

FORTUNATE ISLES

Aphorisms for the emergence of a seemingly continuous world

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Susana Gaudêncio, 2016

Vídeo - animation, 13' 58'', sound, variable sizes

[ENGLISH VERSION OF VIDEO NARRATION]

FORTUNATE ISLES

Notice to Skippers: It's summer, it's hot, I am wearing an embarrassing but comfortable pair of sneakers. In 3 hours I walk down to Freixo in a solitary venture. But «[n]o man is an island, Entire of itself, Every man is a piece of the continent, A part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less. As well as if a promontory were. As well as if a manor of thy friend's Or of thine own were: Any man's death diminishes me, Because I am involved in mankind, And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee. .»**

CADMUS & HARMONY + INTERNET MAP

I can relate an island to a city, a village, a house in the sense that culturally, they all are self-supporting systems. But cultural barriers are not absolute, communication networks are ubiquitous. The fact that advanced capitalism makes the concept of exchange and value increasingly abstract, allowed for the invisible to organize the world in a much more fundamental way than geography or architecture. Today, space is manufactured through the influence of those invisible forces — it seems to be missing or hiding. The idea of nothing, of the disappearance of substance, influences all our experience, where «seeing is believing» no longer proves anything. The Island as a metaphor for isolation in a society or culture may present problems; for instance at what extent does a society change, or not, when in intense contact with others: «Plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose. What goes around comes around. Quanto mais as coisas mudam, mais elas permanecem as mesmas».

KIRIWUNA

Anthropology was founded on the island of Kiriwuna in Trobriand Archipelago, off the coast of Australia. The island of Kiriwuna is to anthropology what the Galapagos Islands are to biology.

FORTUNATE ISLES

I arrive to Trindade in an accelerated walking step. Near there I walk up the newspaper Jornal de Noticias's tower. A dense fog, like smoke, goes up the mouth of River Douro towards its source. From this privileged watchtower I can see the city in its 360 degrees. I look under my legs losing balance and think of «Nearer My God to Thee" the band musicians were playing it while Titanic was sinking. Nero, the Roman emperor, cheerfully played the lyre while Rome was burning. In a tragedy like these, sinking or burning, I would rather hear «World Destruction» of Afrika Bambaataa and John Lydon.

CARAVELAS

The destination of the fifteenth century Caravel was an imagined geography without boundaries. Whether a continent or an island, these places exist in an infinite space, occupying an endless abundance of landscape, the sea. Their navigators aspired to create effective and ideal societies, places where everything was possible, with more or less strict rules, where they could be seen as citizens of a richer and happier state. It is hard to forget that these special envoys were sent to cover up the surfaces of a so called primitive and savage culture with pure religion, Baroque and pristine tiles, inflicting on others the horrors of a rough indoctrination to which they themselves were subject to.

STROMBOLI

When we focus our imagination in the idea of the island, we are often inclined to create only positive values and see it as an apparatus for illusions and chimeras. What contributes to this tendency are the special characteristics of its geographic space—the continent is the norm, the island is the exception.

INFLATABLE BOATS

Today all our countries have been domesticated — to date, we have explored most of the world's surface. But most of our human history has been dominated by ignorance about our territorial limits. It is easy to understand the power over the human mind of geographical areas as evocative as the islands. Today, men and women who come to southern European Islands are seeking for utopia. But the ideal city has yet to be invented.

SOLDIERS OF LEAD

I Visit the Military Museum, where I cannot find a single piece of memorabilia about the Carnation Revolution of 1974, or any reference to the fact that the building was for decades PIDE's head-quarters, Salazar's secret police. In this building more than 7,600 Portuguese citizens were tortured, thank goodness for the Republican Revolution room. There is an odd collection of tin soldiers; the only women represented are the Napoleon army prostitutes and the Egyptian slaves.

STONE WALLS

I walk along the old city walls that appear to be like the limits of an island made in stone.

REFUGE

On November 4, 2003, a few kilometres north of the city of Darwin in Australia, a small group of Kurdish refugees and Indonesian sailors landed a shore Melville Island in a modest boat, seeking for political asylum. John Howard, the Australian prime minister at the time, not inclined to deal with new asylum seekers, decides to cut the country's ties with Melville excluding the island of the Australian territory, thus freeing his government to comply with asylum law for refugees — perhaps we could wait for some political leaders to come together on an island and in return remove it from the map.

IMAGINED GEOGRAPHIES

The islands narrated by Jonathan Swift in his Gulliver's Travels (1726), can be read as deformed mirrors of our own world. Laputa is an island floating peacefully in the sky. The island is constituted by a bottom layer made of diamond. Through its stone-magnet, it is possible to

move the island up and down and from one side to the other. The main concerns of people from Laputa, are music, mathematics and astronomy, they have no practical skills and are disastrous in their daily life. Balnibarbi is under Laputa's purview, here exists an Academy of Projects, where scientists are primarily interested in finding out how all things work at any expense. Here everything is a parody of scientific progress. All projects are truly absurd. For example, a linguist proposed a way to abolish all the words in order to discuss without talking, which would be favourable to the chest, because it is clear that the exercise of speech tires the lungs putting good health at risk. The solution he found, was to carry with him all the objects he wanted to talk about. The occupation of another scientist, since entering the academy, was to return human excrement to its original food material, reversing the process of digestion, eliminating thus the bad smell. Every week a plate with material was delivered to him, almost the size of a barrel of Bristol. Another man discovered the secret of plowing with pigs, saving the effort of horses, oxen, plows and farmers. His method was this: in a hectare of land, from 15 to 15 centimetres, a certain amount of acorns, dates, nuts and other fruits that pigs appreciate should be buried; afterwards up to six or more pigs were freed in to the land and with hands and nose they would revolve the terrain, eat the nuts and fruit and in the end filled it with manure. In Houyhnhnm, a culture of fine horses contrasts with the brutal and uncivilised Yahoos, which portray men in the narrative. In Lilliput, discussions and battles are ridiculous because everything is minuscule. In Brobdingnag, in reality a peninsula, the King says about Europeans: «I can only conclude that the group of the natives is the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered and saw crawling on the earth's surface.»

DEFORMED MIRRORS IN THE SHAPE OF A CIRCLE

The world is a set of different versions fighting each other, while some take vacations, others are go around their business.

OLD FENCE

Throughout all classical tradition, the Fortunate Islands are referred the rest place for gods and mythical Greek heroes. In the book *Message*, by Fernando Pessoa, they are described as a place outside of time and space, where the myths of the Fifth Empire are waiting to come through. Their presence is only captured during sleep by audio signals and the sound of waves, arising as «no place» a Utopia.

THE VENUS OF WILLENDORF

is 11 cm high, and estimated to be 22,000 to 24,000 years old. It is perhaps the artefact from a remote matriarchal society.

RETURNING HOME

without learning the mystery of things hidden under stones.

** DONNE, John. *The complete English poems*. Introduction and notes by A. J. Smith. England: Penguin Books, 1971

Susana Gaudêncio. Porto

Video Credits: Music «Nearer My God to Thee» played by Phyllis Taylor Sparks / Potato Photography (Venus of Willendorf): © Ann Gordon / Image of Internet Map: © Chris Harrison / Sound effects: Susana Gaudêncio, Mike Koenig, Mark Di Angelo.

PLANTA

DA

CIDADE DO PORTO

Lepta, uva, serecramente sobre os céus

Houyhnhnm contrage a cultura dos cavalheiros requintados e civilizados os botos yahoos.

Glubbubbarb é uma ilha de feiticeiros mágicos.

Em Lilliput, porque todo é enfiado, as divindades e as batalhas são viciadas.

Expresmos que os dirigidos políticos se reconstruam ilha e ultramarina.

"A geografia inventada não tem fronteiras. Nelas podemos viver como eternos

Sobreviventes de um naufrágio ou como cidadãos de um estado feliz.

Os emigrantes que chegam às ilhas do sul da Europa procuram

uma utopia. Alguém que procure a cidade ideal, terá que inventar.

As características do espaço geográfico de ilha são de excessão.

O continente é a norma. O mar é hostil.

- Construir a perfeição estática

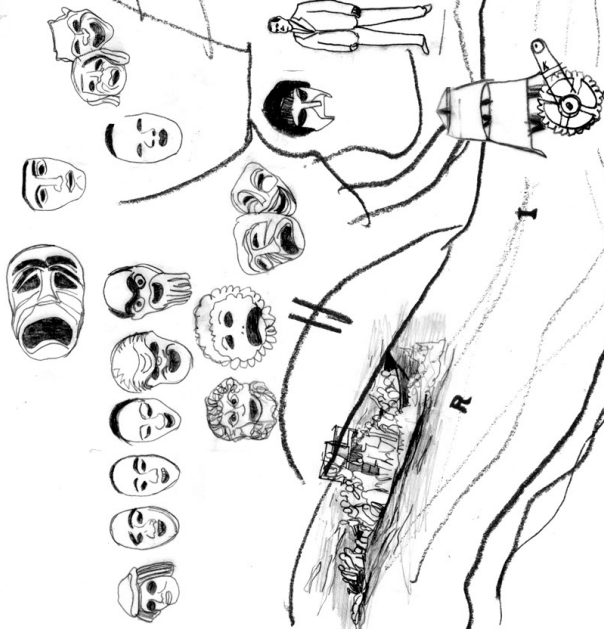
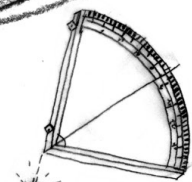
- Tremor tectônico

Tecnologia que existe desde o mundo

da civilização até ao progresso (Israel)



ATLANTIC OCEAN



O absurdo comico e o absurdo dramático

Hipopot ou lampedusa

Laputa ou Suella

Melville ou bubblingmag

Canárias ou houyhnhnm

Leões ou glubbubbarb

Christmas ou yahoos

As ilhas, espelhos deformados do nosso imune

Ativar a primeira pedra

Ativar a pedra e esconder a mão

Chamar alguém à pedra

Com 4 pedras na mão

clar por pau e por pedras

de fazer chover as pedras

de pedra e cal

estar com a pedra no sapato

"a jangada de pedra"

Termas de pedras salgadas

"Uma corral de água-luz, duas pedras, um monte de cobre e outra de ferro e cada uma se por ao lado. Disse a de cobre à outra:

— Cada uma de nós isoladamente não tem força para resistir à água,

mas se juntar a mim e ambas poderemos resistir-lhe.

— Não quero — disse a de ferro — nem dar-me um qualquer

benefício, porque se na água tu me deres uma parca de, ou a

dar a ti, de qualquer maneira tu ficasas 33, e eu fancei em

pedras!"

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