
Introduction: Spaces of Utopia



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The rise of Utopian studies in the twentieth century through a combination of Marxist thought and science fiction is well known and well documented. What is less known is the utopian dimension of postcolonial studies, generated by the various utopian visions of pre- and post-independence writers. Like 'utopia,' the term 'postcolonial' has been the source of endless argument, but postcolonial theory may be defined as that branch of contemporary theory that investigates, and develops propositions about, the cultural and political impact of European conquest upon colonized societies, and the nature of those societies' responses. The term refers to post-invasion rather than post-independence, it identifies neither a chronology nor a specific ontology – it is not 'after colonialism' nor is it a way of being. Post-colonial is a way of reading – a way of reading the continuing engagement with colonial and neo-colonial power. The utopian direction of postcolonial thought, the irrepressible hope that characterised postcolonial literary writing in particular, is therefore the newest and most strategic direction of this reading practice. Yet it remains vestigial. Apart from Pordzik's ground breaking *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia* (2001) and essays by Ashcroft (2007; 2009a; 2009b) and Sargent (2010) and the burgeoning topic of non-Western utopian traditions, (Dutton, 2010), little has been written on this field. This may be due to an insistent and binary oppositionality in postcolonial studies, a binarism that overlooks the powerful transformative agency of postcolonial creative producers (see Ashcroft 2001).

Although postcolonial readings are not necessarily (or even often) Marxist, the importance of Marxist thought to postcolonial utopianism rests on two factors: its dominance of contemporary utopian theory in general; and its robust theorizing of

utopian thought apart from any teleological vision of utopia. The influence of Marxism is also well documented in anti-colonial discourse where the idea of political utopia has long been acknowledged in decolonization rhetoric. The pre-independence utopias of soon to be liberated postcolonial nations provided a very clear focus for anti-colonial activism in British and other colonies. But this appeared to come to an abrupt halt once the goal of that activism was reached and the sombre realities of post-independence political life began to be felt. The postcolonial nation, a once glorious utopian idea, was now replaced in the literature, particularly in Africa, by a critical rhetoric that often landed authors in gaol. But gradually, for instance in Africa through writers such as Ayi Kwei Armah, Ngugi wa Thiong or Ben Okri, and latterly women writers such as Chimamanda Adiche, Sade Adeniran and Unomah Azuah, post-independence despair has been giving way to broader constructions of future hope.

For postcolonial utopianism, as for most contemporary utopian theory, Utopia is no longer a place but the spirit of hope itself, the essence of desire for a better world. The space of utopia has become the space of social dreaming (Sargent, 2000: 8). For Fredric Jameson ‘practical thinking’ everywhere represents a capitulation to the system. “The Utopian idea, on the contrary, keeps alive the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one and takes the form of a stubborn negation of all that is” (Jameson, 1971: 110-11). Postcolonial literatures forcefully extend this transformation beyond Thomas More’s *Utopia*: any economic dimension in the myth of Aztlan in Chicano culture, for instance, or the Rastafarian myth of return to Ethiopia is purely contingent, although Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj*, despite its dominant theme of independence, certainly qualifies as a major example of a radical economic anarchism. But economic projections aside, postcolonial writing is suffused with future thinking, with a utopian hope for the future, a belief in the reality of liberation, in the possibility of justice and equality, in the transformative power of writing and at times in the potential global impact to be made by postcolonial societies. The distinctive feature of this utopian thinking is the importance of memory in the formation of utopian concepts of a liberated future.

There is a certain irony in the existence of postcolonial utopianism today since the colonialist ethic present in *Utopia* – which was founded by King Utopus subduing the indigenous inhabitants of Abraxa – was extended in the eighteenth century by the literary

imagination of various kinds of colonial utopias. James Burgh's *Cessaes* (1764), Thomas Spence's *Crusonia* (1782), Carl Wadstrom's *Sierra Leone* (1787), Wolfe Tone's *Hawaii* (1790), Thomas Northmore's *Makar* (1795), and Robert Southey's *Caermadoc* (1799) were all utopias established in isolated regions of Africa, the Caribbean, South America, or the Pacific, with a blithe absence of moral qualms about setting up a colonial utopia on someone else's land. These were necessarily distant utopias of defined and bounded geographical space, ambiguous precursors of the *national* utopias that were to give a vision of a postcolonial liberation. It is arguable that imperialism itself, particularly in the project of the *mission civilatrice*, is driven by a utopian impetus every bit as ambiguous as these precursors'.

Postcolonial utopian thought now gains much of its character from its problematic relationship with the concept of the nation, a concept that once generated visions of a post-independence utopian future. It has been said that Imperialism's major export was identity: a phenomenon previously unformulated by most colonized societies but forged in the heat of political resistance. However arguable this might be, the most widespread political and geographical export of imperialism was certainly nationality. According to J.A. Hobson in his influential *Imperialism: a Study*, "Colonialism, in its best sense," by which he meant the settler colonies, "is a natural overflow of nationality." But "When a State advances beyond the limits of nationality its power becomes precarious and artificial." (Hobson, 1902: 8. Quoting Seely "Expansion of England", lect iii)

A nationalism that bristles with resentment and is all astrain with the passion of self-defence is only less perverted from its natural genius than the nationalism which glows with the animus of greed and self-aggrandisement at the expense of others. From this aspect aggressive Imperialism is an artificial stimulation of nationalism in peoples too foreign to be absorbed and too compact to be permanently crushed. (11)

Hobson's complaint was that empire-bred nationalism undermined the possibility of a true internationalism. Partha Chatterjee, on the other hand sees nationalism as a blow against true decolonisation, because these countries are forced to adopt a "national form" that is hostile to their own cultures in order to fight against the western nationalism of the colonial powers (Chatterjee, 1986: 18).

Nationality and nationalism and their failed visions of independence are fundamental to the study of postcolonial utopian thinking. The national form, if we continue

Chatterjee's terminology, generated a species of decolonising utopianism at odds with the cultural vision of the societies themselves, particularly with the dimension of the sacred and forms of cultural memory. The concept of the nation, or at least the nation state, has been robustly critiqued in the field because the postcolonial nation is marked by disappointment, instituted on the boundaries of the colonial state and doomed to continue its oppressive functions. Postcolonial utopian vision takes various forms but it is always hope that transcends the disappointment and entrapment of the nation-state.

The Ambiguities of Utopia

Wherever utopias occur, three key contradictions emerge: the relation between utopias and *utopianism*; the relation between the future and memory; and the relation between the individual and the collective. The dialogic ways in which postcolonial writers and thinkers negotiate such ambiguities create a distinct form of cultural and political hope. It is this negotiation and resolution of such ambiguities that demonstrates the utility of postcolonial utopianism.

Utopias and Utopianism – Form and Function

The function of utopianism is the energizing of the present with the anticipation of what is to come. For Bloch, utopias are pipe dreams. Without utopianism, however, we cannot live. We can see this confirmed in the fact that all “achieved utopias” (Third Reich, Stalinist Russia, the Cultural Revolution, neo-liberal Capitalism) including the utopian achievement of postcolonial independent states, are degenerate, or failures (catastrophic failure in the case of Zimbabwe) or outright swindles. But despite these failures and the ambiguous relationship between utopias and dystopias, *utopianism* remains necessary.

Primarily, everybody lives in the future, because they strive... Function and content of hope are experienced continuously, and in times of rising societies they have been continuously activated and extended (Bloch, 1986: 4).

To emphasise this Bloch explicitly separates utopianism, which he sees as a universal human characteristic, from utopias, which, as playful abstractions, are pointless and misleading – a parody of hope.

Postcolonial hope has an interesting place in this ambiguous relation between utopias and utopianism because it produces utopias that rarely have *location* but have a particular and very often sacred *form*, a form describable by Ernst Bloch's term *Heimat*. For Bloch, art and literature have a significant utopian function because their *raison d'être* is the imaging of a different world – what he calls their *Vorschein* or “anticipatory illumination.” The anticipatory illumination is the revelation of the “possibilities for rearranging social and political relations to produce *Heimat*, Bloch's word for the *home* that we have all sensed but have never experienced or known. “It is *Heimat* as utopia... that determines the truth content of a work of art.” (Zipes, 1988: xxxiii). *Heimat* becomes the utopian form in postcolonial writing that replaces the promise of nation. It may lie in the *future* but the promise of *heimat* transforms the present.

Heimat occupies an important space in postcolonial writing, one that blurs the conceptual boundary between utopia and utopianism. The distinction between form and function, or product and process is a long-standing discussion in utopian theory but the spiritual concept of home or *heimat* may turn form into function in interesting ways. For example Caribbean utopianism is most familiarly situated in Rastafarianism with a vision of return to Ethiopia, and the nation features hardly at all in discussions of Caribbean arts or sport. Neither does the African past represent utopia, rather the memory of Africa in Caribbean writing is seen as something that can transform the present with a vision of the future.

One of the most striking examples of the political utility of utopia can be seen in the Chicano myth of Aztlan. The Chicano version of utopian thinking, the Aztlán myth, proved to be a surprisingly resilient weapon in the Chicano political arsenal because it so comprehensively united ethnicity, place and nation. It differs from other postcolonial utopias because it combined the mythic and the political so directly: on one hand it was a spiritual homeland, a sacred place of origin; on the other it generated a practical (if impossible) goal of re-conquering the territories taken from Mexico. But this union of sacred and political proved to be its secret power. Aztlán, the Chicano utopia, became a focus for Chicano cultural and political identity and a permanent confirmation of the possibility of cultural regeneration. For a people dwelling in the cultural, racial and geographical borderlands, Aztlan represented its national hope, the vision of liberation.

The utopianism of indigenous peoples in settler colonies is one that exists categorically within yet beyond the nation and manifests itself in a form that blurs the boundary between utopia and utopianism, as well as condensing the linearity of past present and future into a cyclic vision of place. There is a beautiful description of this in Alex Miller's *Landscape of Farewell* when the narrator goes with an Aboriginal man to visit his ancestral country, which was still 'the country of his Old People.'

The Old People, indeed, suggested to me another way altogether of looking at reality and the passage of time than my own familiar historical sense of things, in which change and the fragmentation of epochs and experience is the only certainty (2007: 233-4)

The Dreaming is perhaps the archetypal demonstration of the infusion of the present and future with the hope of a mythic past, a fusion of time and place, because the Dreaming is never simply a memory of the past, but the focusing energy of the present.

In literary versions of postcolonial hope there is a vision of *heimat* in either a geographical region, a culture, a local community, a racial identity, conceived in a disruption of conventional boundaries, a dynamic operation of memory, and most often a sense of the sacred. All of them blur the boundary between utopia and utopianism because *Heimat*, which is not the nation, locates this genre of postcolonial utopianism.

Memory and Utopian Futures

A second area of ambiguity in utopian thought – the relation between memory and the future – is deeply relevant to postcolonial writing. While utopias are often set in the future, utopianism cannot exist without the operation of memory. In such transformative conceptions of utopian hope the In-Front-Of-Us is always a possibility emerging from the past. The polarity between past and future often seems insurmountable in European philosophy. For Plato, says Bloch, 'Beingness' is 'Beenness' (8) and he admonishes Hegel for whom the concept of Being overwhelmed *becoming*. The core of Bloch's ontology is that 'Beingness' is 'Not-Yet-Becomeness': "From the anticipatory, therefore, knowledge is to be gained on the basis of an ontology of the Not-Yet" (13).

The two things abolished in Oceania in Orwell's *1984* are memory and writing and when we see the function of memory in postcolonial utopianism we understand why: memory is not about recovering a past that was present but about the production of

possibility. In the sense that memory is a recreation, it is not a looking backwards, but a reaching out to a horizon, somewhere 'out there'. In traditional postcolonial societies the radically new is always embedded in and transformed by the past. It does this through what Eduard Glissant calls a 'prophetic vision of the past,' an access to cultural memory that defines the future outside of any prescription provided by national history (Glissant, 1989: 64). Indeed postcolonial utopias are characteristically those that 'remember the future' but memory also operates in postcolonial utopianism in very subtle ways, almost always driven by something we could call the energy of the sacred.

The past in general and memory in particular become central in postcolonial utopianism through the prevalence of what may be called the Myth of Return. All colonies appear to generate myths of return and they take on forms dictated by culture and history. The dominant version in Indian writing, for instance, is the redeployment of Hindu myths in contemporary literature. From Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), to Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) the past is allegorically deployed in literature to re-conceive a utopian present. The Indian literary transnation is perhaps most identifiable in its 'transnational' character while still retaining a sense of 'India.' Indeed the exuberant vibrancy and hybridity of South Asian writing in writers such as Rushdie, Mistry, Tharoor and Ghosh has had an extensive global impact. Yet again, it is an exuberance grounded in the memory of a utopian cultural past and a strikingly resilient transcendence of the boundaries of the nation.

African utopianism, on the other hand, reverts either to an historic sense of pharaonic identity or embeds a sense of cultural 'Africanness' in a mythic consciousness that extends beyond any particular nation. The later novels of Ayi Kwai Armah are particularly engaged in the recovery of an African classicism in the appropriation of Pharaonic Egyptian culture to African history. Most commonly associated with the work of Cheikh Anta Diop in the 1970s (Diop, 1974), it is adopted enthusiastically by Armah in the novel *KMT: in the house of life*. Ben Okri on the other hand generates a utopianism through an exuberant language that provides a richly utopian view of the capacity of the African *imaginaire* to reenter and reshape the modern world. It is not merely a hope for African resurgence, but a vision of Africa's transformative potential.

The return to the past in this form of postcolonial utopianism comes not from the atavistic desire to retrace the path of history, that is, it is not so much dominated by a concern with time, as with an overwhelming concern with place. Stephen Muecke remarks for instance,

In outback Aboriginal communities strangers arrive who ask the Aborigines, 'Why do you do as You do?' ... the answer was, and is, 'Come back tomorrow and I'll take you to a *place* that is important to us' (Muecke, 1997: 84)

In this respect place absorbs and signifies time in the way a word embodies its referent, and the two are interchangeable in the Dreaming. The key form of indigenous utopianism is the continual cycling of an ancient past within the present. Similarly, in much postcolonial writing the *idea* of utopia can be an image of possibility in place. This 'place' may not be location but the metaphoric site of freedom itself. Postcolonial utopianism is therefore grounded in a continual process, a process of emancipation without teleology. The present is the crucial site of the continual motion by which the New comes into being, the In-Front-Of-Us is always a possibility emerging from the past. In traditional postcolonial societies the radically New is always embedded in and transformed by the past.

One of the most common, and popular, demonstrations of this is the limbo dance, a performance of slave history, which re-enacts the crossing of the Middle Passage in a continual reminder of memory, survival and cultural resurrection. As Kamau Brathwaite puts it

Limbo
Limbo like me
Long dark deck and the water surrounding me
Long dark deck and the silence is over me (Brathwaite, 1969: 35)

The dancer goes under the limbo stick in an almost impossible bodily contortion, emulating the subjection of the slave body in the journey across the Atlantic but rising triumphant on the other side. The performance of memory is a constant reminder of a future horizon, a 'return' that performs each time the 'rising' of the slave body into a future marked not only by survival but also by renewal, hybridity and hope.

While the limbo performs the act of historical and cultural memory, the woman in Grace Nicholls' "One Continent / To Another" finds memory embodied in the unborn child

From the darkness within her
from the dimness of previous
incarnations
the Congo surfaced
so did Sierra Leone and the
gold Coast which she used to tread
searching the horizons for lost
moons (Thieme, 1996: 582)

There is perhaps no better figure of a future inspired by memory than the unborn child. But performed or embodied, memory becomes a profound orientation to the future.

The myth of return transformed into the horizon of future identity sums up the most important cultural effect of slavery and slave-descended populations in the Caribbean. For if there is no return, there will be no rescue. And so, gradually, this region has developed some of the most profoundly transformative concepts of cultural living: hybridity, creolization. Kamau Brathwaite is one of the most thoughtful celebrants of Caribbean transformation and in the poem “Islands” we see this affirmation of the hope for a different future in a way that reveals the

Looking through a map
of the islands, you see
that history teaches
that when hope
splinters, when the pieces
of broken glass lie
in the sunlight,
when only lust rules
the night, when the dust
is not swept out
of the houses,
when men make noises
louder than the sea's
voices; then the rope
will never unravel
its knots, the branding
iron's travelling flame that teaches
us pain, will never be
extinguished. The islands' jewels:
Saba, Barbuda, dry flat-
tened Antigua, will remain rocks,
clots, in the sky-blue frame
of the map. (Brathwaite, 1969: 20)

The poem is a celebration of transformation: from displacement to a place humanized by its occupants; from exile to hope; from the grim history of sugar production to the possibility of beauty. This Caribbean – this ‘place’ – is not More’s utopia (nor the dystopia it might seem to the observer) but the location of the spirit of hope. Hope for Brathwaite, the kind of hope that sees a future grounded in, but not imprisoned by memory, is not an optional choice for the West Indian, but a necessity. It may be an ambiguous necessity – earlier in the poem he says the butterflies “fly higher / and higher before their hope dries.” But in a performance of Ernst Bloch’s conviction, that hope, that anticipatory consciousness, is fundamental to human life. History teaches, says the poet, that when ‘hope splinters’ then ‘the iron’s travelling flame will never be extinguished’ – the rope of historical enslavement and oppression will never unravel its knots. The hope for the region is the hope of a vibrant cultural complexity and creolization, a hope often belied by the grim realities of politics, but a necessary hope best imagined by its poets and writers.

I and We

It is perhaps no accident that the first modern dystopian novel was Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *We*. The relation between the individual and the collective continues to be one of the most vexed issues in utopian thinking because while the equality of the individuals in the collective is a fundamental principle of utopian thought, the collective is always inimical to individual fulfilment. The mobilization of society for the betterment of all, for the ‘common good’ is virtually indistinguishable in utopias and dystopias. In utopias it is assumed that the improvement in life will automatically ensure the cooperation of the individual in the perfection of society. In dystopias the fulfilment of the individual is always denied as a condition of a collective utopian dream. Individuality seems an unlikely player in visions of socialist utopias because it is so evocative of the kind of bourgeois self-fashioning nurtured by capitalism. However, the danger inherent in the destruction of individuality occupies a very prominent place in nineteenth century thought, one extended by Ernst Bloch in his allusions to Marx.

What happens when we look beyond the social collective to the cultural? Does this begin to resolve the tension between I and We? Again, the Caribbean is an interesting

example here. The first consequence of a society that has no roots, which has been transplanted in a massive diasporic movement, is the drama of subjectivity itself. The point of departure for Caribbean literatures has been to write the subject into existence, with its master theme the quest for individual identity. For for Aimé Césaire, the subject is not privileged but simply the site where the collective experience finds articulation. This is reminiscent of the ‘collective subject’ invoked by Guatemalan writer Rigoberta Menchu in her book *I, Rigoberta Menchu* (1983). The tension between the individual and collective in postcolonial writing is often resolved in such acts of dynamic identification. In Edouard Glissant, and Césaire, we find that the decentred subject is central to the poetics of the cross-cultural imagination. Such a subject is relentlessly drawn back by the urgency of resistance, the material effects of the colonizing process into identification with the cultural collective. As Derek Walcott puts it in *The Schooner Flight*:

I have Dutch, nigger and English in me,
And either I’m nobody or I’m a nation (1979: 8)

In a situation where the group is ignorant of its past, resentful of its present impotence, yet fearful of future change, the creative imagination has a special role to play. For it is the creative imagination that can focus the collective imagination, provide an identity for a subject that is dis-articulated and dispersed. Importantly, it is in writing that a collective memory must be invented; it is in writing that the myth of return is projected into the future.

The way in which the ‘space’ of utopia combines geography and culture with the vision of possibility is beautifully represented in the concept of Oceania, in which the utopianism of the Pacific islands manifests itself in an intercultural and embracing collective consciousness. The history of this region differs greatly from that of the Caribbean. Here the indigenous people maintain a continuous connection to an Oceanic past, in contrast to the slave society’s severance from an African homeland. Yet both resolve the distinction between ‘I’ and ‘We’ in a regional consciousness. In the Pacific this led to the utopian formation called “Oceania,” an ingenious redefinition of the significance of islands that had seemed tiny, insignificant and marginal. For Epeli Hau’ofa, rather than “islands in a far sea” says they could be regarded as “a sea of islands”. In Albert Wendt’s words

So vast, so fabulously varied a scatter of islands, nations, cultures, mythologies and myths, so dazzling a creature, Oceania deserves more than an attempt at mundane fact; only the imagination in free flight can hope—if not to contain her—to grasp some of her shape, plumage, and pain. (Wendt, 1976: 49)

Oceania is not only itself the name for a utopian formation, but of a particular attitude to time within which the Remembrance of the Past becomes a form of forward thinking that embeds itself in a vision of the achievable – achievable because it has been achieved.

The ambiguities inherent in utopia are explored, blurred and perhaps resolved, within postcolonial literatures by an anticipatory consciousness that lies at the core of its liberatory energy. But the question still arises: How can utopian thinking operate if it has no vision of utopia? One answer is that all utopias are critical. As Zygmunt Bauman puts it: ‘Any utopianism worth the name must engage in a significant polemic with the dominant culture’ (1976: 47). The different manifestations of this genre are nearly always at least an implicit critique of state oppression of one kind or another. Another answer is provided in Ernst Bloch’s philosophy: the utopian impulse in human consciousness does not rely on utopia as a place (unless we understand the space of freedom as a metaphoric place). Rather the dynamic function of the utopian impulse is a dual one: to engage power and to imagine change. In Bloch’s thinking nothing accomplishes this better than literature, which is inherently utopian because its *raison d’être* is the imaging of a different world. Place becomes central, not as *utopia* but as the site of transformation, the location of identity, and the generation of a utopian idea – one Bloch calls *Heimat*. Such literatures tend to resolve the ambiguities of hope. The tension between memory and the future is resolved by their constant and prophetic interaction in the present. And the ambiguous relation between ‘I’ and ‘We’ is resolved in literary approaches to a different form of insurgent, or communal identity, imagined beyond the colonial inheritance of the nation. The utopian function of postcolonial literatures is therefore located in its practice as well as its vision – the practice of confronting and transforming coercive power to produce an imagined future. Even in that most brutally repressed colony of our times – Palestine – the pen might yet throw most light on the future.

The essays gathered in this issue occupy a threshold space between the fields of postcolonial and utopian studies. Whether uncovering unexpected directions in

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postcolonial regions such as Africa or the Caribbean (Pordzik and Kesler), extending the examination into Francophone postcolonialism (Dutton and Ransom), exposing the ambiguous situation of the heirs of the *girmit* indenture embracing the American Dream (Jain), or investigating the utopian spaces of the indigenous occupants of settler colonies (Hardy), they all push the envelope of both the postcolonial and the utopian.

Ralph Pordzik addresses the utopian dimension of a Zimbabwean writer whose reputation has grown rapidly since his death. Dambudzo Marechera is a unique and uniquely difficult figure in African literature, whose short-lived career has arguably had an enormous impact on African literature as a whole, breaking the iron grip of realism in the African novel and paving the way for writers such as Ben Okri and Kofi Awoonor. As Pordzik points out, Marechera is “post-national and post-Western in every possible way,” although he categorized his own writing in terms of Bakhtin’s formula of the Menippean. Most people would not see Marechera’s bizarre, chaotic, violent and ribald writing as utopian, but Pordzik sees it as such because it is “productive and volatile beyond common expectation... it plunges into the unknown.” Building on Michael Serres’ notion of the parasitic, Pordzik offers the proposition of the parasite as postcolonial utopist, demonstrating the ways in which the postcolonial can extend the concept of the utopian in new directions.

While continuing the focus on Africa, Jacqueline Dutton emphasizes the important dimension of Francophone postcolonial studies. While postcolonial theory emerged from English departments, often those that had previously examined ‘Commonwealth Literature,’ its relevance to Francophone Iberophone and Lusophone literatures became immediately apparent although the development of postcolonial analysis in these literatures has been spasmodic and often contested, as Dutton reveals in her introductory discussion. Therefore her examination of Francophone African literature and film is doubly (or triply) significant, not only showing the relevance of Francophone postcolonial studies but also extending them into their generic and utopian possibilities. She offers a comprehensive analysis of African science fiction film and an illuminating account of Abdourahman A. Waberi’s critical dystopia *In the United States of Africa*

Amy Ransom continues the exploration of a Francophone postcolonial utopianism from French Canada and Quebec, citing its postcolonial credentials in its double

colonization and the situation it shares with other settler colonies as both colonizer and colonized. Ransom focuses on some of the productions of the science fiction movement in Quebec, in particular an exhaustive account of Esther Rochon's six volume *Les Chroniques infernales*. This work reverses heaven and hell in a fascinating play on the concept of the utopian and in particular the contrast between a static (dystopian) heaven and an open-ended, constantly changing hell, a reflection of Darko Suvin's utopia of "societies in process, straining to come into being and open to change." Rochon's work gets to the very heart of the ambiguous relationship between utopia and dystopia, revealing the dystopian dimensions of the achieved utopia and the paradoxical requirement for progression and change, of what Ernst Bloch calls the 'Not Yet' in the utopian.

Corina Kesler places postcolonial utopianism in the broader context of non-Western utopian traditions seeing connections in the oppressed groups seeking not a geographical space, but a 'when' (uchronia or intopia) of mythical, or mystical time. She asks important questions such as: How does a Ghanaian, Nigerian, or Indian imagine utopia? How many of their projects' precepts are borrowed from the colonizer's utopian theories and practices, and how many are their own? How much of the native culture is recovered in these accounts? She begins an answer with a brief comparison between Shakespeare's and Césaire's *The Tempest* and continues with a discussion of some of the works of Ben Okri, Amitav Ghosh and Kojo Laing to show the interplay of language transformation and generic disruption in the postcolonial utopian project.

Anupama Jain examines a different kind of utopian ambiguity in an examination of the implications and consequences of a project called Guyanese Opportunities. This targeted ethnic Indians who had emigrated from South America, and revealed both an ongoing investment in the American Dream and a return to earlier imperialist fantasies about new worlds. The imperial project itself was comprehensively utopian and the utopianism of colonized peoples often develops in a way that subverts the utopian ambitions of the civilizing mission. Both forms speculate on a different future, one by extension, the other by liberation, and this distinction makes all the difference in postcolonial utopianism. Jain's examination of the term 'Indian' in the U.S. "reinforces how utopianism and postcolonialism... are intractably conjoined by the palimpsestic

histories associated with the New World.” As an unforeseen chapter in in South Asian engagement with the American Dream Guyanese Opportunities reveals the possibilities and paradoxes of postcolonial utopian discourse.

Karl Hardy addresses King Utopus’ treatment of the indigenous inhabitants of Abraxa before it became renamed Utopia to dwell on a different kind of ambiguity – the process of *indigenizing* undertaken by the settler society. This is a process, as is the settler society’s sense of being colonized by imperial power that differs greatly between the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand or as Hardy suggests, the situation of Palestinians. Nevertheless he endorses a move that positions indigenous peoples at the centre of utopian studies, a process of ‘unsettling’ the settler population. Ultimately he seeks a “re-articulation of utopia as a means of accountability to settler colonial critique and the efforts of Indigenous peoples and their allies to reconstitute an unsettled society.”

We might continue to hope that the investigation of postcolonial utopianism may ‘unsettle’ the received ideas of both fields. The idea of utopian thinking is still contested in postcolonial studies by those who remain locked into a binaristic view of colonial (and now global) resistance as simple oppositionality. Utopianism may further demonstrate the transformative agency of formerly colonized peoples. Utopian Studies, on the other hand, might welcome the spaces of utopianism beyond Western modernity, and Kumar’s assertion (1987: 19) that Utopia is not universal might need to be modified by a closer study of non-Western traditions. In short, postcolonial utopianism offers to extend the horizons of both fields.

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