. It is in this context, that this rumination holds significance for a sociologist, and teaches a simple lesson: in the world of heteronomy, an individual self is still grappling with the question of island-self!

Engaging with some of the visuals from contemporary Indian socio-cultural landscape, literary-poetic expositions, and contemplative arguments, this rumination tries to show that the island-self named *Aham Brahmsmi* has a socially embedded character! Each of us wishes to be an independent self. Each of us however is mired in the play with *maya* even though we indulge in the vanity of meditation in our solitude or on the ruins of a biography. Our discovery of selves is in the domain of the experiences in this world. We want to find the significance of our existence in this world while there is a reference to the world-afar- unknown- unverifiable! We are as much metaphysical as we are physical. Even though a philosopher meticulously divides these worlds we intend to live with a sense of the worlds interconnected. Hence for us the world of play becomes an integrally connected compartment of the world we are unaware of. We play, to be precise, on the bridge between the two worlds. And hence, our island-self is in a perpetually fluid state. This is also a humble antithesis to the articulations, which we have labelled postmodern. For, the latter has put preconditions behind the fluid state of self, such as fear, consumerism, and manmade uncertainty. However, the fluidity of island-self could be an inherent constituent of the disposition. In other words, we are fluid because we are inherently fluid. The liquidness of the island-self stems from the humane disposition and not the social preconditions, doesn't it?

Islands, Archipelago and the Postcolonial Subconscious

Island fascination is age-old. Writers, artists, musicians have explored islands in their artistic creation and what they have produced certainly reflect their imaginings and to a larger degree, desire on islands. From works of literature such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) to music, Warumpi Band's *My Island Home* (1988) and Hollywood's *Castaway* (2000) starring Tom Hanks, nearly all uniformly introduce the trope of islands as a place of adventure and escape from the hectic modern life.

But islands are of course, more than just fantasy or a creation of artists and writers; islands are real physical entities, often historically and geopolitically complex and the island can be a very forbidding place to live because of its isolation and remoteness. Paradoxically, it is because of the isolation that perhaps, it is not us that are looking/longing for islands but rather it is 'island' that holds our imagination captive. Jose Saramago (1999) has suggested that the 'island' really own us, for in seeking it we are more often than not in search of ourselves.

The essay will discuss how the imaginings of 'island' are linked to the postcolonial subconscious of an Indonesian modern painter, Emiria Sunassa (1894-1960) through an examination of her indigenous portraits. The artist who is regarded as one of the few female painters that was active in post-independence Indonesia has created a body of work that highlighted the limitation of the (masculine) imaginings of the Indonesian archipelago.

Maria Gonzalez (2008) suggested that islands have been read as a metaphor for the Modern understanding of identity, namely that islands were/are perceived as something that is fixed and always surrounded by stable borders. But other scholars have criticised that given identity itself is a process, not a fixed entity or autonomous object (Braidotti 1994; Butler 2006); indeed, to see islands as a metaphor for identity is no longer appropriate.

Gonzalez instead proposed that archipelago can be seen as a closer approximate to a metaphor for identity. Drawing from Iris Marion Young's criticism on the formulation of identity, she stated that:

> The modern way of understanding identity implies the idea that one part of the collective can represent the whole

> entity. In the identity model of the island, the capacity of representation emerged from the island's center. As there is no center in the city or the archipelago, no one has the "true" definition of identity. There is no one unique, true definition, but different positions in the scope of power of a collective. Thus collective identity and collective definitions must be negotiated among the different components of the archipelago (Gonzalez 2008: 33).

The discussion on Emiria Sunassa's works below shall expand from Gonzalez's exploration of island and archipelago through a feminist reading on Indonesian art history to challenge a fixed sense of identity as established through the canons in modern art history.

The dark archipelago: Emiria Sunassa (1894-1960)

In *The Question of Lay Analysis*, Sigmund Freud infamously referred to the sexual life of the adult woman as the 'dark continent' (1926: 212). The comment, made because of the lack of clinical materials on the sexual life of girls and women for psychoanalysis, also acknowledged Freud's half-knowledge and, furthermore, his curiosity about the topic. The expression 'dark continent' referred to virgin, hostile and impenetrable dark forest, taken from the African explorer Henry Morton Stanley. Freud's fetishising of women as mysterious and impenetrable also drew attention to psychoanalysis' roots in the age of colonialism.

Ranjana Khanna (2003) links the deep anxiety over women in psychoanalysis to anxiety towards the primitive. Khanna expands Freud's notion of melancholy into what she terms as colonial melancholia. Melancholia, or the refusal to mourn, is a form of incorporation, that is swallowing whole something that cannot be assimilated or expelled (Khanna 2003: 166). Khanna argues that the colonised subject is unable to mourn the loss of his or her culture or tribe, as it is made unknown or invisible to him or her by Western hegemony. One of the resulting symptoms is haunting, in which the lost object haunts the subject in the form of hallucination. History, memory and trauma experienced by postcolonial subjects cannot be eliminated by state nationalism alone.

I want to extend Freud's metaphor of the 'dark continent' into the 'dark archipelago' to suggest that the discussion of Emiria Sunassa's indigenous portraits can be framed within the notion of colonial melancholia as well as an attempt to challenge the conventional reading of identity that is framed within national-masculine perspective. Moreover, the metaphor of archipelago could also serve as a cautious reminder on the question of representation: who and what determine identity.

Emiria Sunassa (1894-1964) or Emiria Sunassa Wama'na Poetri Al-Alam Mahkota Tidore, also known as Emma Wilhelmina Pareira/Emmy Pareira, is one of the few women painters active during the early years of Indonesian modern art.[1] Background information about her works and biography is scant and existing

[1] The various names of Emiria Sunassa derive from the multiple narratives of the artist as explained in Arbuckle (2011). Because there are several possibilities concerning her origin, these names are not only markers of her identities but also of her constructed subjectivities.

sources often disagree, but a general outline can be constructed from the diverse oral and written evidence available.

Born on 5th August 1894, Emiria claimed to be the daughter of the Sultan of Tidore of the time, Sultan Sahadjuan.[2] She was Dutch-educated and attended the *Europese Lagere School* (European Elementary School) until the third grade only. Her attendance at the *Europese Lagere School* suggests that her family had some rank and influence within the colonial administration of the time, as the school was exclusively for the children of Dutch and foreign officials and residents.

Emiria had a diverse career as nurse, secretary and administrator, and travelled widely in the Dutch East Indies and as far as Europe before she became a painter. She claimed to have been married several times, though there is no conclusive record of these marriages. She travelled to Brussels and Austria against the backdrop of World War I in 1914-1915, studying the Dalcroze method of eurythmics. Before her travels in Europe, Emiria had trained as a nurse in Cikini Hospital, Jakarta from 1912 to 1914. Later in the 1920s and 1930s, Emiria travelled in the Dutch East Indies where she worked in plantations, mines and factories, then lived with ethnic groups in Papua, Kalimantan and Sumatra. During her travels in the archipelago she often stayed in remote villages and lived with local tribes where she would later paint portraits that reflected her various encounters. When she settled down in Batavia in the late 1930s, she became involved in the Persagi – the first Indonesian indigenous artists' association.[3]

Emiria participated in Persagi's inaugural show in 1940 and also in the group's breakthrough exhibition in 1941. The artist later on had a solo show at the Union of Art Circles (*Bond van Kunstkringen*) shortly before the beginning of the Japanese occupation of Indonesia and continued to paint well into the occupation period.[4] Her last exhibition was in 1959 in Taman Seni Rupa Merdeka, Kebayoran, Jakarta. Emiria reportedly left Jakarta some time in the same year, possibly to travel to Sumatra for unknown reason. It was later reported that she died in Lampung in the southern part of Sumatra in 1964. She left all her possessions with her neighbour, Jane Waworuntu, in Jakarta. Through Jane's descendants, researchers can gain access to the majority of Emiria's wor ks.

Emiria was commonly associated with Persagi, although she did not train or work with the group as reflected in her choice of subject matter.[5] Persagi's nationalistic vigour came from an unmistakably masculine perspective; most of the paintings represented common subject-matter: self-portraitures, still-lifes and most importantly, the portrayal of the Indonesian people during and after the revolutionary period ¬– and yet, these depictions were limited to the island of Java.

Indonesian modern art during its early years was strongly embedded within the nationalist movement. Nationalism, as noted by Cynthia Enloe (1989), has been regarded as a male phenomenon so that masculinised memory appears embodied in the representation of warfare in in Indonesian art history.

[2] The source of confusion concerning Emiria's background can be attributed to scant official information on her childhood. Arbuckle in her study pieced together Emiria's background from oral histories from various people connected to Emiria. Although she clearly originated from Eastern Indonesia, Emiria's exact birthplace and ethnicity are still shrouded in mystery. See Holt 1967; Arbuckle 2004, 2011; Bianpoen, 2007.

[3] Holt, Claire, *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 251-2.

[4] Persagi (Indonesian Painters Association) was founded in 1938 by Sudjojono and Agus Djaja. After Persagi members were absorbed into *Keimin Bunka Shidoso* (Cultural Centre during the Japanese occupation), Emiria held a solo show (1943) organised by Poetera (*Pusat Tenaga Rakyat* – another cultural organisation, this time established by Indonesians and headed by Sudjojono). In 1946, Emiria held another solo exhibition, this time for charity with the Red Cross in Jakarta. Ibid., 251-2.

[5] Sudjojono and other painters are known to have studied under the tutelage of more senior native painters or directly under a Dutch artist. There are contrasting opinions about Emiria's artistic training. She was assumed to be an autodidact by Indonesian scholars yet Arbuckle points to several historical sources that indicate that she was trained under Guillaume Frederic Pijper (1893-1988) who as an Assistant Adviser of Native Affairs. In Arbuckle's study, Pijper is credited with mentoring Emiria into taking up painting.

The paintings by Sudjojono entitled *Sekko* (c. 1949), Hendra Gunawan's *Guerilla Fighters* (1955), or Dullah's *Guerrillas Preparing* (1949) are a fair representation of a common subject-matter where men are portrayed as being engaged in various activities as fighters and heroes during the revolutionary period. The elevation of participation in armed conflicts in the visual arts is seen as the ultimate contribution of citizenship by artists and also served as the quintessential gendering activity (Speck 2004: 11).

Emiria's works produced during the 1950s were characterised by her (mostly male) peers and writers as 'mysterious' and 'out-worldly'. Her subject-matter was dominantly figurative portraiture, both in groups or individual setting. However, her portraits were atypical of what were painted by her peers during the time which were, during the 1940s-1950s, warfare or other armed conflict scenes as well as nationalistic propaganda posters.

Emiria's portraits convey a sense of directness and character. It is important to consider how the artist managed these by comparing her works with two works by her male contemporaries, namely Nasyah Jamin (1924-1994) and Saptohoedojo (1925-2003)[6]. A closer look and comparison between Nasyah Jamin's[7] *Gadis Makasar* [sic] (*A Makassar Girl*, 1965) with Emiria's *Wanita Sulawesi* (*Sulawesi Woman*, 1958) underline some of the differences.

Jamin's sitter adopted a conventional sitting pose with the sitter's hands crossed on her lap and her eyes averted from the painter/viewer. The careful rendition of the traditional shirt and sarong that blends harmoniously with the saturated yellow background emanates a feeling of softness and femininity as well as an idealised image of a Makassar woman.

In Emiria's portrait of a woman from the same island, the sitter is portrayed in a classic frontal view and she is also wearing the customary *baju bodo*[8] the traditional loose shirt, and sarong against a geometric background. The woman's pink shirt and geometric sarong are rendered in tight, broad brushes while her right hand clasps the edge of the sarong, holding it upright in a gesture of pride or modesty. The pink, green and blue geometric background echoes the sarong's pattern, which creates a sharp contrast to the dark monochromatic rendering of the woman's head. In this particular work the right hand appears to be left unfinished and is also out of proportion to the rest of the body.[9] The painting's focus point centres on the woman's dark impassive face, staring straight at the viewer, and her two large earrings, which are painted in detail. Emiria seems to focus more effort on the sitter's face through smaller and softer brushstrokes to catch a certain life-like quality.

While Holt has suggested that most of Emiria's works from her later period seemed to have been painted from memory (1967: 252), this painting shows that Emiria was able to capture the strength of character of a Sulawesi woman through that memory alone. If we compare this work with another work painted at the year, namely *Kembang Kemboja di Bali* (*Frangipani Flower*

[6] Djamin and Saptohoedojo's works were collected by the National Gallery of Indonesia and the two paintings discussed in the essay were shown during the gallery's inaugural exhibition in 1999. In an extended version of this essay, I argue that the inaugural exhibition of the National Gallery of Indonesia is part of canon-making within Indonesian modern art history. Thus the paintings by the two male artists are part of the mainstream nationalist discourse as conceived by Indonesian curators and art historians.

[7] Nasyah Jamin was a painter and author from West Sumatra, Indonesia. He was more widely known for his literary works such as *Hilanglah Si Anak Hilang* (1950) and *Gairah untuk Hidup dan untuk Mati* that won the highest literature prize in 1970 from the state.

[8] *Baju bodo* is a traditional loose billowy shirt worn by women from several ethnic groups in South Sulawesi.

[9] Arbuckle (2011: 246) has suggested that Emiria possibly had difficulties in drawing hands and feet well. A number of Emiria's paintings show simplified hands or feet, sometimes they are simply omitted or hidden. In *Pengantin Dayak* (1946) the artist simply placed the hands of the figures behind the long table. Nonetheless, she seems to have resolved this problem in her latter works in the late 1950s.

of Bali, 1958), the painting *Wanita Sulawesi* conveys the artist's confidence in presenting the inner character of her sitter.

In *Kembang Kemboja di Bali*, a woman is portrayed in three-quarter view and is wearing traditional Balinese attire. Her head is garlanded with white frangipanis. She is wearing a dark blue *kemben*[10] that stops below her bare breasts and her shoulders are draped with pink shawl-like fabrics; on the right shoulder the fabric appears to have been decorated while the left one is of transparent quality, half-covering the left breast. Against three dark vertical planes, the figure almost appears to blend with the background but the impression is interrupted by the bright white horizontal garland on her head. The depiction of her face has similar formal qualities to the *Wanita Sulawesi* painting, in particular the nose, eyebrows and lips, which may have been painted from memory as well. Again, the artist appears to concentrate more on the face, but in this work, the focus is slightly altered by the striking flower garland, thus bringing together the visual depiction of the flowers and the title of the painting.

[10] A *kemben* is a traditional body covering made by wrapping yards of fabric bandage-style on the upper part of the wearer's body.

In *Kembang Kemboja di Bali*, despite the emphasis on the flowers as a marker for her ethnic identity and gender, the artist's portrayal of the figure appears to have been at odds with the idea of exoticism and femininity commonly associated with the flowers. Instead, the bare breasts and the dark brown skin of the figure seem to emphasise a strong tribal quality.

[11] Saptohoedojo was an Indonesian artist who was renown for his diverse art making. Based in Yogyakarta, Central Java, paintings by the artist were mostly in Realist style which was characterised by idealised representation of his subject-matter.

We can compare this work with Saptohoedojo's[11] depiction with a similar subject-matter: the painting of a girl in *Gadis Bali* (*Balinese Girl*, 1954) that highlights innocence and youthful beauty. The sitter is painted sitting in a three-quarter view, wearing Balinese traditional attire. In contrast to Emiria's portrayal, the breasts are fully covered with *kemben* and one shoulder is covered with yellow *selendang*[12]. Her hands are crossed on her lap above a green piece of cloth and she is holding a white frangipani. The figure demurely averts her eyes from the viewer amidst a background of frangipani trees, some of which have started to bloom, thus emphasising the freshness of her youth.

[12] The *selendang* is an Indonesian sarong-type shawl traditionally used to carry babies.

Although Emiria's painting of a Balinese woman shares with Saptohoedojo's painting some visual references such as Balinese traditional dress and hairdo, it does not conform to the conventional depiction of Balinese women. Instead, it emphasises the otherness of the figure. Emiria's figure, painted in 1958, evokes a not so-far and perhaps an idealised past where Balinese women were still unencumbered by the trappings of modernity, while Saptohoedojo's figure, painted in 1954, seems to have been moulded by the sociocultural values of the time through the covered breasts. Significantly, in contrast to the two paintings by Nasyah Jamin and Saptohoedojo, Emiria's figures gaze straight at the painter/viewer, forcing the viewer to engage with the paintings. The artist arguably represented her female figures as subjects with agency rather than the essence of her being.

Concluding remarks

By her distinctly atypical portrayals of women that deviated from the nationalist imaginings of her contemporaries, Emiria not only proposed a more inclusive vision of the newly emerging nation but also suggests the artist's cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism, as explained by Kwame Anthony Appiah, is a 'duty' to live with all the other people in this world and the moral challenge that humanity should rise up to (Appiah 2006; Papastergiadis 2012). Appiah further explains that cosmopolitanism consists of two strains of thought. First, we have an obligation to others beyond those to whom we are related by kith and kin. Second, we take the values not just of human life but also of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance (Appiah 2006: xv).

Emiria's cosmopolitanism thus can be assumed from her portrait works. Painting the subjects of her portraits at close quarters, portrait style, instead of within a particular situation or events (although they may have been recalled from memory), reveals Emiria's empathy towards them. Artists have used portraiture as a genre since the Renaissance era not only to capture a likeness of their sitter but also to convey their character. In Emiria's case, the identities of her sitters are unknown and nothing is known about the exact location or date of their meetings. Thus it is debatable whether Emiria intended to capture her sitters' physical likeness through her portraits; it is quite likely that it was an act of recollection by the artist from her various journeys.

By acknowledging the otherness of those who are culturally and ethnically different, her portraits suggest the kind of haunting or the inability to mourn as proposed by Khanna (2003) in the previous section. Moreover, the figures in Emiria's portraits might be interpreted as representing the artist's view of the nation's Other/new citizens who were rarely taken into account in mainstream history, including art history.

Her indigenous portraits did not fit into the masculine imaginings of the mainstream history and yet they were and are part of the nation. Furthermore, her paintings also reveal the repressed elements of the nation, from its peripheral members to its traumatic formation. The haunting in the artist's works shadows the notion of a united, patriarchal Indonesia. Moreover, her narratives of mobility and cosmopolitanism underlined the often forgotten negotiation in forming a collective identity within the narratives of the archipelago.

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Emiria Sunassa in 1942 (Source: Djawa Baroe Magazine, 1942, p. 17).
Image courtesy of IVAA (Indonesian Visual Art Archive) Yogyakarta.

The Island Allegory:
Survey and Meditation

(with illustrations by Milenko Prvački)

This is an allegory. An allegory that seeks to survey and meditate on a life of observation, reading and perspecting on all things islandic. An oft forgotten idea that manifests in driving the world around the large water bodies and forming communities that are often remembered only to be forgotten. Island: sometimes charmingly pronounced Iss- land or ice-land in many non-English-speaking countries reasonably deceived by the aberrant 's'. The 's' remains a peculiarity that Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw and the spelling reform movement (which included Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Johnson, Noah Webster and many more) would have eradicated by the end of the 19th century. They point out that on Shakespeare's tomb, 'friend' is more logically spelled (or spelt) 'frend'; and amongst hundred of spelling oddities, they targeted the 'b' in 'debt' and the 's' in island, arguing for 'iland' as better phonemic representation. Though complex, the spelling war never drew blood and a persuasive counter logic pleaded to keep the origins of words intact in their spelling – much to the continued despair of school children and foreigners. Keeping a word's origins visible in its spelling is a sweet argument, until one realises that just as a language continues to evolve, so does spelling – or at least it did, until set in concrete through dictionary definitions.

Traced to a Nordic word of the 700's, *yland* became the Old English *igland* or *ealand.* The *ig, ieg* or *ea* came from the Proto-Germanic for *aqua*, therefore meaning 'thing on the water'. Old English also records it as *ealand*, meaning 'river-land, watered place, meadow by a river'. In place names, Old English *ieg* often refers to "slightly raised dry ground offering settlement sites in areas surrounded by marsh or subject to flooding". Middle English recorded it variously as *iland* and *eiland*, as in the Dutch and German forms of the word. The Oxford Shorter on

Historic Principles is but one of several modern dictionaries that attempt to record the evolution of a word's spelling.

Just as the Chinese language has two very different words for isle and island, it is interesting to know that before the 15th century so did the English. In Mandarin, isle is 沚 (zhǐ) and island is 岛 (dǎo), or islands, 岛屿 (dǎo yǔ). According to the Chinese dictionaries commonly used by colleagues in Singapore, 'isle' means a piece of small land surrounded by water, whereas 'island' is a piece of land surrounded by sea. The Chinese *hanzi* for water, (水, shuǐ) implies drinkable and that seems also to be the original meaning of 'isle', which relates to river and aqua. Shaw might well have argued that the rationalisation of spelling only dates back to the 15th century, but did he know that the language moderators often made mistakes? In the case of 'island' etymologists now argue it is from a completely unrelated Old French loan-word, '*isle*,' which itself comes from the Latin word *insula*, with its relation to *salo*, or salt. So the Chinese language keeps the more accurate definition and distinctly different spellings; while the English language has mistakenly taken the 's' into both words. Today, we should take the Chinese lead and only use 'island' where the land is in a sea or ocean, and 'isle' when in a river or lake. Sumatra is the sixth largest island in the world and only about 12 nautical miles from Singapore, across the world's second busiest waterway; on this island is the huge Lake Toba, the crater of once an enormous volcano; in this lake is an isle which the Indonesians call Pulau Samosir (the Bahasa word for island, *Pulau*, does not hint at what kind of water surrounds it); amazingly, in the centre of this isle is yet another small lake. Isles within lakes within islands are surely special places.

In spite of its spelling, or perhaps because of it, the word 'isle' retains its magic to this day. We remain haunted by early exposure to it in poetry and stories. Like Caliban's salty synonym, it conjures paradise and music:

> The isle is full of noises,
> Sounds, and sweet airs,
> that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling
> instruments
> Will hum about mine ears,
> and sometime voices.
> (*Tempest*, Act 3, Scene 2)

As in Yeats' *Lake Isle of Innesfree* (1888), the word 'isle' remains idyllic and calling, even when location is lost.

> I will arise and go now,
> and go to Innisfree,
> And a small cabin build there,
> of clay and wattles made;
> Nine bean rows will I have there,
> a hive for the honey bee.

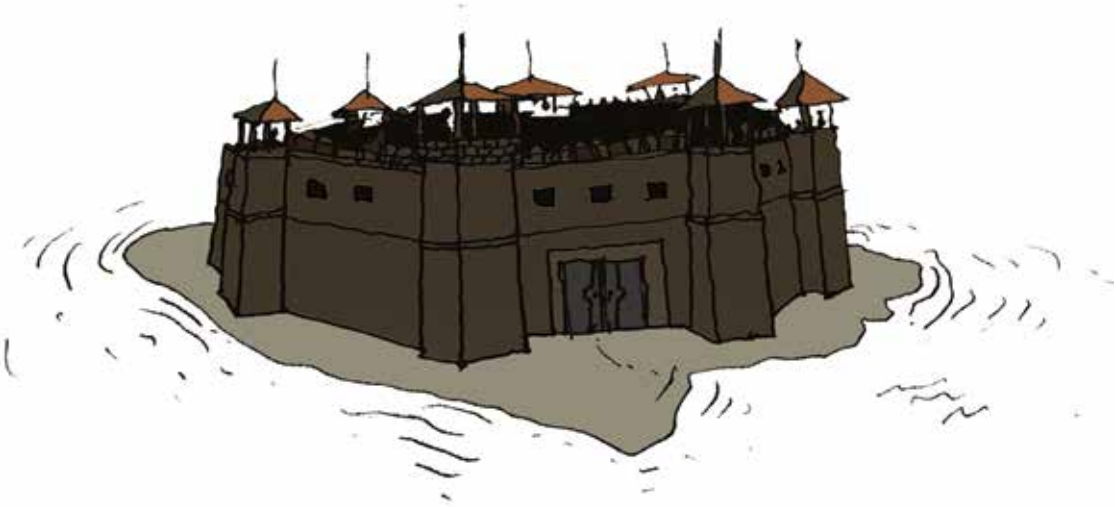
Music and magic also surrounds King Arthur's resting place in the legendary *Isle of Avalon* – now pretty much proved to be the grounds around the Tor of Glastonbury – in numerous books, including Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (published between 1859-1885):

> And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge:
> "The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
> And God fulfils himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world ...
> But now farewell. I am going a long way ...
> To the island-valley of Avilion;
> Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
> Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns
> And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
> Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.

On such an isle, in a Scottish lake, J.M. Barrie made his heroine *Mary Rose* (1920) disappear for decades into Fairyland; but Barrie had already called every child with *Peter Pan*'s magic island of Indians, crocodiles, pirates and lost boys (1904).

We learn early on that 'Isle' is but a poetic form of the equally exciting word: Island. And perhaps one's first association with it springs from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), and Daniel Defoe's unnamed island where Robinson Crusoe (1719) befriended 'Man Friday', the first influential fiction about east-west friendship across a cultural divide. Stevenson's bones remain buried in Samoa, in the same South Pacific seas as Tahiti, the island that kept Gauguin away from his friendship with Van Gogh, perhaps robbing the world of decades of more masterpieces. Captain Cook must also have left remains, after he was chopped into pieces by the Hawaiians but, according to historians, not before his sailors had infected their paradise with venereal disease and smallpox.

Homer and Tennyson both mythologised the Western Isles, though the ancient Celts also referred to them. Historian John R. Gillis deeply



explored the influences of islands upon the western imagination in his 2004 book, *Islands of the Mind: How the Human Imagination Created the Atlantic World*, looking at the role of islands in economic, political and social contexts in what he calls the Atlantic world (East America and West Europe). Equally important is his 2012 book, *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History*, in which he studies coast dwellers and migrations caused by constant and unpredictable fluctuations at the seashore. Gillis has now retired to the Great Gott Island, in Acadia (another word for paradise) National Park, a group of islands off the coast of Maine thrusting into the Atlantic between Boston and Canada. Yet Gillis firmly reminds us that the sea was always considered a "place of chaos and terror, a wilderness filled with implacable beasts - Kraken, Leviathan, Scylla, Charybdis."

Rodney Hall was moved to fiction by his title, *The Island in the Mind* (2000), recording the vision of and search for the great south land, *Terra Australis*, which eluded Portuguese Pedro Fernandes de Queirós (1565-1614), traversing through the Pacific with the Spanish, and so many others who searched for her over centuries. Clearly 'island' or 'isle' is both real and imaginary. The word implies insularity; and that has virtues as well as dilemmas. Where some islanders have built up richly distinct cultures and unique customs and dialects, others have, for example, starved and inbred though lack of connections to a wider world.

It was probably the concept of purity, untouched and virgin, that drew both minds and bodies to the imagined islands. We all want to believe that paradise remains somewhere, and that in this life or the next it is attainable. The island is everything: evoking legend, magic, adventure, remoteness, and paradise, far from the madding crowd; but the island is also a prison and isolation, both real and metaphorical.

Infamously, as with Alcatraz and Sakhalin, a prison island is sometimes made famous by its prisoner, just as Napoleon put both Elba and St. Helena on the map. An isolated rock surrounded by water might be a safe haven for nesting birds, but for prisoners it was a particular form of hell. France had its dreaded Devil's Island that imprisoned Alfred Dreyfus, from 1895 to 1899, and which features in Hugo's *Les Miserables* (1862) and his *Toilers of the Sea* (1866). Tourists in Tasmania now visit Marcus Clarke's hell, all curious to imagine the punishment of Rufus Dawes described so vividly in *For the Term of his Natural Life* (1874). Another island of infamy was Goat Island in Sydney Harbour where the screams of its chained captives could be heard on shore. On both Australia's Macquarie Island and on Singapore's Pulau Senang, experiments in prison reform led to horrific tragedies. Physical suffering never resulted in creativity, though the mind no doubt experiences previously unimagined impulses; but greatness has often been conceived in prisons isolated from the world, for example, Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605-15) and Marco Polo's journals and later Solzhenitsyn and others, such as Marquis de Sade and Oscar Wilde. When directing Václav Havel's Vaněk plays, and told of a new one, I once awaited weekly pages of his *Protest* (1978), each page smuggled out of his Prague prison, and to Sydney via Canada. One thing is plentiful when isolated from the work, and that is thinking time. Hitler, of course, is well known for writing *Mein Kampf* (1925) whilst in confinement.

James Michener spent a lot of time island-hopping before, during and after the second great war, his best-seller, *Tales of the South Pacific* (1947) became a most famous musical and its hit song boosted tourism, as more jaded Westerners heard the call of their 'special island', and *Bali Hai* became for a while synonymous with Shangri-la – James Hilton's mythical inland island, supposedly in the Himalayas, and possibly near Mount Meru, the sacred Hindu mountain linked with the concept of island though the Sanskrit-derived word *dvīpa*.

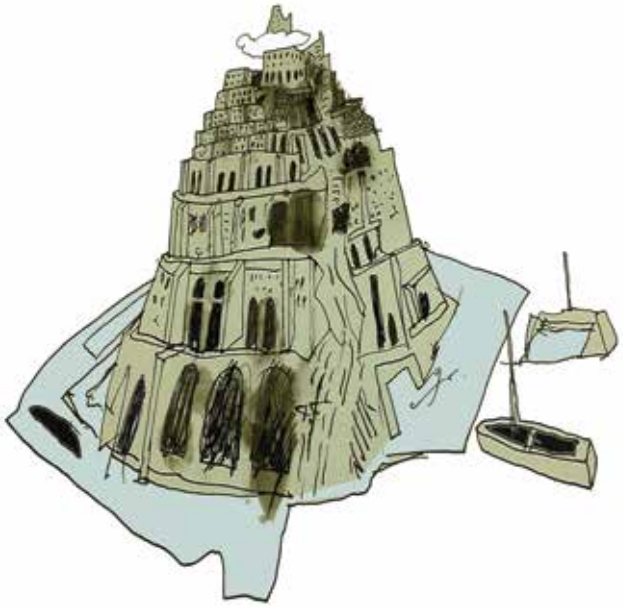
Strangely, even in its south, the Atlantic lacks the lush tropical islands that lured Westerners both west and east in search of the Indies and their wealth of magical spices. So it is fair to say the lure of the island contains images of the tropics and all their associated fruits. And garden paradises, though rare in the bible, fill the Koran and Islamic architecture. Water, trees and fruit evoke not only household orchards (in Russian the word for garden and orchard is the same) along the Silk Road, from Xanadu to Samarkand, but also the miracle island within deserts, the oasis.

Various biblical scholars like Dr. John D. Morris, and others at the rather romantic Institute for Creation Research, have identified the geographical location of the biblical paradise (originally from a Persian word meaning 'park'; translators preferred the Greek word, meaning 'garden', thus 'Garden of Eden') as being at one of two places (Aden in Yemen being neither). The first, according to Genesis 2:10-14, is at some common point of origin of the Tigris, Euphrates, Nile (which is *Gihon* in the Hebrew Bible), and Indus or Gangen (which is *Pishon* in the Hebrew Bible). The second place is apparently in Dilmun of Sumer, near the head of the Persian Gulf. Being near the source of a great river reminds us of the Hindu's Mount Meru, the centre of the universe surrounded by the waters of life in seven concentric seas. The Hindi word for island is *dvīpa*, one of 18 encircling Mount Meru, like the petals of a lotus. The holiest island near the source of the waters of life is *Jambudvīpa* or the island of *Jambu*, overlooked by the giant jambu

tree growing on the summit of Mount Meru. Paradise, perhaps unsurprisingly, is the name of several towns in the United States, e.g. in California, Nevada and Kentucky; also in Newfoundland and Labrador. As a child, I myself explored the ghost town of Paradise in Queensland, a once prosperous gold mining town in the Burnett Valley, a century before Surfers Paradise was named. My favourite naming of Paradise Island is in the Bahamas, where it was formerly known as Hog Island, possibly linking it to Circe's island where Ulysses and his men were almost all drugged into becoming swine, an arguably apt punishment for their sacking of Troy.

Today, the islands in what the Chinese now insist is titled the China Sea (an 18th century Western naming), however small and barren, are now potential hotspots for future clashes with Korea, Japan, Philippines and Vietnam. Islands, such as these and the Falklands, famously fought over by late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, thus represent a nation's outpost or frontier, and every colony seems to have several. Owning of the seaways around the islands would be a frightening if logical extension of territorial claims. An island such as Singapore, garden isle though it may be, is hemmed in by what in other ways could be seen as an invasion of personal space. Should an island therefore have horizons unsullied by other lands to qualify as exemplars? Can paradise exist right next door and be a contact temptation or invitation to invasion? Remarkably, small island-states have always existed in Europe such as renaissance Venice and Florence, and for a while Singapore's return to nation-state status pointed the way to a different future, especially when ethnic, language or cultural islands had their original borders ignored in the rushed reconstructs created after the major wars.

In terms of an economy best suited to empowering people and their needs, as economist E.F. Schumacher so convinces, small is beautiful; and smallness in nations and islands always ensured distinct customs, speech and art. Even an island as small as Britain, divided itself into over 86 counties, each with identifiable dialects (and in the case of Wales, a different language with 30 variants). It is well known that China, India and Indonesia, to name only the largest, all have many unique languages and, within each, many more dialects. A belief system is always related to a language and perhaps language is the best way to identify a nation – the term nation has replaced what many consider the more derogatory word



'tribe' when speaking of North America and Australian indigenous groups. But tell that, if one could, to Lord Louis Mountbatten and his advisors who drew the cruel partition right through regions where people were previously bonded by language, despite their religion. Now we have the western side of Bangladesh subdivided into an artificial island created by language, Bengali.

Artificial islands never seem to have the true grounding that we value in place; but they are growing in number, just as Singapore has grown in size by landfill and purchases of soil from mostly uninhabited Indonesian Islands. Much future-telling expands upon the benefits of floating islands built from the world's debris, but we are yet to find a safe and satisfactory way of securing our nuclear waste. Floating islands claim their place in the imagination and recently reached wide audiences though Ang Lee's 2012 film of *Life of Pi*, suitably enchanting the place and giving it an evil tint that is not always associated with a floating island.

Evil, however, seems very much part of the Great Pacific Garbage patch, or Pacific Trash Vortex. Consisting mainly of man's blessing and the planet's curse - plastic - some claim that the debris floating in the slow whirlpools in both the Pacific and Atlantic will one day consolidate. Known first as the World's Garbage Patch, it was once as big as Texas; but now it links two vortices: the Western Garbage Patch (below Japan

and east of Philippines) and the Eastern Garbage Patch (between Hawaii and California) and is said to be twice as big as the United States in area. The Atlantic has similar, but smaller islands of debris, likewise growing in both north and south. But they can never anchor, as strangely they drift over the world's deepest underwater canyons, which in turn are not far from real islands which are but the peaks of great underwater mountains. Oil-spills from oil-tanker leaks and wrecks, and pumice rafts from volcano ash also form floating islands with no allure.

Nature's own floating islands should perhaps be called isles, as they are found in marshlands, lakes and still waters, sometimes in *cenotes* or sinkholes. Usually made up of a mass of aquatic plants, mud and peat, floating islands have their own magic, much as the giant lily pads that could support a toddler. Once part of mainland vegetation: reeds, bulrushes, and or water-hyacinths, water-lettuce and waterferns such as now clog Asian waterways like the Mekong, they broke away and floated free. Grillis cites the Marsh Arabs, who live 'amphibiously' on floating islands of reeds, as having learned to adapt to the fickleness of shifting water levels. The largest floating islands are said to be on Lake Titicaca in Peru where the Uros people live, originally using nature's isles for safety from aggressive neighbours. Tenochtitlan, an Aztec capital, was once surrounded by floating gardens, which primarily supplied fresh vegetables. Modern artificial islands mimic the reed-beds of the Uros peoples and are increasingly used by local governments to reduce pollutants and increase water quality. China is now developing the water-garden concept on a large scale, mastering aquaponics to grow rice, wheat and canna lilies on two-acre islands. Floating islands were boasted as being part of the massive Ming Dynasty flotillas of Cheng Ho (Zheng He); they carried soil in which fresh vegetables could be grown; and scurvy was never part of the great Chinese merchant fleets that kept peace from Madagascar to Makassar, forming Asia's own Camelot.

Island nations are common and Singapore is one. It is also called an island-country, the garden-island, and sometimes an island-state. In the United States, the island-state is Hawaii, itself consisting of 137 officially islands and another 15 named ones; in Australia, the island-state Tasmania, is primarily one. Guam is not an island-state because it is a territory of the USA, and one of 17 such territories. All definitions

of 'island' record that it is land "smaller than a continent" - without defining a continent's size. Australia calls itself an Island Continent.

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) is an organisation most active in climate change conferences, putting forward the first draft text of the Kyoto Protocol as early as 1994. It has 39 members, all low-lying coastal or island countries, 37 of which are members of the United Nations (UN); with 19 in the Atlantic, 16 in the Pacific (one of which being Singapore), four in the Indian Ocean, and a growing number of 'observer' members, including American Samoa, Guam, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands. These combined voices do not include some of the world's most endangered island cities such as Venice and Bangkok, but they now lead the world as environmental watchdogs, especially becoming the carers for our oceans. Significantly, at the recent Warsaw climate change conference they pushed for the establishment of an international mechanism of aiding victims of the 'super-typhoons' (eg 'Haiyan') said to grow as a direct result of global warming. In 2009 at the UN, members from the island state of Tuvalu demanded that global temperature rise be set at 1.5 degrees instead of the proposed 2 degrees. Tuvalu, formally known as the Ellice Islands, of some 11,000 Polynesians on only 26 square kilometres of three reef islands and six atolls, is far to the east of Papua, deep towards the Pacific's centre. Islands will be the first to be lost in the inevitable melting of the ice caps, and already many villages and families have been moved off the lowest. Sadly, this seems never to reach mainstream media, and the rate is said to be faster than anthropologists can record the details of these disappearing islands.

2014 was the International Year of Small Island Developing States, a year celebrating the "extraordinary resilience and rich cultural heritage of the people of small island developing states " (UN Sec-Gen, Ban Ki-Moon) culminating in a UN Conference in Apia, Samoa. Though the year focused on building partnerships between members, it brought pressing global issues to the forefront, and uniquely sought to find solutions through innovation, science and through traditional knowledge. The 'island mentality' seems to have selected the best of what the world has to offer, whilst living closer to nature and more consciously its carer. It has created what is now referred to as 'The Island Voice'.

The Island of Great Britain is part of a sovereign state, together with Northern Ireland and, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, another 6,000 isles and islands, such as the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea and Queen Victoria's retreat on the Isle of Wight (both of these 'isles' are surrounded by salt water), but in fact Britain is only the 80th largest sovereign state in the world. However, it is the world's third most populous island after the Java and Honshu. Not counting Australia, as it is considered a continent, Greenland is the largest island in the world at over 2 million square kilometres (though some think that underneath the ice it is actually three islands); New Guinea is second largest at almost 800,000 square kilometres, followed closely by Borneo; then Madagascar and Baffin Island (Canada) around 500,000 square kilometres; the sixth largest island in the world is Sumatra, at 481,000.

Indonesia's government officially records that it has 17,000 islands, 8,844 named, with 922 permanently inhabited; but Indonesia's National Institute of Aeronautics and Space, established by Soekarno in 1963, has recently counted 18,307 from satellite. According to the United States Geographical Survey there are a staggering 18,617 named islands in the United States and its territories, outnumbering Indonesia by 310 islands; 2,500 of them are in the state of Alaska, and Florida Keys is actually 60 small islands. In Arkansas, where one might expect a dozen at most, there are 142 named islands, including such as the imaginative, 'Island 28' and similar. Comparatively, the Philippines has ten thousand less, at 7,107 (seven of which are missing during high tide) and Japan has 6,852 islands; similar to the Philippines, Japan's four largest islands comprise the majority of land. Malaysia has 879 islands, Sabah state having the most, with 394; but offshore Malaysia counts another 510 geographical features, that could pass for islands.

Singapore lists over 60 islands, with the well-known Sentosa (Pulau Belakang Mati), Saint John's Island (Pulau Sakijang Bendera) and Pulau Ubin all popular destinations. Included in the 60 are 10 artificial islands, such as Japanese Garden in Jurong Lake, and Treasure Island in Sentosa Cove. These partly make up for islands which formerly belonged to Singapore: Christmas Island, sold to Australia in 1957 (for 2.9 million Australian pounds); Pulau Saigon, once in the Singapore River but added to its southern bank in the late 20th century; Terumbu Retan Laut, now part of the Pasir Panjang Container Terminal on the main island.

The mystery and intrigue involved in the naming of islands are endless. Niue, despite Cook naming it the 'Savage Island', was never cannibal, and its inhabitants were not even betel nut chewers that elsewhere gave the impression of spitting blood: the red on the Niue people's teeth was from *hulahula*, a local red banana. Bali is called the island of the Gods, though international tourists, seeking paradise, seem to have long ago driven the gods away. Cuba is called the island of music and, now open to tourists, is a musician's paradise, not far from the island of Jamaica, of which Harry Bellefonte sang patriotically in *Island in the Sun*, "willed to him by his father's hand" and echoed paradise's elements of "forests, waters and shining sand".

The Isle of the Dead, one of many paintings by Swiss symbolist, Arnold Bocklin, and a 1945 horror movie by Tim Southern, starring Malcolm McDowell, remains arguably the most haunting of titles. Poveglia is also known as the Isle of the Dead, primarily because of its 18th century mass plague graves, a small and famously haunted island located between Venice and Lido in the Venetian Lagoon. But Isola de san Michele is the official cemetery of Venice, the majority being Catholic but with small sections for Greek Orthodox or Foreigners – Jews being buried in nearby Lido, very new compared to Poveglia. Isola de san Michele contains the graves of Igor Stravinsky and Ezra Pound. Apart from the Venetian cemeteries, an island of the dead could be Skyros, where the WWI poet Rupert Brookes died of an infected mosquito bite, given probably in the very olive grove where he now lies in Greece's Aegean Sea. Relatively near, the Cretans claim the graves of Zeus, of King Minos of Knossos, and of Nikos Kazantzakis (the author of *Zorba the Greek* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*). The Island of Crete was also visited by St Paul, who, in letters to Timothy, supported the view that the people of Crete never let the facts get in the way of good story.

As Feste sings in *Twelfth Night: "Come away death... In sad cypress let me lie,"* the cypress tree is commonly found in Mediterranean cemeteries, but Shakespeare could as easily have spelled it Cyprus; especially as *Twelfth Night* is but one of his many plays set near the Mediterranean, and his only play to refer beyond India (home to the child over which Oberon and Titania quarrel) to the more magical 'Indies'. Grave stones attest that Portuguese were being buried in Malacca (Melaka) while Shakespeare was writing.

Located by Jules Verne as 2,500 kilometres east of New Zealand, *The Mysterious Island*, reached by American civil war escapees on an air-balloon, proves to be the last resting place of Captain Nemo and his Nautilus, the world's first submarine. Another 10,000 miles to the east is South America and its important offshore islands of mysterious Easter and evolution's Galápagos. The mysteries of island-hopping in miniature islands we call canoes and boats, thousands of years ago, still fascinate anthropologists, botanists and palaeontologists, as DNA samples and cultural traits argue various migration routes across the vast pacific from both east and west.

So where has this criss-crossing of both time and space led me? Assuredly, the island calls us all, and features in maps and writing from earliest times. Islands are as ancient as continents and can be equally said to be made by God's hand, and therefore selected to serve some divine purpose. Surfing Google maps, courtesy of today's satellites and aerial photography, gives access to a new island-hopping, and there we can see magic that the real explorers, and tourists, cannot see from the ground: the endless and alluring patterns shaped by nature and echoed by man in his stone walls, fences, dykes and rice terraces. We do tend to be preoccupied with recreating versions of islands, in offices, in kitchens, living rooms, as we build partitions as equivalents of waterways. And 'island' has become a handy word for identifying groups, cultural, educational, religious or linguistic: an island can be both hell and heaven, imagined or real; it endlessly fascinates as destination or as metaphor. The fact that an island is isolated, often remote, adds to its lustre and allure.

In art, and in my resistance to naturalism, I have always encouraged symbols, metaphors, allegories and ways to engage the imagination of the reader-audience. Journeying with great writers through their perceptions of 'island' continues to enrich me, though I discovered long ago that I can take only so much of island paradise before I want to island-hop to a new destination. I have been interviewed on radio and literally played the music I would take to a desert island

and talked of the books; but, as with music when travelling great distances, one never really can guess what one will crave for on either journey or destination. I think I prefer the metaphor to the reality; like the picnics in the Forest of Arden, alas there were ants and mosquitoes. Hence my quest for the island was also a search for a theme. And I believe I found it with the ducats in one of the pirate chests left behind by Long John Silver: islands, real, fictional and in concepts, are and have always been, a vivid stimulus to the imagination. And what after all is more important than imagination? It seems that island is a place where the imagination wants to play. But, more than that, is not island a call to venture forth, to adventure?

Following close on the end of the war in the Pacific, Rogers and Hammerstein, at their best, dared to write of east-west love and the call of the 'other' in South Pacific (1949). They gave these words to Bloody Mary and her broken English:

> Most people live on a lonely island,
> Lost in the middle of a foggy sea.
> Most people long for another island,
> One where they know they will like to be.
>
> Bali Ha'i may call you,
> Any night, any day,
> In your heart, you'll hear it call you:
> "Come away...Come away."

If there were no island imagined just beyond the horizon, would mankind ever have been called to leave the cave, to adventure there, and beyond? And is, perhaps, the next island the one we really want? Is the island ever greener just beyond our ken?

Images courtesy of Milenko Prvački

Milenko Prvački, *Prison-Island*, 2015, mixed media on paper, 15 x 15 cm.

Milenko Prvački, *Paradise-Island*, 2015, mixed media on paper, 15 x 15 cm.

Milenko Prvački, *Babel-Island*, 2015, mixed media on paper, 15 x 15 cm.

Another Island Poem

The shores are guarded

When vessels overloaded with Rohingya refugees from Burma and Bangladesh reached the shores of Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand in May 2015, the boats were pushed away. The boat people who fled persecution and poverty at home remained stranded at sea. The boat people are stateless. At home they are denied citizenship; on foreign territories they are refused shelter. Paying huge amounts of money to board the ships to flee conflict situations, the refugees are forcibly converted into commodities by human traffickers serving the plantation, the electronics and fishing industries of the region. They are transported by sea like 90 per cent of the world's goods. Containerization, a post-war innovation that changed the shipping industry, conceals the content, hides and makes it invisible, turning the transported goods into an abstract entity. When boats carry human cargo, do people share the same state of invisibility as containers on ships?

and the water surrounding

Water is an intrinsic feature of an island. We simply define an island as a body of land surrounded by water. Water divides and connects. It separates islands into individualised territories, yet it also sets them into connections and brings them together into a wider network of cultural and historical relations.

In conventional representations of 'islands', in the tourist-like postcards or classical Hollywood adventure films, the image of sea waves touching the golden sand is a popular trope. The relationship to the sea is a fundamental part of life on an island. Such an assumption serves as a premise for Singaporean-based artist Sherman Ong's film, *Flooding in the Time of Drought* (Singapore, 2009). Its starting point is an alarming water crisis affecting the city-island of Singapore. The stories of the film capture different characters reacting to the water scarcity either by rationing its use or making water provisions. What starts as a liminal situation for the inhabitants of the island develops into a network of micro-narratives of different migrant workers who came to Singapore for a better living or change. The water crisis recedes in the background while the daily problems of the characters surface.

Sherman Ong, *Flooding in the Time of Drought*, Singapore, 2009,
Film Still. Image courtesy of the artist.

Water becomes a metaphor that embraces all individual stories under one umbrella. What can the metaphor of 'water crisis' signify in the context of Singapore? A major harbour in colonial and post-colonial times, Singapore's exceptional economical growth has vastly relied on sea trade and port activities. Yet the strong presence of 'water' in economical affairs does not find the same resonance in the everyday. Paradoxically for an island, the presence of the bordering water seems far removed. Similarly in Ong's film, it takes distance and remains in the background.

The metaphor of the 'water crisis' also stands for an experience of loss. The stories in *Flooding in the Time of Drought* are all filled with a certain sense of loss and longing: the overwhelming feeling of being displaced from home, the pressure to make a living, the longing for connection and affection. The lack of water points to the scarcity of other resources and necessities that make our lives not so much complete, but liveable. It also serves as a reminder of one's limits. And for those who inhabit islands, limits are an everyday reality, an awareness of where the land stops and where the sea begins.

those fragile islands (drawings)

At the 2nd edition of Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Swiss artist Marie Velardi produced an ambitious survey of sinking islands. Her investigation resulted in *Atlas des îles perdus (Atlas of Lost Islands)*, with a launch date slated for 2107, the time when all the

Maria Velardi, *Atlas des îles perdus (Atlas of Lost Islands)*, 2007
Installation view, Kochi-Muziris Bienniale, 2014

listed islands will presumably have disappeared under the sea. Alongside this publication, Velardi presented several of the ink drawings included in the anthology.

The islands are depicted with a sheer simplicity of means and economy of details. Each territory is delicately outlined in ink suggesting the threatening impact of the water. These fragile islands, prone to submerge to rising seas, find in the watercolour medium their most suitable agent. Isn't water a threat to both watercolours and physical islands? The absence of details brings the work to a level of abstraction. The only elements that individualise the body of land is its name and an indication of its geographical coordinates written on a sheet of tracing paper that covers each drawing. It suggests the exact way such lost territories will be remembered once wiped off the global map: as abstract entities reduced to a name or a cartographic note.

In one of the reviews of the Biennale, a journalist, discussing the challenges of the climate in the preservation of works in the exhibition, noticed that Velardi's watercolours "were rippled with damage"[1] weeks after the opening. Such an accident gains meaning in the context of this work that became so intimately connected to the physical reality of its space of display. The slow deterioration of the 'island (drawings)' predicted what Velardi herself anticipated. At same time, the drawings embodied what the artist had aimed to represent: a state of irreversible vulnerability.

[1] See http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/"whorled-explorations"/

in the imagination

Some time ago, I came across a story that circulated in the Singapore media. The story has a touch of tenderness. A group of former inhabitants of Pulau Sudong, one of Singapore's Southern Islands, signed a petition asking authorities for permission to return to this island for one day, or at least a few hours. The petitioners had been rehoused in the '70s on the mainland when Pulau Sudong was turned into a military zone for a live-firing exercise; no access to civilians was permitted since. The former residents grew up by the sea as fisherfolk families living in *kampong*[2] houses. More than three decades passed since their displacement, yet they long to return to what they perceive as a lost paradise. Over time, the home-island has become a space for projections of desires produced by distant memories and the work of imagination. Perhaps it is not an accident that such a missed home is an island, as it traditionally lends itself to fantasy and projections. Isn't an island always susceptible to be idealised?

[2] Malay word meaning small village.

In Western literary tradition, islands have always been a metaphorical setting for the imagination to unwind, but also for political projects and ideologies to solidify. There is no surprise that Thomas More's *Utopia* is set on an island, or that Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* encapsulates the colonial discourse, although ironically such a story has been depoliticised and sits comfortably under children's literature. Stories of paradise, stories of calamities, all island narratives linger at the extremes. An island is a meeting point between the utopian and dystopian.

The Pulau Sudong islanders' desire to return is inherently nostalgic; it brings home and longing together. For them, an island is something they lost, for others something they never had. Longing is a *topos* for an island, what we long for is either irreversibly lost in time or has never existed.

of the artist

In 1999, the Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan produced one of his funniest art jokes: the *6th Caribbean Biennale: Blown Away*. A project in collaboration with curator Jens Hoffmann, the Biennale was a work of fiction. It replicated the infrastructure of a conventional Biennale: a board of directors was established, a Biennale's president was appointed, invitations and postcards were distributed and large-scale advertisements promoted the event in art magazines. The language mimicked the art jargon, in claims such as building relationships with local communities, standard statements circulated in press releases of large-scale exhibitions across the world. A predictable roster of Biennale artists was invited to take part in this international event: Olafur Eliasson, Douglas Gordon, Mariko Mori and Rirkrit Tiravanija, among others. They were asked to make no work, but rather to enjoy a fully funded week of holiday in St. Kitts in the West Indies.

One journalist describes the atmosphere of the event: "breakfast swims off a black sand beach; afternoon naps to the jingle of a

tropical downpour; and an Italian *Vogue* shoot that, like almost every other event, took place at the idyllic Golden Lemon Inn where we were all staying."[3] The choice to use a former colonised island as a setting is another playful device. It reminds us of the art tourism that such Biennale events stir up – a potential force that was grasped and instrumentalised by many governmental authorities. More significantly, it also highlights that such international art events might reinforce a Western system of values and practices that they claim to critique.

By revealing the methodologies and structures of the institution of Biennale, this project can be described as institutional critique. The critique from within by the major art players is already an assimilated strategy by the system it attempts to challenge. However what remains up for debate is whether the critique generated from this project bears any weight, and whether it has the strength to change the status quo. Yet looking back at it years later, such a project only survives as a good old joke that once gained a laugh within the small circuit of the international art islanders.

[3] See http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/trouble_in_paradise/

THE ISLANDS VIEW

CURATED BY BILJANA CIRIC

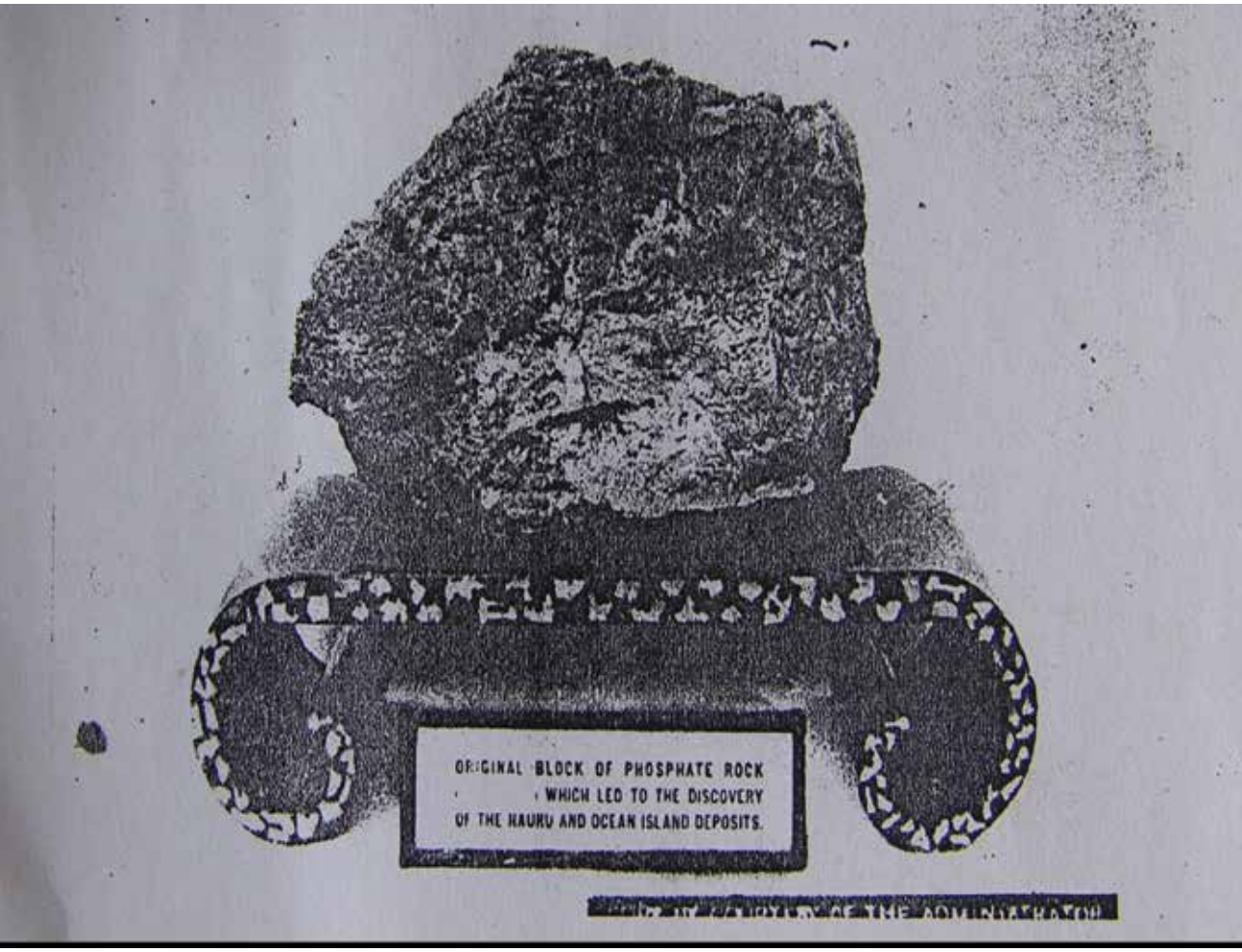
ANTTI LAITINEN

Make your own land

Pile soil into same spot of some water area.
It can be sea, lake, pond, puddle etc.
When the ground rises above the water surface,
declare this new land area independent.

NICHOLAS MANGAN


NAURU
15
Nauru House Melbourne 1977
NAURU
30
Nauru House Melbourne 1977



ORIGINAL BLOCK OF PHOSPHATE ROCK
WHICH LED TO THE DISCOVERY
OF THE NAURU AND OCEAN ISLAND DEPOSITS.

TAN HUAMU

HO TZU NYEN

THE DICTIONARY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA: G FOR GENE Z. HANRAHAN

The Communist Struggle in Malaya, first published in 1954 by the Institute of Pacific Relations and subsequently republished by the University of Malaya Press in 1971 was one of the earliest general historical accounts of the Malayan Communist Party.

This short and concise text by Gene Z. Hanrahan remains - to this day - a key resource for this period of Malayan history, and has been regularly cited by subsequent studies of Communist histories in Southeast Asia. His writing was crisp, his analyses reasonable, if never spectacular. But what made the text valuable was the author's access to confidential documents beyond the reach of other researchers. Hanrahan never explained how these sources were obtained.

Hanrahan's bibliography is dazzlingly diverse. The books that he has been involved with as a researcher, translator (of multiple languages), editor and writer, include *Documents on the Mexican Revolution* (Salisbury, NC, 1976-85), a nine-volume collection of confidential documents related to the Madero Revolution of 1910, writings on military strategies and guerilla warfare, as well as introducing, translating and editing the writings of Carlos Marighella, the Brazilian Marxist revolutionary and urban guerilla theoretician.

Then, there is Hanrahan's more 'literary' streak: *ASSAULT!* (New York, 1962), an anthology of 'real' descriptions of the Pacific War by 'real' US Marines; *Hemingway - The Wild Years* (New York, 1962) a selection of Ernest Hemingway's articles for The Toronto Star, as well as *50 Great Oriental Stories* (New York, 1965), a collection of the "finest Oriental tales ever written", chosen and edited by Hanrahan. He also wrote brief but erudite commentaries for each section of the anthology, meant for "students of Oriental literature".

Hints to the biography of this polymath, or hack are meagerly scattered on the dust jackets of his publications, or in prefaces and forewords written by others. Hanrahan has been variously described as a naval intelligence officer, a lecturer and a specialist of guerilla warfare. But judging from the tone of these prefaces and forewords, it would seem as though none of the authors know him on intimate terms. And in *From PKI to the Comintern, 1924 - 1941: The Apprenticeship of the Malayan Communist Party* (New York, 1992), the Malaysian historian Cheah Boon Kheng declares: "it is believed that 'Gene Z. Hanrahan' is the pseudonym of a research assistant or a research organisation."

But if 'Gene Z. Hanrahan' was indeed a pseudonym, it was one that in turn, had a pseudonym. According to the U.S. Library of Congress, the author known as William J. Kennedy is the pseudonym of Gene Z. Hanrahan. As William J. Kennedy, he authored *Pre-Service Course in Shop Practice,* (New York, 1943), a technical manual for "pre-induction training based upon the requirements of the U.S. Army" to be offered to high school seniors during the Second World War, and the three-volume *Secret History of the Oil Companies in the Middle East* (Salisbury, NC, 1979).

The oeuvre of 'Gene Z. Hanrahan' can be described as consisting largely of texts that are 'documentary' in nature, but it partakes of fiction at a different level – the construction of an author. Gene Z. Hanrahan is an author dreamt up by his books, and in the oneiric skein of his bibliography, is entangled the history of Malayan communism.

Text and images by Ho Tzu Nyen.

G for Gene Z. Hanrahan is the second entry in *The Critical Dictionary of South East Asia*, an ongoing collection of ideas, motifs and biographies related to Southeast Asia. assembled in order to map a region of bewildering multitudes.

The Critical Dictionary of South East Asia was developed during Ho Tzu Nyen's residency at the Asia Art Archive.

In February 2015, Ho Tzu Nyen presented his collection of books by Gene Z. Hanrahan alongside a film *The Name*, at the DAAD Galerie in Berlin.

First published in ArtReview Asia, special issue, March 2015. See artreview.com.

THE COMMUNIST STRUGGLE IN *Malaya*

By GENE Z. HANRAHAN

With an Introduction by
VICTOR PURCELL

International Secretariat
INSTITUTE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS
1 East 54th St., New York 22, N. Y.
1954

CHINESE COMMUNIST GUERRILLA WARFARE TACTICS

Edited and Introduction by
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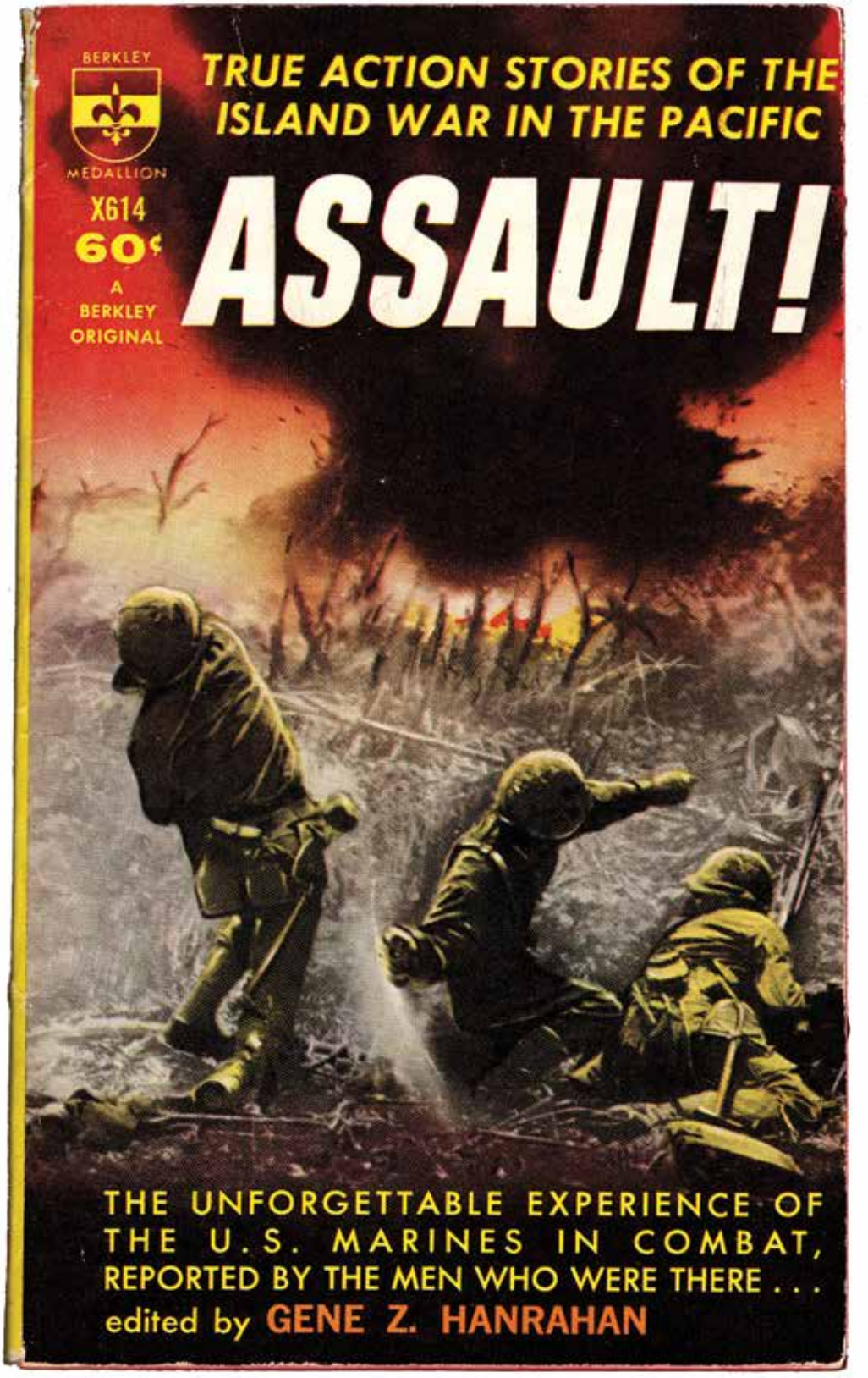
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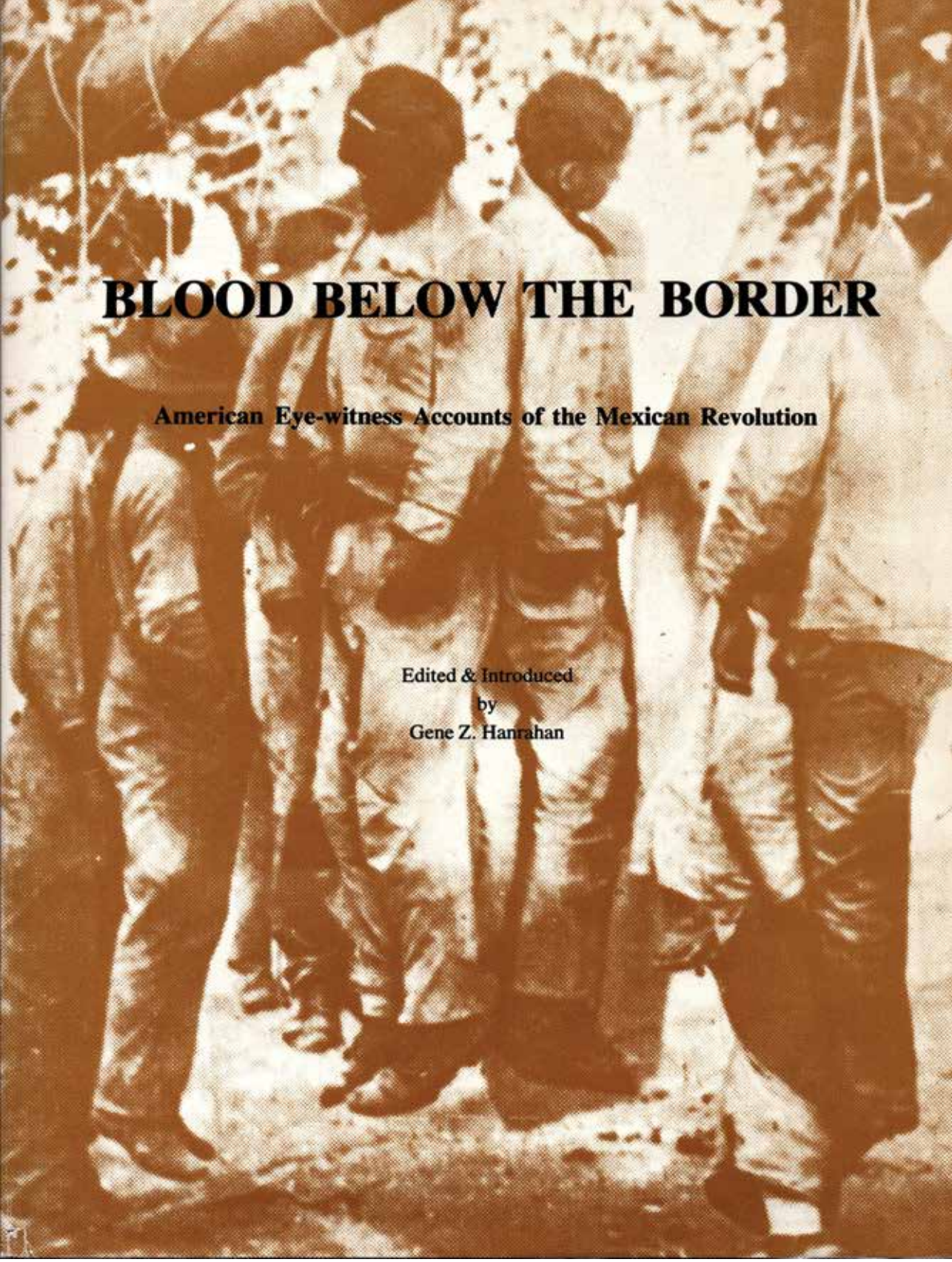

BLOOD BELOW THE BORDER

American Eye-witness Accounts of the Mexican Revolution

Edited & Introduced
by
Gene Z. Hanrahan

The fifty-eight documents in this volume make no pretense of providing definitive answers to these questions. The serious scholar must search more deeply for his answer. A wealth of original source materials are to be found in the vast number of government hearings and reports treating American claims for losses to life and property as a result of the Revolution. Both American and Mexican government repositories bulge with these rich sources. One must also consult the extensive contemporary body of literature produced by the revolutionaries and their leaders. Several hundred memoirs and autobiographies deal in some measure with this issue. Then, of course, there are the Mexican scholarly histories produced over the past forty years, particularly those relating to Mexico's relations with the United States. One could go on and on. But even then a final resolution to this question is at best only probable. The emotions of those days ran deep, the facts were colored by the bias of the writers, and much of the real truth may remain buried in the past.

As with the documents presented in earlier volumes in this series, all materials included in this work have been reproduced from original papers preserved in the U.S. National Archives in Washington, D.C. All materials have been presented, as far as possible, in their original form, without substantive alterations or additions.

Gene Z. Hanrahan

Gene Z. Hanrahan, 'Introduction' to *Abajo El Gringo: Anti-American Sentiment During the Mexican Revolution*, Volume VI of *Documents on the Mexican Revolution*, (Salisbury, nc, 1982)

all these scholars, however, have been allowed to reproduce documents found within these papers. The exceptions were Yap Hong Kuan and Mahmud Embong, who were allowed to reproduce several charts on the organizational structures of the MCP, including those for 1925 and 1932. One of the important Special Branch papers frequently cited by these scholars is the "Basic Paper on the Malayan Communist Party," bound in several volumes, which is believed to include information given by police informers and Communist leaders during interrogations. Other writers, however, such as the journalist Harry Miller and the British Army officer Edgar O'Ballance whose works will be cited later, although they had not seen such papers had, nevertheless, been given police briefings on the historical background of Communist activities in Malaya. Their writing contains much useful information not found in scholarly works.

The earliest author to attempt a general history of the MCP was the mysterious "Gene Z. Hanrahan,"[7] while other writers, such as Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff,[8] pioneered brief preliminary studies of the Malayan Communist movement. Hanrahan's work, however, is still the best concise standard account and for some years of the MCP's prewar history remains the most important account. Hanrahan studied several MCP documents, including its 1934 party constitution, which was translated and included as one of the appendices in the book. He is also the first writer to use the wartime Japanese Kempeitai's account of the MCP found in Tsutsui's work entitled *Nampo gunsei-ron* (Military government in the southern regions), published in Tokyo in 1944. Although in some areas the information in Hanrahan's work is now out-of-date, it is still a useful reference. An intriguing question is how Hanrahan gained access to those MCP documents. He does not mention the holding centers where they are kept.

The police documents compiled within this monograph are (with one exception) found in holding centers *outside* Malaysia. This must be stated because under recent amendments to the Official Secrets Act (OSA) of Malaysia, following opposition disclosures in Parliament of naval arms purchases, the Malaysian government has tightened loopholes to prevent leakage of secret and confidential government documents to the public, and violators are liable to prosecution in a court of law. Therefore, the

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permission to look at the Special Branch papers because his late father was an assistant minister in the federal government of Malaysia. While his thesis tends to be general and descriptive on the prewar period, it has, however, more recent information on the MCP's postwar history.

[7]Gene Z. Hanrahan, *The Communist Struggle in Malaya* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1954); reissued, by arrangement with the Publication Centre, University of British Columbia, by the University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1971. It is believed that "Gene Z. Hanrahan" is the pseudonym of a research assistant or a research organization. According to his bibliographical card index at Yale University's Stirling library, "Gene Z. Hanrahan" is said to have authored the following works: *An Exploratory Critical Bibliography on the Chinese Red Army, 1927-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952); *Ernest Hemingway 1896–1961: The Wild Years* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1962); *Documents on the Mexican Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Documentary Publications, 1972); *Secret History of the Oil Companies in the Middle East* (Salisbury, N.C.: Documentary Publications, 1979); and *Marighella, Carlos, Manual of the Urban Guerrilla*, introduction, new translation and a bibliography by Gene Hanrahan (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Documentary Publications, 1985). When the University of Malaya Press decided to reprint *The Communist Struggle in Malaya* in 1971, they experienced great difficulties in contacting the "author," but finally signed a contract with a third party. Information was given to this writer by Beda Lim, retired chief librarian, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

[8]Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *The Left Wing in Southeast Asia* (New York: William Sloane, 1950).

Published in Cheah Boon Kheng (ed), *From PKI to the Comintern, 1924–1941: The Apprenticeship of the Malayan Communist Party* (New York, 1992)

PREFACE

The artists presented in this exhibition on paper explore radical thinking of islands existing and imaginary, from its geographical realities to personal world explorations. These islands create archipelagos, fragmented territories that cannot be reconciled under collective identities except as individual identities as part of the diverse multiplicities bringing the world to the world.

Their approaches in researching existing islands and their political and economic settings within the capitalist mode of operation or exploring individual attempts of creating his own world as a strategy of active withdrawal, propose new models of operating within the art world and the larger social framework.

Here, withdrawal could be understood as a form of abstraction from the representative imagery of the world, to propose a notion of social abstraction through active withdrawal that in artists' current strategies means creating a space in fiction as an ISLAND within mainstream narrative.

At the same time I hope that these practices and issues discussed through the presented works hint at Edouard Glissant's archipelagic thinking. He wrote:

> I imagine the museum as an archipelago. It is not continent, but an archipelago … It is not a recapitulation of something which existed in obvious way. It is the quest for something we don't know yet.

Glissant's archipelagic thinking, islands scattered but interconnected as well as his idea of mondialite-form of worldwide exchange that acknowledges and preserves diversity, stays as an important reminder that what we know should stay dynamic.

Biljana Ciric

Edouard Glissant (1928-2011) was a French writer, poet and philosopher.

Quote from *Edouard Glissant & Hans Ulrich Obrist, (100 Notes - 100 Thoughts, dOCUMENTA 13): Notebook No. 38.* Kassel: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012.

IMAGE CAPTIONS

ANTTI LAITINEN

It's My Island
Still from Video
2007
Image courtesy of the Artist

http://www.anttilaitinen.com/

NICHOLAS MANGAN

Nauru - Notes From A Cretaceous World
2009-2010
All images courtesy of the Artist

http://www.nicholasmangan.com/

TAN HUAMU

Landscape
1940
Image courtesy of the Artist's Estate

HO TZU NYEN

Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia: G for Gene Z. Hanrahan
ongoing
All images courtesy of the Artist

Sand Man

Charles Lim in Conversation with Foo Say Juan

Edited by Shabbir Hussain Mustafa

Since 1965, Singapore has grown from 224.5 to 276.5 square miles through the movement of sand from various Southeast Asian origins to its outlying islands and coas ts through land reclamation.[1] Amongst its busy seaport traffic, one observes the ever-present sand barge – it tugs along a super highway for sand, the very sand that claims not to have a history, ghosts and stories, but it does. There is also another issue: this sand continues to move under the assumption that an inherently finite resource can be made to appear limitless. It is an alteration of the manner in which the state and what it governs may be imagined. It is reminiscent of another 'geo-logic': as this newly reclaimed land is not inherited, but proclaimed. This reclaimed land, it is also said, is without history: an unclear past but of critical contemporary presence; it may even be a fearless land, where the present is said to meet the imagination.

This transcript is an edited version of a conversation between Charles Lim, a sailor turned artist whose concerns have centred on water bodies in relation to land, and Foo Say Juan, a figure who worked as a sand surveyor in Southeast Asian waters during the 1990s. This conversation centres on Lim's attempts at unravelling the regional and international genealogies of sand that make up land reclamation efforts in Singapore. Simultaneously, the conversation also drifts into questions of materiality, as Lim seeks data in the form of recollections and anecdotes from his interviewee into the types of submarine man-made infrastructures that exist under the sea.[2] Yet, the dialogue also addresses the interviewee Foo's attempt at offering an oral history into the process and scientific methods involved in sand surveying, opening up questions into how scholars may begin to think about the 'infrastructural' and the 'industrial' in Singapore. Could sources such as these be a means through which we unravel how Singapore has become a geophysical force in the period of the Anthropocene, a work-in-progress term for this current epoch when human activities globally have had a significant influence on the Earth's bionetworks.

Singapore is now a human island.

[1] Whilst a detailed historical study on land reclamation in Singapore is pending, there is an account of the experience of defending Singapore's right to reclaim land before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Proceedings began in light of a protest lodged by Malaysia in 2002/3 claiming that Singapore's reclamation efforts were causing trans-boundary environmental implications, especially around Pulau Tekong, and also the island that Pulau Sajahat became subsumed into. See Choon Koon Hean, Tommy Koh and Lionel Yee, *Malaysia and Singapore: The Land Reclamation Case*, *From Dispute to Settlement, Singapore: Straits Times Press*, 2013. For some historical overviews on land reclamation, see R. Glaser, P. Haberzettl and R. P. D. Walsh, "Land Reclamation in Singapore, Hong Kong and Macau", GeoJournal, Nol. 24, No. 4 (1991), 365-373; Jiat Hwee Chang, "(De)forming the 'streets': Land reclamations and the (Re)production of urban spaces in Singapore," *Proceedings of Great Asian Streets Symposium*, July 2002, Singapore: Centre for Advanced Studies in Architecture, National University of Singapore, 2002, 19-27; see also T. C. Chang and S. Huang, "Reclaiming the City: Waterfront development in Singapore," *Urban Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 10, (2011), 2085-2100. The Straits Times has covered the topic regularly since the 1960s, including mentions about the first pilot project launched by the Housing and Development Board, which measured 48 acres. Please refer to "Land Reclamation in Singapore," *The Straits Times*, 14 July 1962. At the time of writing, these articles appeared: Joshua Comaroff, "Built on Sand: Singapore and the New State of Risk," *Harvard Design Magazine, No. 39, F/W 2014*, available at http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/39/built-on-sand-singapore-and-the-new-state-of-risk, accessed on 1 March 2015. Followed by "Banyan: Such Quantities of Sand," *The Economist*, 28 February 2015, available at http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21645221-asias-mania-reclaiming-land-sea-spawns-mounting-problems-such-quantities-sand, accessed on 5 March 2015.

[2] SEA STATE is a series of ten projects initiated in 2005 by artist and former Olympian sailor Charles Lim, with the premise of inverting perceptions of sea and land in the island city-state of Singapore. It explores the biophysical, aspirational and cerebral contours of the Southeast Asian city, through the visible and invisible lenses of the sea. This article is an attachment to an interview published in *ISSUE1: Land*, where Lim and Jessica Anne Rahardjo discussed the context that guided the development of Lim's *SEA STATE 2: as evil disappears* - a meditation upon the disappearance of Pulau Sajahat from the world's nautical charts in 2002 due to Singapore's land reclamation efforts. The original version of this transcript was published in *SEA STATE: Charles Lim Yi Yong*. Editor. Shabbir Hussain Mustafa. Singapore: National Arts Council, 2015.

[*Sentosa Cove, One Degree North Marina, aboard the Boon Teik.*
2nd February 2015.]

Charles ...I think this must be the third time that we are talking about this. The first time was many years ago when you shared your story with me. I recorded it then, but to be honest I have lost the file.

Foo I will try to recall the things I did in the '90s, the time when many landfill projects were ongoing in Singapore. The biggest was around the Southern Islands, where the oil refineries are, when so many of the islands were merged and linked together. This was followed by the Pasir Panjang container wharf project in the southwest of Singapore. During the time they needed a lot of sand, and our company was fortunate enough to be the one called in to look for the sand. What would happen is that the main contractor would gather together the information we had secured, and then suck the sand into the barges, followed by delivery to Singapore. The areas we chose for sand searching are nearby islands, like Karimun, and towards the east, which is Durian Island, and even further east, near Batam, Indonesia. The furthest we went was Batam. Although the project looks complicated, it actually used simple technology. But we also had to use much more advanced equipment like DGPS. We did not use GPS because the difference in measurement with GPS can be up to five to ten metres. So we used DGPS because the project needed accuracy and precision in terms of identifying the quality and quantity of sand. Each time we went out to look for sand, we spent up to one month on board the ship. Most of our efforts were spent doing the landfill projects of Pasir Panjang and the southern islands, which are Ayer Chawan, Pulau Sekai and so on.

Charles The ship that you were on, was it a survey ship?

Foo It was actually not a survey ship, it was a utility vessel. The important thing is the equipment. For example, we needed an A-frame, which is a structure with an A-shape attached to the drop core. The drop core is a stainless steel instrument that is probably about five to eight metres long. The A-frame must be attached the drop core; we call this instrument a drop core because there is a core in the middle of the shaft. When we release the drop core, it penetrates into the sand due to the weight of the metal and it is made in the form of a long arrow. The tip is tapered so it can penetrate deeper into the sand. There is a core in the middle, which when dropped, penetrates about five metres into the sand, and when we pull it back up into the transom of the vessel, there is a locking device along the core. From that point onwards, we open up the core and we will have four or five metres of sand trapped inside. Usually there are only three types of elements that we see: clay, silt or sand. Of course we prefer sand because sand is the best element. Usually if we hit clay, the penetration of the core will only be one metre. But when we hit sand, it probably goes up to four to five metres. The sand is then collected in the form of a one-metre, two-metre or

three-metre quality. The final step is to save the coordinates and positions. Then we travel a nautical mile further away and drop the core again.

Charles So what is considered good or bad sand?

Foo Sand is normally coarse or fine. Both are all right for the landfill. The main contractor was not keen on a mixture of silt and sand. From the developer's perspective, silt would not give a firm foundation. Sand, however, will eventually become compact.

Charles When you did the surveys, was there a ship that followed you or were you out there on your own?

Foo You only need one vessel to search and check the quality of sand. The boat is usually 100-foot long because we lived on board. We needed the crew, a captain, technicians and a survey team. Then we also had divers; so should the drop core get stuck in the clay and we cannot pull it back up for some reason, the divers would go down and settle the problem. And this does happen, but of course when it happens, we would need to have some cores on standby. Usually when the drop core has been stuck in clay, it gets bent by the time it is retrieved. So we have to replace it in a short period of time. The commercial divers are very efficient. They can do welding jobs on board, do any repairs on the vessel, at any time.

Charles Were there instances when you found something you did not expect?

Foo Well, this was a straightforward sand search. Once we have the quality of sand noted down per nautical mile, the main contractor, at times, would request, "The amount and quantity of sand is recorded, but to play it safe, can you do another survey?" We call this a magnetic survey and this is a scan done with a different set of instruments. About a metre above the seabed, we conduct a scan for any magnetic objects that may be resting on the surface or close to it. Usually for this type of sea area, we do not see many unusual objects. But we usually check for World War II remnants like cannons. They could be big cannons, mortar shells, or a bomb. So what we would do is conduct the scan and detect the magnetic spot, then we pass this data and the coordinates of the magnetic spots on to the main contractor. They would often request further, "Can you check what it is?" We would then check what exactly the magnetic equipment or material is, take a picture and remove it if possible. We would dump it in the designated dumping ground, usually around Batam. The designated dumping area is always indicated on the charts. For magnetic surveys, we did not use the big vessel. We used a smaller craft.

Charles So can you dump anything there?

Foo Correct.

Charles Are there a lot of things in the dumping area now?

Foo I have no idea, because normally we would just drop the object and be off.

Charles Let's say you find a bomb, how would you move it?

Foo We would not bring it onto the boat. We would pull it onto the surface of the water and slowly tow it to the dumping area. So actually there is a risk factor involved.

Charles Did anything happen when you were towing?

Foo So far, I think that is how it is done. They will not bring the bomb, for instance, to land. It is a big headache for the land authorities.

Charles So the dumping ground is not in Singapore?

Foo No. It is around the area that we are surveying, depending on where the location is.

Charles Is it on the charts produced by the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore?

Foo No, because we cannot bring the item back to Singapore.

Charles How often do you find such ordnances?

Foo It is very common especially around this area. We do not bring back such items. We see it down there, we have to retrieve and dispose of it at the dumping ground. The items could be old machine guns with the rounds still in them, and sometimes it could be mortar shells or explosive items, sometimes even old engines. We are more concerned about the bombs, because when we want to suck up the sand, sometimes the bomb might get sucked in together with the sand and it could explode inside the suction pipe. This could cause a delay in the operation.

Charles Has that happened before?

Foo Yes. Sometimes it could get stuck at the mouth of the suction and damage the equipment. At the same time it could disrupt the operation. So our main concern is to move the explosive to the dumping ground so the operation for the suction of sand will not be affected.

Charles I think the bombs are something left over from the colonial period. I mean we find newspaper articles, of this kid in the '90s who found a bomb on the beach of newly reclaimed land and got killed because the bomb exploded...?

Foo After that they were aware of the dangers of unexploded ordnances in transport over by the barges, and later onto the landfill island. Therefore, we are required to remove it before the operation starts.

So is the magnetic survey conducted using a smaller vessel?

Yes. When they conduct the magnetic search, I do not have to be involved because my job was more on the computer screen, where I map the sand area, the quality of sand and the recording of the sand search.

Charles Do you still have the sand surveys charts with you?

Foo No. It has been over 20 years.
It would be interesting to see how you mapped it out.

It's quite simple. I'm sure you understand about the sort of software that GPS is based on, right? So you have the GPS in front of you with the vessel indicated, and what we did was plot the square lines on the GPS. You call it a grid. Each nautical mile is one grid. When we conduct the survey, when we drop the core, it will be according to the grid, because you will be able to pinpoint the vessel on the GPS. So when you move according to the grid line – also called a way line – on the GPS or DGPS, we drop the core, and I have to record the spot coordinates. From that point onwards, we retrieve the core and each sample will be numbered. All of this will have to be written on the cans containing the sand. For example 'A1 coordinates', then samples for A2 will be recorded with 'A2 coordinates' and so on.

Charles You did the reclamation for some of the Southern Islands and Pasir Panjang. Do you know which location the sand came from?

Foo I roughly know which areas of the sea, but of course we did not monitor the exact location of the sand. The interesting part is the work involved. Not many people know that sand search or landfill projects require such technology where you have to look for sand, and especially how the quality and quantity of sand is checked. The interesting part is the process and how we carry it out. After the landfill projects we also used our knowledge for projects such as the retrieval of the 1997 SilkAir crash in Palembang. Oddly, it's almost the same process but we did not need instruments to suck the plane up. The dredgers went there instead. It was a matter of mapping the coordinates and then the retrieval. The dredgers also use the same method when the scoop goes down to retrieve the plane, where they pull up and place the debris onto the barge which has netting on top. What they do is use high water pressure from the sea and the silt will settle down onto the barge. The remains will be stuck on the netting.

Charles When we spoke years ago, you said you were apprehended by Indonesians when conducting sand surveys. Maybe you can tell us how that happened...

Foo Sometimes it is very sensitive. Once in Kukup, Malaysia, we had a navy vessel check our permit, and we did have the permit to do the dredging work. Eventually they left the vessel. It is political. In Indonesia, we got held back for a month.

Charles Which year was this?

Foo In the '90s. We went to do a survey, but I think we did not have a permit or the main contractor did not arrange for one. Then we were held and lived there for a month; waiting for permits, waiting for approval to continue the project.

Charles Where you held on the boat?

Foo When a navy vessel approaches the vessel and considers it

suspicious, they would ask the vessel to follow them back to the naval base. Normally that is how it works. Then once you are at the naval base, they will check the permit and so on.
When you were held, did you have to stay on the ship?

Charles

We did not have to because we were not criminals. We were trying to do a job and sometimes it is solely based on permit issues. So the only thing is that our passports were confiscated. We could not leave the country but were free to move around.

Foo

So what did you do for one month?

Charles

We visited quite a number of interesting places in Indonesia.

Foo

I find interesting that you were there doing a job, and suddenly you had nothing to do. So what did you do?

Well, there is nothing we could do; we had to wait for the permit and the application to be approved. We had to settle some fines that were imposed. But during that period we didn't know how long it would take, and they told us, "It will take two weeks, why not go and relax?" What I did was I went to Jakarta. Indonesia was hosting the Southeast Asian Games in Jakarta at the time. So I went to the games village, visited my friends for a day or two. I became very familiar with Jakarta because we were there for a couple of weeks, so I brought some of my Singaporean friends who were in Jakarta around too.

Charles

So is this checking of permits very common?

Foo

Sometimes we never know what is required. Sometimes we may have a permit but we infringe on other authorities. So sometimes they say, "Oh, you need another permit, this is not enough." So we have to comply with the rules, probably pay the fine and then continue with the job.

Charles

So were most of the people on the boat Japanese or Singaporeans?

Foo

We had a mixture of Japanese and Singaporeans.

Charles

How many ships were there?

Foo

There were not many companies doing sand search projects.

Charles

Who has the data from the sand surveys that you conducted?

Foo

Normally we do not hold on to those samples. As soon as we find the sand, we map the area, and the information of the sand is recorded. The quality is exactly the same as the samples we collected. After that we just dispose of the sand. Finally the sand would be sucked up and delivered to the landfill site.

Charles

How much sand do they take?

Foo

Sand is natural; you will not affect the geographical area of the island.

Charles

What about the sand from Singapore?

Foo Well, as you know, sand in Singapore is not natural sand. If I'm not wrong, you can look around in Singapore, it usually has a silt base. Once you have sand, you will be able to see crystal clear water. That is why you hardly see crystal clear waters in Singapore, because underneath it is silt.

Charles And what causes the silt?

Foo The silt is natural. Look at the Maldives, you do not see silt. In Singapore, we are surrounded by water and under the water is all silt, which you can never convert to sand.

Charles When they did the land reclamation project, there were a lot of shores with sea grass. They dumped the sand on top of it and affected the sea grass...?

Foo To boaters, sea grass is not favourable because it gets caught in the filter. So many times they try to get rid of the sea grass. Especially in Sentosa, where we are right now, there is a lot of it. They are thinking of ways to get rid of it because it's not good for corals; it takes away the oxygen and nutrients.

Charles I remember from our earlier conversations that when you were doing the surveys, there would be rival companies trying to leech onto your survey data...?

Foo There were some other companies but they used the ship method rather than barges. The ship method is random. They would randomly put the suction pipe right at the bottom of the seabed and suck. Sometimes they probably brought in a lot of silt into the vessel, because they did not know what the quality of the sand was before they began the suction.

Charles Were these rivals following your survey ship?

Foo I do not think so. They probably knew we are doing surveys but they were not in the same area.

Charles What was the cost of sand during that time?

Foo I have no idea. What is good to understand is the process. It is actually something not understood by many people. How the land is filled, how the project works. It will be good to let the young generation understand how this technology and process is carried out.

Right now Sentosa Cove is reclaimed land. Most countries when they talk about land, there is some connection to the land. Nations are very connected to land, but I think in Singapore, land is not something that we inherit but something that we build. It is not passed down, but it is actually made. Say a site that you were involved in the process of finding the sand, how does that land relate to you? Do you feel a sense of connection to it?

We have this feeling that there is a need to have more land. When land area is constrained, and if the authorities want to develop more space, then of course landfills are great. The land can be expanded and can be created for leisure or industrial purposes.

So sometimes you feel that, "Oh, it's a good idea!" Using sea sand which if we did not use, will be a waste. You use the sea sand to expand and enlarge the island. You find that this should be the way. In the '50s and '60s, during those days, they did not use this method. They used highland soil and transported it by truck to refill the land. That was not economically wise and you needed a lot of trucks, manpower, and equipment. How much can a truck carry each time? Sea sand is so simple. You only need to suck the sand into the barges and you do not need to worry that once the sand goes into the barges it will sink down. Once the barges are full, water will spill over and the sand will be delivered to Singapore in one boat –100-foot barges all the way to the site. So it is cheaper, and economical. I find it is good to continue growing the island because Singapore is too small.

Charles Do you have any personal relics or photographs?

Foo No, I do not keep any.

Charles No mementos, nothing?

Foo No.

Charles Lim, *SEA STATE 7: sandwich* (production still), 2015.
Image courtesy of the Artist

Charles Lim, *SEA STATE 7: sandwich* (production still), 2015.
Image courtesy of the Artist

Island's Master

M. Péchalat in Conversation with Raimundas Malašauskas

17 02 2011, Madrid

Dear M. Jean Péchalat,

Last year I went to Vassivière, France for the first time in my life. The purpose of the trip was a visit to Rosa Barba's exhibition at the Centre International d'Art et du Paysage de l'île de Vassivière. It was a quiet autumn weekend and the time spent in Vassivière happened to be the most beautiful part of it.

We walked the bridge leading from the land to the island in the middle of the lake. After a few minutes we reached the island.

After going up and down the tower, seeing hundreds of metres of film in space and listening to the low-frequencies emanating from the water – all those elements of Rosa's project that you must have seen yourself too, we took a walk around the island with Alexandra Bordes, the curator. I don't remember if we finished the walk, but one thing that struck my mind most was the fact that the island was a recent creation of human hands. It felt we were walking around something that existed there for ages. I was stunned. My whole perception of where we were shifted. I understood that we were standing on top of the little hill that got surrounded by water and became an island some years ago.

This is when Alexandra told me that there is a man living on this island since the time this island was not an island at all. This man, she said, knows the history of the island best, he is older than the island we are in.

You are this man, M. Pechalat, and I am delighted to write this letter to you. You must know this island better than your own life, it is something absolutely unique. I don't know if there is a counterpart of yours somewhere else in the world, another person whose life suddenly became embraced by an island. I am very curious, how does it feel to be a living memory of the place?

Forgive me writing to you in English, it is a language that is easier for me to handle. Nevertheless I would like to engage you in some conversation that could become a part of Rosa Barba's book to be published by the art centre.

I am curious about simple things in no particular order: your life in the island, the life of the island and your shared memory. I am curious about the time the island became the island, about the dreams you have when you sleep in the island, about some scenes and images that you remember in close detail. They say that water has memory too and I am wondering whether you had a chance to witness it. I am curious about those moments that sometimes emerge from our memory in a full detail, for example, that brief moment from many years ago that has never crossed your mindspace for half a century, but suddenly it unfolded in your mind as if happened just two minutes ago. Or perhaps – in two minutes to come: future must be enfolded in the past like water is in water, isn't it?

Also – I am interested in the first image you remember. I've been thinking about the first image one can remember – it may be a true memory or it may be something that wants to be a true memory, but it has a form of an image. To me it is a crocodile in the pages of Lithuanian Soviet Encyclopedia that I happened to open one day when I was a kid. It still can bite.

I believe that you exist and we may have an illuminating conversation, or your story that could be recorded not only in the wind passing through the trees on the island, but also pages of Rosa Barba's book.

The next day we went to Limoges – it was far less exciting than the time-bending moment in Vassivière. I wish we had stayed there longer.

Look forward to talking to you – via other people, directly or through any means you prefer.

With my warmest greetings
Raimundas Malašauskas

Raimundas — I'm very happy to be here and to be able to speak with you. When I came to see Rosa Barba's exhibition on the island, I learnt that someone was living here before the island became an island. I was immediately very interested to talk with that person about the history of the island.

Péchalat — I'm here since 1936. It's been ages! Staying at the same place.

Alexandra — You were born here?

Péchalat — No, I was born in Eymoutiers.

Alexandra — Why did you come to live here?

Péchalat — It was work. I came with my parents who had taken a farm on the island, which wasn't an island then, with no water all around. We continued working for Mrs Pascal. I stayed with her; when the dam was built, she kept me. A lot of people from the flooded villages left. I was on a mountain and I didn't leave, I stayed in Vassivière. I kept working for her until she died and even afterwards. And then the joint local commission in charge of the area came and it took the island. It changed life; it wasn't the same at all. It was very difficult, I don't know how to explain it to you, life was turned upside-down, it was not the same work anymore. We had kept the property, we had the cattle, we had many things. On the other hand, of course, it's saddening to see the water rise. When the dam was completed we were seeing the water rise slowly and we had a lot of invaders, it made the vermin come up: rats, snakes, that the water was bringing them closer. The snakes were passing in the courtyard, you had to see that; it was amazing. We say vermin, but all the hares, the rabbits, every game came here with the snakes and the rats, they came up here and we were invaded.

Raimundas — What was the intention of creating a dam here ?

Péchalat — The dam was built only for electricity then the tourism started. The first to operate in tourism was Leyral with the big boats. At that time there were small sailboats, then he put big ones.

Raimundas — When did they fill the lake?

Péchalat — They started work in 1946 and the lake started to fill in 1949; on Christmas Eve, the dam wasn't completed yet, it was only half finished, but water was not a trouble to work with. The materials were coming through the air. It was like the cable cars you see in the mountains, they were bringing the little carriages that were unloading cement on the dam. Cement, stones, material, all went up like that. From the foot of the dam to the top, everything came by cable car. They were taking the stones from the hills, further that way, above the Bordes; they were picking the stones over there and they were making mortar there and even on the dam. What was really going on, it's that they were taking the carriages over there or in the hills all the same. And it was circling continuously like in the mountain, like at winter sports, well, you see what a cable car is of course.

Raimundas — It took them three years to prepare the place before water arrived. What was going on between 1946 and 1949?

Péchalat — They were working by hand, there were very few mechanical tools, just some, a lot was done manually. There were 3500 workers at the time.

Raimundas — Was the dam conceived before the Second World War?

Péchalat — No, they started right after, it was trouble in Indochina. The war was just finished when they started because there wasn't enough light, wasn't enough central heating. Now there is forest everywhere, but before it was all heather moor, cattle that we farmed and very little wood, the cattle was farmed in little herds, not large ones like today. There were a lot of crops, rye, oats, potatoes; it was a lot at the time.

Raimundas — How was the electricity provided before the construction of the dam? Did people have electricity at all in their houses?

Péchalat — We used electricity a lot less, we didn't have refrigerators, no washing machine, no television, we had just a little ordinary radio. Otherwise, we had electricity since 1928 or 1929, but not in the countryside. In Eymoutiers, they had because there were small plants on the Vienne; it gave light but not nearly as much as today. Now, we need a lot of power; washing machines, freezers, we had none of that, the meat was in a salting tub not in a refrigerator. The slaughterhouses weren't that important, they were smaller. Everyone had fresh meat in their cellars, it was often turning bad, now with the refrigerators it's cleaner. To launder, it was done by hand, in a fishing hole, anywhere where there was water. Now, we put everything in the machine and it does everything. And for heating, there was coal, wood was very rare. That's why they made lakes but they are too few of them.

Raimundas — Between 1946 and 1949 when the government proposed the people to go somewhere else, how did you decide to stay?

Péchalat — I was on a mountain, the ones down below had to go by force. I was only the one in the water.

Raimundas — Did you live with your parents?

Péchalat — We were four, me and three girls, and then my parents. The girls got married and they left. Me, I didn't marry and I remained.

Raimundas — You decided to stay on the island?

Péchalat — The owner kept it so I did stay.

Raimundas — Weren't you worried to stay in a kind of isolated situation being stranded on a island?

Péchalat — I didn't even think of it. It changed life, pages were turned so to speak, in a way we jumped forward. The harder part was when the lake was drained in 1995, to see all the land barren. Then it was a hard blow to see the land where I lived again. I had the

chance to see that from a helicopter, to explain to them where there had been a bridge, a mill, a church...

Alexandra — Before the arrival of the water, did they destroy everything?

Péchalat — They demolished everything, the trees, all cut down, the houses, dynamited. You see little pile of stones, they dynamited everything because of the boats. At Vaugelade, the mill was still intact and, in some other place, the church, but I don't remember where, but now the water probably destroyed everything.

The Vaugelade lake communicates with this one now since it was made before the war to protect Limoges. When there was heavy rain, the part of Limoges that is by the river always flooded, so they decided to create this dam; when it wasn't raining they were letting the water go and when the rain was too important they were holding it to protect Limoges.

Raimundas — Did you go inside that church before the war?

Péchalat — No, never, I don't know the place. Some said that there was a cemetery at the bottom of the lake but it's not true. Vassivière was just a village. The true Vassivière is here.

Raimundas — In 1949, the first day they started putting the water, was it a morning...?

Péchalat — The first water came in 1949 for Christmas but it had been already closed for maybe a week. But the day I remember most, it was a day when there was only a little water on the road, people were continuing to go through with their cars and one of them wanted to show off, he missed the road and dived into the water; he was retrieved from the water on Christmas Day.

Raimundas — Did you really see the water rise?

Péchalat — Yes, it rose continuously. We were seeing the water coming but it wasn't rising very fast, it was rising slowly. We were thinking about it without thinking about it in a way. But it was coming of course. It wasn't rising very fast because it was very hot that year and there was little water and at that time it was only the Maulde. Because there are several rivers alimenting the lake: there is the Vienne that pours out into Servières, up there in Corrèze, and through the tunnel, flows into the Maulde, and then there are other rivers and streams, I don't remember them all, that are poured into it as well.

Raimundas — In three days, the water reached everywhere, how was it for you? The landscape has changed immediately, didn't it?

Péchalat — Of course, we saw it disappear, the stumps of the cut trees, the water was overflowing them, we couldn't see them anymore. We were happy without being really happy, we didn't know what it was. We had never seen a dam. For this one the people weren't resistant, they were just out of the war, they had suffered so much that it was OK. But afterwards the police was needed to protect the other dam projects, people didn't want to give away the land. I remember a project in Creuse, long

after the war, that the people managed to stop. Today it's only ruined houses there and there are people coming back, but the land still belongs to EDF.

Raimundas — Where did the people go to?

Péchalat — They went everywhere, to Eymoutiers, to Bujaleuf, I don't know, I lost track of them.

Raimundas — Were there many friends you never saw again?

Péchalat — There are some that I completely lost, they've gone somewhere in Creuse, in cities. Mostly women, they left after the war, they didn't stay in the country. They were fed up of cultivating when they were growing old and even if they weren't old, and moved to the cities, Paris, Lyon, I lost track of them. Except those who are coming back to visit, who know me, because I don't know them anymore but they're old. It's mostly women that left for the cities, because the work is tiring. It's very hard to be a farmer, that's why they left.

Raimundas — So, in the beginning there was no bridge? How were you dealing with it?

Péchalat — The bridge was rising with the water. All the EDF works had begun at the same time, everything was done at the same time, there were 3500 workers. The bridge, the dam, the road, everything at the same time.

Alexandra — Why did they decide to build the bridge on that side?

Péchalat — Because they asked Mrs Pascal, the owner of the castle, if she preferred toward Creuse or toward Haute-Vienne. She preferred toward Beaumont because there was the church, the cemetery.

Raimundas — Did you feel that your life has changed with the construction of the dam?

Péchalat — Yes, of course, it's a change, a page that turns. But I was less concerned than the owners because I had nothing; but the owners, it was harder for them.

Raimundas — What were you doing in the evening before you had a TV?

Péchalat — Ah the evenings! It was completely different, we spent the evenings in company. For instance, we were doing like you did today, you would come at my home and the next day we would go to Pierrefitte, Saint-Louis, the Moulin, at friends' and we spent the evening playing cards and grabbing a bite. On weekdays we would stay at home, watching television, we had also a small radio like this one.

Raimundas — When did you have a television?

Péchalat — A lot later, long after the dam. I couldn't afford it, it was too expensive.

Raimundas — Were you going to the movies?

Péchalat — To go to the movies you needed to go to Eymoutiers, it was too far, 15 kilometres of walking. Afterward, it started in Beaumont but it wasn't large. Now it's easy, you take the car, you go far, you go to the movies in Limoges even if, in fact, you don't go. At Eymoutiers, there are some who go because there is a movie every week, I believe. Before there weren't any cars like it is now, cars were extremely rare.

Raimundas — What was your favourite movie?

Péchalat — The movies, I don't remember them all.

Raimundas — Earlier, you said something about the moment when the animals, the vermin arrived on the island? What happened exactly?

Péchalat — It's the water that brought the beasts, the snakes and the rats closer. The rats were the most annoying, they were eating potatoes in the fields, grain; we had to poison them because they were too many. The rats weren't nasty but snakes were. Even a rat can bite but they can't kill but the snakes on the other hand, they were killing the animals, biting people.

Raimundas — But snakes are good to kill the rats?

Péchalat — Yes, they were eating them but not all, there were too many. And then I was afraid of the snakes. There were asps, adders, grass snakes, it's said that grass snakes are harmless but there is still venom anyhow. I saw a woman drop dead, many were bitten. I saw this woman fall, she was holding handfuls of wheat, you had to tie it manually, and when she reached out the snake struck and she died. When the doctor came, she was dead. When you're bitten you keep the memory. In the past, there were healers, but it was a long time ago; when you were bitten by a snake, I don't know what he was doing, I was never told, but he was performing some kind of secret thing that I don't know about but you were cured. It's a time that is older than I am, that I didn't know. But if you weren't going to see this person, you'd die.

Raimundas — Why were the people choosing the healer and not the doctor?

Péchalat — Because doctors couldn't do anything, there were no injections at that time, it's an older time.

Alexandra — There is a small island called "The snakes' island"?

Péchalat — The name was given to look nice. There were snakes on all seven islands, the larger the island, the larger the number of snakes.

Raimundas — Where did the snakes go to?

Péchalat — They are gone but some are still there. I killed one on my doorstep last year, in summer, I missed it the first time but the second time I got it because I don't like them near the houses. But I saw an asp coming in, here under the table, but it's my fault really, it was summer, I was watching TV and suddenly I saw a shadow and said "What is it?" It was an asp, it came listening to the TV, here, under the table. But they are few now, they have dispersed again.

Raimundas Does the lake freeze sometimes?

Péchalat Yes, I walked across in the ice that was 40 centimetres thick in 1954 and it was minus 27°Celcius, it made a nice flooring. When the lake was filling it didn't make noise, but when it was coming down, when the ice was breaking, it made a noise at night, it was like thunder, we were hearing cracks ... it was formidable. This year, the frost, was thin like a sheet of paper.

Raimundas Do you remember when the art centre was built?

Péchalat Yes there were discussions about it but I can't remember which year it all started and yet I worked on the construction site, for the sculptures, to bring equipment.

Raimundas When the art centre came, did you think that more exciting things were going to happen on the island?

Péchalat I can't say, those things are above my reach, it's beyond me. It's kind of peculiar, the art centre. They do unbelievable things. It's another life that's beyond me.

Raimundas Do you see the exhibitions?

Péchalat Usually, each of them.

Raimundas Did you ever get bored living here on the island?

Péchalat For the moment, I'm feeling down, but you've got to live with it. I don't have a car to go out anymore, I rolled over. I had the accident in Pierrefitte, after the village, in broad daylight, I fell asleep and I bumped the embankment and the car tipped over. I didn't have a scratch but the car is broken. Me, I could have cured myself but the car is no more. They revoked my licence, because of the accident and because I'm too old, but I'm going to try finding another one. Nobody was hurt but they don't want to insure me anymore.

Raimundas You should be taking a helicopter again!?... At that time, when you were in the helicopter, what was it like?

Péchalat Nothing. I was happy, it was good to see the land I once knew, because the lake, it's 1000 hectares, that's quite a trip, it lasted over an hour, I was happy. It's a nice ride for me. Every place, every bridge, road, everything... It was like being on the moon, the soil had dried, there were cracks like in the desert, big enough to put your hand inside, barren, no more greenery, nothing left but stumps and crushed houses. Of course, it's kind of sad but for the one who knew the place, who used to live there, to see all the recesses, I know I'll never see it like that again.

Raimundas What is the greatest depth of the lake?

Péchalat It's by the dam obviously; the dam, all included, is 37,80 metres up to the top but the water is about 30 metres. At the dam, it's the deepest.

Raimundas Are there many people coming to see you like us today to talk with you about the history of the island?

Péchalat Yes, there were a lot, but fewer now. It's less interesting or not at all, maybe. In the past, many came. Sometimes, it lasted all day long.

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Image by Mirza Bim. Courtesy of the Artist.

Biljana Ciric is an independent curator based in Shanghai. She is co-curator of the 2015 *Third Ural Industrial Biennale for Contemporary Art* (Yekaterinburg, Russia) and her upcoming projects include exhibition at Kadist Art Foundation (Paris) as well as seminar hosted CCA Kitakyushu in 2016 among others.

Her recent exhibitions include: *Just as Money is the Paper, the Gallery is the Room* (2014) presented by Osage Art Foundation; *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back—Us and Institution, Us and Institution* (2013) presented by Guangzhou Times Museum; *Tino Sehgal Solo Exhibition in UCCA*, Beijing (2013); *Taking the Stage OVER* (2011-12); *Institution for the Future -Asia Triennale*, Manchester (2011); *Alternatives to Ritual* (2012-13), Goethe Open Space, Shanghai; and OCAT, Shenzhen among others. Her project *Migration Addicts* was presented in the Collateral Events program of the 52nd Venetian Biennale in 2007, and at the Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture in Shenzhen/Hong Kong in 2008. In 2013, Ciric initiated the seminar platform *From a History of Exhibitions Towards a Future of Exhibition Making*; she regularly publishes in *Broadsheet* and *Yi Shu* among other magazines. Ciric was a jury member on number awards including the Hugo Boss Asia Art Award (2013) and she is on the nominating council for the Vera List Prize for Art and Politics (2014/2015). She has been nominated for an ICI Independent Vision Curatorial Award (2012).

Ho Tzu Nyen (b. Singapore) makes films, video installations and theatrical performances that are related to his interests in philosophy and history. His works have been shown internationally in museums, galleries, film and performing arts festivals.

Ho has had one-person exhibitions in Singapore (Substation Gallery, 2003; Galerie Michael Janssen, 2013); Adelaide (Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, 2007 and 2010); Sydney (Artspace, 2011); Tokyo (Mori Art Museum, 2012); and Berlin (DAAD Galerie, 2015). He represented Singapore at the 54th Venice Biennale (2011). Some group exhibitions in which he has taken part, include: the 26th Sao Paulo Biennale (2004); 3rd Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale (2005); 1st Singapore Biennale (2006); *Thermocline of Art. New Asian Waves*, Germany (2007); 6th Asia Pacific Triennial, Australia (2009), *No Soul for Sale*, London (2010); 5th Auckland Triennial, New Zealand (2013); *No Country*, New York (2013); 10th Shanghai Biennale, China (2014); and 2nd Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India (2014). Some of the film festivals that have presented his work include the 41st Director's Fortnight, Cannes International Film Festival (2009); 66th Venice International Film Festival (2009); 64th Locarno Film Festival (2011); Sundance Film Festival (2012); the 42nd Rottendam Film Festival (2013); and the 10th Forum Expanded of the 65th Berlin International Film Festival (2015). He was the subject of profile screenings at *transmediale 09* (2009) and the 59th Oberhausen Short Film Festival (2013). His theatrical performances have been staged at the Singapore Arts Festival (2008), the Esplanade Theatre Studios (2007, 2012, 2014): KunstenFestivaldesArts in Brussels (2006 and 2008); the Theater der Welt in Mulheim, Germany (2009); and the Wiener Festwochen (2014). Ho's PYTHAGORAS was recently awarded the grand prize of Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize. He is currently an artist-in-residence at the DAAD, Berlin.

Antti Laitinen (b. Finland) currently lives and works in Finland. In 2013 his work was shown in Venice Biennale Finland Pavilion.

He has participated in number of international exhibitions and institutions including Liverpool Biennale, UK (2010); Weimar Arts Festival, ACC Gallery, Germany (2009); Athens Biennale (2009); The Rhinelander Contemporary Art Center, France (2008); Peri, Turku (2007, 2001); Helsinki City Art Museum (2005); Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece (2004); Tampere Hall, Tampere (2001). He also had presented performances in Liverpool Biennale, UK (2010); Rauma Biennale (2010); Athens Biennale (2009); Verbo Performance Art Festival, Galeria Vermelho, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2007).

Raimundas Malašauskas (b. Vilnius, Lithuania) curates in the world, writes occasionally. http://www.rai.lt

Nicholas Mangan (b. Geelong, Australia) lives and works in Melbourne, Australia.

Aubrey Mellor is an award-winning theatre director and arts educator who is currently Senior Fellow (Performing Arts) at LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore. He studied acting and directing under Sir Tyrone Guthrie, Giorgio Strehler and others, including the son of Komparu Noh master, Hideo Honda.

He is known for translating and directing plays, musicals and operas. Formerly Director of the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) Sydney, Australia; he has been Artistic Director of the Playbox-Malthouse, the Royal Queensland Theatre Company, the Nimrod Theatre Company (now Belvior) and the Jane Street Theatre. The first Australian to study Asian traditional theatre, his awards include: the Churchill Fellowship; the Order of Australia Medal; the Australian Writer's Guild (AWGIE); the Dorothy Crawford Award; and the International Theatre Institute's Uchimura Prize for best production (Tokyo International Festival).

Dr Charles Merewether is an art historian, author and curator who has worked in Asia, Australia, Europe and the Americas. He was Collections Curator at the Getty Center in Los Angeles (1994-2004); Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Cross Cultural Research, Australian National University (2004-2006); Artistic Director and Curator of the Biennale of Sydney (2006); Deputy Director, Cultural District for the Tourist Development and Investment Company, Abu Dhabi (2007-2008). In 2009, he was Visiting Fellow at ZKM Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany. Merewether served as Director, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Singapore (2010-2013); Visiting Professor, Nanyang Technology University, Singapore (2014); and Visiting Research Fellow at the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art.

Merewether is currently a Visiting Professor at Baptist University in Hong Kong. He is the author on many articles abut contemporary art and his recent books include *After Memory: The Art of Milenko Prvački - 40 Years*; a co-edited volume of essays; *After the Event*, by Manchester University Press (2010); *Under Construction: Ai Weiwei* (2008); and editor of both *Art, Anti-Art, Non-Art: Experimentations in the Public Sphere in Postwar Japan 1950-1970* (2007); and *The Archive* (2006). He is currently writing editing and co-writing a book, *Singapore Art Today*.

Shabbir Hussain Mustafa is Senior Curator at the National Gallery Singapore, where he researches art from Singapore and Southeast Asia, and leads the curatorial team overseeing the DBS Singapore Gallery, a permanent exhibition space that surveys art in Singapore from the 19th century to the present. He was formerly a curator at NUS Museum, where his curatorial practice centred on the deployment of archival materials to engage different modes of thinking and writing, whilst opening the archive to the varied struggles of perception and reading.

His numerous curatorial projects have ranged across Southeast Asia, including the critically acclaimed *Camping and Tramping through The Colonial Archive: The Museum in Malaya* (2011) and *The Sufi and The Bearded Man* (2010). He co-conceived the experimental project space *prep room: things that may or may not happen* and other accumulative platforms namely *malayablackandwhite, writing power: Zulkifli Yusoff* (2011); *semblance/presence: Renato Habulan and Alfredo Esquillo* (2012); *Curating Nation* (2011); and *In Search of Raffles' Light* (2013). Most recently, he was curator of the Singapore Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale where he realised an exhibition titled *SEA STATE: Charles Lim Yi Yong.*

Dr Dev N Pathak (b. India) is a Charles Wallace Fellow at Queen's University, Belfast, UK, who teaches sociology at South Asian University, New Delhi, India. He has a doctorate in Sociology from Jawaharlal Nehru University and his research interests consist of cultural performances, art, music, and popular cinema in the region of South Asia.

He has contributed articles to the journals such as *International Critical Thought, Journal of South Asian Studies, Contemporary Sociology, Gandhi Marg, The*

Book Review, Sociological Bulletin, and *International Journal of Humanistic Ideology*. He is the Reviews Editor and Editorial Member of *Society and Culture in South Asi*a, a journal of South Asian University (publ. Sage India). His articles are available at http://academia.edu.

Milenko Prvački (b. Yugoslavia) graduated with a MAFA (Painting) from the Institute of Fine Arts in Bucharest, Romania. He is one of Singapore's foremost art educators, having commenced teaching at LASALLE College of the Arts since 1994. He was Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts for 17 years, and currently holds the position of Senior Fellow in Fine Arts.

Prvački has exhibited extensively in Europe since 1971, with numerous showcases in public spaces and galleries in Singapore since 1993. He has also participated in numerous symposiums and art workshops worldwide, with artworks permanently collected by museums and galleries worldwide. He was awarded the prestigious Cultural Medallion Award for Visual Arts by the National Arts Council, Singapore in 2012. Additionally, he is the founder and organiser of Tropical Lab, a Postgraduate Art Camp that gathers talent from leading art institutions, all around the world. http://milenko.prvacki.com

Shubigi Rao (b. Bombay, India) is a Singapore-based visual artist and writer whose interests range from archaeology, neuroscience, language, libraries and books, cultural histories, contemporary art theory, and unfashionable branches of knowledge, to natural history and the environment.

Her complex layered installations comprise books, drawings and etchings, video and pseudo-science machinery, metaphysical puzzles, ideological board games and archives, and have been exhibited and collected in Singapore and internationally. She is currently visiting public and private collections, libraries and archives globally for *Pulp: A Short Biography of the Banished Book*, a decade-long film, book and visual art project about the history of book destruction. Her awards include the Creation Grant (2013), Presentation Grant (2013, 2012), and twice the Award for Excellence in the Arts for most outstanding student of the year (MAFA First Class 2008, BFA First Class 2006) from LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore. She also holds a BA(Hons) in English Literature from Delhi University, India. http://www.shubigi.com

Anca Rujoiu (b. Bucharest, Romania) is a curator currently based in Singapore. She is a curator for exhibitions at NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore and co-director of FormContent, a curatorial initiative in London. Previously, she coordinated the public programme of the School of Fine Art at the Royal College of Art (UK).

With FormContent she explored various curatorial models and challenged the relationship between artist/curator, often overlapping their roles in the process. Her recent project with FormContent, *It's Moving from I to It*, unfolded as a performative script within a nomadic structure testing formats of production and distribution. She has been a visiting lecturer at various universities including Goldsmiths College, Central Saint Martins University and Newcastle University (UK). As a researcher and writer, she worked for several film and television productions, and artists' publications.

Tan Huamu (1895-1976, Guangdong, Taishan, China) was admitted in 1919 to the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, Western painting department, where he graduated in 1924. Returning to China, he joined the ranks of He Sanfeng and Chen Shijie as an artist who had previously studied in Japan, and founded a private art school in Guangzhou. During the Republican era, he served as dean and professor of Western painting at the Shanghai University of the Arts; Shanghai Xinhua Art College, Shanghai Art College; as well as director of western painting department of Guangzhou City Art School.

After the fall of Guangzhou to the Japanese in 1938, he fled to Macau. After the war, he served in the Guangdong Provincial College of Art. In the late '40s, he remained active in the arts in Macau and held the post of honorary vice president of Macau Art Society. In 1956, he returned to Guangzhou and joined the Chinese Artists Association, Guangdong Branch.

Dr Wulan Dirgantoro (b. Bandung, Indonesia) currently teaches art history and theory at the MA Asian Art Histories Programme, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore.

She has contributed to various publications and exhibition catalogues in Australia, Indonesia and Japan. Her research interests focus on visual culture, gender theories, feminisms, memory and affect in contemporary art, and human-animal interactions.

Venka Purushothaman (b. Singapore) is an art writer, academic, and arts and cultural manager. He is currently Vice-President (Academic) and Provost at LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore.

He has researched and written extensively on visual arts, performing arts and arts management with an interest in contemporary art. He has written essays on numerous artists including Pierre & Gilles (France), Nathalie Junod Ponsard (France), Parvati Nayar (India), Salleh Japar (Singapore). His artist monographs include: *The Art of Sukumar Bose: Reflections on South and Southeast Asia* (2013); *Dance Me through the Dark: The Photography of Tan Ngiap Heng* (2008); and *Salleh Japar: Gurindam dan Igauan* (2004). His books on arts and culture include *Making Visible the Invisible: Three Decades of the Singapore Arts Festival* (2007) and *Narratives: Notes on a Cultural Journey, Cultural Medallion Recipients, 1979-2002* (2002).

Susie Wong (b. Singapore) is an art writer, curator and artist.

She contributes to several publications in Singapore: she was a regular art reviewer in the 1990s for *The Straits Times, Life!* Singapore; and a regular art feature writer for magazines such as *The Arts Magazine* (publ. The Esplanade); *ID*; and *d+a* in architecture and design, among many others. She has written for publications such as Southeast Asia Today, 1995 (publ. Roeder), and for artists' monographs. She is a member of AICA (International Association of Art Critics - Singapore Chapter). She has published two special edition art books: *Trace* (2008) and *Tracing Land* (2014). In 2014, she also edited and published *[The Machine] Contemplating the Body* after a group exhibition she curated at Singapore General Hospital (SGH) Museum.

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