DESSERT ISLANDS

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Demarcated from their respective environments, the ocean and the desert, in visually arresting ways, islands and oases have been popularly imagined as areas of respite, as lands capable of fostering some semblance of ‘civilization’ in a tempestuous ‘wild.’ Indeed, in cross-cultural canons of modern media, oases appear as mirages, images of hope, to those desert wanderers without it. To the wayward sailor lost at sea, tropical islands are the stuff of dreams not dissimilar.

Modern conceptions of each landscape, far flung in the eyes of the North American and European armchair anthropologist, have been flavored by stereotype. Gauguin painted Polynesia as an exotified Paradise found, establishing an iconographical legacy found still today on the backs of postcards and magazines. While it is easy to denote such images as antiquated (especially in the face of rising sea levels and anthropogenic environmental change), they are the ones that paper the arrival gates of Tahiti’s Fa’a’a airport, and are representations that often tint the perspectives of tourists and travelers long before departure. Herman Melville and David Porter manifest textually what Gauguin expressed visually; each have contributed to the casting of Tahiti and Nuku Hiva as exotified realms literally and socioculturally removed from the fabric of the Western societies they are tied to.

Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Indeed, in cross-cultural canons of ‘civilization’ in a tempestuous ‘wild,’ they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to. Low-lying islands and desert oases are geographies defined by water. Heterogeneous in form, atolls and oases are alike in their function to human societies; they are tied to.