Utopian Possibilities: Models, Theories, Critiques

EDITED BY

Liam Benison

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Coleção Transversal

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Introduction: Towards Utopian Possibilities

Liam Benison

> Every utopia is a hovering, a suspension, between possibility and impossibility.
> PAUL TILLICH

Paul Tillich highlighted the essential tension of utopian hope, which the authors of the essays in this volume address from a variety of perspectives. As Ruth Levitas explains, although utopia has "real power to transform the given, social world, including the economic", Tillich warns that a side effect of the struggle "to negate the negative in human experience" is disillusionment as a result of the failure to recognize the provisionality of utopian possibilities (Levitas, 2013: 17–18). This tension is essential to modern utopian thinking, one set in play by Thomas More, who Fátima Vieira argues, is responsible for reconfiguring utopian desire as a tension between the affirmation of a possibility and the negation of its fulfilment (Vieira, 2010: 4). Engagement with this tension is critical to realizing the best possibilities from utopian thought and action.

The objective of this volume is to explore the power of the utopian imagination, and to submit old and new utopian models and discourses to analysis and critique. The thirty-eight brief essays consider many kinds of utopian models that have been proposed from the Renaissance to the present day. They include literary, architectural, and visual artistic models, as well as historically realized communities that have challenged societies' politics, and reshaped their imagined communities. While the utopian imagination by definition assumes a more positive vision of the future, the realization of changes inspired by utopian visions will not be regarded as positive for all. What Tom Moylan refers to as the "negative function" of reshaping society for the better entails necessary destruction. While we might hope, like Moylan, that the destruction "unleashes new progressive energies as it cuts through the knots of structural and ideological atrophy", the fierce opposition, if not, repression, that will be aroused in those social and political agents whose power and privileges

are challenged may in itself shift social perceptions and definitions of what is utopian, anti-utopian, or dystopian, depending on one's perspective and position in a changing social order. In their separate essays, Michel Macedo Marques and Ceren Ünlü highlight the extent to which the meaning and evaluation (positive or negative) of imagined communities and shared memories of events can be transformed in the course of the struggle between progressive and reactionary social forces. Typically, utopians have a tendency to focus on the light on the hill at the expense of the challenges and risks of the climb, and of what might be lost along the way. Indeed, it might be argued that such a focus is essential to maintain hope in the possibility of change for the better, and persist in struggling with the complex problems and against the resistance that must attend change in complex societies. The essays in this book address the tension between these poles in a variety of ways.

One persistent thread through these essays is the question of how knowledge has been used in the past and might be used in the future to construct an inclusive society that allows for the happiness and well-being of all its citizens. Nina Liebhaber and Lars Keller submit this question to sustained analysis in their essay, and argue for the need to understand the nature of utopian knowledge in a more systematic way so that we can understand how to reshape knowledge for positive utopian objectives. Lisa Garforth also considers the problem of knowledge; in particular, the gap between knowledge and action in discussions of how to motivate behavioural changes to ameliorate climate change. She points to the importance of desire in determining how to deal with the phenomenon that Kim Stanley Robinson so aptly named "The Dithering", as part of her argument for why the utopian imagination is so important in discussions of how to respond more decisively to climate change.

The essays by Marques and Ünlü are also revealing of the ways in which knowledge and social imaginary can be co-opted and manipulated by powerful political, military, and economic interests to stymie progressive social change. These historical essays have important relevance for contemporary democratic struggles to realize a more inclusive foundation for a wider sharing of wealth and power in deeply unequal and authoritarian societies. These essays demonstrate that the raw material of utopian possibilities lies all around us, in the institutions and traditions of the social fabric and in the minds and memories of people. The challenge is to awaken hope and belief in the possibility of change in enough people. Martin Greenwood and JC Niala examine two unique social institutions of Britain—the Post Office and the allotment—to find utopian sources of hope and inspiration for social reform that might offer paths to a more equal and cohesive, less authoritarian future.

Utopian Possibilities is divided into nine parts, which address different themes or disciplinary approaches to the question of how the discourses, conceptions, and literary works of the utopian tradition might inform the search for new possibilities that can break through the resistance and dithering that ossifies many contemporary political, social, economic, and legal frameworks.

With respect for the essentially spatial and architectural nature of utopian thought (Leibacher-Ouvrard, 1989: 93; Marin, 1990: 9), the essays in Part 1 discuss models of utopia from architecture and the visual arts. Jennifer Hankin looks at the utopian implications of the ways in which contemporary art installations shock and estrange their viewers. Jennifer Raum asks some challenging questions about the possibilities for utopian architectural worldbuilding. Filipe Brandão looks at digital methods that are facilitating new ways of both imagining and constructing interior living spaces with potential benefits for both user participation and climate harm reduction. Pavla Veselá meditates on the idiosyncratic utopian propositions of the Russian Futurist Velimir Khlebnikov.

Part 2 looks in depth at three historical models of utopian society. Anna Di Bello introduces three essays that trace the evolution of the connection between the concept of utopia and ideas of the perfect society: Francesca Russo's historical analysis of the utopian theories of Antonio Brucioli, Italia Maria Cannataro's breakdown of the principles of Domingo F. Sarmiento's transatlantic notion of utopia in *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*, and Anna Rita Gabellone's unveiling of the history of council communism in Britain.

The history of influential literary models of utopia are the focus of essays in Part 3. Liam Benison examines the shift in utopian conceptions of privacy and private property between Thomas More's *Utopia* and Hendrik Smeeks's *Krinke Kesmes*. Gabriella Hartvig reads some creative and varied Hungarian interpretations of *Robinson Crusoe*. Albert Göschl looks at the expression of nineteenth-century discourses of hygiene in utopian works by Jules Verne and Paolo Mantegazza. Marta Komsta delves into the world of nineteenth-century Spiritualism to show how it combines notions of the afterlife with progressive ideology and desire for radical reform. Finally, Kenneth Hanshew compares two important and distinctive South Slavic utopias.

Part 4 is devoted to the examination of the creation and reshaping of a number of models of imagined community. Michel Macedo Marques discusses the fate of the twentieth-century Brazilian intentional community Caldeirão da Santa Cruz do Deserto, which combined messianic, ecological, and socialist characteristics. Ceren Ünlü shows how the Turkish state set out to suppress the memory of progressive political activism in the 1960s and 1970s. José Eduardo Reis unpicks Svetlana Alexievich's response to the fall of the Soviet imaginary in *Secondhand Time*. Martin Greenwood walks us through the British Post Office's

potential to inspire social democratic renewal. JC Niala highlights the structures of diversity and openness in Britain's allotment movement. Finally, Cristina Gil introduces the conceptualization of Deaftopia, discussing a variety of ways in which the imaginary of d/Deaf communities is constructed.

Literary evocations of utopian playfulness, dystopian counterpoint, and possibility are the focus of essays in Part 5, which discuss a number of prominent and lesser known literary utopias and dystopias. Divya Singh examines the Dalit novel within the framework of utopianism, considering the ways in which the anti-caste politics of Paul Chirrakarode's *Pulayathara* mobilizes a disruption of the real. Kevin Hogg looks at how Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* anticipates more recent developments in gender identity politics. Matthew Leggatt calls for greater recognition of the possibilities of the utopian form's playfulness, taking his cue from a Facebook group called Boring Dystopia. Evanir Pavloski questions the myth of a rigid opposition between utopia and dystopia through the lens of Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas". Bence Gábor Kvéder continues the critique of the border between utopia and dystopia by looking at the legacy of Swiftian satire in a recent Hungarian adaptation of *Gulliver's Travels*. Finally, Adela Catană and Mary-Jane Rădulescu turn their enquiry to the problem of memory and identity in *The Hunger Games* and *The Maze Runner*, considering the dystopian implications of psychological stress and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Part 6 has three reflections on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Nusret Ersöz reads against the grain for the threads of Orwell's ideas on moderation and decency, while Almudena Machado-Jiménez reads in a different direction to deconstruct Orwell's patriarchal imagination from a feminist perspective. Imola Bülgözdi then brings Orwell into the post-truth era with a reading of the visual novel, *Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength*, which allows readers to navigate the moral dilemmas of our times for themselves.

Possibilities to address the climate crisis and the dysfunctional social impacts of capitalism are the subject of Part 7. Lisa Garforth argues that two pairs of contradictory elements of utopia, namely, cognitive estrangement and affective inspiration, and critique and affirmation, are valuable resources to confront climate change. António Ferreira and Ori Rubin dissect the problematics of the triple-imperatives of twenty-first century capitalism: endless acceleration of mobility, proliferation of digital technologies, and the desire for incessant economic growth. Tom Redshaw deconstructs the cyberlibertarian utopianism of crypto-capitalism, subjecting the widely propagated utopian possibilities of Bitcoin to a rare and incisive critique. Cara Linley considers the possibilities and questions offered by post-apocalyptic fictions to reimagine how property rights might be constructed outside the framework of the nation-state.

The three essays in Part 8 subject the social consequences of the spreading use of artificial intelligence (AI) to sustained analysis through the exploration of a variety of literary works. Ilenia Vittoria Casmiri outlines the ways in which Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* highlights the complex questions about human empathy which are raised by the advent of robots with AI. Dana Svorova provides a thought-provoking counterpoint to Casmiri's analysis with her exploration of emotional AI in several science fiction works. Through the lens of Richard K. Morgan's "Altered Carbon" trilogy, Anna Bugajska considers how future law might be designed to address the dilemmas posed by AI and biotechnology.

The final part of the book has three essays that present theoretically informed overviews of approaches to utopian education, knowledge, and utopian transformation. Zorica Đergović-Joksimović asks the provocative question, "Can utopia be taught and, consequently, learned?" Most utopian scholars are also teachers, and focus on the teaching of the tradition, while many are also invested in activism, and in encouraging others to *become* utopians, in the words of Moylan. Offering students the opportunity to write their own utopias as Đergović-Joksimović has done remains rare. Her students surprised her, and may surprise readers, with their ideas.

Nina Liebhaber and Lars Keller argue that utopian thinking, however open to alternative possibilities, needs modelling and guidance. They propose a typology of utopian knowledge, a framework to facilitate productive forms of utopian education able to identify blind spots and anti-utopian ideas. The authors aspire to develop new approaches to knowledge, and emphasize that utopian thinking embraces the many ways in which we can know the world, including feelings, dreams and hopes.

Finally, Tom Moylan issues a cautionary note about the positivity, optimism, or hope that readers might discern in many of the essays. Moylan warns us to be vigilant to ensure that our utopian thinking and speculation is informed by "a critical negation of the present order of things" in order to truly open up the possibility of genuine change by becoming better utopians. He recommends Marx's "ruthless critique" of the current order as the exemplum for the utopian approach.

As in utopian studies generally, these essays do not propose blueprints for change but rather propositions, critiques of theories and ideas, considered in the context of different disciplinary frameworks including art and architecture, literary criticism, history, law, and a sociological analysis of technological developments such as AI. The essays in this volume accept the premise that utopianism is a form of social critique, a stimulus to critical thinking about the social, political, ecological, and other "wicked" problems that create conflicts, divisions, and inhumane consequences in modern societies.

The diversity of essays offers readers a variety of approaches to the question of the possibilities inherent and inspirational in the particular forms of thought and artistic production which we may call utopian. We hope that those interested in utopian possibilities will find something of interest whatever your particular perspective or disciplinary background.

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Art and Architecture

1.1. Shock, Tension, Offence, and Satire in Utopian Contemporary Art

Jennifer Hankin

Abstract

In this paper, I discuss versions of utopia which offer challenging or controversial perspectives expressed through environments modelled in contemporary installation art. I will focus on the darker side of utopia and analyse how the artist constructs worlds which may provoke unrest, or transform the gallery space into something unexpected, confrontational, or potentially shocking. I locate the installation artwork as a place-making device in which imaginary worlds can be explored, and the physical impact of the work has the power to shock, disrupt, and engage the viewer from disconcerting and politically controversial positions.

Key words: utopia, world-building, place-making, installation, satire

To demonstrate the connection between the installation artwork, the imagination, and a physical engagement with place, I analyse Yinka Shonibare's *Gallantry and Criminal Conversation* (2002), an installation artwork produced as part of the art biennale *Documenta* XI (*Figure 1*). The artwork critiqued is modelled within a temporary exhibition space in Kassel, Germany where five of Shonibare's works are exhibited together culminating in an overall environment. The five works featured together feature sex acts and are titled *Threesome* (2002), *Woman with Leg Up* (2002), *Parasol* (2002), *Carriage* (2002), and *Fellatio* (2002). The artwork incorporates two historical points of reference. Firstly, Criminal Conversation was a law condemning adultery, which was still active in England up until 1857. Secondly, the work stages a scene from the "grand tour", the journey taken across Europe usually by the aristocracy for the purposes of cultural enhancement. It provided an opportunity for extended travel, and was popular throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The grand tour was typically a European phenomenon and included cultural capitals, for example, Venice, Rome, and Paris. In the words of historian Jeremy Black (1985: 109), "[t]ravel abroad provided a great opportunity for

sexual adventure", as travellers often had time and wealth to invest in recreational activity. In 1715, the Earl of London recounts that "[i]t is impossible to take more freedom than that place allows" (Black, 1990: 339) as the grand tour often included opulent celebration and the exhibition of personal wealth.

However, Shonibare's interpretation of the grand tour refers to a different aspect of the utopian traveller. He conveys a sense of anonymity through the act of travel which facilitates a departure from social convention. The audience encounters headless performers and public sexual acts portrayed as free from social restraint. Participation in Shonibare's grand tour is staged within a scene where the traditional rules of social conduct and propriety are suspended. Placelessness is emphasized through an imaginary environment depicted in transit. Packing cases have been discarded and loosely stacked; and a stagecoach is hung overhead. This is a mobile place outside the permanency of what is familiar or established.

Gallantry and Criminal Conversation locates a relationship prompted by the artwork as a space apart. Michel Foucault's essay "Of Other Spaces' (1984), based on a lecture given in March 1967, established social ritual as a performance of alterity; however, an alternative view on the production of anonymity

has been argued by Marc Augé. In *Non-Places: An Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995), he describes an emerging "placelessness", as society produces "ephemeral or transient" places in which human relations are characterized as impersonal within structures of movement or passing through.

However, in Shonibare's independent world, "placelessness" has a dual purpose. It enables the set-up of a location (or non-location) within which alternative social behaviours can be explored, but it also essential for the engagement with shock and humour. Critical distance enables an objective and flexible perception of events where ridicule or mockery become possible. An audience's awareness of engaging with fiction — with a non-place — enables the artist to push the boundaries of propriety and offer creative, explicit, and provocative depictions. These are imaginary acts, positioned as if elsewhere and at a distance.

The "placelessness" that I suggest, however, also establishes a viewing paradox. Shonibare's communication of humour also relies on a tense visual comedy which centres on corporeality. The human scale, primary contact, and scope of the work physically confronts the viewer, enhancing the potential to create unrest. However, the modelling of these sexual acts also emphasizes the ridiculousness and performative aspects of the situation. An example of this is the balancing of copulating figures on the fine point of a parasol, a visually absurd composition; or hands steadied on piles of travelling trunks. These theatrical gestures are elevated to farce as the work signals to a self-conscious pageantry. Elaborate costumes and exaggerated behaviours contribute to the flamboyance of *Gallantry and Criminal Conversation*, and signal an underlying humour attached to the staging of the sexually explicit actions that the viewer encounters.

This mockery is juxtaposed with serious themes of culture and conquest which extrapolate an underlying tension in Shonibare's fictional scene. His practice is designed to "question the validity of contemporary cultural identities", highlighting a language of provocation rather than didactic communication (Shonibare, 2018). In *Gallantry and Criminal Conversation* cultural politicization is inferred through Shonibare's utilization of fabric design and pattern. Shonibare questions cultural supposition through utilizing Dutch wax textiles with complex cultural origins. The fabrics borrow batik processes from Indonesia, a Dutch colony at the time of original manufacture in the seventeenth century, yet have rich associations with Africa. Shonibare achieves a further level of obfuscation through the cultural juxtaposition of Victorian costumes made from these brightly coloured prints. The patterns are reminiscent of African cultures subjugated by the British Empire. This is a presentation of a world in which cultural associations are reconfigured and uprooted. The installation artwork provides an entry point to a world elsewhere, and by doing so, a new world of contradiction is established.

I interpret Shonibare's work as a social commentary, drawing on Merlin Coverley's definition of satire as a sub-genre of utopianism. He writes, "the satirical utopia is as old as the genre itself, its primary aim being to highlight the short comings and absurdities of contemporary society" (Coverley, 2016: 68). Playful juxtapositions of social histories, hypocrisies, and an exposure of the complexity of cultural attribution suggest a social interrogation of views which claim cultural autonomy. However, insight is also provided by Nicole Pohl, who, in contrast to Coverley, offers a more visual description of satire as a "world upside down", which "may serve as a satirical ploy to ridicule contemporary deficiencies" (Pohl, 2010: 66). Pohl distils an optical aspect of satire which may display physical and visual transformations as social critique. In *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), for example, visual humour and juxtaposition is utilized for powerful effect. The Lilliputians' enlarged sense of self-importance is contrasted with the actual size of individual citizens not six inches high (Swift, 2003: 13). The Lilliputians' description of the city of Mildendo as a "metropolis" also suggests social pretention, as the city is approximately 500 feet square (Swift, 2003: 13).

The visual of Shonibare's world also portray an exploration of contradiction. The recognizable Victorian styling of Shonibare's scene, for example, transitions from something visually familiar into another version of itself, as African textiles are imprinted onto historical costume. An aesthetic mismatch is also evident in the work, as lively textile prints create visual pleasure, yet the overall scene portrays raw and controversial sexual content. I read these visuals as a strategy for creating new ways of looking and seeing, as an arresting combination of textile design, historical costume, and overt sexuality are modelled. However, *Criminal Gallantry and Conversation* is also an artwork which instigates resistance. The politicization of racial and cultural supposition is reflected upon the visiting audience. On contact with the work, the prejudices of the viewer are challenged and explored, leading to an uncomfortable space for viewing.

The physical building of worlds in an exhibition space establishes *Criminal Gallantry and Conversation* as a three-dimensional scene in a public place. The exhibition space, therefore, and the encounter with explicit fiction, is potentially experienced as part of a communal viewing audience. This group dynamic creates the opportunity for shared dialogue and a shared experience of humour, but also produces a potentially uncomfortable space where an audience member may feel inhibited. Controversial works in the exhibition space may provoke feelings of unrest and disgust towards explicit subject matter, and this in turn raises questions as to how the exhibition reflects the outside world, and the expectation of the viewing public on entering the space. An unusual and challenging spectrum of viewing possibilities is created within *Criminal Gallantry and Conversation,* which are usually outside the scope of the exhibition viewing experience. Shock, embarrassment, or ridicule form part of a testing relationship with the exhibition facilitated by the installation artwork.

However, the explicitness of the work depicted also scaffolds a confrontational space where tension counteracts audience apathy or indifference. The role of provocation, therefore, can be conceptualized as part of an aim of audience transformation. Through challenging preconceptions of propriety, race, and culture, Shonibare introduces an alternative world view, communicated through the lens of a place-making device which prompts an engagement with challenging and complex topics. From this perspective, the utopianism in *Gallantry and Criminal Conversation* is part of a transformative audience process of social engagement rather than the portrayal of a world considered more ideal than the viewers' contemporary society.

In summary, *Gallantry and Criminal Conversation* embodies a place apart, where an engagement with 'placelessness' is visualized as a physical space of alterity. In a similar vein to the traditions of satire, I locate Shonibare's artwork as an exposure of the hypocrisy of a bourgeois society claiming moral authority. The mannequins highlight the supposed conservatism of the upper classes, while depicting sexual acts in public. In addition, the artwork creates the opportunity to encounter a visual and physical manifestation of a satirical world which challenges cultural and racial assumptions. Provocation, shock, and tension all contribute to a space of resistance, where confrontation establishes a mutual dialogue with the audience and performs the essential role of social critique. This approach to world-making highlights how artists are engaging with both positive and negative emotional responses in contemporary installation, and points towards a significant role for controversy in emerging practice.

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1.2. From Masterplan to Masterplanet: Architectural Worldbuilding

Jennifer Raum

Abstract

As an epistemological method, the imaginative narrative densifies possible and impossible global constructions, entanglements, and relationships within our reality. This turns the characteristic architectural utopian spirit of discovery from a future projection or an occupation of space — sometimes understood as a form of colonization — towards a discovery of reality in which we can question our current assumptions and viewpoints. In widening the horizon of architectural utopias, which have long been read solely from a representational perspective, these imaginative utopian narratives explore future relations without aiming for universal validity or realization. Architectural worldbuilding is therefore proposed as a counterposition to pragmatic utopianism, with its focus on formalism and finality, in order to dissolve the rigidity within the utopian by extending the spectrum of viewpoints on our environment.

Key words: worldbuilding, grand narrative, reality, environment, estrangement

> Utopia is a not state, not an artists' colony. It is the dirty secret of all architecture, even the most debased: deep down all architecture, no matter how naïve and implausible, claims to make the world a better place.
> KOOLHAAS, 2004

In spite of Koolhaas' reference to the immaterial presence of the utopian in architecture, the "dirty secret" still seems to be all too often rooted in the human spirit of discovery. While entrepreneurs have long since grown weary

of the planet and its habitat and are already directing that spirit of discovery towards the vastness of the cosmos, in one of their latest projects, the Bjarke Ingels Group has chosen the referencelessness of the open sea to locate — or rather *not* locate — Oceanix City, a ten thousand resident floating city. Despite maintaining sustainable building standards, the design of this city can be seen as another attempt by Bjarke Ingels Group to fulfill its self-imposed goal "to change the surface of our planet" by "hitting the fertile overlap between pragmatic and utopia" (Bjarke Ingels Group, 2021). More in a modern than in a postmodern sense, the Bjarke Ingels Group thus defies the complex climatic problem of rising sea levels through small-scale architectural intervention. The ghost of social transformation may be inherent in the project (see Martin, 2010: 150), but its haunting seems limited to an exclusive group of inhabitants.

Due to its morphological similarity to concentric urban designs from centuries past, Oceanix City offers potential clients or residents the promise of a "good life" through its form-given architectural structure — according to an object-based analysis of architectural utopias. However, a comparison of the utopian significance of Oceanix City to Bertolt Brecht's understanding of estrangement opens up a different interpretation. In his writings on theatre, Brecht emphasizes the fact that estranged representation "allows us to recognize the object, yet at the same time causes it to appear strange" (Brecht, 1967: 680). If one then focuses on the blurred environment rather than on the object under the lens, the proposed architectural structure of Oceanix City would offer a more conscious consideration of the present, familiar ecological environment. Yet, instead of this alienating effect unfolding, the lens is solely directed toward the represented object. The effect is thus not operative, and rather than a disillusion of the proposed environment, it appears estranged and illusory.

From Masterplan to Masterplanet

Masterplanet, another emerging project of the Bjarke Ingels Group, builds on Oceanix City, both theoretically and formally. In proposing a new global building standard consisting of ten major factors that need to be handed on to future collaborators and governments, the project demonstrates a method based on the upscaling of small-scale architectural interventions to a masterplan and ultimately to a "Masterplanet". The efforts made to materialize this project reflect a deep pragmatic utopianism, based on the notion of an architectural utopia as a final state or blueprint.

Despite its global scale, Masterplanet belongs to the category of projects which are not radically projective enough, a fact often discussed by researchers (Jeinić, 2019: 14) in the context of architectural criticism, following Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting's call for a more projective architecture in "Notes Around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism" (2002). Masterplanet, with its formal emphasis on the finished architectural product, sits squarely in the modernist tradition, embedded in a time in which we are well aware of architecture being either in a constant flow of objects (following new materialism) or within contingent, emerging, and changing circumstances (following actor-network-theory). Despite this ontological distinction, the shift from the architectural artefact to a "thing among other things" is an ecological liberation from the anthropocentric distinction between objects and living beings. Furthermore, thinking with, or rather *in* an "ontology that assigns primacy to processes of formation as against their final products" (Ingold, 2010: 2–3) serves as protection against a condition of disempowerment and creative stagnation.

Developing a Different Spirit of Discovery

In a recent publication, Bruno Latour evokes an inward-looking planet. In referring to two current crises (climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic), he warns: "Locked-down of the world unite! You have the same enemies, the people who'd like to escape to another planet" (Latour, 2021: 68, my translation). In light of Oceanix City and Masterplanet, this appears as a clear statement against the indulgence of the market-driven, boundless spirit of discovery and argues for our attention to be directed *toward* our planet and its infrastructure, not away from it. While Bjarke Ingels' driving force seems to be his loss of trust, not only in an ability to act projectively through politics, but also in a scientific ability to act per se,[1] Latour argues for collective action instead of reactionism (2021: 161). But where to address this collective inward-looking spirit of discovery? How to uncover the complexity and the entanglement of the present, or dis-assemble the taken-for-granted to create meaning, to formulate the problem in Latour's terms (2005)?

In the speculative narrative *Planet City*, architect and filmmaker Liam Young refers to a scientific concept by biologist Edward O. Wilson. While the Half-Earth Project proposes declaring half of the planet as a natural reserve in order to preserve biodiversity (Wilson, 2016), Young radicalizes this concept further, imagining a single Planet City inhabited by the entire global population, which

surrenders the rest of the planet to a global wilderness. Young moves away from the idea of intervening through masterplans and suggests instead a global utopian world based on scientific research. He therefore proposes an undoubtedly different nature of discovery. Young tries to dispel any concerns of an implied universality: "This is not a neo-colonial masterplan to be imposed from a singular position of power. … Piece by piece we will dismantle the world we once knew and remake it in new configurations" (Young, 2021: 40–1).

Mirroring a growing awareness of the increase in climate change in his imaginative narrative, Young strongly positions himself against the "continuation of the colonialist project" (Fairs, 2021). Narratives as scaling devices can therefore assemble different layers, local as well as global. They visualize possible worlds that reflect on our present infrastructures in order to reach a condition of balance between the human and the non-human — not as grand narratives, but as heuristic approaches: "As we write stories, we write the world — and in this way storytelling can be considered a critical act of design" (Young, 2021: 35).

Disentangling the Entanglement

Utopian narratives which question our current situation and imagine ecological reconfigurations change our perception of time; so argued the phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur (1990: 207). A specific world may be projected in the future, but the perception of time implies that the narrative as an event is discussed and perceived in the present: "What is proper to every event is that it brings the future that will inherit from it into communication with a past narrated differently" (Stengers, 2015: 39). The utopian not only represents and preconfigures intermediate states but also investigates and interprets human and non-human ecological relations in the present. Through an understanding of the world "as an unformed but generative flux of forces and relations that work to produce particular realities" (Law, 2004: 6), the focus of consideration does not shift the depicted world in the future, as it is often discussed in the context of utopian research, but the narrative instead offers an extension of present reality.

Ruth Levitas has contributed significantly to the idea of the utopian as a method. In relation to temporality, she argues that the "relation between realism and utopia may be considered as tension or contradiction" (Levitas, 2013: 128). In light of the pragmatic utopian spirit of discovery, these doubts seem to be reasonable. However, if storytelling is accepted as a part of our reality instead of being seen as a possible or impossible alternative, Reinhold Martin's

claim that utopia's ghost "infuses everyday reality with other, possible worlds, rather than some otherworldly dream" (2010: 5) misses its target. Martin's argument for "utopian realism" is based on a concept of reality that is founded on an imbalance between the material and non-material environment. In our entangled present we neither need "other, possible worlds" nor "otherworldly dreams", but new, hitherto unknown perspectives and ways of seeing that enrich our knowledge. As Latour enquires in his essay, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern":

> Can we devise another powerful descriptive tool that deals this time with matters of concern and whose import then will no longer be to debunk but to protect and to care, as Donna Haraway would put it? Is it really possible to transform the critical urge in the ethos of someone who adds reality to matters of fact and not subtract reality? (Latour, 2004: 232)

Criticizing the conventional epistemic method that (scientific) knowledge is only achieved by adopting an impartial view from nowhere, Donna Haraway argues for a "practice of objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing" (Haraway, 1988: 584). These "ways of seeing" may become "ways of life" through the articulation of new utopian narratives as creative practitioners, both in revealing the construction of current human and non-human relations, and in reconstructing and exploring new realities through speculative fabulation.

Architectural Worldbuilding

Repeatedly building and rebuilding our world feeds our reality with what was previously perceived strange. Imaginative architectural worldbuilding therefore explores the world of estrangement and out-thereness through which new relationships might emerge. It offers an extension of reality through the multiplication of situated, scientific, and interrelated matters (Latour, 2005: 248), containing new points of view on the more-than-human nature of our planetary ecological system. The narrative as method is then not a simplification of reality, as the utopian is so often accused of being, but instead brings more understanding to global constructions, entanglements, and relationships: "To submit oneself to the terrifying namelessness, to unlearn the old set of meanings and names, is already to be on the path to a utopic reconfiguration of the world" (Marder & Vieira, 2011: 40).

So what if, instead of progressive formal change, the intention of architectural worldbuilding was to expand reality by questioning its actual state? An epistemological perspective offers the possibility of leaving behind the idea of a single, built reality and counteracts the tendency for anthropocentrism within the utopian. The projection of a future is thus not implied in utopian narratives; rather, they can enrich the discourse about an ecological ethics of care. The intensity of this discourse on previously unknown ecological relationships illustrates the potential of architectural worldbuilding in light of an inwardly directed spirit of discovery. Through the creation of imaginative narratives and their dissemination, we can question our viewpoints, assumptions, understandings, and relationships, and thus discover and explore the spectrum of our ecological reality.

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1.3. Designing Context-Aware Construction Systems

Filipe Brandão

Abstract

Digital frameworks for user participation in the design of affordable mass housing are being reconsidered as a co-design method to provide context-specific solutions. These methods are particularly relevant for interior renovations, whose frequency is likely to increase because of the move to homeworking, and already account for a substantial part of the carbon emissions over a building's life. In the context of the climate emergency, this requires rethinking building workflows, and open-source digital frameworks are proposed to address the need to develop specific solutions for local contexts. This essay discusses design principles for the mass customizable construction of partition walls.

Key words: mass customization, building renovation, co-design, partition walls

The notion of leveraging digital frameworks to enable user participation in designing the built environment has its roots in the sixties, and is being reconsidered now due to developments in artificial intelligence (AI), computational design, and digital fabrication. It is a revision of the modernist utopia of providing affordable housing to generic clients, replacing the top-down design methods that provide one-size-fits-all solutions with co-design methods mediated by digital systems to provide context-specific solutions to its users.

Ongoing digitalization trends have been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with implications such as the move to homeworking, long foreseen by Alvin Toffler (1980). Such change will affect all aspects of the built environment, from the way cities and houses are structured to the way construction is practised. Reintroducing work in the home will likely increase the incidence of interior renovations which already accounts for a significant part of the carbon emissions over a building's life (Addis & Schouten, 2004: 38; Sturgis, 2017).

To address the above trends in the current context of climate emergency, a fundamental shift in how buildings are procured, designed, constructed, (re)

used, and demolished is required. The problem is urgent and widespread. The required solutions should be specific for local contexts based on sustainability criteria; hence the design methods should be based on distributed open innovation to develop the building systems. Open-source digital frameworks can provide a solution to enable the design, fabrication, delivery, and reuse of systems, components, and materials (Ratti & Claudel, 2015: 105). The present article details design principles for mass-customizable and disassemble-able construction systems of partition walls for building renovation.

Democratizing Design through Computer Means

In 1969, Yona Friedman (1971) devised a proto-computational system to enable user involvement in the design process. The Flatwriter, a modified typewriting machine, would allow a future resident to design a flat to be built with prefabricated components such as partition walls, bathrooms, and kitchens. The user-designer would be granted the freedom to express preferences while the task of the architect, the designer of the system, was to warn the user and society of the consequences of the choices.

Concurrently, Nicholas Negroponte (1969) was hypothesizing human-machine collaboration in architectural design to expand the scope of architectural design services. From 1973 to 1975, Friedman collaborated with Negroponte on the Architecture-by-Yourself project, which resulted in YONA, an interactive application implemented on a computer with a touchscreen interface for non-experts to configure their apartments (Weinzapfel & Negroponte, 1976).

The idea of allowing users to control the design of their products is also at the root of the "mass customization" (MC) production and business strategy (Davis, 1987). It is an alternative mode of production that reconciles the contradictory goals of mass and custom production, and whose main enablers are computational design, digital fabrication, and the web. While MC immediately captured the imagination of architects for the possibility of exploring formal universes of design (Carpo, 2017: 58), a distinct application to "the long tail"[1] of the construction industry is now gaining relevance (Kolarevic & Duarte, 2019). In this application, the user context, in all its dimensions, is the key driver of the customization process. Configurators, product platforms, and modularity are important concepts to enable the implementation of the mass customized construction (MCC) paradigm.

MCC is founded on the premise that design variation may be objectively described by several parametric or rule-based systems. To address the challenge, the "meta-designer" must reduce the scope of the system to a specific typology and construction system; provide proper methods for mediating the objective description to allow the "instance-designer" to navigate the solution space; select the appropriate level of automation balancing cost, social, and sustainability issues; set the level of instance-designer control, balancing predictability and quality of designed solutions, and the complexity of the configuration process (Kolarevic & Duarte, 2019).

The goal of MCC is not to deliver complete freedom to the end-user but to enable the possibility of personalization of housing to clients that could not otherwise afford it, contributing to a more diverse, inclusive, and resilient built environment. Perhaps unsurprisingly, its proponents frequently draw on vernacular construction systems and building typologies as their inspiration for developing digitally fabricated construction systems (Sass & Botha, 2006; Benros *et al.*, 2011; Parvin, 2013).

Yet, simply reinstating, updating, or converting traditional construction methods to current digital fabrication tools is not enough to ensure adequate responses to contemporary challenges. In addition, although most digitally fabricated buildings can be disassembled, the reuse of systems, components, and materials in different configurations from those originally designed is often difficult or impractical. The solution seems to rest on redesigning the design process, "considering the built environment as an autonomous entity" that evolves over time with specific patterns (Ratti & Claudel, 2015: 104).

Habraken's Legacy to Mass Customized Construction

The social and economic advantages of the MCC paradigm have affinities with the ideas of separation of support and infill, which John Habraken has advocated since the 1960s, and which eventually became known in the 1980s as "open building". Habraken was one of the first authors to identify the problem of a lack of user participation and propose a systematic and holistic solution for the design, construction, and management of customizable mass housing (Habraken, 1972: 56).

Habraken (1992) argues that the adoption of open building principles, such as the separation of technical systems at their interfaces, allowing

replaceability with minimal disruption, is a precondition for the industrialization of construction and a greater degree of control over design by the user. He further states that user involvement is more important in decisions about the sub-systems for the infill of the building (*Figure 1*), where building elements such as partitions walls are changed more frequently. This was one of the factors that led Habraken and the Ahrend group to develop the Matura system between 1986 and 2000 (Kendall, 2015: 136).

Figure 1. Support and infill. The support consists of the building systems that are common to all buildings, e.g. slab, façade, roof, elevator shafts, floor landings; infill comprises all the building systems that are specific to a single horizontal property, e.g. partition walls, dropped ceiling, raised floors, and all services to one apartment.
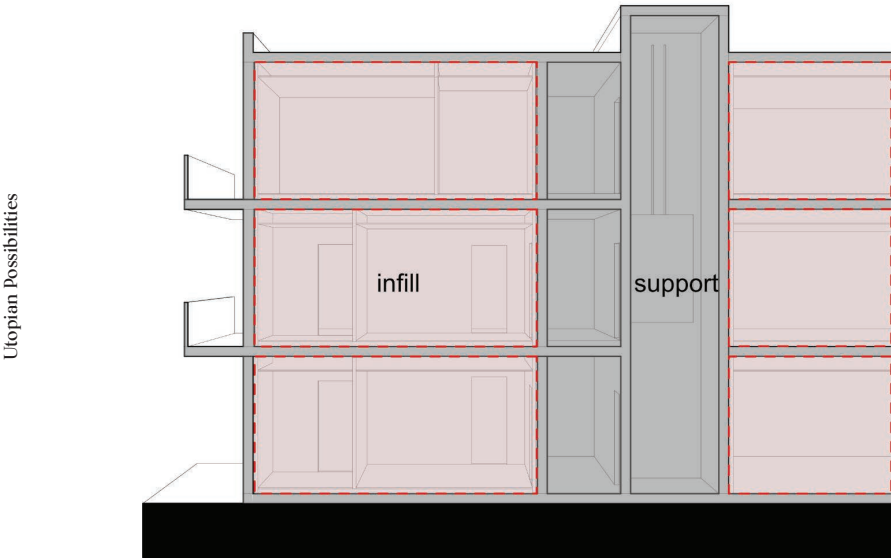
The Matura Infill System was developed for the renovation of mass-housing apartments (Kendall, 2015), and was a precursor of present MCC systems. It comprised a construction system that combined off-the-shelf building systems with coordination components and a computer system, the MaturaCAD. In the last of its two iterations, the MaturaCAD was an interactive design interface allowing the manipulation of parametric component representations to operate in tandem with the clients to customize their apartments. The system would then prepare the final design for prefabrication and the documentation for on-

site assembly. It was an integrated and open system for sharing the control of design and production between the several stakeholders, yet the process was still vertically integrated in one company holding the patents of the components that made it work (*Figure 2*).

FIGURE 2. Matura Infill System was composed of construction and design systems. The construction system was divided in an upper system, composed of off-the-self components and subsystems such as the Faay partition wall, and a lower system, composed of a baseboard profile to support the partition walls and run the electrical and telecommunication cables, and the Matrix tile, used to organize water and sewer plumbing.
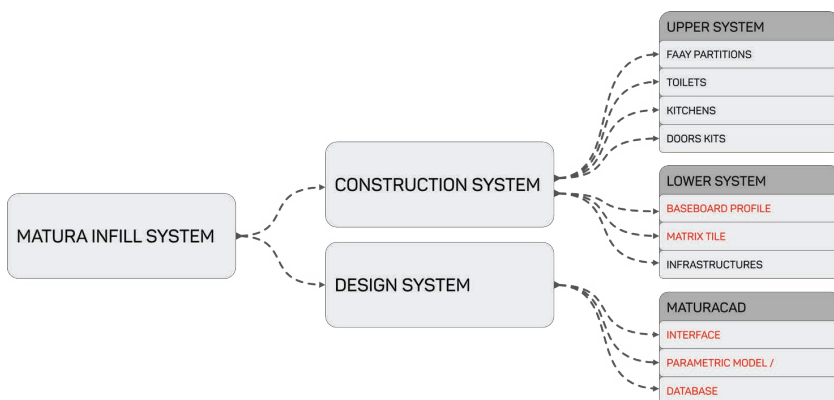
Independently of the commercial failure of the Matura Infill System, Habraken's ideas helped cement the notion that buildings are complex entities, whose parts evolve on different time scales and thus should be separable at their interfaces. These ideas have been expanded, by Francis Duffy (1990) as the theory of layers, and by Stewart Brand (1994) as the six S's (Site, Structure, Skin, Services, Space plan and Stuff), also known as the shearing layers of change (*Figure 3*). Within Brand's framework, partition walls are part of the space plan that is the most frequently changed system and with the higher number of dependencies with the other levels.

Elma Durmisevic (2006: 112) argues that simply focusing on a specific number of levels is misleading since these can be recursively divided into systems, components, and materials, each with a specific durability which may be different from the use lifecycle of the levels they are part of (Durmisevic, 2006: 112). Hence, there is a strong case for making all systems of a building decom-

posable into their most basic constituents, since doing so would maximize the opportunities for reuse at all levels of the technical decomposition of building systems. Such is the aim of the "design for disassembly" (DfD) methodology, which attempts to define principles for the design of interfaces between materials, parts, components, and systems; and the relations between the elements of each of the levels.

Figure 3. Shearing layers of change: a concept introduced by Francis Duffy (1990) for interiors and expanded by Steward Brand to the building level to describe the different rates at which different building subsystems change. Figure adapted from Brand (1994: **13**). Reproduced with permission of Stewart Brand.
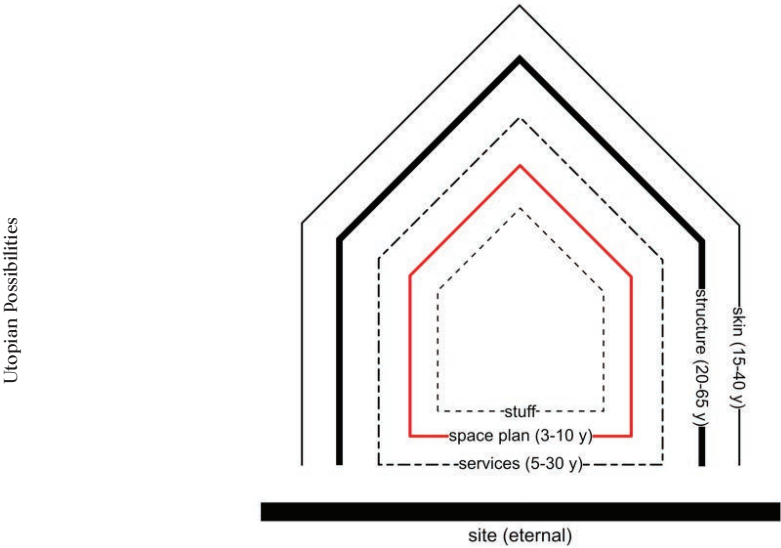
Philip Crowther identifies a comprehensive set of principles for designing buildings or construction systems that are disassemble-able. They can be summarized as: (1) reversibility of assemblies and sub-assemblies into basic materials, (2) avoiding chemical connections between different materials, (3) minimizing the number and types of different components and connectors, (4) using lightweight recyclable or recycled materials, (5) prefabricating sub-assemblies, (6) increasing interchangeability, (7) using construction technologies that are compatible with standard building practice and common tools, (8) increasing serviceability, and (9) documenting the construction process (Crowther, 2009: 230).

The combination of an open building philosophy and DfD design principles provides a firm basis to design digitally fabricated systems for building renovation that are reusable. Some principles such as modularity and interchangeability are also MCC enablers but are generally considered only from a manufacturer's point of view. Partitioning and interior finishes are the most often replaced components over the life cycle of a building; however, the partitions are usually constructed with overly permanent constructive processes or ones that cannot be reused, either as a constructive system that maintains its functionality but in new combinations, or as materials that can be reused for other purposes (Durmisevic & Yeang, 2009).

Towards a Generic Grammar

A set of design principles can be derived from the reconciliation of MCC, DfD, and building renovation guidelines with the technical requirements of partition walls (Brandão, 2022). The first critical step in the design of partition wall systems for the outlined context is to recognize that these must be designed in terms of their interfaces with the remaining building systems. Interfaces in this context are understood as "a set of design parameters describing how two objects mutually interact" (Salvador, 2007: 225), which will include both the geometry of the connection and the physical or chemical exchanges.

In addition, instead of starting the design process from a *tabula rasa*, we must start by considering the constrained condition of an assembled wall in an existing building which might be disassembled for maintenance, upgrading, or reconfiguration of the space plan, ideally with minimal disruption for the inhabitants. Disassembly for maintenance might be required if other systems, such as services, are embedded in the wall. Upgrading might be driven by a desire to change finishes or improve some aspect of performance; while space plan changes might involve removing sections or all the existing walls (Brandão, 2022).

Each of the above disassembly actions is related with a different level of the technical decomposition of the wall system. Space plan changes are the limit case that might involve a complete removal of the system to a new location, and which implies removing every component through some door. Thus, the wall system will need to be subdivided into smaller components, whose dimensions are determined by their weight and the previously mentioned constraints, but also by material dimensions and transport considerations. Consequently, there will be internal interfaces between the system components, whose nature is contingent on the ease of disassembly and the degree of combinability with other

systems components. Each component should be locally demountable without requiring the removal of other system components, to maximize the flexibility of the system to space plan adaptations. Hence, component-to-component internal interfaces should be bi-directionally reversible.

Conclusion

The above principles are generic, in the sense that no specific technical solutions are prescribed, and should be viewed as ideals to achieve. Hence, there is sufficient latitude for designers to interpret and adapt them to the specific circumstances of local contexts, design goals, closely available materials, and building practices. They should be used in conjunction with a holistic view of sustainable construction, since designing for component level disassembly and using digital fabrication might not be the most appropriate solutions in some contexts.

Designing digitally fabricated systems for component level reuse can increase the likelihood that systems, components, parts, and materials are used to the full extent of their technical life cycle. Sustainability requires local solutions to a common problem. Solutions will likely not be perfect and may have to be negotiated and iterated. A generic grammar offers a template that can be used to develop open building renovation systems for specific contexts.

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1.4. "Devise the Art of Waking Easily from Dreams": Velimir Khlebnikov's Utopian Proposals

Pavla Veselá

Abstract

This article discusses selected writings of the Russian Futurist Velimir Khlebnikov, with the intention to show that, rather than being simply nonsensical and absurd, his works such as "Proposals" reveal the nonsense and absurdity of our dehumanized, war-driven world. Khlebnikov's texts are considered against the background of debates concerning the genres of the manifesto and the critical manifesto.

Key words: Velimir Khlebnikov, Russian Futurism, manifesto, poetry, utopia

David Burlyuk, Aleksei Kruchonykh, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Velimir Khlebnikov published works in various genres in the first decade of the twentieth century, but it was through manifestos such as "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste" that they brought notice to what became known as Russian Futurism. This manifesto achieved what poems, dramas, and essays never did, and these writers and artists continued to work with the genre. The interpretation of certain Futurist texts nevertheless remains a question. Are the more absurd and aphoristic works such as Khlebnikov's "Proposals", which I consider in this article, manifestos? Are they what Kathi Weeks calls "critical manifestos"; that is, manifestos that aim seriously to intervene in the literary, cultural, and socio-political space without, to quote Weeks, "the more typical manifesto's authoritative certainty and aggressive drawing of lines in the sand" (2013: 222)? Are they artistic collages or experimental poems? Does it matter?

Manifesto

As Martin Puchner observes, the word "manifesto" initially "designate[d] a declaration of the will of a sovereign. It [was] a communication, authored by those in authority, by the state, the military or the church, to let their subjects know their sovereign intentions and laws" (2006: 12). The second lineage besides the monarchic one "derives from the religious practice of revelation or manifestation" (2006: 12). In the seventeenth century, more democratic manifestos that challenged monarchic and religious authority began to appear. Examples include documents issued by the Levellers and later, *The Communist Manifesto,* which called into being the collective subjectivity of the proletariat. The genre has not become democratic by default, even though as Janet Lyon points out, manifestos have since been written by the Communards, Suffragettes, and Black Panthers, among others, with explicit anti-colonial and feminist agendas. The word "manifesto" has functioned "as a center of gravity" (Puchner, 2006: 16), but manifestos have had a variety of other names including "declaration", "proposalle" or "petition" (Puchner, 2006: 16), and therefore the genre is better defined by its intended performative function. Although manifestos need be neither prosaic nor verbal, and a "case can be made for the poem-manifesto, the painting-manifesto, [and] the aphorism-manifesto" (Caws, 2001: xxix), they aim to intervene in the status quo and the dominant vision of history by provoking transformative subjectivity into being. As Weeks writes of *The Communist Manifesto*, "[t]he traditional utopia of the sort the utopian socialists produced sought to outline a new and improved social world; the *Manifesto* wants to call into being the political actors who could create it" (2013: 218).

Weeks points out that "critical manifestos" resemble "critical utopias" in that they are self-reflexive and non-authoritative; incomplete, imperfect, and impermanent. Moreover, "the category of the critical manifesto might also help us to read *all* manifestos differently, to find ambiguity in what looks like certainty, provocation in what at first encounter sounds only like pontification, joy in what might feel simply like rage, and open, hopeful speculation in what might be rhetorically packaged as command or prediction" (Weeks, 2013: 229, original emphasis). This appears particularly true of artistic manifestos, which have frequently revelled in provocation and speculation, to the extent that Puchner distinguishes between the intended performative function of political manifestos and the "calculated theatricality" (2006: 5) of artistic ones, notably manifestos of the modernist avant-garde. In his view, "theatrical manifestos of the Futurists or Dadaists seem to have given up entirely on the desire for authority and real change and instead delight in theatrical pranks and the liberties provided by the theaters" (2006: 25). From this perspective, artistic manifestos are rather art for art's sake.

Keeping in mind these thoughts about manifestos, critical manifestos, and theatrical manifestos, I will now turn to Khlebnikov's "Proposals".

"Proposals"

In the preface to a selection of Klebnikov's works, Yuri Tynianov warned in 1928 that Khlebnikov's biography should not be allowed to stifle his poetry" (2019: 217). However, the author's writing is difficult to read without considering how it emerged. Viktor Vladimirovich Khlebnikov was born in the province of Astrakhan and spent much of his youth in this multicultural and multireligious region. He wrote poetry first under the influence of the symbolists. His subsequent writing was published as a result of his involvement with writers and artists who formed the Hylea and later the Cubo-Futurist groups. The exact extent of Khlebnikov's contributions to collections such as *A Trap for Judges* or even the aforementioned "Slap in the Face of Public Taste" remains contested as Khlebnikov oftentimes stood apart from the Futurists (or Futurians, as they sometimes called themselves). He is known to have written constantly but haphazardly, in minuscule letters on various sheets and scraps of paper, returning to the same texts, rewriting and extending them. As if this was not confusing enough, the writer travelled around Europe and Asia with his "notes, mathematical formulas, projects for improvement of the world, and lines of poetry" (Markov, 1962: 19) at one point stuffed in a pillowcase, in no order whatsoever. Many of Khlebnikov's works were lost and once, according to Tynianov, even stolen to use as cigarette paper (Taufer, 1974: 15). "Confronted with a bundle of Khlebnikov's manuscripts, [his Futurist editors] tended to pick out lines at random, to mix texts together, print rough drafts, append inappropriate titles, and so on, producing what was often little more than an editorial interpretation of a given text" (Cooke, 1987: 249). Khlebnikov was not content with this treatment because he took his writing seriously but his legacy indeed consists of volumes of disorganized and generically-ambiguous works.

"Proposals" was first published in the collection *Took: The Futurists' Drum* in 1915, along with texts by Mayakovsky, Viktor Shklovsky, and Boris Pasternak, among others. As is the case with other works by Khlebnikov, there are different versions of the text and several proposals also appear reformulated in his other works, such as the poem "Ladomir". I will use here the version translated by Paul Schmidt and printed in the collection *Utopias* edited by Catriona Kelly, and discuss the text's three thematic clusters: art and governance, war and language, and utopia.

The proposals that address art and governance range from enigmatic to preposterous claims about artists as "far-seeing visionaries" destined to rule, predict the fate of and decorate the planet (if not the entire universe). The poet suggests, for example, to "divide up humanity into inventor/explorers and all the rest", to "[d]ecorate Mont Blanc with the head of Hiawatha, the gray peaks of Nicaragua with the head of Kruchonykh, the Andes with the head of David Burlyuk" and to "[t]ake 1915 as the first year of a new era: indicate years by means of the numerical expression for a plane $a + b\sqrt{-1}$, in the form $317d + e\sqrt{-1}$, where e is less than 317" (Khlebnikov, 1999: 15–16). Departing from such claims, several critics argue that Khlebnikov, who accepted the pseudonym Velimir (meaning "command the world") that friends bestowed on him in 1909, mythologized himself as an artist-prophet along with other Futurists. Raymond Cooke, for example, remembers that the writer, who "could sign one of his edicts as 'king of time Velimir I'" (1987: 34), in 1916 "founded the union or society of the '317', a number which Khlebnikov chose because of the central role it played at that time in his attempts at mathematical prediction [and] viewed this society as a prospective world government" (1987: 16).

During the thirty-seven years of his life, Khlebnikov created elaborate mathematical theories of history; the booklet where the first version of "Proposals" was published also included his essay about the significance of the number 317 for the rhythm of the public and private lives of figures such as Pushkin, who got married exactly 317 days after his engagement. However, there are reasons to consider many of Khlebnikov's views as conscious artistic fictions rather than seriously advanced theories. The generic boundaries of his works are blurred, as he "often tried to introduce experiment into his nonexperimental works and to apply his theories in artistic writing" (Markov, 1962: 26) and presented his ideas also in the form of poetry. Moreover, as Cooke himself points out, the writer "was not entirely happy with the determinist theory which he had constructed [and] fear[ed] that he might have imprisoned himself in a net of numbers of his own making" (1987: 154). This is not to argue that Khlebnikov did not seriously attempt to gain insight into the historical process and that he did not see "his investigations and proposals as the tools to create a new, better situation for mankind" (Baran, 1983: 1341), but that there was a conscious fantastic dimension to his mathematical theories.

Concerning aspirations to planetary governance, not only were the documents issued in the name of the self-appointed "Chairmen of the Terrestrial Globe" often undercut with self-mockery, irony and hyperbole, but the Futurists could act quite theatrically. In "October on the Neva", for example, Khlebnikov remembers how they called the Winter Palace:

- Winter Palace? — Please kindly connect us with the Winter Palace.
- Winter Palace? — Here is the Teamsters' Union.
- What can I do for you? — cold, polite but cheerless voice.
- Answer: — The Teamsters' Union would kindly like to know when the inhabitants of the Winter Palace are planning to move out?
- What? What? — a question.
- Answer: — The inhabitants of the Winter Palace are moving out? Let us give you a hand…
- Nothing else? — the sound of a sour smile.
- Nothing.
  The one on the other side of the line can hear me and Pietnikov laughing.
  Someone's terrified face peeks in from the neighboring room.
  Two days later, cannons spoke. (Chlebnikov, 1974: 116; my translation)

Just as it is absurd of Khlebnikov to ask in the "Proposals" that the fantastic ideas of the Futurians be disputed with weapons, it is difficult to see Khlebnikov as a self-assured "King of Time" who was serious about his royal obligations. Whatever the poet's intentions, the absurdity of his numerically driven history and his ideas about chairing the globe are rather a grotesque mirror of an otherwise taken-for-granted selection of events around which historical periodization is constructed, and a grotesque mirror of artists' powerlessness, on the one hand, and aggrandizement, on the other.[1]

Another set of proposals concerns war and language, and includes suggestions to "[e]nd the World War with the first flight to the moon"; "[s]et aside a special uninhabited island, such as Iceland, for a never-ending war between anybody from any country who wants to fight now. (For people who want to die like heroes)"; "for ordinary wars, use sleep guns (with sleep bullets)"; and "[e]stablish a single written language for all Indo-Europeans, based on scientific principles" (Khlebnikov, 1999: 14–15). Cooke and other critics such as Henryk Baran and Ronald Vroon notice streaks of nationalism and pan-Slavism in Khlebnikov's early writing, as well as a certain attraction to warrior-type heroes and a romanticized view of battle; nevertheless, they agree that his view changed substantially once he faced the reality of the war; Vroon, for example, writes that "the outbreak of the First World War and his subsequent induction in April 1916 rapidly deflated his militancy" (1989: 102). Khlebnikov's proposals reveal how nonsensical war is, and their aim is to end it rather than call for bloodshed.

In several other works, Khlebnikov diminishes war poetically by metamor- phosing it into something tame, controllable, and erasable. In a fragment of "Boards of Fate", Cooke observes that war "is to be transformed into a 'useless *izhitsa*' (*izhitsa* being a letter which disappeared in the post-revolutionary alphabet reform of 1918)" (1987: 158). In another poem, Khlebnikov describes wars as birds that eat grains from his palm (Chlebnikov, 1974: 112). These efforts draw attention also to the writer's second life-long project: the transformation of and through language, which he aimed to free mainly by neologisms, and the creation of a universal language by linking ideas with specific consonants. Many critics would agree with Willem Weststeijn that "Khlebnikov's word creation is an integral part of his literary oeuvre, which has as its unique aim the creation of a new world and a new future on the basis of knowledge and experience stored in language since its existence" (1998: 37). Nevertheless, as creative as Khlebnikov's linguistic explorations are, he could become disillusioned about their effectiveness. He also published them as poetry. His attempts to form a universal language were somewhat impractical as he did not try to create an Esperanto-like tongue combining different languages but extended Russian into infinity through various analogies and derivatives. In many ways, the language is untranslatable and if anything, it could be argued that, rather than being a serious alternative, it undermines confidence in language as a representation of, and action on, reality and opens up questions of linguistic dominance, including in attempts to create universal languages like Esperanto.

My third selection from "Proposals" shows that, although many of Khlebnikov's ideas, intentionally or not, are a grotesque, estranging mirror of the surrounding world, they are more than manifestations of the modernist crisis of history and representation. They also contain a genuine care for the good life of others. Examples are:

> Grow edible microscopic organisms in lakes. Every lake will become a kettle of ready-made soup that only needs to be heated. Contented people will lie about on the shores, swimming and having dinner. The food of the future.

> Effect the exchange of labour and services by means of an exchange of heartbeats. Estimate every task in terms of heartbeats — the monetary unit of the future, in which all individuals are equally wealthy.

> Effect an innovation in land ownership, recognizing that the amount of land every single individual requires cannot be less than the total surface of Planet Earth.

> Reform of the housing laws and regulations, the right to have a room of your own in any city whatsoever and the right to move whenever you want.

> Let factory chimneys awake and sing morning hymns to the rising sun, above the Seine as well as over Tokyo, over the Nile, and over Delhi. (Khlebnikov, 1999: 14–16)

It is apparent that through nonsense, Khlebnikov critiques everyday realities of starvation, hoarding, lack of housing, pollution, economic inequality, and a dehumanized market on which everything may be quantified and converted into monetary value.

Khlebnikov's "Proposals" therefore do not envision realistic solutions while nevertheless pointing to what humans lack: understanding and control over the historical process, governance not concentrated in the hands of the Winter Palace, peace, common language, food, housing, clean environment, economic equality, and a humane rhythm of labour. Ironically, the proposals are significant for what they oppose implicitly, rather than for what they propose. This is not necessarily a failure: utopia as full representation, as we know post-Jameson, tends to bring about a contemplation of our imagination's limits.

Conclusion

In the end, the question is whether Khlebnikov's text is a manifesto; that is, a work that aims to intervene with more or less hesitancy in the status quo and in the dominant vision of history, and to evoke into existence collective political agency. Weeks considers Donna Haraway's "Manifesto of Cyborgs" as an example of a "critical manifesto", and argues that the work is uncertain about historical process and agency, without giving up on hope. Haraway "treats truth ironically", Weeks writes,

> as a way to cut the text's knowledge claims down to size, but never hope. … Irony enacts a distancing from aspects of the form, but these do not include the way the genre serves as a vessel and vector of the handful of political affects that Ernst Bloch named militant optimism and I am calling hopeful resolve. In this sense, the 'Manifesto for Cyborgs' should be read not as an act of disavowal but as a critical reoccupation of the form. (2013: 222–3)

"Proposals" are not a typical authoritative manifesto and the work is not purely theatrical either, given the author's serious preoccupation with the questions raised. Is it a "critical manifesto"? There is little certainly about the historical process and agency; the recurring directives — devise, create, take, grow, end — do not have a clear addressee. It is unclear whether the proposals are intended for artists, scientists, architects, lawyers, workers, politicians, or soldiers who could end wars if they stopped fighting. There is humour, which is not bitterly satirical; it seems hopeful, regenerative, communal, extending perhaps the tradition of the Bakhtinian medieval and Renaissance grotesque, where madness parodies official reason and laughter awakens the possibility of an entirely different world. But who is the interpolated utopian subjectivity and what realistically is to be done?

After 1917, Khlebnikov worked as a journalist in Ukraine and afterwards joined the Red Army campaign in Persia as a lecturer. He welcomed the October Revolution although in 1921, he returned ill, barefoot, and penniless to Pyatigorsk, where he struggled to survive materially. His health rapidly deteriorated, and he died in 1922, due to a combination of illness, malnutrition, and maltreatment. As Cooke observes, many of his late works addressed poverty and famine particularly in civil-war Kharkov; Vroon points out that Khlebnikov was much disturbed by the violence he witnessed, such as the execution of the poet Nikolai Gumilyov (2000: 674). Socially-conscious as he was, Khlebnikov seems to have passed his life above all as a writer who kept being painfully reminded that he too needed, as one of his own proposals stated, "the art of waking easily from dreams" (1999: 14).

Note

1. Speaking of self-aggrandizement, is "Velimir" more self-laudatory than "Victor Vladimirovich" or does it rather reveal the absurdity of our names that evoke victory and world-rule?

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Historical Models

From the Perfect Republic to a Just and Wealthy Society: Models of Utopia from Early Modern to Contemporary Times

Anna Di Bello

The idea of utopia has been defined in different ways according to different historical contexts, cultural environments, and the intellectuals involved. If, in the early modern period, utopia is seen as the realization of the kingdom of God on earth, the achievement of complete human happiness, or the construction of a society that is perfectly balanced between personal freedom and public justice, from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, it often becomes the fulcrum of socialist theories, which call for a general reform of society and the state to affirm social justice and the socialization of economic resources. Beyond European borders, it becomes a pivotal model in a new transcontinental dynamic that favours well-being in the newly independent South Atlantic states (Servier, 1991; Andreatta & Vattimo, 1995; Claeys, 2020).

The following three papers aim to illustrate the connection between the concept of utopia and the idea of a perfect society. They highlight this relationship in its evolution at three stages between the early modern and contemporary age, through analyses of the utopian theories of Antonio Brucioli, Council Communism, and Domingo Sarmiento. The three contributions show that, even if these models are distant in time, they have many similarities and there is much that they continue to say and teach us today.

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2.1. Republican Utopia in Antonio Brucioli's *Dialogi* (1526-1544)

Francesca Russo

Abstract

Antonio Brucioli is among the most enigmatic and important characters in Florentine Renaissance culture. He lived a very particular life. In the first phase, he was a brave republican fighting against the Medici's political order, and a religious dissenter asserting his full freedom of conscience and professing his faith. In the second period of his life, after his exile from Florence, he became a spy for Cosimo de' Medici. He repudiated his earlier political ideas and even, in the last years of his life, his heretical beliefs, or at least he pretended to. His main work, the *Dialogi*, written between 1526 and 1544, was deeply influenced by his attitudes at the time of each edition. It is an interesting and complex work, covering many areas of knowledge, and one of the greatest masterpieces of Florentine Renaissance culture. The main aim of my contribution is to underline the model of the perfect republic as explained by the author, and to point out its evolution through the editions of Brucioli's work. I aim to show how the author followed both the teachings of Niccolò Machiavelli and readings of Thomas More's *Utopia*.

Key words: Florentine republicanism, Brucioli, perfect society, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas More

Antonio Brucioli is among the most prominent enigmatic and relevant characters in Florentine Renaissance culture. His life could be divided into at least two phases. In the first phase, we can describe him as a brave republican supporter and as a religious dissenter. After his exile from Florence, he became a spy for the Grand Duke of Tuscany Cosimo de'Medici. He denied his political ideas and in the last years of his life, he even disavowed his heretical beliefs, or pretended to.

Brucioli's main work, the *Dialogi*, written between 1526 and 1544, is deeply influenced by the author's attitudes at the time of each edition (Brucioli, 1982). Nevertheless, the *Dialogi della morale philosophia* comprise a fascinating and complex series of works, covering many areas of knowledge, from philosophy to

religion, to politics, to physics, to cosmography. For their literary style and content, they can be considered one of the masterpieces of Florentine Renaissance culture (Russo, 2016a).

Among the most notable historians of Brucioli's life and dialogues are Delio Cantimori, Carlo Dionisotti, Giuliano Procacci, Felix Gilbert, Ugo Rozzo, Paolo Simoncelli, Andrea Del Col, and Élise Boillet. Giorgio Spini wrote an important biography (Spini, 1940) and Aldo Landi edited the critical edition of the *Dialogi* (Brucioli, 1982). One of the main reasons for the importance of the *Dialogi*, apart from their literary value, is that they represent an important historical witness of the debates that took place in the cultural milieu of the Giardino degli Orti Oricellari (Rucellai Gardens) (Cambiano, 2000: 118–20). Brucioli took part in these meetings. His cultural background was deeply connected to that fascinating experience. In his youth, he was a convinced republican and a free spirit. Then, for personal economic reasons, he became a spy for the Medici government. Having suffered several interrogations by the Inquisition, he became more inclined to align with the Catholic faith, or at least, he tried to hide his religious ideas.

The editions of the *Dialogi* show changes in Brucioli's religious perspective and evidence of discussions in the Rucellai Gardens about the model of a perfect republic. Despite this, the author's fundamental aim to establish free republican institutions persists throughout. The real spirit of the Rucellai Gardens reunions is more evident and disclosed in the first version of the *Dialogi*, although the author never abandoned his intellectual ties with the cultural world of his youth (Russo, 2016a).

Brucioli (1487–1566) came from a middle-class family and received a humanistic education at the Studio Fiorentino, as one can learn from his *Dialogi* (Brucioli, 1982: 553). In the first edition of his works, there are interesting references to the teachings learnt there, and some of his former professors are main characters of the *Dialogi*. Brucioli had a profound knowledge of ancient Greek philosophy, Plato, and of Florentine neo-Platonism, which was his time's main philosophical trend, but he was also familiar with Aristotle's teachings (Dionisotti, 1980: 202–3). Aristotle's thought is a fundamental source for understanding Brucioli's ideas. The Florentine author had learned Aristotelian philosophy through the teachings of Francesco Cattani da Diacceto. Cattani deeply influenced Brucioli. In my book, *Donato Giannotti pensatore politico Europeo*, I studied the role played by the 1528 and 1529 editions of Brucioli's *Dialogi* in recreating the cultural debates that occurred in Florence (Russo, 2016b). In the thirteenth dialogue on the beginning of the world, the main topic is a debate about the Aristotelian theory of the eternity of the world, widely discussed in Diacceto's school. Giannotti and Ristoro Serristori, Diacceto's students, widely discussed Aristotelian theory and its various interpretations, wishing to deny any charge for heresy for this doctrine, as

Aristotelian theory had been condemned in Florence by Girolamo Savonarola and by the Fifth Lateran Council in 1513.

The main feature of Diacceto's school was to point out the importance of Aristotle's philosophy, and blend it with the neo-platonic Florentine tradition (Kristeller, 1956; Garin, 1978). Diacceto rediscovered Aristotelian philosophy in a "modern" way, spreading again the knowledge of this fundamental author in the Florentine milieu, and connecting his philosophy with Platonism and the Hellenic cultural tradition. Benedetto Varchi praised the role played by Diacceto's school in Florentine humanistic society. He underlined the importance of Diacceto's teachings and the main role covered by Brucioli's dialogues as a witness of his master's leanings. In his *Vita del Diacceto*, published in 1561, Varchi highlighted that Brucioli's utopia of a perfect republic refers to the Aristotelian model of a mixed constitution, as taught by Diacceto (Varchi, 1561).

Before briefly presenting Brucioli's idea of the perfect republic from the 1526 edition of the *Dialogi* (he amended it in the later editions of 1538 and 1544), it is important to know that his idea of a republic was influenced not only by Aristotle's thought, which he learned through Diacceto's teachings, but most of all by Machiavelli (Dionisotti, 1980). Brucioli was present in the Rucellai Gardens in 1516, when Machiavelli read out his *Discourses on Livy* at the invitation of Cosimo Rucellai. In this work, he celebrated the history of the Roman Republic, considered the best model of government. Rome had been the perfect republic because it had a mixed constitution, a different mix from the Aristotelian model, but ideally connected to it. The mix of the three elements (monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy) was unequal: the monarchical and aristocratic elements were represented in the Roman constitution, but the main importance was given to the democratic institution, which represented the idea of freedom of people, and the caretaker of the republic's survival.

Brucioli and his young friends were fascinated by Machiavelli's teachings, and they dreamt of the idea of building this model of ideal republic in Florence. In 1522, they organized a conspiracy against Cardinal Giulio de'Medici. It failed. Machiavelli denied right away his involvement in this plan. Brucioli narrowly succeeded in saving his life, but he was compelled to escape Florence, together with Jacopo Nardi, Luigi Alamanni, and Zanobi Buondelmonti. They were all formally banished from Florence (Russo, 2008). Brucioli went into exile, to Lyon, in France, where there was a huge community of Florentines. Many Florentines had converted to Lutheranism. Brucioli likely started his conversion to Protestantism in Lyon. He moved to Paris and then to the German States, where he lived for a long time. There his Protestant choice became stable in his conscience. He improved his connections with the German reformers (Spini, 1940).

He succeeded afterwards in returning to the Italian peninsula, to Venice, which was to become his new homeland. Venice was one of the most important cultural centres. It was a free republic or, perhaps, a "free oligarchy", as Machiavelli called it, with a lasting tradition of reception for people coming from several parts of the world. The "Serenissima" represented one of the main hopes for Italian political and even religious dissenters. Brucioli belonged to both categories. Venice was the best place for him to settle in the peninsula. It was furthermore an important publishing centre, and he gave his works to the press.

The first edition of the *Dialogi* was published in Venice in 1526 by the editor Gregorio de'Gregori. The work is dedicated to Massimiliano Sforza. The fifth dialogue is devoted to the theme of the ideal republic. Brucioli presents his "first" project for an ideal republic using the humanist pattern of a discussion between several speakers. It is informed by the Rucellai Gardens debates, where Diacceto's cultural heritage and Machiavelli's teachings were combined in an original and sharp synthesis. Procacci describes Brucioli's utopia as similar to the free German cities where the author had lived at the beginning of his exile, with some traits of the ancient Greek *polis* described by Aristotle. Nevertheless, Procacci observes that the two main examples of Brucioli's imaginary republic are the Roman Republic as illustrated by Machiavelli in *Discourses on Livy* and contemporary Venice (Procacci, 1965: 29–43). Brucioli was strongly affected by a fascination for his new homeland, but he never forgot his former teachers and his old patria of Florence.

The characters involved in the discussion about the model of the ideal republic in the fifth book of Brucioli's 1526 *Dialogi* are imaginary.[1] The main issue of the dialogue is how to settle and lay out a free republic based on the principles of justice and equality. It is important to explain how to make the republic last despite all the internal and external dangers. The perfect republic is, according to Brucioli, settled on an island, Matthien. In the description of the island are references to Thomas More's *Utopia*, which had been printed in Florence in 1519. This is very likely the first witness to a knowledge of More's masterpiece on the Italian peninsula. In the whole dialogue, there is also an important debate about the activities which are necessary for the republic. Following the Venetian example, it is underlined that trade is the most important activity in the community, and that people living within the borders of the island should be converted most of all into merchants. There is also an interesting discussion about war. The Machiavellian idea of a "militia" prevails. The discussants decide that is important to banish violence and civil war from within the borders the republic, but to keep an army ready, not to wage external wars but to repel an external assault. The free and equal institutions of the ideal republic must be saved by their own citizens.

In editions of the *Dialogi* in 1537 and 1538, the utopia of the perfect republic is kept in the text, but there are some changes. These modifications are connected to Brucioli's new political attitude and life. He lived calmly for a short while, returning to Florence after the republican restoration in 1527. However, he was banished again from his homeland by his Republican friends for openly professing his Lutheran heresy and his stated intention to attack the San Marco cloister, where Savonarola's followers lived. In 1530, the Florentine republic fell under the assault of Habsburg troops, and the Medici were restored to government. The only hope for the restoration of the republic was created in 1537 by the sudden and unexpected gesture of Lorenzino de'Medici, who killed the illegitimate and authoritarian duke of Florence, Alessandro de'Medici. The final attack on the Medici republican faction took place some months later in Montemurlo. It ended with the final defeat of the republicans (Russo, 2008). Afterwards, there was no chance of restoring free institutions in Florence. The republic became a nostalgic memory. Cosimo de'Medici was ensconced in Florence. During this time, Brucioli kept away from the fight for freedom. He had hoped for the return of the republic. He remained openly a republican, living in exile in Venice, but he secretly became a spy for Cosimo de'Medici to better his poor conditions of life.

The editions of his *Dialogi* written after 1537 are affected by Brucioli's new attitude and his continuous search for new protectors, which is disclosed in the editions' dedications. Nonetheless, Brucioli did not renounce his utopia of the perfect republic in the edition of 1538, nor in the last edition of 1544. There are significant changes, by comparison with the version of 1526. The names of the characters are different. They are living persons and important intellectuals of the time. The most important in the edition published in Venice by Bartolomeo Zanetti in 1538 is Niccolò Machiavelli.

The final version of the *Dialogi* was printed by Antonio Brucioli himself in Venice in 1544, in the publishing house established by his brothers Francesco and Alessandro. The theme of the ideal republic remains, but it is described differently from the first edition. The work is devoted to Ottaviano de'Medici, and his family is fully praised. However, there are signs that Brucioli continued to be a covert follower of Machiavellian teachings on republicanism, even while a servant to the Medici family. For example, he leaves behind utopian references. The ideal republic is no longer on the island of Mathien. Thomas More is indirectly quoted and even criticized for his preference for the common ownership of goods and his extreme notion of equality. The speakers taking part in the dialogue on the perfect republic changed completely from the one described in 1526. In the edition published in 1544 the debate develops between Machiavelli, Bernardo Salviati, Giangiacomo Leonardi from Pesaro, and Giangiorgio Trissino. They were all real persons known by the author. Trissino is the main character. He describes the perfect model of

republic, answering the question asked by the others. Machiavelli asks the most important questions about the institutional model of the perfect republic, which should be "ideal" but also "real", in the sense that this model should have a possibility of becoming true. The ideal republic described by Trissino is very close to the one Machiavelli presented in the *Discourses on Livy*. It should be a free community based on fully enjoyed liberty, and values of justice, good laws, good habits, and a good "civil" religion. There should be an army of citizens. The republic is organized into several institutions and equipped with a large assembly that elects all the magistracies. All citizens should be involved in political life. From an economic point of view, the republic should be self-sufficient, so a good division of labour is needed. From a geographical point of view, it is underlined that it would be better if the republic were located where it is difficult to reach by its enemies. It would also be better nearer the sea, where winds blowing from the north are stronger because these winds make men braver.

In my opinion, Brucioli's 1544 description of the ideal republic is more connected to his past as a Republican supporter and his passion for the republican model of Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* than to the utopian tradition. In 1526 Brucioli was perhaps affected by the novelty of More's *Utopia*. In 1544, even though he was a spy and a servant of Cosimo de'Medici, he was still fascinated by republicanism, and his model of the ideal republic is closer to Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* than to More's *Utopia*.

Note

1. The fictional characters are Theophane, Phalerio, Cratippo, Theone, and Carmene.

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2.2. From Anti-Parliamentarianism to the Utopia of Council Communism: The Soviet in Great Britain

Anna Rita Gabellone

Abstract

The term "utopia", in this paper, refers to the project of a just society through the political path undertaken by the Council Communism movement. Ruth Levitas argues that, in the twentieth century, "utopia becomes a method, even a political one, for building programmes capable of redeeming all social classes" (2013: 22–25). The socialist utopia spread among intellectual circles thanks to historical events. The Soviet Union became the heir of utopian hopes of socialism. For several Western intellectuals of this period, the October Revolution represented humanity's noblest hope. In this context, Marxist-inspired intellectuals advocated the emancipation of the people through revolution. Revolutions realized a transition from the myth of the "ideal city" to historical event. Within the Third International, a fierce debate arose on the role of the parliament, animated by militants such as Sylvia Pankhurst, Hermann Görter, Antoon Pannekoeck, Otto Rühl, Amadeo Bordiga, and Antonio Gramsci. In 1921, they founded Council Communism, which came to reject the Leninist model of party and state centralization. The Workers' Councils represented a new form of anti-parliamentary organization in which every citizen was to be a participant in political life. In the soviets, the workers would be prepared to face the real problems of society, and the political demands of the working class could be brought together to realize a "just society".

Key words: Soviet, utopia, Council Communism, Anti-Parliamentarianism, Great Britain

Immediately after the October Revolution, the Consiliarist movement was born in Europe to redefine the workers' political project for the future. The Consiliarists advocated a form of authentic democracy realized, according to Miguel Abensour, through the struggle against the state and the affirmation of the Workers' Council as a new institutional body. Consiliarist political theory, which rails against Leninism and party power, aims at workers' redemption, and the factory councils become a viable alternative to post-revolutionary Soviet communism. With Lenin, capital is held and managed by the party-state and labour remains alienated and enslaved, with the result that the workers' movement does not develop a true class consciousness as Marx would have wanted. Because of this, the power of the party will take over the state, subordinating the proletariat and the entire people to itself, and depriving the revolution of its emancipatory outlet. Miguel Abensour observes that an idea of democracy, which is revealed through the struggle against the state emerges out of the Marxian text, *On the Hegelian Philosophy of Law* (1843). It is "the opening of an agonistic scene marked by an indefatigable and never completed struggle against inequalities and for emancipation" (Abensour, 2015: 119–24). This premise, surely known to an audience of specialists, is necessary to introduce an aspect of the history of Consiliarism that is less studied, but worth knowing.

In this paper, I analyse the history of British Consiliarism represented primarily by two groups within the Communist Party of Great Britain: the Worker Suffrage Federation (WSF) and the British Socialist Party (BSP). These sections initiated the Council or Left Communism movement, as an alternative to the political reality offered by post-revolutionary communism, to support an "international socialism" and direct democracy through the organization of factory councils. The goal of the Consiliarists was to redeem the workers through the elimination of Parliament, considered a bourgeois institution. This movement, mainly formed by pacifist and anti-militarist revolutionaries, already represents a "revolution", according to scholars such as Mark Shipway, because it was formed in the heart of world financial capitalism (Shipway, 1998: 35). As proof of how important the English Consiliarist movement was, Lenin wrote *"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder* in June 1920 to discredit the British Consiliarist policy in international public opinion.

A number of names stand out among the British Consiliarists who contributed most to proposing an anti-parliamentary alternative to the Leninist programme. For the BSP, they include George Peet (1883–1967), who was active in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and at the Gorton Locomotive Works; Albert Samuel Inkpin (1884–1944), general secretary of the BSP from 1913 until 1917, first general secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain and opponent of the First World War; and Joseph King (1860–1943), a pacifist and anti-militarist.

Notable for the WSF were Sylvia Pankhurst (Gabellone, 2015; 2018a: 51–67; 2018b: 58–67; 2018c: 111–28; 2019: 1–16); Leonard Augustine Motler (1888–1967), who also influenced Chinese Consiliarism; and C. Hagberg Wright (1862–1940), secretary and librarian of the London Library from 1893 until his death, and famous for translating the works of Tolstoy (Smele, 2006).

It is worth remembering that the echo of anti-parliamentarism resounded in Europe starting from the economic crisis after 1870, as a reaction to the defects of the parliamentary system. Precisely from this, Council Communism denounced the Leninist political strategy as responsible for the centralization of parliamentary powers, which had thrown the Russian people into despair and misery.

Council Communism considered parliament to be a reactionary and obsolete body, which should be abolished as quickly as possible. Therefore, at the meeting held in London in January 1920, the British Consiliarists planned a political strategy to eliminate Parliament. Their goal was to participate "ostensibly" in the election of the government, but only to cause its overthrow. An example was the candidacy of Sylvia Pankhurst in Sheffield, for the Hallam constituency. The leader of the WSF said, "We will be at the elections, but only to remind workers that capitalism must disappear" (Pankhurst Papers, Amsterdam). British Consiliarists believed that members of Parliament had failed to represent the people, and only advanced particular interests.

The British Consiliarist programme wanted to establish workers' councils in all industries: for agricultural work, in the army, in the navy, and in every other productive sector. Elected delegates would be educated and could be replaced at any time. In the report of the above meeting we read, among other things, harsh criticism of Lenin's Soviets:

> On November 10, 1917, Lenin began to establish an unprecedented tyranny and started committees, called Soviets, in every district. Most of these committees quickly degenerated, and those that did not bow to the corruption of the party were closed, and their members "disappeared". The educated man began to be regarded as a parasite and treated as such. What are the results of this policy today? Russia is starving and its people are always in terror. (Pankhurst Papers, Amsterdam)

As early as the beginning of 1918, the British Consiliarist movement published a statement in *The Manchester Guardian* in which Philips Proce publicly argued that the "parliamentary and local government system existing in this country today has been constructed to meet the needs of the capitalist system, and for the legislative and administrative suppression of the working class". From the

WSF, Motler wrote in *Soviets for the British* that Parliament exists only to support a system based on inequality. If they were to assert full control of economic and social processes the people must establish their own soviets to directly manage factories, workshops, mines, ships, and control food and housing.

The WSF began to embrace anti-parliamentarism as early 1918. Later, in the aftermath of the British elections, a series of anti-parliamentarian articles began to be published in the WSF's newspaper, *The Workers' Dreadnought*, including "The Election", of 14 December 1918, and "Look to the Future", which appeared only two days later, both written by Sylvia Pankhurst. Among the articles of *The Workers' Dreadnought* one can read the report of a meeting entitled "The Socialist Workers' International", held in June 1924, between the European Consiliarists in Amsterdam. The result of this meeting marks the detachment of the Consiliarist movement from Lenin; and the English "comrades" were among the most convinced supporters of a detachment from Leninism. In this regard we read:

> Dear comrades! We, socialists, prisoners of the Bolshevik government, turn to you, socialists and leaders of the world workers' movement to convey to the whole world the story of the unprecedented bloody tragedy that was carried out by the Bolshevik government and that would like to hide thousands of peasants from Tambov and sailors from Kroonstad to exterminate them physically in the Soviet concentration camp. (Pankhurst Papers, Amsterdam)

The document described in detail the concentration camps created in Russia for political prisoners who were deprived of any kind of communication and any form of freedom: "to begin with it was decided to deprive us of the freedom to walk in the courtyard of the prison" (Pankhurst Papers, Amsterdam).

During the meeting, the British Consiliarists announced the launch of an international inquiry to bring to light all that was happening in Leninist Russia. The inquiry intended to indict many Russian political leaders, followers of Lenin, for the dubious ways adopted in the Soviets. The British Consiliarists did not want to provide, during the meeting, any evidence of the inquiry initiated, but only a copy of the telegram sent to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of all Russia. They categorically accused the higher administration of the government responsible for management of the concentration camps and the behaviour of the state secret police (the GPU) of involvement in some puzzling events on 19 December 1919, which had befallen some opponents of Lenin. The international inquiry provided for the urgent appointment of a special commission with representatives from all over Europe — not only leaders of the

Bolshevik government, who would not have been impartial — to determine what had happened. In this regard, we read:

> We wrote to Moscow demanding admission to the commission of representatives of the Amsterdam Trade Union Bureau and the Socialist Workers' International. We imposed these conditions; it was necessary to send our delegates to Moscow, even in rowboats, to testify before the Commission of Inquiry. Only such a Commission, composed of the representatives of the international proletariat, could ensure a minimum of guarantees that the truth would be revealed. (Pankhurst Papers, Amsterdam)

Moscow provided no response to this, as though the crimes had never been committed. The Amsterdam meeting concluded with the hope of unanimously raising a "cry" of indignation from workers all over the world to stop the Bolshevik dictatorship:

> a new page has now opened in the history of Bolshevik terror against the socialists or Russia. The bloodshed at Solovistz has swept away the last barrier. Henceforth the shameful path of Russian Communism is marked. In the name of socialism, we protest before the world proletariat against the policy of bloody terror perpetrated on the socialists of Russia. And we know that our protest will find a fraternal response in the heart of every honest worker, of every socialist. (Pankhurst Papers, Amsterdam)

In 1919, Motler published *Anarchist Communism in Plain English*. He proposed an alternative anarchist-communist programme able to implement factory councils, and he distanced himself from the anarchist authors of attacks and riots. The political plan supported by the WSF (and, therefore, also by Motler) has always been pacifist and revolutionary at the same time. Motler states, "You can't learn to swim without getting wet. But because a Revolution MIGHT mean bloodshed, that is no reason why it *should* mean bloodshed" (Motler, 1919a: 3).

Many intellectuals of this period carried out a "revolutionary and pacifist" programme, despite the apparently contradictory nature of these two terms. The October Revolution provoked, in most cases, a revolutionary impulse that had the objective of defending life, and the councils represented a possible way to achieve that. Motler stated,

> Anarchism means no rule. That is to say "Mind your own business". And when the people start doing that, they have no use for tyrants, big and little, plain and coloured. Communism means working together for the good of all. Consequently, the people will be prepared to accept the ex-capitalists as fellow workers provided they do USEFUL work. (Motler, 1919a: 5)

The anarcho-communist programme was intended to induce the citizen to political and social responsibility, without necessarily resorting to the coercive activities of the government. Another element on which Motler dwelt was the controversial subject of the anarcho-communist programme. The author repeatedly argued that it is not only the working class that is the target of their renewal programme but all other social classes must be involved in this new political project. Motler stated: "Mind you, I don't mean it is the working class only. We want to get rid of that pretty name. A shirker is a shirker whether he is a tramp or a Duke. When everybody gets to work then we'll have more than enough for all. The principle is not to share and share alike, but help yourself to what is good for you" (Motler, 1919a: 8).

In the European context of the crisis of parliamentarism, Motler analysed the reorganization of the British Soviets on an anarcho-communist basis in *Soviets for the British*, and his words perfectly summarize the British Consiliarists' movement:

> the soviets do not, perhaps, give the best chance of all, but they are better than the present system. The soviets are not a perfect system. It is only a very good means to an end — and that end is complete freedom to live, love, and enjoy oneself. It must always be remembered that this system is just a plan of action that is being implemented right now. It is the duty of the soviets to keep the workers in touch with the People's Commissars and to assist in the application of the laws passed, which recall those of nature. (Motler, 1919b: 11)

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2.3. Old Europe, New America: Domingo F. Sarmiento's Utopia of Well-Being

Italia Maria Cannataro

Abstract

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento has forever held a revered position as the "father of civilization" in Argentina's history. This paper offers a revisionist interpretation of Sarmiento's *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism* (1845). After a century and a half, the scholarly interpretation of *Facundo* continues to be hindered by its early-onset canonical status in the history of Argentine political thought. In particular, the convention of reading *Facundo* within a nationalist framework and for its perennial significance therein have closed off an approach to the text as a bundle of speech acts situated in the important context of the European blockade of Buenos Aires during the 1840s. By centring the analysis on this momentary context, and refusing to assume the book's reception as simply an artefact of nineteenth-century nation-building, this essay reinterprets *Facundo* as a piece of considered, transcontinental imagining, rooted in the imperial dynamics of the post-independence South Atlantic. Sarmiento utilizes the language of utopian desire to describe the best conditions for cities to thrive; the text's utopian ideas are not aimed at providing an escape from reality but at bridging the forces of civilization and barbarism.

Key words: Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Facundo, Argentina, Europe, empire

"South America in general, and the Republic of Argentina above all, have lacked a Tocqueville … to penetrate the interior of our political life" (Sarmiento, 2003: 228). This is how Domingo Faustino Sarmiento cleared a space for his ultimately book-sized intervention in the introduction to his 1845 work, *Facundo: civilización y barbarie* (2002). Sarmiento, an exiled Argentine liberal, was openly seeking a canonical status for his work and himself. History promptly obliged. Since shortly after its first publication in Chile, Facundo has been regarded as a founder of Argentine literature and political thought. But while canonical status was desired

by Sarmiento, it has burdened historical interpretation of his book. Out of both methodological and normative commitment, as well as simple convention, the prestige attributed and continually reattributed to *Facundo* in Argentina has encouraged it to be read for its perennial significance, while there has been a related hostility to (certain) contextualist approaches.

This paper offers a revisionist interpretation of *Facundo* by focusing on its momentary context and refusing to assume the book's frequent attribution as an artefact of nineteenth-century nation-building. This essay reinterprets *Facundo* as a piece of considered, transcontinental imagining rooted in the imperial dynamics of the post-independence South Atlantic.

"In the Argentine Republic we see at the same time two different societies on the same soil" (Sarmiento, 2003: 73). Sarmiento wrote that the nineteenth and the twelfth centuries live together: one inside the cities, the other in the country. Crucial to what Sarmiento tried to do with the dichotomy between Europe/civilization and Orient/barbarism was how he territorialized the two concepts and, in particular, how he mapped the border between them. In his opening chapter on the "physical aspect" of the Argentine Republic, he asserted,

> The city is the centre of Argentine, Spanish, European civilization… There, elegant manners, the conveniences of luxury, European clothing, the tailcoat, and the frock coat have their theatre and their appropriate place … The capital city of the pastoral provinces sometimes exists by itself, without any smaller cities, and in more than one of them, the uncivilized region reaches right up to its streets. The desert surrounds the cities at a greater or lesser distance, hems them in, oppresses them; savage nature reduces them to limited oases of civilization, buried deep into an uncivilized plain of hundreds of square miles, scarcely interrupted by some little town or other of any consequence. (Sarmiento, 2003: 71)

To a mid-nineteenth century reader such as Sarmiento, there was inscribed in the orientalist discourse a bipartite way of mapping the world — a "conception of the global"; its singular border, imaginary but full of violence, separated the transnational space of Europe/civilization from that of the Orient/barbarism. And in *Facundo*, Sarmiento used this border to splinter Argentina into its urban and rural parts. The former, an archipelago of cities, was the foothold of this supra-European "Europe" in Argentina. This island chain was crowned by Buenos Aires, which, as the country's only port, dominated the post-independence state, thanks to its monopoly on the customs revenue from Atlantic commerce.

Sarmiento placed this metropolis at the height of European Argentina from the outset, forecasting, "Buenos Aires is destined one day to be the most gigantic city of both Americas ... It alone, in the vast expanse of Argentina, is in contact with European nations; it alone exploits the advantages of foreign commerce; it alone has power and income" (Sarmiento, 2003: 72). Sarmiento saw neither Buenos Aires nor the Atlantic coast as the full reach of Europe/civilization in Argentina. In *Facundo*, the foundation of European Argentina was presented as co-extensive with all urban space in the national territory, including cities of the provincial interior like Sarmiento's native San Juan. This was done through depictions of flourishing civilized life in the interior cities before their decimation by the forces of Juan Facundo Quiroga. In Chapter 11, for example, the city of Mendoza is pictured enjoying industrial progress in its production of silk and mining, before Quiroga took over and supposedly reduced it to barrenness.

Surrounding this urban network of Europe/civilization in Argentina, Sarmiento drew a countryside filled with pervasive, Asiatic barbarism. His description of rural La Rioja province (not coincidentally, the home of Facundo Quiroga) offers a comprehensive example:

> I have always had the idea that Palestine is similar in aspect to La Rioja, down to the reddish ochre of the earth, the dryness of some areas, and their cisterns; down to the orange and fig trees and grapevines with exquisite, massive fruit, grown where some muddy, narrow Jordan flows. There is a strange combination of mountains and plains, fertility and aridness, gloomy, bristling mountains, and grey-green hills carpeted with vegetation as colossal as the cedars of Lebanon. (Sarmiento, 2003: 74)

Drenched in analogy to "the Orient" — by this middle point in the book, well-established by Sarmiento as synonymous with barbarism — this is the type of characterization which he tied to rural Argentina, and its medi-terranean pampas in particular. Needless to say, Sarmiento had never been to Palestine or Lebanon, nor would he ever. Moreover, as Sarmiento mapped Argentina's rural and urban space as Asian and European, so too did he map its inhabitants. While orientalizing Argentina's rural populations, Sarmiento worked on Europeanizing its city-dwellers.

He described his group of dissident liberals — now-called the "Generation of 1837" — as the highest cadre of European urbanity in Argentina, characterized by "love for European peoples, associated with a love for the civilization, institutions, and letters that Europe had bequeathed to us" (Sarmiento, 2003: 168). Sarmiento often hammered home the reality of this societal schism by presenting the

European civilization of urban Argentines in immediate juxtaposition to the oriental barbarity of their rural compatriots. Dress was a recurrent feature in Sarmiento's illustration of (un)civilized life, evidenced again by this lengthier contrast in the opening chapter,

> The man of the city wears European dress, lives a civilized life as we know it everywhere: in the city, there are laws, ideas of progress, means of instruction, some municipal organization, a regular government, etc. Leaving the city district, everything changes in aspect. The man of the country wears other dress … They are like two distinct societies, two peoples strange to one another. (Sarmiento, 2003: 73–4)

With the excerpts quoted in this section thus far, and countless similar ones deployed throughout *Facundo*, Sarmiento bifurcated contemporary Argentina into a European archipelago of cities and their inhabitants, and a countryside Oriental expanse of Asiatic inhabitants. Nor, unsurprisingly, was this correlation of space to people a coincidence in Sarmiento's scheme. Argentine society was explained in *Facundo* through a severe application of geographical determinism. He attributed the type of people — civilized European or barbaric Oriental — to the type of space. As quoted, the urban space, in its compactness, facilitated "laws, ideas of progress, means of instruction, some municipal organization, a regular government".

He went on, diversifying the argument with commentary on how the expansive pastoral landscape of the pampas prevents governance. "Civilization, then, can never be attained, barbarism is the norm" (Sarmiento, 2003: 244). Sarmiento explained the barbarism of the gauchos by the limits with which the geography of the plains impeded social organization. "He lacks a city, a municipality, intimate association, and therefore lacks the basis for all social development; since the ranchers do not meet together, they have no public needs to satisfy; in a word, there is no *res publica*" (Sarmiento, 2003: 33).

With a catalogue of utterances in *Facundo*, then, Sarmiento split the nation in two, leaving bastions of Europe/civilization located in and explained by Argentina's cities, and an expanse of the Orient/barbarism in its countryside. Moreover, it is no revelation that Sarmiento qualitatively bifurcated Argentina with the civilization-barbarism divide, but the recognition of this move in terms of transnational communities radically recasts its meaning, rupturing the existing historiography of *Facundo*. Because Sarmiento's conception of civilization was, fundamentally, a global Europe, his cartography of Argentina as split between civilisation and barbarism was not simply a presentation of uneven social progress. Sarmiento was

constructing a global European community (in tandem with its Oriental antagonist), carving up Argentina as he went. What is more, these transnational identities of "European" and "Oriental" into which *Facundo* partitioned Argentina were not meant for a workable accommodation with Argentine nationality which cut across them. Sarmiento narrated these two deep-set identities promising neither coalescence nor coexistence, as one might expect a nation-builder would strive for. Instead, Europe-in-Argentina and the Orient-in-Argentina were staged antagonistically. The hatred of the Oriental gaucho for the European city-dweller, for instance, is a recurrent motif throughout *Facundo:*

> The man of the country, far from aspiring to resemble the man
> of the city, rejects with scorn his luxuries and his polite manners;
> and the clothing of the city dweller, his tailcoat, his cape, his sad-
> dle — no such sign of Europe can appear in the countryside with
> impunity. All that is civilized in the city is blockaded, banished
> outside of it, and anyone who would dare show up in a frock
> coat, for example, and mounted on an English saddle, would
> draw upon himself the peasants' jeers and their brutal aggres-
> sion. (Sarmiento, 2003: 54)

This inter-cultural toxicity in the relation between Europe-in-Argentina and Orient-in-Argentina is writ large into the fissile political history of post-independence which *Facundo* nominally tells. Sarmiento casts the *gaucho caudillos* who rose to power in Argentina from the mid-1820s as the personification of rural and barbaric Argentina, and their urban rivals as the embodiment of Europeanness. "In Facundo Quiroga, I do not see simply a caudillo", he wrote, "but rather a manifestation of Argentine life as it has been made by colonisation and the peculiarities of the land" (Sarmiento, 2003: 94).

Thus, Sarmiento foretells Juan Manuel de Rosas's 1828 conquest of Buenos Aires in the following terms: "backwardness and barbarism were going to penetrate the streets of Buenos Aires, become established, and set up camp in the fort" (Sarmiento, 2003: 224). The two transnational communities into which Sarmiento divided Argentine space are the real protagonists of Facundo's volatile political history, and the violence of their relationship was rendered interminable. Far from imagining an integrated or integrable national community, then, Sarmiento's magnum opus of "nation-building" partitioned Argentina between two bitter, transnational opponents. Sarminento utilizes the language of utopian desire to describe the best conditions for cities to thrive; the text's utopian ideas are not aimed at providing an escape from reality but at bridging its opposing forces.

This paper has had two main aspects: de-canonizing and recategorizing. In the first instance, I have tried to interpret *Facundo* in an acutely historical way, despite its canonical reputation. As such, I have disavowed concern with the perennial, and even the thematic, to engage with *Facundo* as something momentary and ephemeral. From this perspective, the text appears to have been comprehensively (not exhaustively) shaped by the intention to promote the escalation of Anglo-French military pressure on Rosas's government to a fuller-scale intervention. Such a gritty imperative is concealed from or by the will to read *Facundo* as having perennial meaning. Its implications for networks of imperial "collaboration" pose a special threat to the status of a national classic.

But this is not to say that this sense of threat is justified in truth. I have little personal concern with the aesthetic or normative status of *Facundo*. I have now re-read the book too many times to be able to fully enjoy it and, more seriously, such unconcern is needed to attempt a properly anti-canonical reading. However, for the many who are so concerned, this does not mean that identifying the situated meaning of *Facundo* lowers it as an intellectual object. Enabled and impelled by this de-canonizing approach to *Facundo* is my re-categorization of the text from an artefact of national imagination to one of transnational imagination. Once appreciated as an intervention meant to promote European material support for his anti-Rosista coalition from outside Argentine national space, it more easily becomes apparent that the construction of a transnational community, grouping civilized Argentine with French and British people as European, was Sarmiento's chosen means for doing so. Moreover, at several, important moments of the text, the transnational community was proposed at the expense of the coherence of any national, Argentine one.

Sarmiento's *Facundo*, then, might also be placed in the archive of the history of transnational ideas of Europe. And this suggests the pressing need to better globalize the historiography of that idea. Although its origins are partly located in the critical thought of post-colonialism, the intellectual history of Europe continues to be circumscribed by a distinct parochialism. In particular, it regularly fails to account for the non-European history of the concept. Whereas there has long existed in Latin America a useful recognition of thinkers from beyond its continental limits taking part in the imagination of its regions, there has been no equivalent reckoning by Europeans with non-European thinkers such as Sarmiento who have imagined Europe. This is why the route by which *Facundo* could have entered the intellectual history of transnational thought earlier — the history of Europe as an imagined place and community — has been closed to it. Eurocentric routines of study in the field have for too long insisted that Europe, alone among the regions of the world, has only been invented from within.

Related to this new image of Sarmiento as (re)constructing Europe from its margins while French and British gunboats blockaded Buenos Aires is a closing suggestion for the historiography of trans-, non-, and anti-national imaginaries. Namely, whereas the clash between imperial power and the formally postco-lonial states of Latin America has typically been regarded as — and was — a crucible for the development of their nationalisms (the propaganda of the block-aded Rosas government being an excellent example), it could at the same time stimulate the imagination of certain, non-national communities among those, like Sarmiento, who sought to form coalitions with imperial power for their own, local priorities. With the Manichean nineteenth-century discourse of civilization/ barbarism as an archetype, the modern ideologies of imperial powers historical-ly involved in this sort of intervention have frequently had a transnational and/or universalist dimension. To a degree, this feature is almost structural for empires, given their need to legitimate rule over acknowledged plurality. So, anchoring many languages of empire has been some sort of a legitimized and legitimizing, transnational space: 'Europe', 'the West', 'Greater Britain', etc. In trying to secure the active support of such empires from outside their formal frontiers, then, the move by actors like Sarmiento to reimagine these places to include more people and space has often made obvious, strategic, as well as affective, sense. Perhaps, then, the historiography of such imperial languages stands to gain from study-ing how they have been used and reinvented from without the formal borders of their associated empires by those, like Sarmiento, who have seen imperial designs on their countries as more opportunity than danger.

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Utopian Literary History

3.1. Exchanges of Knowledge at the Private-Public Divide in Smeeks's *Krinke Kesmes*

Liam Benison

Abstract

Privacy and the private are central problems of utopian thought. Although utopian speculations are typically focused on the public realm, paradoxically, the operation of the utopian imagination requires a setting in a private space, separate from the world. In the early modern period, in particular, utopian social visions are typically set on islands or other isolated parts of the earth, and envision social models that abolish private property and even eliminate privacy altogether, as in Thomas More's *Utopia*, first published in Latin in 1516. Yet as capitalism pervaded European societies with ever more privatized spaces, utopia also embraced more materialism and privacy. In this essay, I explore traces of early modern shifts in the conceptualization of privacy through a comparison of More's influential work and the first Dutch utopia, Hendrik Smeeks's *Krinke Kesmes* (1708). I compare utopia's austere, anti-private, Morean inheritance with the more positive valuation of privacy that may be seen in Smeeks's work, published in the context of the buoyant mercantile capitalism of the Dutch Republic.

Key words: utopia, early modern privacy, dissimulation, Krinke Kesmes

Utopian attitudes to the private are ambiguous. The utopian imagination focuses on the public realm, on envisioning models of enhanced sociability (Claeys, 2013). In Thomas More's *Utopia*, "there is nothing private anywhere … [the Utopians] live in the full view of all" (2018: 48). Private property is typically abolished in many literary utopias. We might therefore expect utopias to be unlikely sources of evidence for conceptions of privacy or the exchange of knowledge between the public and private realms. However, utopias are themselves private places. The setting on an island or in another isolated location is necessary to protect

the enhanced society from outside corruption. More's Utopians are self-suffi-cient in knowledge and know little of European philosophy, but, for readers to acquire knowledge of this ideal society, the narrator Raphael Hythloday must breach the ideal society's isolation.

The tension between public and private becomes more complicated in lat-er utopias, as the social and economic changes associated with early capital-ism, such as the enclosure of the commons (a target of savage critique in Book I of *Utopia*), become more entrenched. As European trade with the world grew, spurred by the profitable growth of the early joint-stock trading companies, most predominantly, the English East India Company and the Dutch United East India Company (VOC), the volume of foreign commodities available to European con-sumers increased. Historians of material culture highlight the social impact of the availability of a profusion of new and exotic objects, in particular, among the "middling sort" (Jardine, 1997; Hamling & Richardson, 2017). The impact of this materialism on households is noticeable in the visual art of the Low Countries, epitomized by the painting of interiors by artists such as Vermeer (Weststeijn, 2008). It can also be seen in works of literature such as the utopia written by a surgeon from Zwolle, near Amsterdam, Hendrik Smeeks. His *Beschryvinge van het magtig Koningryk Krinke Kesmes* (*Description of the Mighty Kingdom of Krinke Kesmes*), first published in 1708, includes elaborate descriptions of the architec-ture of utopian palaces, and the furnishings and statuary of their interiors. Their beauty and luxury are far from the austerity of More's *Utopia*, published two centuries earlier, in which gold is considered suitable for toilets.

How might the shift from More to Smeeks be understood, given that the structures and objects of a utopia encode signs and symbols of its ideological "landscape architecture" (Leibacher-Ouvrard, 1989: 93–125)? What kind of privacy does Smeeks envision in utopia, and what are its implications for shifting conceptions of privacy in premodern Europe? In this paper, I examine the tension between private and public in the context of utopia's austere Morean inheritance, highlighting some findings from my research into changes in the conceptualization of privacy through the lens of utopian literature.

There is no explicit abolition of privacy or private property in *Krinke Kesmes*. The narrative is recounted by Juan de Posos, a Dutch merchant whose ship loses course during a storm en route from Panama to the Philippines, and is beached on an island of the Southland (as the Dutch then referred to the continent of Australia). There De Posos and his companions are arrested by soldiers and tak-en to the utopian city of Taloujaël. De Posos meets the Garbon, the overseer of al-iens, who explains the Kesmians' history, politics, laws, religion, ethics and social customs. Their conversations tell much about their different attitudes to private and public knowledge. The Garbon introduces De Posos to a fellow Dutchman

called the El-ho, who takes him on his first tour of Taloujaël. The El-ho arrived in Krinke Kesmes as a boy after becoming separated from the crew of a Dutch ship during a landing on a remote coast. Marooned alone, like Robinson Crusoe *avant la lettre*, he learned to survive by his wits and defend himself against "savage" coastal dwellers, before he was rescued and welcomed into Kesmian society.

On his tour of the City Hall, De Posos is confronted with a custom that he had read about in More's *Utopia*, the premarital examination of the prospective marriage partner's naked body, as a buyer would inspect a horse. The earliest source for this practice is Plato's *Laws* (More, 2018: 83 n99). In *Utopia*, the ritual's aim is to prevent either party to the marriage from deceiving the other about flaws in their bodies:

> Whether she be widow or virgin, the woman is shown naked to the suitor by a responsible and respectable matron; and similarly, some honourable man presents the suitor naked to the woman. … If some disfiguring accident takes place after marriage, each person must bear his own fate; but beforehand everyone should be legally protected from deception. (83–4)

There are no details in *Utopia* about where the inspection takes place. Smeeks's reinterpretation of the practice highlights a significant difference in the two authors' evaluation of privacy. In *Krinke Kesmes*, the ritual takes place in a room in the City Hall called the "wedding chamber". De Posos reports that a male relative of the groom and a female relative of the bride escort the prospective partners to the wedding chamber:

> Having arrived in the chamber and closed the doors, these each undress their relation and display them to one another quite naked, who then scrutinize each other behind and in front, moving standing, stooping &c. … if both are well and sound, then the marriage is concluded and must proceed. (Smeeks, 1995: 88)

De Posos confesses that the custom strikes him as "peculiar [and] at odds with honour and modesty". He adds that he had read "something like this in *More's Utopia*, yet believed that to have been a fiction; but now I found it to be the truth, which amazed me greatly". De Posos's visit to the wedding chamber is interrupted by four people who enter all "covered in silk" to perform the nuptial inspection, so that "we had to depart, the door was closed" (88).

Two striking aspects of Smeeks's narrative adaptation from More's *Utopia* is instructive of differences between the conception of privacy in the two utopias.

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First, the Kesmians attempt to preserve the marriage partners' "modesty" by holding the ritual in a private room. In Utopia, we may assume that the inspection ritual could be observed by anyone, given Hythloday's report that the Utopians "live in the full view of all" and the doors of their houses "open easily with a push of the hand … so there is nothing private anywhere" (48). By contrast, in Krinke Kesmes, the ceremony is witnessed by only the couple themselves and their chaperones. The ritual's relative privacy is emphasized in Smeeks's narrative by allowing De Posos to view the room where it takes place, but forcing him to leave it when the couple arrives. The episode is bookended by references to closing doors: "Having arrived in the chamber and closed the doors" and "we had to depart, the door was closed" (88).

Another detail of Smeeks's narrative is equally instructive of the two works' different attitudes to property and material goods. The couples of Krinke Kesmes wear silk to the ceremony, a fabric which More considered extravagant and, like private property, eliminated from Utopia. Erasmus observed that, in life, More preferred "simple clothes" and never wore silk "except when it is not open to him to lay it aside" (55 n42). Likewise, Hythloday reports that, in Utopia, "fine clothing was not respected … silk was despised, and gold a badge of contempt" (65).

A critical problem raised by the necessity for utopian isolation is how such a separate, self-sufficient society might acquire the resources and knowledge to flourish. Francis Bacon addressed this question in his utopia *New Atlantis.* The Bensalemites send "merchants of light" to the outside world to travel incognito gathering "the books, and abstracts, and patterns of experiments of all other parts" to inform the ongoing scientific research and inventions produced in Saloman's House (Bacon, 2008: 486). The merchants of light travel like spies, dressing as the locals do, speaking their languages and telling no one where they come from. This practice of dissembling or dissimulation may be considered as an important form of early modern privacy. Baldassar Castiglione, Niccoló Machiavelli and Torquato Accetto advocated dissimulation in the sixteenth century as a necessary art for effective princely rulers. During the seventeenth century, manuals of conduct literature such as the highly popular *Art of Worldly Wisdom* by Baltasar Gracián, first published in 1647, recommended dissimulation more widely as part of the culture of display and self-fashioning (Snyder, 2009). For example, aphorism 179 warns: "A breast without reserve is an open letter. Have depths where you can hide your secrets: great spaces and little coves where important things can sink to the bottom and hide" (Gracián, 1995: 275). Gracián's work was a major source for *Krinke Kesmes* (Smeeks, 1976: 40). A version of aphorism 179 appears in the maxims of the Kesmian philosopher, Sarabasa: "A heart without secrecy, is like an open Letter and a disclosed resolve, and is like a game given away, which is held in low regard" (93–4).

The merchants and captains of the VOC were also expected to use dissimulation to identify profitable trading opportunities in new commodities during their voyages and in meetings with local peoples in foreign lands. Abel Janszoon Tasman was the commander of one of the VOC's first planned expeditions to explore the Australian continent, in 1642–43. Tasman's instructions for the voyage state:

> [Let civilized men] know that you have landed there for the sake of commerce, showing them specimens of the commodities which you have taken on board for the purpose, … closely observing what things they set store by and are most inclined to; … inquiring after gold and silver whether the latter are by them held in high esteem; making them believe that you are by no means eager for precious metals, so as to leave them ignorant of the value of the same; and if they should offer you gold or silver in exchange for your articles, you will pretend to hold the same in slight regard, showing them copper, pewter or lead and giving them an impression as if the minerals last mentioned were by us set greater value on. (Heeres & Coote, 1898: Appendix E)

A like form of dissimulation by the merchants of light creates a "filtered" utopian insularity for Bensalem, which ensures that only useful knowledge and virtues are imported, and not corrupt ideas and practices that would undermine its utopian society. As Paul Salzman observes, Bensalem "is carefully protected from the outside world but not insular" (2002: 38).

In *Krinke Kesmes*, the filter that allows knowledge from the outside world to reach the isolated utopia is structured differently. The Garbon tells De Posos that there is no exception to the rule that no Kesmian may travel abroad on pain of death. In a pointed reference to *New Atlantis*, the Garbon states, "We do not send out people in *Persian* clothes to find out what is going on in *Europe* or *Asia*" (34). As a result, he admits that the Kesmians "have very little intelligence of our own" (41). However, they do have a means to allow knowledge of the world to reach them, in books that are brought ashore from shipwrecks. In fact, the prevailing religious principles of Krinke Kesmes were adopted from books that arrived in this way. In AD 1030, a Persian ship was wrecked on the coast carrying three hundred passengers, including Persians, Indians, Turks, Arabs, Greeks, Italians and Dutch, as well as a cargo of many books "in divers Languages and on various Topics", including Bibles and Qur'ans. Young Kesmians were selected to learn all the languages so that the books could be studied. However, tumultuous dissension ensued between supporters of the sects of different religions, and the philosopher Sarabasa introduced

a simplified religious code based on two Christian principles: the golden rule (*Matthew* 7:12) and the "render-unto-Caesar" rule (*Matthew* 22:21) (36–8).

The Kesmians' rejection of dissimulation as a means to obtain knowledge does not deprive their society of useful knowledge. Enough books wash ashore that, unlike More's Utopians, they are familiar with the latest European philosophy, including the questioning of Cartesian thought and the microscopic discoveries of Antoni van Leeuwenhoek. Krinke Kesmes has two separate academies for men and women, which reside on two smaller islands called Nemnan and Wonvure. Some books washed up on the coast of Wonvure enable the women academicians to write letters to their male colleagues arguing for the existence of a vacuum, although the academicians of Nemnan are content with the old ideas.

De Posos's identity exemplifies the dissimulatory approach to trade and knowledge used by the VOC. Although born Dutch, his Spanish-sounding name, Juan de Posos, is adopted from an Andalusian friend to improve his chances of mercantile success in Panama. De Posos is therefore the inverse of the merchants of light: instead of leaving utopia to gather knowledge from the outside world, he travels in the opposite direction. He returns to Europe with a trove of information about Krinke Kesmes that the trusting Garbon shares with him, including information about its religion, laws, customs, geography, animals, birds and fish, cereals and vegetables, metals and architecture (128).

De Posos maintains a constant dissimulatory mask in response to the Garbon's candidness. This is exemplified in an early conversation in which they compare their two societies. After admitting that the Kesmians have "little intelligence of our own", the Garbon shares a striking critique of the hypocrisy of Kesmian priests:

> what causes wise [Kesmian] Southlanders to laugh is, that our
> Divines here, despise all Faiths, and swear, indeed curse, and for-
> ever are at odds with one another; in their Sermons they admon-
> ish us or the common people to peace, and reject it themselves,
> constantly waging war amongst themselves. (41)

In reply, De Posos sighs, "Alas! foolish *Southlanders*, ... in *Europe* there is a quite different state of affairs; there we live as Christians ought to, in love, peace, and unity." The Garbon accepts this statement and shows no awareness of its value as satire on the violent religious conflicts of the Reformation. De Posos does not point it out either, being pleased to deceive his host.

Krinke Kesmes has a carefully filtered privacy that offers protection to both the wider society and its individual members. Kesmians cannot travel abroad for themselves, but foreign books can be freely read and their contents discussed

and shared to improve the Kesmians' understanding of the world. They also allow knowledge of themselves to be freely shared. The doors of Krinke Kesmes do not all open at the push of a hand, unlike Utopia's. The Kesmian version of the marriage inspection ritual shows how a balance is achieved between public responsibility and individual dignity. However, practices of unethical dissimulation such as the deceit of Kesmian priests and De Posos's dishonesty in his dealings with the Garbon, remain a social problem even in Krinke Kesmes, and a sign of Smeeks's awareness of the risks and moral dilemmas posed by colonial strategies to cheat and dominate other peoples. Smeeks offers an inventive critical response to the utopian imaginaries of More and Bacon which furnishes an excellent source for the study of changes in the conception of privacy in early modern Europe.

Note

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3.2. "Not only a Robinsonade but also a Utopia": The Early Reception of *Robinson Crusoe* in Hungary

Gabriella Hartvig

Abstract

Like many other eighteenth-century English novels, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was first translated into Hungarian only in the twentieth century, just a few years after *Gulliver's Travels* appeared in translation in 1914. *Robinson Crusoe yorki tengerész élete és meglepő kalandjai* [The Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Mariner] was translated by Zsigmond Fülöp and published by Athenaeum in 1922. However, the Hungarian translation of *Robinson der Jüngere* (1779/80) by Joachim Heinrich Campe had enjoyed several editions since its first rendering in 1787, along with other adaptations of *Robinson Crusoe* for children in the nineteenth century; so much so, that the Robinsonade became an independent genre in novel literature. Early examples of the Robinsonade are *Jelki András* [András Jelki] (1791), *Magyar Robinzon* [Hungarian Robinson] (1808), and *Engelhard Márton* [Márton Engelhard] (1826). This paper explores the Hungarian reception of Daniel Defoe's imaginary voyage and its identification with utopian literature.

Key words: Robinsonades, Robinson Crusoe, imaginary voyages, Hungarian translations, reception

In 1899, in the conclusion of his book review, Gusztáv Heinrich turned to his readers with a request, to send him any missing work or book title of which they were aware and which belonged to the type of Robinsonades so that he could share them with Hermann Ullrich who would publish a supplement to his excellent book, *Robinson und Robinsonaden* (Heinrich, 1899: 752–72). Heinrich

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asked his readers to send in more Robinsonades because he was correcting and completing the Hungarian entries in Ullrich's bibliography. Three years later, Ullrich re-published Johann Gottfried Schnabel's *Die Insel Felsenburg* (1731–43), about which Heinrich remarks that the book is "not only a Robinsonade but also a Utopia, for the author draws an ideal state and society which, according to him, is exempt from all the troubles and sins in which his age has subsided" (Heinrich, 1902: 440). Robinsonades and utopian literature, sometimes with a dystopian direction, have gone hand in hand since the first imitations of Defoe's novel.

It is somewhat surprising that the most influential eighteenth-century novelist, Daniel Defoe, enjoys hardly any critical reception in Hungary, although there was a time when Hungarian Robinsonades were the most popular form of fiction writing. Apart from some book reviews, book chapters, and articles in literary journals, the best sources to turn to for the reception history of *Robinson Crusoe* (the original novel, not adaptations for children) are *A magyar regény előzményei* [The Prehistory of the Hungarian Novel] (1941) by Lajos György, which provides an annotated bibliography of novels published between 1730 and 1840, and the *Arcanum Digitecha*, the largest digital periodical database in Hungary. With its nearly 400 entries, György's bibliography is the fullest possible record of Hungarian novels in that period available today. His prehistory has a chapter on "Robinsonades and travelling romances" (György, 1941: 121–8). In *Arcanum*, one can have almost full access to press articles and literary essays that help to shape the picture of Defoe's critical reception. Added to these two sources, I should mention two recent studies on Hungarian Robinsonades, Gábor Pusztai's essay on András Jelky's adventures and Robinsonades (2011) and Norbert Béres's on the first Robinsonades in Hungarian (2021). In what follows, I would like to discuss the early Hungarian reception of Daniel Defoe's imaginary voyage and its possible identification with utopian literature. Because of their large number, the story of adaptations for children deserves an independent discussion.

The first mention of Defoe can be found in George Szerdahelyi's *Aesthetica* in 1784 (Fest, 2000: 535). Besides scattered references to Defoe's name, imitations and re-writings also appeared in the early nineteenth century. The exploitation of *Robinson's* didactic element began with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's recommendation of the book in Émile. According to György, because Rousseau appreciates Defoe's solitary hero, *Robinson Crusoe* finds its way into pedagogical literature sooner than its first full translation in national literatures. The Hungarian translation of *Robinson der Jüngere* (1779/80) by Joachim Heinrich Campe had enjoyed several editions since its first rendering in 1787 by József Gelei as *Az ifjabbik Robinzon*, along with other adaptations for children in the nineteenth century, so much so that Robinsonades became an independent genre. Several imitations for the youth followed, usually adapted from a German

original; among them, we should mention *Róbert Péter született anglus élete* [The Life and Strange Adventures of Peter Robert, a true-born Englishman] by László Sz. Szent-Iványi (1797) and the story of the young orphan, *Márton Engelhard* by Péter Csery (1826).

When looking at the many imitations and re-writings, the question must be asked, to what extent can we call any Hungarian work a "Robinsonade"? Heinrich's definition is the following:

> a Robinsonade is a work that focuses on, at least in some of its major episodes, the Robinson motif. The two essential elements of the Robinson motif are: 1. complete isolation, in the literal sense of the word: on an island that is difficult to reach, and 2. the hero is completely isolated from all human society for a certain period of time. (Heinrich, 1899: 752–73)

Those two requirements are not always fulfilled, and neither are other essential features that define castaway narratives: we may think of such utopian elements as social criticism or the introduction of an ideal state of life, or such elements of imaginary voyages as self-reflection and conversion on the island, or an encounter with cannibals or friendly natives — although this latter element does appear in Joachim Szekér's work (1808). As we will see, when Hungarian authors publish a Robinsonade, they seem to have a different agenda: the island episode is not the most crucial event or a new beginning in the protagonist's life; instead, it is one of the many adventures, and, quite often, Robinson's name in the title or the designation of the category of the book seems to appear mostly for marketing reasons (Béres, 2021: 22).

The first truly national imitation is *Jelki Andrásnak egy született Magyarnak Történetei* [The History of András Jelky, a True-Born Hungarian], translated by István Sándor in 1791. It was originally published in German in Vienna in 1776 (*Geschichte des Herrn Andreas Jelky, eines gebornen Ungarns*), then in Prague in 1779, and later, again in Vienna in 1797, with the alternative title *Der ungarische Robinson* [The Hungarian Robinson]. It is an anonymous work but was ostensibly dictated to the editor by Jelki himself (Pusztai, 2011: 68). Among Heinrich's categories, it is listed as an original national imitation, not an adaptation or translation of a foreign work: *András Jelki* belongs to "Robinsonades published in Hungarian or having a plot related to Hungary" (Heinrich, 1899: 758). The protagonist of the story, as the title indicates, is indeed a "true-born Hungarian". András Jelki, son of a tailor, travels to Vienna and then to Paris to gain experience. He goes through several adventures: he is taken prisoner by Algerian pirates, serves as a soldier in the Netherlands, and transports spices from exotic islands on a Dutch ship.

When he is captured, aided by a native girl, he flees to an uninhabited island before returning to Batavia where he becomes the governor's secret counsellor. Eventually, he settles in Buda. This is a brief summary of a short work of about 30 pages, and one wonders why it is a "true Hungarian Robinsonade." The island episode occupies less than two pages and begins with this compressed summary:

> [Jelki and the native girl] finally arrived in a deserted area where they lived for thirteen months, isolated from all human company. They built a small hut made of bushes, with two Indians as their companions in hiding, who served them faithfully. Their diet consisted of coconuts, figs, fish, crabs, and turtles. (Sándor, 1791: 19, my translation)

The second edition of Jelky's adventures appeared in 1784, together with a sequel providing a range of entertaining and humorous episodes from the later life of András Jelki, which distances the book even further from the original Robinson story. Pusztai searches the true history behind Jelki's adventures and concludes: "It is assumed that the adventures that preceded his arrival in Batavia were inspired by the plots of *Robinson* imitations that were so fashionable at the time. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* goes through similar vicissitudes (sea adventures, battle with pirates, slavery in Africa, escape, tossing about at sea, then lucky escape) before landing on the desert island" (Pusztai, 2014: 75). Thus, what makes *András Jelki* a Robinsonade is the adventurous travel narrative that precedes and follows the short island episode.

Another early example of a national Robinsonade is Joachim Szekér's *Magyar Robinson* [Hungarian Robinson] (1808), which comes with a preface that offers a recipe for reading the work. Here, we have two heroes, Captain Újvári and his servant Miskei; they are captured by Ibrahim, the Turkish Pasha, during the battle of Karlowitz. After a series of adventures, they enter the court of the Sultan of Morocco and become the leaders of the expedition that the Sultan initiates to explore his provinces. They tour Algeria, Tripoli, and Tunisia. In the last place, the Bey's daughter, Siphonella, falls in love with Újvári. Returning to Morocco, Újvári trains the Sultan's army on the model of the Hungarian hussars. The Tunisian Bey also invites Újvári to train spahiks, but he and his mate get shipwrecked on the way. So they stay on an uninhabited island until they are picked up by the boat sent to fetch them. Újvári spends happy times in Tunis with Siphonella. However, the Turkish Sultan finds out his whereabouts and pursues him. After a lucky escape, they get married, and it turns out that Siphonella is the daughter of a Hungarian captain. At the same time, Újvári's companion Miskei marries a native girl, whom he finds on the island, and becomes a merchant in Trieste (György, 1941: 379).

Szekér's preface to the first volume borrows some of the "Editor's Preface" precepts in Defoe's original. About the authenticity of the story, the editor writes the following: "The Editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it: And however thinks... that the Improvement of it, as well as the Diversion, as to the Instructiion of the Reader, will be the same" (Defoe, 2007: 3). From Szekér's preface, the reader learns that, "By this work, I wish to entertain and educate the reader alike. The story that I present here is based on a history of fact, but it is endowed with a more poetic quality. I have chosen a manner of writing so as not to bore the reader, but rather to entice him to read further" (Szekér, 1808: 4).

The island episode occupies several chapters in Szekér's work. The weather conditions are similarly challenging, and the two Hungarian castaways do not even have proper tools or guns, so they hunt down birds by throwing stones at them. Besides birds, they eat roots and drink water. Another similarity between Defoe's original and its Hungarian imitation is the encounter with cannibals who approach the island in their boats and carry innocent natives who are tied up; one even gets eaten, while the other, a 16-year-old girl, is rescued by *Újvári* and Miskei: "They suddenly felt horrified because they understood that there were savages on a nearby island who, if they found out that they were here, would come and they [*Újvári* and Miskei] would fall into their hands" (Szekér, 1808: 26). Similarly, Defoe's Robinson is also troubled by the thought of what happens if savages come to the island. However, his thoughts of fear also disturb his routine of praying to God: "the dread and terror of falling into the hands of savages and cannibals lay so upon my spirits, that I seldom found myself in a due temper for application to my Maker". Robinson's fear of the cannibals serves to give a spiritual lesson: "I rather prayed to God as under great affliction and pressure of mind, surrounded with danger, and in expectation every night of being murdered and devoured before morning" (Defoe, 2007: 138). The appearance of the savages on the island is perhaps the finest example of the author's precept given in the editor's preface, that there will be a "religious Application of Events to the Uses to which wise Men always apply them to the Instruction of others by this Example" (Defoe, 2007: 3). We cannot find this in *A magyar Robinson* [The Hungarian Robinson], which is all the more surprising since its author, Joachim Szekér, was a military chaplain. Since most imitations in Hungary are more than two steps away from the original text, it is hard to establish to what extent they remain Robinsonades. As Béres explains, "By the time the Robinsonade reaches our country, its type has taken on an autonomous life, so much so that it becomes problematic to specify the earliest traces... since it is not known what may have been its source text" (Béres, 2021: 15).

The stories of these two Robinsonades remind the reader more of adventures than an imaginary voyage or a spiritual biography of the *Robinson* type. Nevertheless, both contain an island episode, although it remains a minor part of the story. When we recall Heinrich's explanation of the Robinsonade, that the hero has to be in complete isolation on a far-away island, we realize that those early Robinsonades in Hungarian do not fill the requirements even in this respect. Most of the time, the protagonist is not alone: Újvári takes his servant Miskei with him, while András Jelky is surrounded by helpers; he has a savage girl with him too, who rescues him and who dies on the island. We can hardly call the protagonists sea-travellers: they are soldiers, tailors, or politicians, attached to land rather than the sea. Getting shipwrecked seems to be a minor episode in their lives. The category Robinsonade serves a marketing purpose: to sell the story through its connectedness to a popular original. An attractive element of these travel narratives is the exotic nature of the visited places and very remote cultures. As Béres writes, Hungary was not a sea-travelling nation; it existed on the margins of the globalized world in Szekér's time (Béres, 2021: 10).

The secret of the success of these Hungarian Robinsonades is that they provide a unique example that constitutes an essential role in the nationalizing process. As Beöthy argues, the protagonist of these stories is not a cultured man but "by virtue of his physical strength and spiritual goodness, [he] is capable of living under the harshest circumstances. He becomes prosperous and is honoured everywhere" (Beöthy, 1887: 197).

Like many other eighteenth-century novels, *Robinson Crusoe* was first translated into Hungarian only in the early twentieth century, just a few years later than *Gulliver's Travels*, which was translated in 1914. The twentieth-century reception of Defoe can primarily be characterized by juvenile literature and short discussions of *Robinson Crusoe's* place in literary histories.

In the Hungarian *Lexicon of World Literature,* we can find two entries on the Robinsonade genre. Both agree that the genre of the Robinsonade belongs to novels of adventures, and both disregard Defoe's purpose of a religious application of the story. We can also find an established connection with the utopia: "This characteristic genre of the novel of adventure was not only popular in the context of youth literature or travel writing, but was also used in utopian literature because of its socio-political message" (Radnóti, 1991: 25). Gulliveriads seem to be better examples of utopist writing, of which there were plenty in the twentieth century, so much so that they became the prototype for social satires. The umpteenth voyage of Gulliver often provides a political lesson through the depiction of a futuristic, dystopian society. Despite this fact, Swift's book (at least the first two voyages) was relegated to children's literature, like *Robinson Crusoe*. However, Swift's philosophical and political agenda did not disappear from the imitations, as the moral teaching of Defoe's imaginary voyage did.

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3.3. Utopianism Clean and Pure: The Interconnected Hygiene Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Science and Literature

Albert Göschl

Abstract

Since Thomas More and classical times, utopian literature has integrated hygiene into its reflections. Renaissance utopias are concerned with questions of cleanliness, sewerage systems and the orientation of the city to exploit the winds for air purification. But the scientific discourse on hygiene increased and consolidated in literary and non-literary utopias of the nineteenth century. It pervades both Richardson's utopian city *Hygeia* (1875) and Jules Verne's *The Begum's Fortune* (*Cinq Cents Millions de la Bégum*) (1879), and also leaves its mark on other European utopias such as Paolo Mantegazza's *Year 3000* (*L'anno 3000*) (1897). In Jules Verne's utopian city of France-Ville, a doctrine of hygiene reaches down to the level of private space. For example, the use of carpets and wallpapers are prohibited to combat "bad evaporation" and the spread of germs, with the effect that epidemics and disease no longer exist. The primary task of the state is to protect the population from diseases, which are conceived as dystopian horror scenarios: "To clean, clean unceasingly, so as to destroy the miasmas constantly emanating from a large community, such is the principal work of the central government" (Verne, 1879: 152). This paper examines the complex status of hygiene control for utopias as well as the consequences for the creation of the utopian space at the turn of the twentieth century.

Key words: nineteenth-century literature, hygiene discourse, Jules Verne, Paolo Mantegazza

The concept of hygiene changed radically during the 19th century (La Berge, 1992; Ward, 2019). The reasons are various medical discoveries, including innovations in the field of epidemiology. Less well known is the connection between literature and hygiene, especially the role that literary utopia plays in this constellation. The hygiene discourse of the nineteenth century — spurred on by the experiences of epidemics such as the cholera pandemics — is a driving force behind the emergence of new sanitary utopias, just as pandemics have played an essential role in the creation of the dystopian genre (Al-Aghberi, 2021). The combination of epidemic experience and dystopia is an extremely fruitful one, since the pandemic represents one of the few real dangers for humanity globally, beside world wars, nuclear wars, and global dictatorships. The epidemiological threats of the nineteenth century, which often resulted from a lack of hygienic conditions, and the birth of epidemiology as a science led to the emergence of numerous literary and non-literary hygienic utopias, that is positive social concepts based on hygienic cleanliness.

Hygiene, public health and preventive medicine are intimately connected (Cawadias, 1950: 352). Since at least the seventeenth century, it has been seen as the task of the state to provide clean water, clean air, and food. Nicolas De La Mare wrote in his *Traité de la police* (1707–1719) that it is the task of the state power to ensure three essential goods, as defined in Seneca's *De beneficiis*: "the goods of the soul, of bodies and of fortune" (De La Mare, 1722: 566):

> The health of the air around us, & which we breathe, the purity of the water & the quality of the food, are the three main factors of health; thus, in order to preserve such a great good for the public, & to prevent diseases which might disturb it, it is the duty of the Police Officers to remedy as much as possible that the air may be infected, water & other food may be corrupted. (De La Mare, 1722: 566, my translation)

In the nineteenth century, the pandemic situation was particularly tense in Europe. From the first decade, cholera raged in several waves for almost a hundred years. Its experience was linked to the plague, which at that time, was still very much present in the collective memory of Europe (Poczka, 2017: 359). After the plague, cholera was the first disease to be perceived as global. Between 1850 and 1900, countless international health conferences took place to solve the sanitary situation at which scientists and politicians closely collaborated for the first time. The debate split furiously into two parties: contagionists and anti-contagionists debated the question of the cause of the disease. No agreement between them seemed to be possible (Poczka, 2017: 360).

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the concept of public hygiene was developed in France, especially in the years between 1815 and 1848. This period is often regarded as the beginning of modern hygiene (Ackerknecht, 1948: 118). Transformations in medicine led to the elimination of cholera but also changed the relationship between science and government (Poczka, 2017: 34). By contrast with the elaborate sewerage system of Paris, whose construction dates back to the fourteenth century, London's system was only built in the 1860s after the so-called "Great Stink" (Osterhammel, 2011: 262). Around the same time, the world's first academic chair of hygiene was established in Germany (Cawadias, 1950: 359). Numerous hygienic societies followed, such as the Fondazione dell'igiene in Italy (Giorgi, 1999: 441).

There was also a connection between the discourse of hygiene and that of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie distinguished itself from both the nobility and the working class through meticulous personal hygiene (Poczka, 2017: 33). Bourgeois hygiene became a part of moral existence and a successful lifestyle (Poczka, 2017: 96). Victorian cleanliness transcended the medical realm and became an overarching aesthetic paradigm producing it's own 'sanitary narratives' (Cleer, 2014, 43–66).

But what significance does utopia have for the discourse of hygiene? From Plato to the Italian concept of the ideal city, from Thomas More and Tommaso Campanella to the enlightened utopias of the eighteenth century, hygiene has been a crucial component that shapes the interrelationship between the individual and their society (Siefert, 1970: 27). Generally speaking, eutopias establish healthy societies, which prevent diseases from arising through hygienic prophylaxis. These utopians do not let anything enter their society that could pollute the air or water. Cattle are slaughtered outside the city and cleaned under running water. Hospitals are located outside the city and act like their own city states. Expensive hospital care is legitimized by the need for epidemic prevention (Siefert, 1970: 41). As in Campanella's *The City of the Sun*, corpses are burned prophylactically to keep the air clean and keep out diseases (Siefert, 1970: 36). Prophylactic quarantine and drugs are used to prevent illness as a result of human catastrophes predicted by misalignments of the stars. Utopian doctors therefore have a prophylactic function. They tell the leaders of the town what they should cook for their society (Siefert, 1970: 37). In Johann Valentin Andreae's *Christianopolis*, gardens are created for medical purposes and air purification (Siefert, 1970: 36). In *New Atlantis*, Francis Bacon creates the office of *conservator sanitatis*, which prescribes prophylactic methods for new arrivals, including a three-day quarantine in well-ventilated individual cells, and forbidding physical contact between individuals.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a specific form of sanitary, or hygienic, utopianism became established through an intertextual network that included Benjamin Richardson's *Hygeia*, Jules Verne's science fiction and its

relationship with the city of La Plata, as well as a synthesis of the hygienist and utopian that was united in the mind of Paolo Mantegazza. It is a dense network that transcends genres and kinds of literary utopias, and interacts closely with science and architecture.

One of the less well-known texts of the prolific Verne is *Les Cinq cents millions de la Bégum* (*The Begum's Fortune*). After the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–1871, Verne wrote a novel based on the tension between a utopian and a dystopian world correlated implicitly with French and German culture. The protagonist, Dr Sarrasin, a successful French scientist in the field of hygiene, participates at a British hygiene congress. During the congress, he learns that he will inherit an extremely large amount of money due to a distant connection to an Indian noble-woman, a so-called Begum. He will therefore inherit five hundred million francs. Dr Sarrasin is not only a wise man, but also a morally honourable man. He only needs a short time to think about what he intends to achieve with the money. At the Congress, he announces that he wants to donate the sum to science in order to found a city, France-Ville, which would be built according to the latest state of knowledge in the field of hygiene. The city would significantly increase the happi-ness and health of its citizens. After the news is widely published in the European gazettes, another researcher, Dr Schultze from the German town of Jena, be-lieves he is also entitled to the inheritance due to his far-reaching connections to the Begum. Through an out-of-court settlement, the two agree to share the sum. Schultze, inspired by Sarrasin's idea, also decides to build an ideal city. As a convinced representative of the racially supreme German Empire, he builds, just a few kilometres from France-Ville, its evil twin sister. Stahlstadt, as it will later become clear, has the primary objective of destroying France-Ville. France-Ville is a utopian city oriented between egalitarian common good and liberal democ-racy. Stahlstadt, on the other hand, is presented as a highly polluted machine of exploitation, which bases its wealth on arms production and the international arms trade, incorporating also the incipient discourse of racial hygiene. The two cities could hardly be conceived as greater opposites: utopian hygiene versus dystopian pollution; sanitary hygiene versus racial hygiene (Göschl, 2022: 122).

The interesting element of this text for my argument is the premise of hy-giene on the basis of which the city of France-Ville is to be built. Everything in the city's architecture is geared towards prolonging the lives of the inhabitants, reducing child mortality, diseases, and epidemics to a minimum. France-Ville be-comes a health paradise with the typical totalitarian claims of power inherent in utopias. The obsession with long life leads to the fact that private decision-mak-ing is reduced to a minimum. The lives of the individuals, also typical of the utopi-an genre, are systematized through everyday space. The form and architecture of all private apartments is defined down to the last detail: every family lives in a

detached single family house, each house is surrounded by a garden to protect it from possible miasmas (bad air). No house has more than two floors to distribute light and air evenly to all inhabitants. All houses are ten meters from the road, and thus from possible dirt. The roofs are only slightly sloped and surrounded by a protective grid to prevent falls. The houses are supported by a sophisticated and also standardized ventilation and sewerage system. The kitchens must be located on the top floor, directly under the roof terrace, to dissipate the smells. Electricity and water are very cheaply available to the inhabitants. Carpets and wallpapers are forbidden, to prevent germs and unhealthy evaporation. Walls and floors can be kept hygienically clean: "On les lave comme on lave les glaces et les vitres, comme on frotte les parquets et les plafonds. Pas un germe morbide ne peut s'y mettre en embuscade" (Verne, 1879a: 101) ["They are washed as windows are washed, and rubbed like ceilings and floors. Not even a germ of anything harmful can be harboured there"] (Verne, 1879b: 150).

Each bedroom has its own toilet, and here too, the furnishings are precisely defined: four armchairs, an iron bed, a woollen mattress; all legitimized from a hygienic point of view:

> Eider-down quilts and heavy coverlets, powerful allies of epidemics, are excluded as a matter of course. Good woollen coverings, light and warm, and easily washed, replace them well. Though curtains and draperies are not absolutely forbidden, it is recommended that, if used, they should be made of washing materials. (Verne, 1879b: 150)

Last but not least, each room has its own fireplace, with a predefined ventilation system (Verne, 1879a: 100–1).

From today's point of view, one could almost assume that the book might be a persiflage of the utopian genre. However, this is definitely not the case, considering the origin of all these regulations. Indeed, as Verne says in his novel himself, all these rules derive almost literally from a certain Benjamin Ward Richardson, a British hygiene scientist, who had given a lecture entitled "Hygeia. City of Health" a few years earlier at a British hygiene congress (Gondolo della Riva, 2003: 22). The city's name refers to Hygieia, the Greek goddess of health. Richardson:

> It is my object to put forward a theoretical outline of a community so circumstanced and so maintained by the exercise of its own freewill, guided by scientific knowledge, that in it the perfection of sanitary results will be approached, if not actually realised, in the co-existence of the lowest

possible general mortality with the highest possible individual longevity. (Richardson, 1876: 10–11)

Richardson has in mind what the fictional character of Dr. Sarrasin will do in Verne's novel just a few years later. The construction of an ideal community, built according to the state of the art of the hygiene sciences of the time, with the aim of producing the greatest happiness, understood as the greatest cleanliness for the greatest number, to speak in utilitarian terms:

> Pestilences which decimated populations, and which, like the great plague of London, destroyed 7,165 people in a single week, have lost their virulency; gaol fever has disappeared, and our gaols, once each a plague-spot, have become, by a strange perversion of civilisation, the health spots of, at least, one kingdom. The term, Black Death, is heard no more. (Richardson, 1876: 14)

Richardson was extremely successful with his idea, published in the form of a literary utopia. In the years that followed, there are countless references to this utopia. Richardson is also likely to have influenced other literary utopias in addition to Verne's. Not only did the utopian town of Hygeia become a metaphor for the hygienic city in the medical circles of the nineteenth century, it was also adopted in other fictions. The fact that Paolo Mantegazza writes some years later an Italian utopian novel called *L'Anno 3000*, wherein he calls his hospital Igeia, suggests that Mantegazza also knew Richardson's text; which is probable, since Mantegazza was not only an Italian writer and utopist but also an international hygienist who published scientific books such as *Elements of Hygiene* (1875) and *Physiology of Love* (1896), which was also read by Freud (Pireddu, 2010: 2).

Mantegazza's hospital, Igeia, is a bureaucratically organized health machine, whose purpose is also to prevent disease:

> [I]n all the schools, everyone is taught to observe carefully his own organism and its functioning. And the moment one notices the slightest pain or the smallest trouble, one rushes here or to another Hygeia to have his inner organs checked and thus nip in the bud the least ill that might threaten him. (Mantegazza, 2010: 135)

Richardson's influence can be seen in other works such as Walter Besant and James Rice's short story, "*The Monks of Thelema*" (the title is an allusion to

Rabelais' micro-utopia, "*L'abbay de Thélème*"): "There was clearly a good deal of work before this village could become a city of Hygeia, and the hearts of both glowed at the prospect of tough work before them" (Besant & Rice, 1878: 34–5).

On an abstract level, the hygiene utopianism of the nineteenth century transcends the emerging science of hygiene, whose ideas are taken over in literature, while at the same time hygiene utopianism is influenced by literature. Richardson's Hygeia is not only a scientific example, but also linguistic construct created with literary means t hat explicitly refers to the utopias of early modern times. Hygiene utopianism transcends the boundaries of literary utopia, science, fiction, and reality too. One of the models for the Argentine city of La Plata was Verne's France-Ville. In fact, at the World Exhibition of 1889, La Plata was called "The City of Verne" (Feierstein, 2008: 41).[1]

Notes

1. I would like to thank Benjamin Loy for drawing my attention to this fact.

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3.4. The Path of Progress: Utopia and Spiritualist Literature

Marta Komsta

Abstract

Described variously as the "Summerland", the "Spirit World", or the "Beautiful Beyond", depictions of the afterlife in nineteenth-century Spiritualist literature reveal a conspicuous affinity with the dynamic utopian paradigm of their times, developed in line with the period's focus on individual and collective development. While these allegedly factual representations of post-mortem locus amoenus were not written as utopias per se, they foreground the essentially utopian belief in humanity's inherent potential for betterment, fully realized in the hereafter. In contradistinction to the traditional trope of utopian insularity, Spiritualist accounts highlight the intrinsic correspondence between the two realms of existence, which allows the spiritual sphere to influence its earthly counterpart. Hence, progress in the Great Beyond is correlated with continuous improvement on Earth and, by extension, with creating a better world in the here and now. This essay will thus focus on selected nineteenth-century Spiritualist texts with a view to exploring the idea of progress established as their thematic and structural dominant. I argue that the examined models are grounded on the tension between the depiction of a transcendent utopia and the drive towards individual perfection amongst its inhabitants, as the concept of divine will is juxtaposed with the necessity of human agency in the Spiritualist universe.

Key words: utopia, progress, heaven, Spiritualism, nineteenth century

The history of modern Spiritualism begins in 1848, when two young sisters, Kate and Maggie Fox, allegedly communicated with an unruly spirit that took residence in their family home in Hydesville, New York. As unlikely as it might seem today, this highly publicized case of spiritual communication changed the religious landscape of the nineteenth-century United States, made evident by the

immense popularity of spirit lectures and seances, the celebrity-like status of some of the mediums, as well as the considerable interest shown by luminaries of Victorian science and culture such as William James, Alfred Russel Wallace, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Robert Owen. As a religious but also political movement, Spiritualism became a brief though potent expression of a latent need to support the belief in life after death with scientific validation. To quote Molly McGarry (2008: 8),

> Unlike other religions, in which faith was a necessary prerequisite for belief, Spiritualism asked only that one become an "investigator", attend a séance under "test" conditions, analyze "evidence", and weigh whether or not to believe. Spiritualists described theirs as a "religion of proof".

In response to extensive criticism as well as encouragement from their opponents and followers, Spiritualists produced a great number of written accounts delineating a unique post-mortem cosmogony, according to which the spirits of those who passed away on Earth come to inhabit a system of celestial spheres, referred to variously as the Summerland or the Great Beyond. These often highly detailed descriptions appear as an amalgam of fiction and spiritual testimony, blending pseudo-scientific speculations and parables with presentations of religious doctrines and political treatises. Particularly striking is the connection between Spiritualist writings and the utopian literary convention, especially in the context of the evolution of the utopian genre from the static early model to its more dynamic nineteenth-century counterpart. Many of these texts echo utopia's cultural antecedents such as the Garden of Eden, the Fortunate Isles, or Elysium as representations of a perfected reality that transcends the adversities of mundane existence. At the same time, they show the discernible influence of nineteenth-century precepts of individual and collective development as blueprints for a better future now and after death. Thus, it is my contention that, although Spiritualist works were not intended as proper literary utopias, their structural and thematic determinants link them to the utopian paradigm as well as to the utopian focus on perfectibility and progress, demonstrated by the intertwined tropes of scientific confirmation and divine agency.

The notion of progress lies at the core of Spiritualist world-building as an indispensable component of its utopianist philosophy, which effectively transferred the ethos of progress from a temporary existence on Earth into an everlasting hereafter as a dynamic process of perfectibility affecting various elements of the presented world. According to Cathy Gutierrez,

> Progress was projected into heaven, which itself was sub-
> ject to time and improvement. In contrast to more classical
> depictions of heaven such as Dante's, where the ground is
> so solid it bruises one's feet, or Huck Finn's, where angels
> on clouds play harps ..., Spiritualist heaven was a whirlwind
> of motion. The dead grew up, went to school, advanced
> through the spheres, even got married. Progress contin-
> ued into the infinite future, and although there was usually
> peace for the dead, there was no rest. (Gutierrez, 2009: 19)

Seen from the perspective of the utopian paradigm, progress in Spiritualist texts takes up the function of the so-called "primary ideal" of classical utopias, whose "existence", according to Elisabeth Hansot, "does not *directly* depend on a particular form of social organization but hinges rather upon the existence of a supra-sensible reality" (1974: 11, original emphasis). I argue that the "primary ideal" in Spiritualist utopias can be identified as the determinant of progress to which all levels of the given presented world are synecdochically subjected. For example, Eugene Crowell declares in *The Spirit World* (1879: 37) that "[p]rogression is the grand law of the spirit-world, and although some spirits may not take the first step in the path of progression for a long time, even for ages, yet there can be no change for the worse. Retrogression is there unknown." Similarly, D. E. Bailey states in *Thoughts From The Inner Life* (1886: 157) that "[p]rogress is a law of life; it is a child of the Infinite; it knows no limit, because all of the boundless regions of heaven, earth, and space are open to its research. It is forever unfolding grander forms of beauty, nobler forms of thought."

The focus on progress is distinctly noticeable in the spatial modelling of the Spiritualist universe. Unlike the traditional utopian model, Spiritualist world-building is essentially vertical, based on the progressively diminishing contrast between the upper echelons of excellence and the inherently flawed earthly realm. The general spatial model takes the form of interlocking zones or spheres, arranged hierarchically, which are further divided into circles or divisions. For example, in *The Spirit World,* the afterlife constitutes a "system or series of heavens, or zones, which are associated with our planet, and which revolve with it, ... and which are fixed in their relations to it" (Crowell, 1879: 21). According to Andrew Jackson Davis, one of the most prominent Spiritualists of his times, there are "*six* spheres in the ascending flight toward Deity, who fills the Seventh Sphere" (1867: 66, original emphasis). Such a design of intertwined worlds is based on a principle of correspondence between respective zones as well as between the hereafter as a whole and the earthly realm, which contravenes both the trope of spatial insularity, typical for traditional utopias, and the temporal distance of nineteenth-century euchronias.

The implementation of an up/down dichotomy as the core structural principle highlights the progressive focus of Spiritualist texts. Each sphere reflects a successive stage in the development of its inhabitants, who, in time, advance to higher zones in line with the divine "order of progression", at the end of which spirits become "purified and exalted angels" (Crowell, 1879: 27–8). The spatial organization follows the synecdochic structure of early utopian narratives, in which, according to Artur Blaim (2013: 146), the components of the given state operate as signifiers of "the general principles underlying the utopian system". Thus, various elements of the presented world come to represent the overall excellence (or its lack) in a given area, and each sphere constitutes a component of the overarching Spiritualist universe. For example, in the so-called "wicked heaven" in *The Spirit World*, cities are described as dens of destitution and poverty where "[t]he dwellings present a dingy, forlorn appearance, and suggest ideas of uncleanness, and discomfort" and their inhabitants "are clothed in garments which correspond to their degraded moral, and intellectual conditions, and their unhappy countenances reflect the passions, vices, and ignorance of their natures" (Crowell, 1879: 40).

The spatial design and, by extension, the "moral, and intellectual condition" of utopians change in the subsequent sphere that constitutes an improved version of its predecessor. Hence, in contrast to the aforementioned "wicked heaven," the more advanced regions in *The Spirit World* display explicit superiority over the lower world. Likewise, Paschal Beverly Randolph (1886: 118) points out in *After Death* that the second section of the first division

> is a great improvement on the first. It occupies more surface; is greatly diversified; is higher, both in reference to the scale of perfection and the equator. The fauna and flora are less coarse and rough … The inhabitants are still quite coarse and low, but far less brutal and gross than in the former section.

The static structure of each sphere is connected with the individual progress of its inhabitants; the spiritual zones, which neither develop nor deteriorate, are arranged hierarchically, enabling the spirits to advance by moving upwards from sphere to sphere. What changes here is not the organization of the given celestial zone, but the moral progress of the individuals, whose advancement in the spiritual reality relies on their personal effort.[1]

In what follows, many Spiritualist narratives strive to resolve the key difference between the focus of progress in traditional and modern utopias respectively. According to Hansot (1974: 13), "while classical utopias are critical

of existing society, they aim primarily at changing the individual rather than society. … [M]odern utopias attempt to change man by remaking the society in which he will live." Spiritualist works reconcile the said approaches by placing them on two seemingly distinct ontological planes: the post-mortem reality becomes a reflection of a classical utopian state in which the individual undergoes reformation through the corrective mechanism of education and labour (the society, as such, remains static); soon enough, however, after having advanced sufficiently, spirits begin working on improving the general conditions of life on Earth as part of their path toward perfection. It is then an interlocking system in which the individual progress after death becomes correlated with facilitating improvement in the mortal world by means of spirits, who assist and inspire various social reforms with a view to creating an earthly utopia as a reflection of the celestial model. As a result, Spiritualist texts, apart from foregrounding an aesthetic and didactic ideal, attempt to provide a viable programme of socio-political critique and reform, aimed at the reality outside their boundaries.

This idea of correspondence between the two realities is one of the central tenets of Davis's concept of the "harmonial philosophy", whose purpose is "[t]o unfold the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, to apply the laws of planets to individuals — in a word, to establish in human society the same harmonious relations that are found to obtain in the cosmos" (Davis, 1923: 205–6). The spiritual world is modelled as a spatiotemporal and socio-political matrix to be emulated on earth as the core element of the mimetic relationship between both realities. More importantly, however, the connection between the two realms enables mortals to achieve greater harmony in their lives. Davis observes (1867: 165–6) that "[t]he true and noble in the Summer Land work diligently among the members of its inferior societies to bring about that state of heavenly peace and concord. When the inferior societies of the other sphere are harmonized, the earth-land will also be more harmonized". M. T. Shelhamer (1885: 422) makes a similar observation, arguing:

> [the spirits'] highest blessing and privilege is in being able to impress, work upon, and guide the hidden, inner powers of souls in mortal forms until they develop the beauty and glory within them, and awaken their spirits to an understanding of beautiful life, an appreciation of the good and true, and a knowledge of the possibility of the power that is theirs.

Spirits would also exert a more direct influence upon the socio-political strata of earthly societies by establishing congresses, which would then work on impressing a specific political agenda upon respective nations. In the series narrated by the spirit of the late Samuel Bowles, a celebrated journalist, the celestial visitor reveals the following mechanism of political activism in the spiritual realm:

> We have our Spiritual Congress for our nation's interest, which by developing harmony and engendering a right spirit, is enabled to throw a greater influence over your, earthly Congress. There are many impediments to our even partial control, but mighty minds are working with power, ten-fold greater than those in earth life, to help strengthen any moves in the right direction, and make them effective for the nation's good. (Twing, 1881: 32)

The spirits "not only watch most anxiously who is elected to office", but they also "exert as strong an influence as possible to have those elected upon whom we can act" (Twing, 1881: 32). The idea of spiritual intervention was seen by many Spiritualists as a necessary part of facilitating widespread reforms on Earth, which included the pressing issues of women's rights and abolitionism, inspired by the utopians from the Great Beyond. The spirits were described as "trying to influence a world that is going astray and might cause undreamed-of suffering" in preparation for the new world developed in unison with the post-mortem realm (Rafferty, 1922: 9). Spiritualism was hence seen as a herald of the time of the New Dispensation "when heaven shall draw near to earth, and the soul of man shall be baptized with spiritual gifts; and finally, *finally*, war and hatred shall cease on earth, and peace and kindness shall be the law of life" (Rafferty, 1922: 176, original emphasis). Perhaps the most far-reaching example of Spiritualist progress is the transhumanist ideal of a new humanity that would usher the utopian ideal of the Summerland into the mortal world in the wake of the impending spiritual revolution. Davis (1923: 277) explains that

> [t]he world will be cleansed and renovated, and then our race will stand forth in the brightness and beauty of its nature. One universal good, one constituting principle, one spring of thought and action, one grand and lofty aspiration — the love and quest of perfection. ... Then will the race be perfect ... and the Earth will be one garden, the true Eden of existence, with humanity as one nation standing erect therein, free from spot or blemish.

Progress was seen as an almost inevitable future of humanity in which the consolation of an eternal hereafter blended with a call to action in the here and now. In this way, Spiritualism was as much a utopian and utopianist movement, embracing the spiritual revelations from the no-place of the Great Beyond, as a radical programme for creating a good place on Earth.

Note

1. There were, however, other aspects of progress to consider, connected with what Christine Ferguson describes as a "hard biological determinism and eugenic idealism", which is common to many Spiritualist accounts of the afterlife (Ferguson, 2012: 203).

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3.5. From Utopia to Dystopia, between Local and Global: Two Past South Slavic Futures

Kenneth Hanshew

Abstract

While much scholarly attention has been given to nineteenth-century anglo-phone uchronias, two important Serbian uchronias of the same period have been neglected. The first, the anonymous *Beograd posle 200 godina* [*Belgrade in Two Hundred Years*] (1871), forecasts a bright future for the Serbian capital in descriptive prose, while the second, Dragutin Ilić's *Posle milijon godina* [*In a Million Years*] (1889), offers a dystopian vision of the clash of humanity and an advanced, rational alien other in a post-apocalyptic setting. This paper highlights these early works' differences in regard to genre, aesthetics, and their hope for humankind, and offers insight into the significant differences between early literary utopias and emerging science fiction, as well as into the cultural specificity of both texts.

Key words: Serbian literature, science fiction, nineteenth century, literary evolution

The anonymous text, *Belgrade in Two Hundred Years*, published in the *Srpski omladenksi kalendar* in 1871, paints a vision of Belgrade's future might in broad strokes from a surveyor's perspective above the city. Belgrade has become one of the largest cities in Europe, joining the ranks of Odessa and Istanbul, its power reflected in the grand bridges spanning the rivers shaping it, the Sava and Danube, and in its urban sprawl that reaches into the surrounding hills. The decidedly metropolitan Serbian capital is the result of careful planning, its quarters connected by majestic boulevards and the city dotted with green parks and its citizens' gardens. The depiction of Belgrade's size and urban character is a vision of a more important role for Belgrade in the future that contrasts

with the author's present, when it was far from being one of the largest cities in Europe. Its population of twenty-six thousand was dwarfed by the million people living in Paris at the same time; it was more a town than a modern city.

Belgrade's future relevance is not just a matter of its size, but also the better way of life it offers, including a more pleasing climate. Apartments are fitted with modern central heating, electrical lighting, and clean water. In keeping with the nineteenth century's increased attention to hygiene, the city is so impeccably clean that the contemporary reader "cannot imagine it". All citizens enjoy healthy diets thanks to high quality, fresh, natural food that is "incomparably cheaper" than that of the present (Anonymous, 2017: 187).[1] These improvements no doubt lead citizens to follow the healthy natural rhythm of rising at the crack of dawn, full of energy and enthusiasm to work, and to go to bed at the first sign of dusk. Yet the frail are not forgotten. The few sick find numerous treatments of their ailments free of charge at specialized hospitals. As typical of utopias of the period, the ordering and categorizing of people rears its head, yet here equality is emphasized.

As if in implicit answer to the question of how this utopia is economically feasible, Belgrade is envisioned as a world trade centre second to none, filled with artisans and manufacturers of every kind who send their wares and services by a fleet of steam-powered vessels to all corners of the world. The creation of wealth is aided by the advent of new technologies. Machines take the burden of tedious labour from humankind's shoulders and run non-stop to make the city so rich that "there are more capitalists and millionaires than in many of Europe's largest cities" (190).

Having established the probability of such a bright future on the tenets of capitalism and listed various forms of factories, *Belgrade in Two Hundred Years* turns to education. Education is open to all, both male and female, free of charge, and tailored in respect to one's abilities, desires, and time schedule. Day, night, and continuing education classes offer citizens instruction in trades, as well as philosophy, literature, and natural sciences. Unlike today's abstract academics, instruction is always holistically tied to improving people morally and ethically. It is believed that the heavens are full of other intelligent beings and it is humankind's duty to always work at improving itself, the art of perfection a moral imperative. This early text thus combats the critique of utopian stasis by accenting process over condition. In this context, it is hardly surprising that teachers are the most highly regarded and well-paid civic servants.

Finally, Belgrade is cast as the centre of a new world, in which Christianity has overcome past schisms to become a unified belief. By following the principle of love, it becomes increasingly pure and touches all people. As a result, wars and soldiers have become a thing of the past. A humane justice system and government by the people, with few and only term-limited officials have become the norm.

Ivo Tartalja (2017: 20) correctly notes that *Belgrade in Two Hundred Years* reminds us of classic utopias in many ways, before drawing parallels with Tomasso Campanello's *City of the Sun* and Thomas More's *Utopia.* Certainly, the fictional description of a city as a blueprint for a better society is common to these as well as in Johannes Andreae's *Christianopolis* or Franje Petrić's *Happy Town,* but even more directly relevant is Louis-Sebastien Mercier's *Year 2440*.

Yet there are significant differences to be noted in content and literary form. In regard to the former, the Serbian text is firstly more closely tied to a specific city than all save Mercier's, a tendency to be followed in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. Unlike the latter, however, *Belgrade in Two Hundred Years* strives not only to portray the city as a shining beacon, but a beacon of the future that outshines famous cities of the author's present. This hope for a rise in Serbian cultural prestige in Europe is a profound one when one considers that, at the time, Serbia had not escaped the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Belgrade should become not only European but a better European metropolis.

Secondly, the text does not question the tenets of the industrial revolution as a pathway to wealth nor reference the utopian social movements of the nineteenth century. This is hardly surprising when one considers that the industrial revolution and commerce would come to Belgrade only after emancipation from the Ottoman Empire, after the text was written. The differences in form are yet more striking. Unlike the aforementioned literary utopias, the anonymous text is singularly descriptive, lacking fictional characters, plot, or the dialogism of More's *Utopia.* Much like the Russian Sumarokov's "Dream of a Happy Society", *Belgrade in Two Hundred Years* does not engage contemporary readers with literary questions or interactions to contrast their status quo with a postulated better future, even though these had become well-established in other literatures at the time of its writing. *Belgrade in Two Hundred Years* relies singularly on the description of a better, more ordered city to inspire hope.

The contrast with Dragutin Ilić's *In a Million Years* could hardly be greater. Although Ilić's drama was first published in the journal *Kolo* in 1889 and received little mention during the author's lifetime, nor was it staged until 1995 (Nedeljković, 2007: 51), it has since been called the first original sci-fi drama in world literature, and an early example of dystopian or anti-utopian literature (Nedeljković, 2007: 51; Jović, 2008: 141–2). It has been argued that the drama demonstrates Serbian literature's contribution to sci-fi well before the first "notable" sci-fi dramas of the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties (Clute & Nicholls, 1993: 1216). Aleksandar Nedjelković thus deemed the drama's translation a necessity for completing the picture of world science fiction's development (Nedeljković, 2007, 53). Although he considered an English translation unlikely, it became a reality in an MA students' workshop in Novi Sad in 2014 (see

Ilić, 2016), as discussed by Zorica Đergović-Joksimović elsewhere in this volume. Although the play may not have achieved Ilić's ambition to show "how contemporary Man will look in a million years in comparison to a living Man that will then exist" (Smela, 2008), there is much about *In a Million Years* that anticipates later utopian and sci-fi texts. It reveals the shift from eutopia to dystopia, and the movement toward science fiction in Serbian literature.

The play's prologue opens on the last two surviving humans on Earth in a million years: a father, Nathan, and his son, Danijel. The characters' biblical names foreshadow the play's message. In the rubble of the "once proud city of Paris", Nathan condemns Darwin, Spinoza, and Kant for leading humanity astray, blaming its demise on its arrogance and reliance on rationality: "They were all masters! All great minds! Worms have overthrown the wisdom of Man and sucked the juice of life from him" (Ilić, 2008: Prologue, Scene 1). In support of the dichotomy of divinity/feeling on the one hand and rationalism on the other, the divine beauty ("Božanstvena iskra krasa") and spirit are praised in the prologue over intelligence. The text quickly shifts to lyrical declamation. The change to poetry over prose in the dialogues in itself expresses how Ilić values emotional over dispassionate, rational prose.

The turn to emotionally laden lyricism parallels the play's praise of feeling, both joyful and painful. When Nathan answers Danijel's request to tell of the "golden age" of humanity, admirers of idyllic pastorals and nineteenth-century socialist dreamers recoil in horror. For rather than a land of peace and plenty, Nathan defines the lost paradise as a time of toil, suffering, and violent emotions such as love, hate, and suffering, passions that made humans human and differentiated them from simple beasts. While not entirely disavowing reason, *In a Million Years* pleas that a human being is a creature of both passion and reason. Not heeding this truth will lead to humanity's demise.

This theory turns to action when Danijel, who doubts his father, encounters their progeny of the future. Danijel's "dreams" of people in the next valley turn out to be real, when a group of *ducho-svet* ["spirit-people"], immortals who travel the planets of the solar system, capture the last remaining specimens of humanity. The spirit-people see inferior animals in Nathan and Danijel, scorning their primitivism, while the zoologist Zoran urges them to see father and son, not as mere animals and apes, but rather as their own ancestors, thus referencing nineteenth-century evolutionary theory and colonialism. Unconvinced, the modern people place their ancestors in chains and cages, awaiting their female leader's return from Mars and Jupiter, thus estranging Nathaniel's positive view of the human animal.

In the second act, Danijel recognizes the woman from his dreams on Earth in the spirit-people's leader Svetlana, vowing to win her heart, even as Svetlana makes her own plans to "tame" these animals, as she has so many other animals

before. Nathaniel's warning of pure rational beings has taken corporal form in the spirit-people. Danijel discovers that those of the spirit-world do not have emotions as he does when he questions the woman Zora:

> DANIJEL Do you feel love in your heart?
> ZORA What? I don't understand.
> DANIJEL Love, love! Or does one say that differently in your world? Look, for example, you are Biljan's [her husband]. What passion led you to this? Did you feel something unusual in your heart, in your soul?
> ZORA I don't know what I could feel.
>
> (Act 2, Scene 9)

Zora's misunderstanding of passion and monogamy is further demonstrated by her actions. The married woman allows Daniel to kiss her without a second thought.

Despite this lesson and his own comparison of Svetlana to a perfect, classical statue of beauty, full of rational perfection and cold to the lips, Daniel believes he can kindle the fires of his desired "stone-like perfect goddess" Svetlana. To him, he succeeds. Svetlana does not resist his amorous advances, allows him to kiss her, embraces him and willingly spends long nights with him in love-making until dawn. The corporeal pleasures cause him to sing Svetlana's praise as a shining star that outshines all others and to proclaim in the afterglow of love-making that he shall live forever at her side. However, his lust satiated, Danijel realizes that this is not love as he desires. It is not love at all, but rather the product of rationalism, for all these physical acts mean, as Svetlana says, no unnecessary work of consequence for her in order to alleviate his sadness. Danijel screams in outrage at this pragmatic attitude in a paraphrase of all attacks on utilitarianism and utopian rationalism. Finally, he even rejects her physical touch, which he still craves, his hubris destroyed.

For her part, the rational Svetlana can only understand Danijel's passions and lack of contentment as diseases which she has unsuccessfully tried to treat:

> SVETLANA Man is the kind of beast you cannot satisfy with anything. If you satisfy all his desires as he wishes, he will again be dissatisfied and he himself will not even know why. One thing I have now realized is that "dissatisfaction" is as strong a disease as "love," "sadness," and "hate," all of which hasten Man's death. So, as you see, our ancestors were strange animals.
>
> (Act 3, Scene 4)

Realizing she cannot tame the human animal — and having been criticized by the others for attempting it — she decides to put Danijel back in chains. Her hubris has also been crushed.

If *Belgrade in Two Hundred Years* is a monologic description of a blueprint for a utopian city, *In a Million Years* is an impassioned plea for emotion in soliloquies and dialogues. In comparison to the lifeless utopian cityscape of *Belgrade in Two Hundred Years*, Ilić's romantic ploys and subplots of kidnapping and laying claim to human specimens create a lively suspense and awaken readers' own emotional responses. In effect, form matches content. *In a Million Years* stages perfection as inhuman, indeed unbearable, despite the achievement of harmony, longevity, and an apparent lack of suffering. Ilić presents the emotions of love, suffering, and even hate — while animal-like, from the viewpoint of the future — as what make existence full of life, making the rationally constructed alternative, *Belgrade in Two Hundred Years*, seem as beautiful and lifeless as a classical Greek statue.

The shift in utopian content is no less striking. Rather than a totalizing blueprint, attempting an overview of the key institutions of an ideal future Belgrade and Serbia, the drama focuses on one theme. Apart from the theme of love and marriage, the alternative society receives very little attention save for an examination of its rationality. Is this a result of the drama marking the arrival of science fiction?

Science fiction, as a rule, does not attempt the same totalizing view of society as utopia, thus, although *In a Million Years* is regarded as sci-fi, there is cause to question its science-fictionality. Its cognitive effect and plausibility are weaker than contemporaneous sci-fi texts. These attempt to create the illusion of a plausible story, anticipating critics' hesitations at accepting life on the Moon by offering seemingly scientific explanations of space travel, gravity, and time. However, Ilić resorts to a simpler ploy of placing the setting so far in the future that anything should seem possible. Indeed, there is no scientific explanation of earlier humankind's devastation nor how it came to pass that there should be two human survivors identical to Ilić's contemporary humans on Earth in the distant future. Science and its gadgetry, though not required by sci-fi, are nevertheless often part of the image of science and are noticeably lacking. Ilić's text grapples with the rationality and non-spiritualism behind scientific positivism. Science itself is absent, his sci-fi limited to its setting in space.

In regard to utopia, *In a Million Years* challenges the rationalist fundamentalism of early utopias, positing that more is necessary for human happiness, more than *Belgrade in Two Hundred Years* and most utopias of the Enlightenment promise. Rather than rejecting utopia per se, it rejects simplification of the human in utopia.

Both texts navigate between cultural specificity and universality. While *Belgrade in Two Hundred Years* places Serbia at a better world's centre, moving it from the provincial periphery to the cultural centre, and addresses perfecting

rather than the perfect, *In a Million Years* showcases the stereotype of the noble, passionate savage in opposition to the rational, unfeeling modern human, foreshadowing Huxley's John the Savage in *A Brave New World.* But it also points to its own tradition, seen in the character of Wolf in the Bosnian writer, Veselin Gatalo's *Ghetto* (2008). Unlike John, both Danijel and Wolf are portrayed as unequivocally positive. Wolf is a South Slavic new noble savage who usurps the hierarchy of the technologically superior, but morally corrupt "other" Western Europeans precisely through his human feelings. As such, these early texts belong in both the national and transnational tradition of utopian literature and early sci-fi.

Note

1. All translations from *In a Million Years* and *Belgrade in Two Hundred Years* are by the author. References are to the Serbian editions.

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Models of Imagined Communities

4.1. Caldeirão da Santa Cruz do Deserto: From Intentional Community to Cultural Artefact

Michel Macedo Marques

Abstract

Caldeirão da Santa Cruz do Deserto was an intentional community with messianic, ecological, and socialist characteristics. It was organized in the city of Crato, in Ceará State, northeastern Brazil, by a pilgrim devoted to Father Cícero, and existed from 1926 and 1936.[1] In light of memory and utopian studies, this paper aims to understand the role of art in the making of the history of this community, transforming it into a cultural identity artefact of the region during and following decades of media and government attempts to silence and defame its memory.

Key words: Caldeirão, intentional community, Father Cícero, Armorial Movement, Araripe Geopark

Northeast Brazil was where the Portuguese started their occupation, with the cultivation of sugar cane and coffee. With the deterioration of the soil and the arrival of immigrants from the abolition of slavery, people were attracted to other regions of Brazil in search of economic opportunities and modernity. In the media, an idea and image of the Northeast was created as the poorest and most backward part of the country (Albuquerque Júnior, 2011: 56–7). Despite the exodus, some rich landowner families stayed and managed the land feudally with semi-slave labour for more than half of the twentieth century.

In 1889, the Republican regime was proclaimed in Brazil, bringing the end of the monarchy. It was a moment of religious uncertainty as a rupture of ties between the State and the Catholic Church was threatened by three antagonistic forces of positivism, Freemasonry, and Protestantism (Menezes, 1959: 194–209).

Between 1877 and 1915, four major droughts ravaged the Northeast. Along with depopulation for the "progress" of the South (Facó, 1976: 29–37), orthodox

Catholicism in Brazil was in a state of decomposition. The lower classes lost contact with the official Church in sacramental liturgies, due to fees or being neglected by priests who preferred to welcome the rich (Della Cava, 2013: 49). A void was left which made room for a "thought of the end of the world" fuelled by prophetic priests during droughts (Della Cava, 2013: 63).

In this context, the newly ordained Father Cícero Romão Batista was sent in 1871 to the then Vila de Tabuleiro Grande, a small village with only two streets, a chapel, and a school. It had about two thousand inhabitants, and belonged to Crato, then the largest city in the interior of Ceará (Della Cava, 2013: 43, 64). The cleric assumed the roles of "doctor, counselor, provider and confessor" (Della Cava, 2013: 136).

Due to an alleged miracle, in March 1889, the communion wafer given by Father Cícero turned into blood in the mouth of Beata Maria de Araújo.[2] This miracle happened more than sixty times, attracting many pilgrims and making the village grow rapidly in population within a short space of time (Della Cava, 2013: 55). Since 1911, the town has been called Juazeiro do Norte. It is now the second largest city in Ceará. Father Cícero is considered the "saint of the Northeast", and a twenty-seven metre high statue stands in his honour in the city.

During his education, Father Cícero had a lot of contact with the Jesuit formation. During a cholera epidemic, his mother and sister were assisted by one of the charity hospitals founded by Father Ibiapina, who travelled the region as a Jesuit teacher (Della Cava, 2013: 34). Father Cícero was charismatic and popular, and found occupation for the many people who were arriving every day. Juazeiro had become a "promised land" because of the supposed miracle. One of these pilgrims was Beato José Lourenço (Della Cava, 2013: 53), to whom Father Cícero leased land in Sítio Caldeirão, in Crato, and instructed him to take some followers there to live from agriculture (Ramos, 2011: 59).

About two thousand people lived there and, under the slogans of "fé, trabalho e oração" ("faith, work, and prayer") and "tudo é de todos e nada é de ninguém" ("everything belongs to everyone and nothing belongs to anyone"), more than three hundred houses, dams, a sugar cane mill, warehouses and a church were built. At first, the community was agricultural only, but it received other workers and eventually manufactured clothes, tools, bricks, and kitchen utensils, among other products. The inhabitants ranged from pilgrims to drought migrants and farmers, who fled from semi-enslaved labour (Ramos, 2011: 61–5).

With the death of Father Cícero in 1934, the community lost its protector and began to suffer persecution from the Church, which claimed the lands left by him and was uncomfortable with the so-called "popular Catholicism". The ruling elite, which was losing workers, also cracked down, with support from the government which was opposed to a community that did not use money to live (Ramos, 2011: 121–33).

On 11 September 1936, the community was attacked and expelled by the police, accused of being "communists". Everything was destroyed. Only one house remained besides the Church (Cordeiro, 2008: 10–11). The residents fled to a place higher up the hill. A few days later, the expelled residents were surprised by an air raid. The exact number of dead is unknown, nor are there records of their names. The police report enumerates about two hundred dead, but non-official reports estimate more than seven hundred victims, including men, women and children (Cariry & Holanda, 2007: 277). After the massacre, survivors returned to their homeland and many settled, mainly in the cities of Juazeiro and Crato. The press and public opinion sided with the government and the Church, and treated the inhabitants of the community as criminals. The newspapers of the time labelled them as "subversives" and "religious fanatics" (Menezes & Pinho, 2017: 75).

In the decades of silence since, six of the seven types of forgetting proposed by Paul Connerton (2008) can be identified: (1) "repressive erasure", the survivors are considered "enemies of the State" without the right to remember the names of the dead; (2) "prescriptive forgetting", the community is seen as a "communist" threat to the recent republican regime; (3) "forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity", new experiences inhabit the silence that covers the loss of past experiences; (4) "structural amnesia", only socially accepted memories are taken into account; (5) "forgetting as annulment", all information is organized in the form of archiving, making its permanence in everyday life unfeasible; and (6) "forgetting as humiliated silence", for all of the above, survivors often do not feel comfortable telling their descendants about the past.

The remnant population felt prohibited from talking about Caldeirão, but the subject "Caldeirão" became more than prohibition — a demanding policy that would require an appeal to rationality — it became a taboo, conceptualized anthropologically as a practice of avoidance (Olick, 2007: 40). Taboo is not merely or morally neutral, it requires being designated as dangerous, dirty, disgusting, contagious, and/or degenerate. It operates through a mythical order, which involves moral principles and definitional claims that are beyond debate and rational arguments.

We can observe in the survivors of genocidal events such as wars, the Holocaust, and the massacre of Caldeirão, the formation of a trauma that damages the self through a non-heroic memory, where any physical and intellectual control over the environment is subtracted. Language loses active connotation of choice, will, power of reflection, and assurance of expectations (Langer, 1991: 177). Trauma transforms the body into a recording area, unable to narrate. Therefore, the silence of the remnant population remained for about four decades, fed by a mixture of fear, shame and loneliness (Assmann, 2011: 283).

Despite decades of silence in the media, and the difficulty of obtaining testimonies from survivors, the history of Caldeirão gained space to be told and mythologized in the arts, especially in cordel (chap-book) literature and in xylographs (woodcuts). As Aleida Assmann observes, "it is as if memory, no longer having a cultural form or social function, had taken refuge in art" (2011: 385). Della Cava writes that around 1900, "Northeastern bards and singers appropriated the prophetic figure of Father Cícero and introduced him into their popular repertoire" (2013: 35), mythologizing the priest as a miraculous entity and one of the legendary heroes of regional popular belief. As a consequence, Caldeirão became "a symbol of progressive thinking about the Brazilian agrarian structure" (Della Cava, 2013: 35).

Cordel literature and xylographs became the main arts in Northeastern Brazil, but were considered "poor" in the rest of the country. This meant that, even without much notoriety and appreciation (since the Northeast was considered a separate Brazil), they forged a mythical image of the history of Caldeirão and Father Cícero. Today both are symbols of regional identity, represented in customs, fashion, and art in general.

Brazilian sociologist and anthropologist Gilberto Freyre attributes Dutch influence in the seventeenth century as one of the factors in the cultural differentiation of the Northeast from the rest of the country, and regards historical events as stronger than natural issues, such as drought and miscegenation, in the formation of regional identity (Albuquerque Júnior, 2011: 89). Regional identity makes it possible to sew a memory, invent traditions, and reconnect to the past, giving direction and meaning to existence (Albuquerque Júnior, 2011: 91).

After the 1964 military coup, there were twenty-one years of dictatorship, with much censorship of the arts. Still considered poor arts, Cordel literature and xylographs enjoyed a certain freedom of dissemination, because they were restricted to the Northeast region, regarded by the rest of the country as a poor and miserable place, which survived through policies of government charity.

It was only after 1970 that cordel literature and xylography were accorded canonical *status*, followed later by music, dance, painting, sculpture, architecture, and other artforms. The Armorial Movement, headed by Ariano Suassuna, then Secretary of Culture for the State of Pernambuco, sought to catalogue, classify, and define artforms that could be considered genuinely Brazilian, making use of the symbology of heraldry and studies of the popular arts. Suassuna saw in Brazilian armorial art common traits and a connection with the magical spirit of the pamphlets of Northeastern popular romance, the music that accompanied these songs (played on viola, fife, and violin), and the xylographs that illustrate their cordel covers (Suassuna, 1975).

The end of the silence concerning Caldeirão would only happen, however, with the end of the military dictatorship in Brazil. This is how the film *O Caldeirão da Santa Cruz do Deserto*, by filmmaker Rosemberg Cariry, was released in documentary format in 1986. With appealing imagery from the Armorial Movement, the film tells the history of the community through the testimonies of members of its remnant population, as well as from police officers and politicians of the time. Launched in a historical "new" period, the so-called "redemocratization of Brazil", it was received as a symbol of a movement of transformation. There was a sense of optimism that overcame the "moment of crisis" so common in post-revolutionary moments (Ricoeur, 1997: 359).

This film is considered a watershed, as it promotes an appreciation and new focus on the history of the community. From "religious fanatics" and "enemies of the government" to "surviving heroes", Caldeirão began to become part of the structure of regional identity, through the characteristics of faith, work, resilience, Christian love, and utopia. Aby Warburg sees art as a form of cultural memory, for its power to survive for long years and its ability to traverse large spaces. With a valorization of the arts, academic research, books, and other historical approaches to the history of Caldeirão also began to appear (Erll, 2011: 21).

A survivor of attempts at disqualification and historical erasure, the community of Caldeirão da Santa Cruz do Deserto is more alive than ever in the memory that forms the identity of the inhabitants of Northeast Brazil today. There are countless products derived from Caldeirão, a true cultural artifact, portrayed not only in chap books and xylographs, but in many forms of literature, painting, sculpture, theatre, cinema, music, fashion, and graffiti, in forms that vary from simple portraits to questions about its symbology, the absence of mourning, sociological analysis, and retractation. In the form of pilgrimages and masses, rites created to keep the memory of the community alive now attract thousands of people every year.

The place has been legally occupied since 1991 by about 50 families from a Brazilian Landless Movement (MST), a community called Assentamento 10 de Abril, practitioners of sustainable agriculture. There are ongoing projects to become a Geosite of Araripe UNESCO Global Geopark (as the touristic visitation sites are called, as they are considered of unique wealth from the geological, historical and cultural point of view) and to be part of the Organic Museums Project of the Ceará State, which already has more than 10 museums in operation.

Notes

1. Born in Crato, Father Cícero Romão Batista is considered the founder of Juazeiro do Norte and a unifying character in the history of the region (Marques, 2019: 3).

2. "Beata(o)" was a title given to people who took vows of a life of chastity, work, charity and faith. It was instituted in the region by Father Ibiapina, without the canonical approval of the Church (Della Cava, 2013: 55).

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4.2. Unimaginable Utopias: Neoliberalism and the Turkish Military Coup of 12 September 1980

U. Ceren Ünlü

Abstract

The 1960s and 1970s in Turkey were times of rapid social change, rising critique of the present, increasing future projections, and heightening revolutionary activism, which filled the decades with elevated sociopolitical possibilities; that is, with utopias. However, a search of public memory (the testimonies of leftist activists) demonstrates that some of these utopic moments, such as that of direct communication (proliferation of communicative practices and cultural production around leftist movements), are mostly forgotten or unimaginable through present lenses that this paper asserts to be manufactured by the ideological closure of neoliberalism and the concurrent official historical narrative sponsored by the state since 1980. In 1980, the army staged a coup that acted as a radical rupture for Turkey, which especially targeted to suppress leftist politics. Yet, the military coup was not only a rupturing event with harsh impacts on leftism, but also a constructive historiographical moment with a hegemonic historical narrative; because it signified both a political interruption and an economic break with sociocultural connotations that heralded the opening of a new age of neoliberalism in Turkey. The intervention of the army combined with the ideological sweep of neoliberalism, which has presented itself as the only alternative, advertised its values, and engrafted its instruments of thought. This essay explores public memory to interpret the trends in remembering and forgetting the leftist politicization of the period. At the same time, it presents a critique of historiography that seems to have created a deadlock in the social imagination, rendering past utopic moments unimaginable.

Key words: utopias, military intervention, state-sponsored historiography, neoliberalism, public memory

The 1960s and 1970s in Turkey, as in most parts of the world, witnessed a rise in leftist politics. This period of increasing political engagement (that is, politicization of the masses) started with an anti-democratic event, the military coup of 1960. It ended with another coup d'état in 1980, which was much harsher and interrupted all sociopolitical movements. This paper focuses on the latter coup and its effects not only on history but also on historiography and public memory. The paper touches only briefly on the expanded possibilities of the 1960s and 1970s; instead it focuses on how they ended and became unimaginable.

The 1960s and 1970s in Turkey were times of rapid social change, a rising critique of the present, increasing future projections, and heightening revolutionary activism, which filled the decades with expanded sociopolitical possibilities, in other words, with utopias. Following Ernst Bloch, this paper handles utopia as both a product of the reality of society and an expansion of the boundaries of that reality (Bloch, 1995: 144). The heightened politicization in Turkey of the 1960s and 1970s was partly triggered by the new sociopolitical liberties granted to citizens by the constitution of 1961 (Zürcher, 2005: 259). For the first time in Turkish history, the constitution acknowledged workers' and public officers' right to unionize and strike. In addition, the legal freedom of expression, publication, communication, congregation, demonstration, and association set a suitable ground for politicization, and together, they paved the way for a boom in communication that manifested itself as a quantitative rise in publication and speech.[1] From the beginning of the 1960s until 1980, every leftist political organization of the period had the urge to communicate with the wider public, and thus had its own publications, periodicals, posters, brochures, forums, or graffiti. Thorough research in the archives unearths a distinctive communicative practice, and the emergence of liberated and non-hierarchical communication as a possibility, of which not only mainstream media, intellectuals, or professors, but also students, workers, peasants, and political militants became a part. Critical and revolutionary utopias of the 1960s and 1970s emerged out of the heightened politicization of this period. In particular, a utopia of direct communication emerged, embodying several forms of free expression such as periodicals and brochures, literary translations and forums, and posters and graffiti, which opened cracks in the existing media (Ünlü, 2020: 145–238).

In the politicized university campuses and factories, students and workers struggled to capture their own words and voices. They developed their own means of communication, such as printing periodicals, organizing open forums, or covering the walls with silkscreen posters; through these means, they tried to destroy the authorities' monopoly on information and communication. The boom in communication was both geographically and socioeconomically widespread. It was pursued not only in big cities but also in small towns and

villages. Not only intellectuals or students but also workers and peasants were part of this communicative practice, which thus unleashed the possibility of a more egalitarian type of communication (Ünlü, 2020: 217–35).

However, this effusion in communication came to an abrupt end in 1980, when the coup d'état of 12 September harshly interrupted all sociopolitical movements. The military intervention of 1980 and the subsequent constitution of 1982 aimed to control, limit, and punish the circulation of ideas. What happened after the military coup of 1980 was, in the mildest sense, regime-sanctioned censorship of ideas and the hindrance of their dissemination (Ünlü, 2020: 27). On 12 September 1980, the National Security Council, which was comprised of five Turkish army generals of the highest rank, seized legislative, executive, and judicial power for the purpose of "protecting the integrity of the country, maintaining national unity and solidarity, preventing a potential civil war and fraternal fight, reestablishing the state authority and presence, and extinguishing the factors that have hindered the functioning of the democratic order".[2] The Council assumed omnipotent political and legal authority to maintain order immediately after the military coup of 1980. In the course of the approximately three years that the military government remained in power, the total time of prison sentences imposed on editors amounted to almost one thousand years (Karaca, 2012: 14), and the junta sentenced journalists to a total of 3,315 years in prison (Turkish Parliamentary Investigation Commission on Military Coups and Memorandums, 2012: 840). All the newspapers circulated in Istanbul, the publishing hub of Turkey, were banned for an aggregated number of three hundred days immediately after the 1980 coup d'état, and the thirteen newspapers with the highest circulation faced three hundred and three indictments (Karaca, 2012: 14). Between 1980 and 1989, the government shut down approximately fifty publishers and five hundred bookstores (Karaca, 2012: 14), while 937 films were labelled objectionable and banned (Turkish Parliamentary Investigation, 2012: 840). Throughout its rule, the junta burned or recycled the paper from millions of books (Karaca, 2012: 14). The government destroyed thirty-nine tons of newspapers and periodicals (Turkish Parliamentary Investigation, 2012: 841). Forty tons of publications were amassed in warehouses waiting to be obliterated (Uskan, 1990: 5). Besides the overarching ban on publications after the 1980 coup d'état, all political parties and 23,667 associations were closed. All the channels through which the leftist politicization of the period had flowed were suspended or terminated (Çelenk, 1990: 38; Zürcher, 2005: 292; Ersan, 2013: 111).

As a result, the surge of leftist politicization of the 1960s and 1970s ended abruptly with the military coup, as well as the heightened possibility of direct and non-hierarchical practices of communication. But the coup did not stop there. It was not only a sociopolitical and economic intervention; but also an

ideological one that institutionalized a state-sponsored historiography. The military junta not only annihilated and restricted the instruments of communication by closing down newspapers, arresting journalists, carefully controlling journalism, and destroying books, but also dominated the narrative of history in the absence of free speech. To put it differently, the regime of 1980 sought to physically oppress dissident political movements by destroying their instruments of communication and sources of identity, on the one hand, and on the other, it attempted to annihilate their public memory and voice in the political agenda and history. It was not sufficient for the regime to suppress politicization and take unlimited control of the government in the present; the junta also wanted to control the past. The rule of 12 September blocked the channels of contemporary communication by destroying the written products of past communication (Ünlü, 2020: 71–2). The destruction of books and periodicals, the prohibition of pamphlets, posters, and banners, the painting over of political graffiti, and the suppression of other channels of free speech paved the way for what Rebecca Knuth has called a "process of homogenizing discourse", in which the ruling authority was determined to destroy any element that "support[ed] memory or legitimiz[ed] past identities", to bring about a clean slate and write a new, unopposed history (Knuth, 2003: 52, 236). The historical narrative reframed by the military intervention of 1980 has regarded the period between 1960 and 1980 as a period of crisis, terror, and chaos. Every practice of communication was regarded as an act of terror agitating the chaotic political atmosphere. The junta presented a narrative of "*the dark 1970s, infested by terror and chaos*" as justification for its intervention, which has dominated history writing and memory after 1980. The military government sponsored this historical narrative and imposed it on the Turkish people.

Not only for the junta or the government but also for revolutionaries of the period and their followers in subsequent years, the coup has become a historic and historiographical milestone. An analysis of public memory of the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Turkey and the historical narrative produced by the military government reveals common historiographical elements that dominate the post-1980 historical narrative. While revolutionaries then and now object to the historical narrative produced by the military coup, refusing to allow social movements of the 1960s and 1970s to be portrayed as terror, they still put the coup at the centre of historiography. They regard the 1970s as a "*dark"* period vis-à-vis the "*brighter"* 1960s.

Correspondingly, the year 1968 emerged as a symbolic date for memory and history, eclipsing the 1970s (Çubukçu, 1993: 45–7; Feyizoğlu, 2003: 49–51; Mater, 2009: 37). Whereas a narrative of "*the dark 1970s"* was an ideological tool in the hands of the junta to justify the military intervention, it has become a different

ideological tool in the hands of the revolutionaries that the junta had oppressed, who emphasize the severity of the military intervention and the struggle against its repercussions. Therefore, historiographically speaking, the centrality of 12 September has also been embraced by its adversaries. The history of the 1960s and 1970s in Turkey is either perceived through the lens of 12 September or produced in opposition to it (Ünlü, 2020: 111–13).

The retrospective reading of the 1970s as merely a gloomy road marching towards the coup of 1980 has blurred the socio-historical process and rendered some occurrences of the period forgotten. Through the lens of post-1980 historiography, some events and possibilities of the 1970s, as well as the 1960s, have been rendered unimaginable, or "unthinkable" (Bourdieu, 1992: 5). One of the utopic moments that became "unthinkable" after 1980 was the direct and non-hierarchical practice of communication that took place in the 1960s and 1970s (the proliferation of communicative practices and cultural production around leftist movements). Although the archives are abundant with the evidence of such a communication boom, the public memory (as testimonies of leftist activists show us) is blurry (Ünlü, 2020: 114–16).

Pierre Bourdieu instrumentalized the term "unthinkable" to characterize that which cannot be grasped or envisaged because of the non-existence or deficiency of the current conceptual means or political framework to understand or imagine it (1992: 5). Therefore, the "unthinkable" is that which is non-existent in the current sociopolitical basket of possibilities. Historical elements such as the existence of workers and peasants contributing to the communication boom of the 1960s and 1970s or the existence of relations built among various segments of the population have been largely omitted from historical narratives and public memory. Utilizing Bourdieu's concept makes it plausible to assert that these historical elements that corresponded to the utopic moments have become "unthinkable" under the post-1980 political and socioeconomic framework (Ünlü, 2020: 77).

What makes this case peculiar is that the junta's attempt at a state-sponsored historiography coincided with and was reinforced by the rise of neoliberalism in Turkey. The military coup of 12 September created a historical rupture and an ensuing narrative framework because it constituted not only a political interruption but an economic break with social and cultural connotations. To clarify, the army in 1980 acted with both a political and economic intent that was backed and marketed by institutions of international capital, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The military intervention was instrumental in clearing the political arena by suspending political mobility and rights to association so that a neoliberal programme to open Turkey to a free market economy could be implemented without political or legal hurdles. As a

result, starting with the military repression of unionized, proletarian struggle, the coup of 1980 heralded the opening of a new global age of neoliberalism in Turkey (Zürcher, 2005: 306–7; Boratav, 2004: 147–51).

Consequently, in the 1980s, political oppression and prohibitions by the military went hand in hand with a new civilian discourse of "liberating promises" in the fields of economy and culture. This paradoxical duality of political pressure and economic liberalization started a new social era and created a new "cultural climate" in Turkey (Gürbilek, 2001: 13–14). At the centre of this "new age" was a model of "a new self" (Ahıska & Yenal, 2006: 8–9, 43). This new neoliberal system, which was promoted to the Turkish public in the early 1980s as the only viable socioeconomic alternative (Boratav, 2004: 148), has framed a new "conceptual apparatus" by advertising new values such as individualism, competitiveness, and consumerism (Ahıska & Yenal, 2006: 56). Furthermore, these newly-marketed values stood against the political mobility of the previous period and the social relations it created, blacklisting them as not only unwelcome but also unimaginable. In Turkey, as in other parts of the world, the ideological closure of authoritarianism and neoliberalism has rendered the anti-systemic elements of the 1960s and 1970s controllable, and has disguised the once-likely utopias as unlikely or dead (Jameson, 2004: 35–6). In other words, the political reconstruction and neoliberal transition in the early 1980s codified an official historical narrative that has buried certain historical elements, rendered them unimaginable, and replaced them with new perspectives and values.

This was "creative destruction". David Harvey uses this term to identify the advancement of the neoliberal system. Neoliberalism has destroyed the political and socioeconomic framework and narratives of the previous era, which were based on a more equal socioeconomic distribution, while it has simultaneously sponsored its own institutions and narratives (Harvey, 2007: 22–4). Similarly, the 1980 coup eradicated the previous socioeconomic and political framework and built a new system on the debris. While destroying alternatives that were imaginable in the 1960s and 1970s and the related historical narratives, the military intervention reframed a new historical narrative. Under this hegemonic discourse, the coup's narrative on leftist political movements of the previous period became naturalized as the only plausible story. On the one hand, the coup dismantled the socioeconomic and political system of the 1960s and 1970s and codified a new system. On the other, it sponsored a new historical narrative of the period, omitting certain features from the story. In this way, the military intervention of 1980 became one of the most significant determinants of recent Turkish history by both rupturing history and constructing history and public memory.

On 12 September 1980, the army staged a coup that acted as a radical rupture for Turkey. It targeted leftist politicization and the utopia of direct communication for suppression, by criminalizing free speech, censoring and banning publications, shutting down book stores, and imprisoning journalists. The violent intervention of the army combined with the ideological sweep of neoliberalism, which presents itself as the only alternative, advertised its values and engrafted its instruments of thinking. However, a serious critique of historiography may help one to notice the deadlock in social imagination that has rendered past utopic moments unimaginable. Utopian political scholars can create a critical historical narrative against the ideological closure of the existing neoliberal system by carefully problematizing the historical narratives as well as the testimonies of leftist militants. In this way, it is possible to detect empty spaces between the historical process and the story about that process that have been filled with forgotten, silenced, or "unthinkable" utopic moments of the past.

Notes

1. For an English translation of the Constitution of 1961 see "Constitution of the Turkish Republic," trans. Sadık Balkan, Ahmet E. Uysal, and Kemal H. Karpat, accessed February 2022, https://www.anayasa.gen.tr/1961constitution-text.pdf.

2. "Girişilen harekâtın amacı; ülke bütünlüğünü korumak, milli birlik ve beraberliği sağlamak, muhtemel bir iç savaşı ve kardeş kavgasını önlemek, devlet otoritesini ve varlığını yeniden tesis etmek ve demokratik düzenin işlemesine mani olan sebepleri ortadan kaldırmaktır" (Turkish National Security Council, 1980: 6).

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4.3. The End of the "Great Utopia": Svetlana Alexievich's *Secondhand Time*

José Eduardo Reis

Abstract

Svetlana Alexievich's *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets* is a testimony-based novel about absence, denial, disillusion and, above all, the aspiration for ontological and political liberty. Conceived as a requiem to a key political figuration of this greatest of human ideals, it looks back from recent times of ideological disenchantment and confusion, delving into people's memories of the Soviet regime's glory and demise. In addition to comparing *Secondhand Time* with the other four books that comprise the author's pentalogy dealing with crucial historical features and periods of the Soviet Union's political and social experience, my essay will focus on the narrative strategies used in the novel to highlight and denounce the paradoxes, absurdities, illusions, and machinations that subverted and led to the collapse of the utopian project of building a social order governed by socialist ideas.

Key words: epic novel, oratorical novel, epic chorus, utopia, Soviet Union

Radical and reactionary live together as in an unhappy marriage,
Shaped by each other, dependent on each other.
But we who are their children must break free.
Every problem cries out in its own tongue.
Track like a hound the marks truth leaves behind!
TOMAS TRANSTRÖMER, 2006

The Portuguese version of *Secondhand Time* by the Belarusian writer and journalist Svetlana Alexievich, the only one of her books to have been published in that country at the time she received the 2015 Nobel Prize for Literature, contains a "conversation conducted by Natalia Igrunova" (Aleksievich, 2015: 459–469). This paratext, incorporated into the work's epilogue, performs an important editorial function, that of familiarizing readers with the general tone, aesthetic motivation, and narrative programme of Alexievich's literary output concerning the "Great Utopia" of the twentieth century; that is, the inaugural attempt in the Soviet Union to create the "new man", as envisioned by Marx and Lenin, the two names associated with the Russian Revolution that would be enshrined in what became communist ideology.

Adopting what we might term a tragico-prosaic register, Alexievich fashioned the five books of her "Red Encyclopedia", the first of which, *The Unwomanly Face of War* (1984), delivers epic, horrifying testimonies of what her female compatriots experienced and suffered during the Second World War. The second volume, *Last Witnesses* (1985), takes the same theme forward with Soviet children as the main protagonists and witnesses. The third work, *Boys in Zinc* (1989), is based on the recollections of young Soviet soldiers fighting against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The fourth, *Chernobyl Prayer* (1997), tells of the tremendous political and ideological outcomes, and dire public health and environment consequences resulting from the explosion of one of the reactors at the Soviet nuclear power station at Chernobyl — a placename that came to universally symbolize all the uncontrollable and unpredictable dangers associated with the use of nuclear technology and the power it unleashes. Finally, the novel for discussion in this essay, *Secondhand Time*, focuses on the social and cultural impact of another collapse, that of the political empire known as the Soviet Union (Alexievich, 2017).[1] Each of these five books documents the impact of catastrophic human actions that have resonated powerfully in the history of the contemporary world, all of them having the Russian people as their primary collective protagonist. Alexievich has remarked in an interview:

> If you look back at the whole of our history, both Soviet and post-Soviet, it is a huge common grave and a blood bath. An eternal dialogue of the executioners and the victims. The accursed Russian questions: what is to be done and who is to blame. The revolution, the gulags, the Second World War, the Soviet-Afghan war hidden from the people, the downfall of the great empire, the downfall of the giant socialist land, the land-utopia, and now a challenge of cosmic dimensions — Chernobyl. This is a challenge for all the

living things on earth. Such is our history. And this is the theme of my books, this is my path, my circles of hell, from man to man. (The Conversation Series, 2015)

In response to one of Natália Igrunova's questions, Svetlana explains that, in her writing, she foregrounds the Russian people because of the high incidence of tragedy and multiple forms of suffering it has experienced: "It is ingrained in deep-rooted Russian culture that we are a people of sorrow and misery. Go through the countryside and have a talk in any hut. What will they talk about? Only about misfortune ... Suffering, struggle and war, such is the experience of our life and our art" (Aleksievich, 2015: 465, my translation).

The tragic national fatality documented in her books has a metonymic function, becoming — by virtue of its illustrative quality — a contiguity, a resonance, a referential value with the propensity to have itself associated with other historical, political and national circumstances. It is almost as if, through her "cycle of books on utopia", there pulsated narrative material so essential and so universal, so eminently serviceable for purposes of comparison, evocation, and extrapolation that these books' discussion of the impact of the madness and the excesses of the Soviet political experiment could clarify or prefigure the reasons why such things had happened or might happen in other places and times. So great is the books' capacity for exemplification, the accuracy and reliability of their scale of measurement, and their value as models for conferring meaning on such events. Both retrospectively and prospectively, the effect of reading Svetlana's novels tends to fulfil the cathartic function which great tragic literature can have for those citizens who voluntarily participate in the cultural *polis* that is fuelled by our critical consciousness of the weight of history, the ideological illusions of our times, and the myths shaping our future. This is why Svetlana's book on Afghanistan, *Boys in Zinc,* was read in France in the light of the Algerian War, while in the USA, it was 9/11 that resonated most strongly for its readers. It is why *Chernobyl Prayer* inspired in France a theatrical trend aimed at alerting people to the potential for nuclear catastrophe in any one of the nation's many atomic reactors, and why in Japan the book was re-edited in the immediate aftermath of the disaster at the Fukushima nuclear power plant.

The term "catharsis" (from the Greek *kathairein*, 'to cleanse, purify') seems entirely appropriate for defining the aesthetic reception of Svetlana's literary works, above all by her Russian and Belarusian compatriots. For in classical Aristotelian poetics, catharsis is used to describe how Greek tragedy gave its audiences the opportunity to sublimate their feelings of terror and pity, and thereby cleanse themselves of the passions they felt in everyday life. However, if we are to define the conditions under which the author produced her novels, rather than how they were received, we should employ the term "mimesis", another

classical concept theorized by Aristotle (drawing on Plato) with a view to characterizing the specific nature of tragic drama. "Mimesis" has been repurposed (with the appropriate theoretical updates and revisions) so that the mechanisms of all literary representation can be made explicit. Aristotle's dictum was "art imitates life", justifying the extent to which literature should be concerned with verbally depicting the world. In turn, Alexievich's novels can best be understood if we appropriate the Aristotelian concept of mimesis and use it to describe a form of literary discourse whose aesthetic reception consists mainly of a cathartic effect.

Both Alexievich's writing technique and the genre in which she addresses the reader owe a debt to the highly innovative form of the novel discovered and developed by the Belarusian writer Ales Adamovich — the so-called "collective" or "oratorical novel", the "novel of evidence" or "epic chorus", a narrative mode that combines thematic content from a plurality of diverse testimonies about real events, and whose expressivity adopts a tone of orality and is devoid of rhetorical flourishes. "Over a long period, I sought a genre", Svetlana says, "that would let me write the way my ear heard. And when I read [Adamovich's] *Out of the Fire*, I understood that this was possible" (Aleksievich, 2015: 463, my translation). Alexievich's books display the same oral register, the words of others transcribed in rhythmic cadences and with apparent stylistic simplicity, yet structured using the demanding narrative technique of free indirect discourse. *Secondhand Time* deploys this technique in exemplary fashion — at least, as far as it is possible to judge from reading António Pescada's Portuguese translation — allowing her to achieve the mimetic representation her cathartic purpose requires.

Born in 1948, Alexievich came to know, internalize, and adhere to communist ideology as an infallible, redemptive doctrine, inscribed in the objective laws of human development. Her disenchantment with the doctrine and the critical posture towards it grew, progressively permeating her personality, as the utopian scope of the communist project was increasingly refuted by the contradictions, absurdities, injustices, and evils of its real-world application.

In the introductory chapter to *Secondhand Time*, "Remarks from an Accomplice", the author suggests rather than states that her option to "listen to all the participants in the socialist drama" was not intended to vilify the Soviet Union but to write a requiem for a political regime and an economic and social system whose final account has to be tallied not only in the light of the historical context in which they operated, but also by comparison with the regime and system that succeeded them. The touchstone of this before-and-after comparison has to be the idea of freedom, an element key to Alexievich's research, which allowed her — albeit in an asymmetrical manner — to establish a crucial distinction between those generations of her fellow citizens who were

born during the time of the Soviet Union and those who were born after. When asked "What is freedom?", there could have been no greater contrast between the answers given by the parents and children she interviewed: they were simply "people from different planets".

> For the fathers, freedom is the absence of fear; the three days in August when we defeated the putsch. A man with his choice of a hundred kinds of salami is freer than one who only has ten to choose from. Freedom is never being flogged, although no generation of Russians has yet avoided a flogging. Russians don't understand freedom, they need the Cossack and the whip. For the children: Freedom is love; inner freedom is an absolute value. Freedom is when you're not afraid of your own desires; having lots of money so that you'll have everything; it's when you can live without having to think about freedom. Freedom is normal. (Alexievich, 2017: 18)

Secondhand Time is a narrative assembled from myriad testimonies, each a variation on the themes of absence, denial, illusion, or the generalized aspiration to experience freedom that was conceived as something between an apologia and an execration, a requiem for the political manifestation of this supreme human value. It is a narrative that limits itself to the remembrance of the rise and fall of the Soviet regime from the later standpoint of ideological disenchantment and disorientation. Put another way, it is a double continuum, or a diptych, both of its panels similarly painted to capture every shade of distinction from the brightness of hope (at one extreme) to the darkness of tragedy (at the other). At the polar extremes, we find, respectively, the utopian projects of creating the just, egalitarian, and communist "new man", and that of nurturing the post-Soviet liberal, democratic, and consumerist Russian. This continuum structures and gives shape to *Secondhand Time* on various thematic and discursive planes, distributed over the twenty stories that make up the two discrete parts of the book, the two movements of the requiem. The two panels of this diptych are respectively entitled "The Consolation of Apocalypse" and "The Charms of Emptiness". Each part is delimited by a ten-year period. In the first, it is 1991–2001, the decade of the Gorbachev and Yeltsin administrations, bracketed by the August coup that precipitated the end of the Soviet regime and the end of attempts to create a democratic regime and a market economy in the Russian Federation. The second period, 2002–2012, covers the years in which

Putin installed and consolidated his increasingly authoritarian regime, in which the economy came under the domination of oligarchs while society struggled against mounting inequality. For each decade, Alexievich provides ten micro-narratives, arranged not chronologically but kaleidoscopically, according to a logic that emphasizes the contradictions and paradoxes of the play of light and shade suggested by the "double continuum" and in the titles of the two halves of the book. These testimonies have titles such as "On the Beauty of Dictatorship and the Mystery of Butterflies Crushed against the Pavement", "On Brothers and Sisters, Victims and Executioners ... and the Electorate", "On the Sweetness of Suffering and the Trick of the Russian Soul" and "On the Old Crone with a Braid and the Beautiful Young Woman". The title of each story, juxtaposing utopia and history, nostalgia and disappointment, idealism and pessimism, freedom and repression, tragedy and farce, courage and betrayal, hope and disillusionment is imbued with symbolism and irony by a semantic vector that oscillates between two narrative possibilities closely associated with the two decades: those stories which are told against a red interior and those recounted in the absence of any interior whatsoever.

The former stories reflect faith. For example, Vassili Petróvich says "I want to die a communist. That's my final wish" (205). He is aged 87, a party member since 1922, and a victim of Stalin's purges in the 1930s. They also reflect the communist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. "And what had we been before that?" Marina Tikhonovna asks a neighbour of Aleksandr Porfirevich, a retired cabinetmaker and former Soviet deputy who, suffering from depression and alcoholism, set fire to himself aged 63 because he had lost both his wife and his reason for living according to communist ideals. She answers her own rhetorical question:

> Enemies of the people ... Kulaks and kulak sympathizers ... In our village, all of the best families were subjected to dekulakization; if they had two cows and two horses, that was already enough to make them kulaks. They'd ship them off to Siberia and abandon them in the barren taiga forest ... Women smothered their children to spare them the suffering. (Alexievich, 2017: 94)

The second type of stories, narrated with no interiors whatsoever, are those that, having freed themselves of the historical influence of that universe of red faith and red terror, express — devoid of any concern over ideological realignment or reorientation — the axiological drift and moral corruption caused by the dissolution of rigid mechanisms of Leninist and Stalinist indoctrination. As inform-

ant Alisa Z., an advertising executive, says in the narrative "On a Loneliness that Resembles Happiness":

> These days, few people go weak in the knees for love. Everyone saves their strength for the leap forward! For their career! In our smoking room, the girls gossip about their love lives, and if any of them has real feelings, everyone feels sorry for her — like, what an idiot, she's head over heels. … Moscow travel agencies offer these kinds of clients special entertainments. For example, two days in prison. … Then they dress them up in prisoners' uniforms, chase them around the yard with the dogs and beat them with rubber clubs … That's what makes them happy — new sensations! (Alexievich, 2017: 331–2, 337)

This dissolution of political values and ideals of human solidarity reached its most paradoxically tragic moment when national prejudices and ethnic conflicts erupted due to the faltering of the centripetal force of the Soviet system of imperial and transnational administration that had hitherto bound the system together. Gavkar Djuraeva, director of the Moscow's Tajikistan Fund, Centre for Migration and Law, reports:

> 1992 … Instead of the freedom we had all been waiting for, civil war broke out. People from Kulob started killing people from Pamir, and Pamirites started killing Kulobites … People from Hisor and Garm all splintered off. There were posters all over the city: "Hands off Tajikistan, Russians!" "Go back to Moscow, Communists!" (Alexievich, 2017: 430)

Running through this narrative there is also a thematic thread related to the cultural and pedagogical value of literature as a space for intellectual and aesthetic knowledge of the world as it is and as it might be (re-)imagined, and as a vehicle for moral resistance and for demonstrating the indomitable freedom of the human spirit in all its political and ideological manifestations. This thematic thread, which highlights the multivariate human capacities to understand and communicate the literary phenomenon, can be found right from the beginning of the novel, in the prologue to Part I. The subtitle of a story, "On Ivanushka the Fool and the Magic Goldfish", that alludes to iconic characters of Russian folktales is intended symbolically to capture the Russian propensity for dreaming.

This recurring theme occurs in the most diverse of narrative contexts, for example, by recourse to the popular stanza with the value of a patriotic incitement — "From the taiga to the British sea, / There's nothing more mighty than the Red Army". It appears as an illustration of lyrical, melancholic, or nostalgic situations — "The fire burns bright in the little stove, / Sap drips down the logs, like tears" — and in an evocation of its subversive quality — "People used to be put in jail for *The Gulag Archipelago*, they read it in secret, typed copies of it up on their typewriters, wrote it out by hand. I believed … I believed [says Anna M, architect, aged 59] that if thousands of people read it, everything would change". It shows a recognition that it may in some small way make people wiser — Aleksandr Laskovich, a soldier and entrepreneur, who spent his twenties as an emigrant, says "I'd believed Chekhov … He's the one who said that you have to squeeze the slave out of yourself drop by drop, that everything about a man ought to be wonderful: his sweet little soul, his cute little clothes, his charming notions. But in lots of cases, it's just the opposite!". There is even an allusion to someone's singular character trait — "And now it's time to tell you about Yuri [says the film director Irina Vassileva]. In the village, they call him the 'reading cowherd', because he herds cows and reads. He has a lot of books by Russian philosophers" (Alexievich, 2017: 98, 110, 292, 405, 478).

This thematic thread makes its final appearance on the last page of the concluding narrative "On Courage and What Comes after", when the informant, the young student Tania Kulechova, refers to the torture being inflicted at that time by the Belarusian dictatorship: "In school, they told us, 'Read Bunin and Tolstoy, those books save people'. Why isn't this the knowledge that's passed down, instead of the doorknob in the rectum and the plastic bag over the head?" (Alexievich, 2017: 506).

Despite the pessimistic tone of the final question of this diptych of densely-packed discrete yet interconnectable themes, *Secondhand Time* is a documentary epic constructed from oral sources — including interviews with people on the street and kitchen conversations — which ultimately transcends an apparent fatalism that seems to recognize the triumph of the forces of barbarism over the subtle energy of the human spirit and the aesthetic creativity manifested through literature. Alexievich's work is proof that, even if books like hers do not save their readers in some spiritual manner, at least they allow them to be saved from being unaware of themselves; of the dire effects of their illusions, of their tedium, of their petty powers; thereby preventing them from becoming complicit in pulling all manner of plastic bags over anyone's head, least of all their own.

Note

1. The 2013 German translation added the subtitle "Life on the rubble of socialism" to the original title *Secondhand Time*. The 2014 Belorussian edition added "The end of the red man". The Hungarian publishers opted to replace the title altogether with "Our past is swept away" (2015). The US publisher Random House added "The last of the soviets", thereby introducing ambiguity over whether the subtitle referred to the organization (the soviet) or was an adjective describing the human protagonist. In Spain (2016), the book was called "The end of homo sovieticus", using a term Alexievich borrowed from the dissident sociologist Alexander Zinoviev. In the same year, the French publishers came up with *Le fin de l'homme rouge: ou le temps de désenchantement*. Both the European Portuguese (2015) and Brazilian (2016) editions replaced the title altogether with *O Fim do Homem Soviético* [The end of soviet man], an unfortunate choice for a novel by a woman, in which (unsurprisingly) female witnesses are well represented. The later Italian edition reverts to the original title but adds a subtitle that explains, somewhat over-didactically, that we will be reading about Life in Russia after the collapse of communism.

Acknowledgments

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4.4. Spatial-Historical Waypoints in the Possible: Generating Sociological Knowledge by Walking between Manchester's Forty-Four Post Offices

Martin Greenwood

Abstract

In this essay, I outline how notions of social possibility and utopian theory were incorporated into the ethnographic portion of my sociology PhD, "Postcapitalism and the Post Office: The Role of Public Services in Utopian Futures" (Greenwood, 2023). The PhD aims to contribute to the understanding of how public experience of social possibility is affected by the condition of public services and to consider the strategic role that public services might play in bringing about a more utopian society. The project takes the UK's Post Office as its main case study and subjects the institution to a utopian social-historical and empirical investigation. The institution was chosen for the project for two primary reasons. Firstly, its prolonged existence (with roots stretching back to early modernity) makes it an institution through which changing relationships between the state, economy, society, and changing ideas about public services, can be read across key historical periods to the present day. Secondly, the institution's presence as routinely encounterable post offices presents a means of empirically investigating the way these relationships and ideas have arrived at the living moment, and of assessing the effects they have on social experience — including senses of social possibility. To aid theoretical consistency in the move from a utopian-social history of the Post Office to empirical investigation of its spatial presence, Henri Lefebvre's "spatial triad" has been utilized as a means of "spatializing" the utopian theory that forms the project's theoretical core. In what follows, I will outline the project's empirical strategy and summarize its main utopian concepts, before presenting an example of how these were spatialized.

Key words: Bloch, Benjamin, Marcuse, Lefebvre, ethnography

Post offices can be seen as spatial manifestations of an historic institution moving into an as yet undetermined future. Their presence will emanate something of this history and this future to people as they encounter them. Something of the futures that could come about for post offices will be to an extent implicit, given how relatively valued or vital, struggling or flourishing they seem to be. The specifics of the history of the institution may be more or less known to people, but their sense of how it has arrived at this point and why a post office in a particular location looks like it does, who its customers are, how well they and the post office staff seem to be doing will be enmeshed in the context of a general conception of social change over time. This sense of change will also have a dimension of locality to it. How does this place seem to be getting on relative to other places in the city, the country, the world?

Along with an awareness of being situated in a spatial-historical context of social change will be some awareness of what the conditions of possibility are within it. Different things are evidently more or less possible in some places and some times than in others. The different ecologies of possibility that people find themselves enmeshed in will be related to others that they perceive of as existing, having existed, or as having the possibility of existing in other places and times. People move house, migrate, or wish they had been born in other countries or at other periods in history, because they have the sense that they might stand a better chance of flourishing within a different ecology of possibility. Viewing post offices as sites of interest within particular ecologies of possibility presents a starting point for their investigation in a utopian-oriented ethnographic strategy. Pertinent utopian sociological data could plausibly be generated through making observations about the sorts of possibility evident in and around these sites, and by considering what would need to change to dramatically improve them. Relating this to the history and possible future of the Post Office, considering its possible role in connecting and contributing to improved ecologies of possibility would begin to tie these data to the main utopian social-historical trajectory of the project.

Into the Empirical

To initiate the empirical aspect of my PhD, I identified each post office within a three-mile radius around Manchester City Centre (currently forty-four post offices), and devised three walking routes via which I could visit each of them over the course of two and a half days of walking. Each route would be walked several times over the course of several weeks and copious ethnographic audio notes would be taken en route to and at each post office visited.

This part of the fieldwork was devised to familiarize me with the neigh bour-hoods the post offices were located in, to develop my own sense of how these neighbourhoods were "getting on" and to try to gain some sense of the ways that different, shifting qualities of possibility might be detectable in the city, and the roles post offices might be playing within these. It was also devised as a means of preparing for a second part of the empirical strategy: possibility-focused walking interviews with post office customers between post offices in different Manchester neighbourhoods.

The use of possibility to bridge the utopian social-historical and empirical/spatial dimensions of the Post Office provided the beginnings of a way to make the move from theory to ethnographic investigation. But imagining "improved ecologies of possibility" does not yet address the underlying normative basis for making claims about what would constitute such improvement. As Ruth Levitas has argued, sociology ought not to shy away from making normative claims, and speculative sociology can usefully extend this normative/critical reach into future social possibilities (2013: 98–114). Such claims require some justification. In this project, the work of Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, and Herbert Marcuse has been key to building a case for utopia as a project that *ought* to be engaged in, and to providing some sense of what qualitative changes this would entail. Below, I briefly summarize a selection of concepts from their work which I have utilized in the project. I then address the matter of their spatialization for empirical use.

Key Utopian Concepts

Ernst Bloch's concept of "concrete utopia" involves his understanding of Marxist praxis as being the first means by which humanity can — with full consciousness — intervene in the historic process and usher the world towards the real utopian possibility that is present within reality (Bloch, 1995a: 206; 1995b: 623). This sense of utopia as a process and a project, something undertaken from a particular con-crete circumstance connects action with utopia, not as a hazy, inspiring vision, but — however distantly — as the real ultimate object of the action. This is important, for Bloch, not just in terms of the need for the action to occur, but in that some-thing of its utopian orientation should be understood. For Bloch, Marxism that neglected to emphasize its implicit utopian purpose risked failing to connect with key motivating aspects of humanity: desire, longing, a sense of belonging, the af-fective power of art, the sense of profundity associated with myth and religion. If Marxism focused on a cold, critical, and deterministic interpretation of society

and class struggle, it risked ceding such profound territories of human experience to the right, which is what he saw as having occurred in the rise of fascism (Bloch, 2018: 54–229; Hudson, 1982: 45).

For Walter Benjamin, capitalist modernity had seen a significant degradation in the quality of human experience. In pre-modernity, Benjamin viewed experience (*Erfahrung*) as having had an intersubjective, mutually-woven, communal aspect to it, the qualities of which he associated with the social prevalence of storytelling and artisanal production. This was experience that had a kind of narrative grandeur; it was experience that was always a continuation of something (Benjamin, 2006; Miller, 2014: 40). Benjamin saw in modernity a retreat of experience into the subject where it took on an individualized and psychological character (*Erlebnis*). This was effectively an enclosure of experience. In place of the rich narrative continuity of pre-modern experience, experience was now characterized by shock and sensation, boredom and repetition, and given little coherence or meaning by the rise of information, the hubbub of urban life, and the clatter of production lines (Benjamin, 2006: 329; Salzani, 2009). Even though Benjamin does not make a specific proposal for a restitution of *Erfahrung* through a reordering of society, the sense of an urgent need to halt capitalist "progress" and to construct a world that redeems the suffering endured under progress's brutal march, as elaborated in "On the Concept of History" (Löwy, 2016) implies a need to construct a future society in which this form of experience would once again be afforded the possibility to flourish.

For Herbert Marcuse, utopia was something that was no longer "utopian" but now realizable. Developments in technology and productive capacity meant utopia was no longer objectively impossible (Marcuse, 2014). What remained in the way of such a realization was the surplus repression that kept people trapped into the reproduction of capitalist civilization. Marcuse agreed with Freud that the development of civilization had required a necessary repression of human drives, but saw the extent of this repression as far beyond what was necessary now that civilization had developed the capacity to provide all with the requirements for a flourishing life (Marcuse, 1998: 91; Marcuse, 2014). The erotic, for Marcuse, was the key drive which had had to be repressed for civilization to develop and endure. The erotic, experienced as the drive to sexual gratification, was — as the desire for sexual gratification alone — an immature and constrained manifestation of what was in fact a drive to an intense engagement with the world, a creative and playful urge to build, secure, and expand the conditions for gratification (Marcuse, 1998: 212). If capitalism's surplus repression could be pushed back, systems built to sustain qualitatively new forms of pleasurable living could expand into the space it had been ejected from. A libidinal investment in the institutions which constructed and sustained such systems would be a

feature of life in the society that arose through such a dynamic. This raises the prospect (if we accept Marcuse's reasoning) of the existence in the future of such a thing as the erotic post office.

Spatialization

These concepts each provide a justification for utopia as a project to be engaged in, and offer some sense of which human capacities ought to be given the means to flourish through the world that the project would set about establishing. Although they are usefully relatable to a narrative of the historical emergence of, and changes to, ideas about public services and their possible futures, and thus easily situatable in the theoretical/narrative core of the PhD, the means by which they might be employed in an empirical, spatial context is less immediately evident. Assistance with this problem was provided by using Lefebvre's spatial triad to bring focus to the spatial aspects of these concepts, and frame these such that they became more readily empirically witnessable. Before providing some examples of how this was undertaken, I will summarize Lefebvre's ideas about space and his understanding of its three key aspects.

For Lefebvre, space (under capitalism) was something socially produced, with the reality of its production being mystified in ways analogous to Marx's understanding of the fetishization of commodities. Space was something conceived, perceived, and lived, but the level of conception — the level at which space was enlisted by those who intended to utilize it for profit or for ideological ends — tended to obscure its lived and perceived aspects. To begin the work of demystifying the production of space, Lefebvre devised his spatial triad, not as a means of identifying in space three ontologically separate arenas by which elements of space could be rigidly categorized, but as a conceptual tool that could help us maintain vigilance against space's reification, and to push back against the obscuring of space's lived and perceived dimensions (Merrifield, 2003).

In brief, Lefebvre's spatial triad comprises: (1) "Representations of space": this is space as conceived by those at the strategic level with a material or ideological interest in its production: town planners, developers, the council, police; (2) "Representational spaces": this is space as lived, imagined, sensed — the qualitative, experiential aspects of spatial being; (3) Spatial practices: this is what is going on between people and between physical objects in space (1991: 38). This includes the shifts in kinds of activity that occur in different spatial zones, how people make their ways between them, and the forms of competence that these various goings-on require (Merrifield, 2003; Degen, 2015: 18).

To use this conceptual tool as a means of spatializing the utopian concepts noted above, I created a table which helped me to sketch out what their spatialized implications could be. A truncated version of this table demonstrates how the process worked for Benjamin's understanding of experience, *Erfahrung* versus *Erlebnis* (*Table 1*).

Utopian concept	Spatial triad	Spatialized utopian/antiutopian output
Experience *(Erfahrung vs. Erlebnis)*	Representations of space	How is experience represented and how is any desire for richness and depth in experience handled (misdirected) strategically? How is intersubjective experience repelled by built environments? What messages, implicit or explicit, may be contributing to its individualization?
	Spatial practices	What sorts of enduring meaning can attach to the "doing" that occurs here? What narratives might arise from these? How might narratives be fractured/individualized by these? What spaces/opportunities are there here for activities that grow beyond those generally encouraged/sanctioned?
	Representational spaces	How is affective experience cultivated or thwarted here? What stories, myths, senses of significance are present for people as they move through space here? How do people feel in relation to their communities and — specifically — how do they sense their ability to shape or make impressions on this locality?

Each of the key utopian concepts at the project's core was subjected to the same process of spatialization, and through this process it was possible to generate sets of cues for empirical observations for the first walking (ethnography) stage of the empirical plan, and to generate questions and conversational prompts for the second, walking (interview) stage. This improves the chances that the observations made and the discussions had with participants would speak to (and present challenges to) the normative and qualitative aspects of the project's core utopian themes.

Conclusion

Through focusing on the aspects of possibility empirically detectable at and around Manchester's post offices, and through spatializing the key utopian concepts underlying the project's theoretical core, it became possible to embark on the empirical part of the PhD with some confidence that the data produced would speak to these key concepts, the narrative of the development of the Post Office and public services, and the paths these might take to a utopian future. There are likely to be many other ways in which such utopian concepts could be fruitfully spatialized, and there are aspects of each theorist's work which might present more direct routes to spatialized utopian insights. For this project, this somewhat instrumental use of Lefebvre's spatial triad provided a means of finding such insights, while usefully bringing together its main theoretical and empirical aspects.

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4.5. English Allotments as Sites of Utopic Super-Diversity

JC Niala

Abstract

This paper explores the banality of urban gardening as a utopian practice and interrogates inclusiveness on allotment sites in the city of Oxford, England. Growing in Oxford on allotments has increased in significance due to the convergence of food provenance issues, environmental concerns, and the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Utopia is not a destination to arrive at but is in a constant state of production and renewal that carries echoes of the gardening calendar. This paper illuminates the ways in which urban gardeners, through their practices, complicate traditional Euro-American imaginings of utopia. It looks at the reproduction of urban gardening sites, specifically allotments, over time. Despite allotment sites being seen as a quintessential piece of English material cultural heritage, they have in both human and more-than-human gardeners been more diverse than the rest of the UK for over half a century. Human gardeners with origins in different parts of the world talk about a process of "re-rooting" through which allotment sites offer a possibility for them to simultaneously express the cultural identities of their heritage as well as participate in British cultural identities.

Key words: utopia, urban gardening, allotments, super-diversity, banality

Re-rooting

The gate locks behind me, freedom lies ahead
I embrace the earth's welcome smell.
There's no return so here's paradise instead.

Old country shovelled into bags as I fled
Collecting the traces of lives where they fell.
The gate locks behind me, freedom lies ahead.

My real name hangs up on a nail in my shed
They won't pronounce it, anyway who would I tell?
There's no return — here's paradise instead.

Today's job is to make sure that my plants are fed
In the old country, I ran a business as well
The gate locked behind me, freedom lies ahead.

Allotment soil is a warm, soft bed
A new home where ancient plants can dwell
A locked gate behind me, freedom lies ahead
No return, here's paradise instead.

(NIALA, 2022).

The poem above encapsulates the central argument of this paper, which analyses the English allotment as a form of utopia. As another allotmenteer said, "And it seemed to be when I first went there, I thought this was kind of utopia". This paper argues that allotments are recognised by the people who practise urban gardening on them, not just as utopias but as places where a plurality of people practise with and alongside diverse plants, animals, and other more-than-human actors.

Allotments are sites of land often glimpsed out of the corner of one's eye. They are subdivided into plots, which are individually rented out to members of the public for the relatively low annual fee of fifteen to thirty pounds a year. English allotments are utopic in three ways that are critically different from traditional Euro-American renderings of utopia. They are of collective imagination but individual effort, they are ordinary and everyday, and they are a process rather than a destination. They are a quintessential and enduring form of English material cultural heritage, what Niamh Moore *et al.* have termed "everyday utopias" or "intimate privatepublics" (2014: 327).

Allotmenteers' conversation with the city is a quiet and state sanctioned embodiment of a different way of being through a cultivated relationship with city soil. Or, as Michael, an allotmenteer, described them, "These micro communities come together and celebrate our differences and our shared passion too".

First, I will present a brief introduction to the work that I have been carrying out over the last couple of years with allotmenteers on allotment sites across Oxford. Then I will outline the methodology used to carry out this work, and finally discuss some of the conclusions to which I have come through this work.

My research is about the practice of hope at a time when human beings are being stretched in their capacity to believe in a better world. Allotmenteers are people who transform city spaces into utopic places. By growing alongside each other, they create sites of super-diversity with communities that travel through time and encompass different peoples and species. As human beings we are driven towards self-improvement. Using the imaginary as a way to think about how we can make the world a better place has a long history both as an oral tradition and in literature, and also through various forms of practice. Urban gardening as a practice offers the possibility of improved health and well-being and although there are many studies that have shown this to be the case (Wakefield *et al*., 2007; Wood *et al*., 2016; Soga *et al*., 2017), there are far fewer studies that explain why the imaginary is an important part of this process.

One example that crosses with my research about the power of the imaginary comes from Benedict Anderson's (2016) work on imagined communities. Anderson illuminates how a shared practice such as that of reading a national newspaper individually or maybe even collectively in our own homes can draw us into a particular national imagination of who we are collectively.

On allotment sites there is also a shared practice that is carried on alongside each other, but what is critical is that allotmenteering is primarily an individual practice. Or, as the allotmenteer Matthew illuminates, it is a type of growing that is done alone, together:

> So most people … including me, would say it's a kind of sociality or socializing where you don't have to socialize … So you be digging away, and someone passes at the top of the plot and you say "Hi", and you might pass two sentences but there's no obligation to. But it's nice to have people around, and when people are not here, it feels slightly creepy but slightly, you know, I prefer to have people around, working on their plots, not necessarily talking to them.

This *alone, together* sociality is a critical paradox in the utopic method of allotmenteers. By examining it, my work is a counterpoint to research in utopian studies that presupposes utopias as primarily sites of social cooperation. What brings allotmenteers together is not their relationship with each other, but their individual relationships to the land which they cultivate alongside each other. This leads to a complex interplay between individual practice and collective moments in order to produce a place of collective value. It means balancing

working together to maintain the site with a type of "civil inattention", a term coined by Erving Goffman to describe the neutral interaction that takes place between strangers in public space (1963: 83).

The focus of utopian studies on the collective, while understandable, has led to the oversight of places like allotment sites that city dwellers experience as utopic. Within the context of utopian studies, basing utopia on the collective is a reasonable assumption given the description of Thomas More's *Utopia*.

Urban gardeners in Oxford are not the first group of people to wrestle with this question of materializing a perfect world. There are many types of utopic projects where people work hard to materialize what they consider to be a perfect world. Such projects include democratic schools such as Summerhill in the UK or local exchange trading schemes. A key difference between these projects and urban gardening is the relationship to identity. The identity of an urban gardener is based on place and practice. What I mean by that is, you cannot be an allotmenteer unless you are practising allotmenteering on an allotment site. There is a dynamism about these utopic places that allotmenteers materialize. And in being aware of the constant changes, allotmenteers do not expect their sites to be perfect. A shift in wider utopic studies as detailed by authors such as Davina Cooper recognizes that utopia is an evolving method rather than a specific goal (2013: 5).

Although my work on allotmenteers in Oxford is in many ways an everyday utopian project, it is also about a practice of hope. The allotmenteers I researched and grew alongside in Oxford are not doing so as part of a collective effort. Although there are indeed collective moments as part of the practice, it is not an essential prerequisite to carrying it out. This specific form of alone, together sociality is also echoed in the allotmenteers' practice of growing. Everybody is growing, but not everybody is growing in exactly the same way. It is this recognition of difference, this acceptance and celebration of difference, that allows allotment sites to be places of super-diversity. Every single site in the city of Oxford has at least ten different nationalities growing alongside each other. If we take into account the plant species and insects that grow alongside the humans in these spaces, we are talking about a super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007).

It is important to note that this diversity is not new. For over half a century, people, plants, and insects from all over the world have been growing alongside each other at rates of diversity that are higher than in the rest of the UK that surrounds the allotment sites (Moran, 1990: 130). What I have learned from my thirty-six months of fieldwork is that there is the possibility for us to build a world together that works well, that is described by its participants as a utopia, but that does not, as a prerequisite, require us to give up parts of how we see ourselves

as individuals or indeed subscribe to communality; a world that operates with common values but allows for a plurality of purpose and practice.

I was involved in participant observation on four different allotment sites for a total of thirty-six months. Because of the way that networks in the allotment community operate, I also visited several other sites over the course of my fieldwork, as people would say to me that I must meet, visit, or see somebody who was cultivating on a different site. As well as the practice of becoming an allotmenteer myself, I carried out semi-structured interviews with thirty-three allotmenteers from sites across the city. In addition to my interviewing and participant observation, I was fortunate that a secretary on one of the sites which I cultivated volunteered, without prompting, to give me the archives of that allotment site, which go back over eighty years. As a result, I was able to carry out archival research. I also used fieldwork sketching and public engagement with research as part of my methodology.

A key question I had was how do urban gardeners in Oxford materialize a utopic place within a city space? This reflects the shift from utopia as a concept to an active and dynamic method in which participants are practically involved in the creation of utopias that are not necessarily perfect but nevertheless offer spaces of hope.

The twentieth century marked three clear developments in allotment history that are less well researched within a utopian framework: the formation and maintenance over time of urban allotments; the policy moments that enshrined allotments in law; the understanding of allotments as being more than functional spaces in which to grow food. This last point, in particular, situates my research within a developing body of work that unsettles the idea that the primary reason people grow plants in cities is because they want to be self-sufficient in food. Allotmenteers also grow plants for their beauty, plants that actively support the growth of pollinators they garden alongside, plants that reflect their heritage, plants to give away to other people in the wider community, and more.

Allotments have survived over centuries because of a complex interplay between long-standing allotmenteers in the form of the "old boys", interplayed with more diverse arrivals in terms of sex, ethnicity, and social class. The "old boys" are a more or less unbroken chain of white working-class men who have been gardening on allotment sites since their inception. Stereotyped by their flat caps and their trousers held up with baler twine, they are still very much the main people working allotments in the public imagination. They have been the mainstay of allotments, and I discovered they have been directly responsible for the survival of many of the sites across the UK today. "One way or another they kept the sites going", said Peggy, an allotment committee chair.

Critically, the respect "old boys" have for other allotmenteers stems from a connection to the land. For them, presence on the land is more important than the shape in which that presence comes. This orientation of "old boys" means that allotmenteers from places as far flung from the UK as Trinidad, Zimbabwe, or Nepal are not just tolerated on allotment sites but frequently understood. There is an understanding that the people who are growing alongside them were going through a process of re-rooting, as described in the poem at the beginning of this essay, which supports them to live a more connected life in England.

That is not to say that the "old boys" do not also have opinions on the changes that have taken place on allotment sites over the years. For many of them, the fact that more women now run the sites through the allotment committee is welcome, because it means they have less work to do and less responsibility. However, some particular nationalities have been associated with practices such as intensive water use and not hiding the use of pesticides sufficiently, which raises certain grumbles. Still, in comparison with the city outside the allotment gates, these are minor grumbles. Allotmenteers love the land they work on, and they form a connection to their fellow allotmenteers through the care that they demonstrate on the allotment site. Their alone, togetherness allows them not to be exclusive in their practice. People, plants, and insects from other places are mainly welcome on the site, and the relationships that are formed are, in the main, meaningful and equitable.

What my research has found is that it is indeed possible to materialize a utopic place within a city space. Allotment sites actively embrace a diversity of people, species, and practice in ways that the wider city aspires to but is yet to fully realize. It is my assertion that they do so by creating a belonging that is centred on three key concepts. The first is that belonging is grounded in plurality. The second is that, although there is a collective vision, it is practised individually. Finally, utopia is not a place to arrive at, but rather a process and a method that allows people to work with an imaginary that takes us to a better place, through a consistent, ordinary, and productive engagement with the realities of our present.

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4.6. Deaftopia: Utopian Representations and Community Dreams by Sign Language Peoples

Cristina Gil

Abstract

Deaftopia conceptualizes utopian and dystopian manifestations of Sign Language Peoples, drawing from Deaf-led cultural productions. These cultural objects contain narratives and discourses that stem from diverse sources, including Deaf artwork and films, Deaf literature and visuature, Deaf-led activist demonstrations, and even political efforts for sign language recognition. Many perspectives are possible within Deaftopia. The utopian discourse enables us to get a glimpse of an improved societal scaffold, where sign language and Deaf culture thrives, while dystopian counter narratives and discourses of resistance forewarn us about the threats and dangers to Sign Language Peoples and their cultural legacy. This essay outlines findings from my doctoral research, with the aim not only to bring forth knowledge of Deaf culture, but also to contribute to its preservation. This is the role of Deaftopia for Sign Language Peoples.

Key words: Deaftopia, Deaf culture, Deaf communities, Deaf literature, Deaf art

Deaftopia conceptualizes dreams and projections for the future, as well as fears, emerging from Deaf imaginary and experience. The concept brings forth a new perspective on d/Deaf[1] people's cultural productions in a transdisciplinary synergy of culture studies, Deaf studies, and utopian studies. Studies conducted on Deaf culture have had an impact on the understanding of culture. Now, as a field, culture studies is benefiting from Deaf studies, which brings innovative theoretical perspectives through the critical analysis of the cultural productions and centuries-long oppression of Sign Language Peoples (SLPs) (Ladd, 2003; Batterbury *et al.*, 2007). This systemic oppression results in a conceptual counter-discourse that produces complex notions such as "DEAF WAY", "DEAF

WORLD", "DEAFHOOD", and "DEAF GAIN" (Erting *et al.*, 1994: xxiii; Lane *et al.*, 1996: ix; Ladd, 2003: xviii; Bauman & Murray, 2009: 3, 2014: xv).[2] The concepts mentioned above compose what I call a Deaf "Mythomoteur", which works as an intensifier of group identity, a motor to form a sense of belonging, the same way as a flag or folklore forms the imagined community that we call a nation (Gil, 2019). However, Deaftopia also contains cultural productions and elements that fuels group cohesion in SLPs.

My doctoral thesis analysed the narrative, critical, and activist discourses of Deaf people and theorized the scientific concept of "Deaftopia" as an expression of Deaf culture (Gil, 2020). The concept of Deaftopia was the result of an extensive analysis of the utopian and dystopian manifestations of diverse cultural productions, carefully selected narratives, and discourses produced by Deaf people who use sign language and who consume and/or produce Deaf culture and are engaged in their own Deaf community. Beginning with narrative worldmaking in Deaf literature and visuature (literature conveyed in sign language), the focus was on novels, short stories, and poems. A work that can be considered canonical is *Islay*, a novel by Douglas Bullard (2013) first published in 1986. The novel takes us on a journey with Lyson Sulla, the protagonist, who undertakes the project of creating a Deaf state. Sulla travels the USA to find supporters of the project and gets into many adventures in the process of becoming governor of Islay.

Another example of Deaftopian literature is *Mindfield* by John F. Egbert, which also takes place in the USA (Egbert, 2006). A bioterrorist weapon spreads a meningitis pandemic leading to an unprecedented increase of deafness. The North American government has no other solution than to turn to the Deaf community to learn how to adapt to the new circumstances. In the UK, Nick Sturley published *Milan* in 2003, a dystopian science fiction narrative. *Milan* surprisingly gathers historical figures and events, anthropomorphizes oralist philosophies in the villain, and unexpectedly includes time travel. Sturley wrote for both hearing and Deaf audiences and includes a thought-provoking idea, mainly for those who are not familiar with Deaf communities and Deaf culture, which is the notion that many Deaf people consider becoming a hearing person a dystopian reality.

Other narratives with Deaftopian features include *Vibrating Mouth* by John Lee Clark (2017), "Understanding" by Kelsey Young (2017), "The Sonic Boom of 1994" by Mervin D. Garretson (1984), and "A Brave New World" by Lawrence Newman (2009). These short stories tackle a wide variety of topics that allow the authors to reflect on the origin myth of Deaf communities, as well as critique oralism, thus expanding the discussion of biopower and biopolitics.

There are several traits in Deaftopian fiction that recur, such as the inversion of circumstances. This complete inversion of social dynamics is a common resource in utopian/dystopian speculative fiction. These narratives

usually depict imaginary scenarios that turn the tables, making the majority use sign language. These stories entail a dialogue between utopia/dystopia as they are read by different audiences that hold different values towards deafness and sign language. They allow hearing audiences to understand the Deaf perspective and experience, and allow the Deaf reader to untangle his or her own experience of decolonization of the Deaf mind and to open themselves to the novelties of worldmaking.

In Deaftopian visuature, the literary genre conveyed in sign language, two very rich contributions are notable. One tells the story of planet EYETH, a place where everyone uses sign language, and which has become recurrent folklore in American Sign Language and Deaf culture. The analysis focused on Stephen M. Ryan's (1991) version entitled *Planet Way Over Yonder*. The second is *Bleeva: The Narrative of Our Existence*, a live performance by Benjamin Bahan (2018) that boldly merged Deaf history, Deaf culture, science fiction, and several myths and conspiracy theories to explain why Deaf people are in this world and to identify their origin. This visuature piece articulates not only the storyteller performance of its author in American Sign Language, but also includes a carefully curated visual art composition.

Deaftopian narratives are also featured in films and short films such as *The End* (2011), written and directed by Ted Evans, and *The Destination Eyeth* (2007) directed by Arthur Luhn. *Reverberations* (2018), written and directed by Samuel Dore, will also be included here, although it was not part of my doctoral research.

The End is a docu-fiction, meaning it resembles a documentary but the content is entirely fictional and enacted. It is a short film that follows the life of four characters, Arron, Mohamed, Sophie, and Luke, showing their experiences in five chronological frames: 1987, 1995, 2008, 2031, and 2046. The narrative leads us to several subjects under constant discussion among SLPs, such as Deaf education and the politics of rehabilitation, Deaf identities, biopower, and biopolitics concerning the right to be born and to be proud of one's language and identity (Ladd, 2013). In this narrative, a cure for deafness is presented, and although it appears to be voluntary, we see that forces of intimidation and coercion are set in place to convince Deaf people to engage in the treatment. As the narrative evolves, we end up following Arron, who consistently refuses "the treatment" and wants to continue to be Deaf and use British Sign Language. As we approach the finale, Arron, already an isolated man without any interpersonal connections, is visited by a sort of government social welfare assistant and is informed by them that he is the last Deaf man on Earth. The scenes create a profound feeling of solitude as we understand, in the film's final shot, that the film we are watching is also being displayed at a gallery or museum. This "cure", which could apparently signify a utopia for hearing people and is, therefore, an intense dystopia for people who are familiar with Deaf culture and are members of SLPs.

Reverberations is a sci-fi short film, a drama that tells the story of a fascist government that wipes out deafness through gene therapy. The film follows an organized Deaf resistance in 2167. A young Deaf time traveller goes back to 2018 to warn the responsible researcher of how her work is going to be used in creating this "perfect" society. Both *Reverberations* and *The End* were produced with the assistance of the British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust, which are accessible to both Deaf and hearing audiences. Evans and Dore are both writers and directors, as well as members from the British Deaf community.

From the USA, *Destination Eyeth* is a revivalist silent film with a slapstick comedy style that explores the attempts of a scientist to travel to planet EYETH, a planet where everyone speaks sign language. The dialogue between the two characters, a man and a scientist, is conveyed through title cards. They present a plan and make three failed attempts to travel. The film ends with the statement "To be continued ..." instead of "The End" to suggest that they are not giving up on reaching EYETH. This short film, the first directed by Arthur Luhn, with a duration of only 2 minutes and 56 seconds, appears in the PBS documentary *Through Deaf Eyes* (at minute 28:08) as an illustration of the quest for EYETH.

Deaftopias are also found in non-fictional narratives, as in the case of a heated exchange of letters that took place in the USA between 1856 and 1858. These letters concerned the hypothesis of building a Deaf Commonwealth, first proposed by John J. Flournoy, and later discussed by Edmund Booth and many others. As a philosophical debate, the content of these letters remains pertinent to considering the pros and cons of such an endeavour (Flournoy & Turner, 1856; Flournoy, 1858; Flournoy *et al.*, 1858).

All cultural productions mentioned above were categorized as narrative discourses; however, a second part of my research examined critical and activist discourses that are pivotal to broaden the potential of a concept such as Deaftopia.

Sources for the first part of my research included narrative discourses in literary works such as novels, short-stories, poetry. Non-literary texts such as letters and, in a different medium, short-films were also included. The second part of the research turned the focus on critical and activist discourses, including speeches, political manifestos, activism, lobbying for sign language legal recognition, and the development of shared sign communities. (Shared sign communities are villages, islands, and other types of somewhat isolated communities, where sign language is used by everyone.) The existence of shared sign communities is far more common than generally acknowledged in the scholarship, and it occurs in all continents. In these communities, Deaf people remain a minority, even if the demographic density is higher than usual, but hearing people embrace the local sign language and start to use it regularly. Shared sign communities are not utopian in their genesis, nor artificially created or projected, with perhaps the exception of Soviet Russian towns (Gil, 2020: 221). However, they symbolize an ideal that many

Deaf people from western countries recognize as utopian. The most paradigmatic example of a shared sign community is the extinct Martha's Vineyard settlement, which is known to this day by Deaf communities worldwide (Groce, 1985).

Now turning our gaze to Deaf-led activist demonstrations, the most iconic of which is the speech by George Veditz in 1913 entitled "The Preservation of Sign Language". This was filmed in the aftermath of the Milan Congress, as Veditz, and many others at the time, thought that after the prohibition of sign language in Deaf education, the result would be the extinction of signed languages and Deaf Culture. Veditz gathered signing experts, both Deaf and hearing, to film speeches in American Sign Language to leave an archive of their testimonies and their heritage for future generations as they were facing the threat of extinction. Veditz's speech is known as the Deaf community's cultural equivalent of Martin Luther King's iconic "I Have a Dream" speech.

Another highly relevant moment for Deaf activism and agency in Deaf history was the Deaf President Now movement. In brief, Deaf President Now or DPN is a movement that developed on Gallaudet University's campus in March 1988 and had international impact. The Deaf community, including students, faculty, alumni, and many others, gathered to demonstrate and demand a Deaf president for the university, among other changes to make the institution Deaf-led. Gallaudet University is a singular place for Deaf students with a majority of Deaf faculty members. It has been identified by many as a Deaf space, the closest thing to a Deaf utopia or Deaf mecca (Gil, 2020: 105). By achieving its ends, the movement scored a victory in terms of Gallaudet's history and administration, and also inspired activism for Deaf rights in the rest of the country and worldwide (Christiansen & Barnartt, 2003; Gannon, 2009).

The town project of Laurent serves as another significant milestone within critical and activist discourses. In 2002, Marvin Miller moved to Sioux Falls and founded the Laurent Company. Miller had a project to build a Deaf town in South Dakota. Although he gathered the names of many Deaf people who were interested in moving to that town and taking part in the experience, and despite the generous media coverage, Laurent was put on hold and later abandoned due to the financial crisis and insufficient support (Miller, 2006).

On a different note, across the Atlantic, in 1976, a group of Deaf activists in the UK inaugurated the National Union of the Deaf (NUD) and wrote *Blueprint for the Future: A Radical Manifesto* (NUD, 1977). The collective reclaimed its right to exist, the right to be Deaf, the right to sign language accessibility, and the right for Deaf cultural representation, among other claims. The particularity in this approach was that the language used was not at all the common diplomatic approach of other institutions of the time, such as the British Deaf Association (BDA). The NUD were unapologetically proud of their heritage, culture, and identity.

Although the field of linguistics established that signed languages are full-fledged languages with the publication of William Stokoe's ground-breaking research in 1960 (Stokoe, 2015), legal and social recognition in many countries has been slow to emerge. To have their rights acknowledged, Deaf organizations and Deaf people worldwide have inaugurated political efforts for sign language recognition in their own countries. Furthermore, this effort bears on the cultural and linguistic sustainability of Deaf communities and SLPs. The lack of adequate educational policies, lack of Deaf agency and representativity, and a lack of accessibility to information and equal opportunities are only a few of the claims that inspire Deaf people, and signers overall, to fight for sign language recognition (De Meulder, *et al*., 2019). It is always a joyful moment when another country legally proclaims the right to use sign language. The transnational Deaf network is always supporting each country's Deaf community accomplishments.

In conclusion, a complex trait of Deaftopia is that it encompasses both utopian futures and perspectives which Deaf people dream about, as well as containing dystopian warnings, such as the threat of extinction of Deaf communities, signed languages, and the preservation of Deaf people's right to exist. These dark possibilities fuel the creation of counter narratives and discourses of resistance. Deaftopias fall into the categories of transgressive utopias and critical utopias (Sargisson, 1996: 10; Levitas, 2010: 197, 2013: 110; Moylan, 2014: xv) and function as a method for critically engaging with Deaf history and the colonial legacy (Gil, 2022). The concept of Deaftopia helps to bring forth knowledge that contributes to the preservation of Deaf culture and sign languages, as well as opening the discussion of cultural diversity as a positive trait of humankind.

Notes

1. The division of d/D has been used since 1970s in Deaf Studies. "Deaf" refers to people that use sign language and participate actively in the Deaf community and consume or produce Deaf culture; and "deaf" means people that are not sign language users and prefer to live assimilated among hearing people and whose preferred means of communication is oral. This binary division has been questioned and the capital D is still the subject of heated debate (Kusters *et al*., 2017). However, although understanding, and in part agreeing with, the issues raised by this fruitful discussion, the author still finds it important to use a capital D, just as capitalization is used to refer to specific groups, nationalities, ethnicities, and identities.

2. Small caps indicate English glosses of concepts from sign language.

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Contemporary Literary Themes

5.1. Utopia as Disruption in Paul Chirrakarode's *Pulayathara*

Divya Singh

Abstract

This essay seeks to study contemporary Dalit novels within the framework of utopian studies, using Fredric Jameson's definition of utopia as a disruption of what is familiar and known. Dalit literature, in particular, Dalit novels, has been studied as a critique of Brahminical hegemony through a mimetic representation of social reality. This reading leaves something to be desired, as it focuses more on the sociological aspect of this body of work than on the aesthetic and political possibilities it offers. Gail Omvedt makes an intervention in Dalit studies in this regard. In her book *Seeking Begumpura*, she looks at utopian alternatives offered in the tradition of anti-caste intellectual thought from the Bhakti poets' radical visions of an egalitarian world to the possibilities offered in the political thought of anti-caste leaders in the twentieth century. Through a reading of Paul Chirrakarode's novel *Pulayathara*, this essay seeks to extend this idea to the study of Dalit novels that can be read, using Jameson's definition, as texts that offer utopian possibilities through a disruption of the real. It is argued that utopian possibilities are a crucial element of the anti-caste politics of these texts, which have so far only been read as critiques.

Key words: Utopia, Dalit, Possibilities, Disruption, Resistance

Anti-caste resistance has had a long political and intellectual history in India. Anti-caste intellectual thought has been traced as far back as the *bhakti* traditions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and even before in the emergence of counter-ideologies such as Buddhism. One contemporary intellectual who has traced this history is Gail Omvedt. In *Seeking Begumpura: The Social Vision of Anticaste Intellectuals*, Omvedt traces the earliest anti-caste articulations in a utopian envisioning of a place without sorrow and without caste in the *bhakti* poet-saint Ravidas's song, *Begumpura*, dated to sometime in the late fifteenth

to early sixteenth century**.** She similarly finds a strain of utopian thought in anti-caste intellectual thought, from the *bhakti* poets to the radical intellectuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Mahatma Jotirao Phule, E. V. M. Naicker Periyar, Pandita Ramabai, and B. R. Ambedkar. Yet, Omvedt is perhaps the only one to study anti-caste thought from a utopian perspective. This lens has been absent from contemporary anti-caste studies, especially in the reading of Dalit literature, which has been largely studied as a sociological critique and focuses more on a realistic portrayal of suffering and victimization in Dalit life.

In her book, Omvedt starts with a definition of utopia as an imagined place, and goes on to explore utopia as a visionary process that has two aspects; namely, ecstasy (*bhakti*) and reason (*dhyan*). While utopia as ecstasy is an emotionally charged articulation of the possibility of a better world, utopia as reason is rooted in an historical analysis of present conditions (Omvedt, 2008: 10). One way to look at utopia is as a fully articulated society that represents a better world (Sargent, 1994); another way is to regard utopia as heuristic, as hope, desire, or an impulse that inhabits or engages with utopian possibilities (Jameson, 2005: 1–9).

Fredric Jameson makes a distinction between utopian form and utopian impulse. He defines utopian impulse as being found through a hermeneutic method, while utopian form is one that requires a closure or constraint. In *Archaeologies of the Future*, he is concerned with redefining utopian impulse. Even as Jameson is concerned with utopian representation as an analytical tool, he situates it outside of the utopian form. He theorizes a definition of utopia as disruption, a disruption of the present by the future, a future which offers ideological possibilities. He argues that utopian articulations are necessarily emerging from fixed ideological positions and, as such, singular utopias are necessarily constrained by this fixity. Disruption thus is a radical break from such ideological constraint. It is utopian because it implies the existence and emergence of alternative possibilities to the fixity of an ideological position. Disruption as a radical break leads to a proliferation of ideological possibilities. Utopia, according to Jameson, is the disruption of the present, the known, and the familiar by the future, the unknown, and the unfamiliar (Jameson, 2005: 2–4, 231).

This essay is concerned with Jameson's definition primarily because his rearticulation of utopia situates utopias not in texts that represent alternate or better worlds as fully articulated societies, but as a discursive strategy that considers texts as articulating a utopian impulse. Jameson's redefinition opens up the opportunity to study Dalit texts differently. The following is an attempt to read a Dalit novel through the lens of utopia as disruption, as offered by Jameson. One of the reasons for the privileging of the realist lens in the study of Dalit literature has been the preoccupation with the sociological and mimetic representation of contemporary society. That is a necessary but limited understanding of

the Dalit novel. This essayx argues, instead, that Dalit novels engage in a disruption of the familiar ("familiar" being the dominant feudal, caste-based reality) by the introduction of unfamiliar ideas or moments that not only critique the social structure but evoke possibilities of alternatives.

Paul Chirakkarode's 1962 Malayalam novel *Pulayathara* has been identified as the first Dalit novel. *Pulayathara* was made available to a wider audience with a new English translation in 2019. The novel is the story of a community of untouchables in Kerala society, Pulayans, both Hindu and Christians, who seek to survive in and question the hostile socio-economic system. Thevan Pulayan's son Kandankoran converts to Christianity to marry the girl he loves, even as his father becomes destitute, losing the home he himself had built. Others in the Church meanwhile begin to question the hierarchies existing in the Church between the upper caste and the Dalit Christians, who are referred to as "new Christians".

Since the publication of the new translation, the book has been reviewed and written about widely (Kannan, 2019; Meera, 2019; Phyllis, 2019). The focus of the largely non-academic reviewers remains on the suffering and abject lack that the book represents. The idea of home for the Pulayan represents constant loss and precarity, Nikhitha Phyllis argues (2019). My contention in this essay is that, even though the critique of the feudal caste structures is inherent to the plot and the narratorial voice, the focus of the critics has been a lot more on the critique and rather less on the utopian ideas that the text also represents. This paper will read *Pulayathara* as an enactment of utopia as disruption, through a look at its overall thematic structure, characterization, and narrative point of view.

The title *Pulayathara*, literally translated as "Pulaya's land or home", is itself a disruption of the hegemonic ownership of land by the upper castes. The title is indicative of a reclamation of land by the Pulaya. It is utopian, for it disrupts the idea that land belongs to those who own it and not to those who till it. It also evokes a history when the Pulayas did own land. The presence of a strong and clear narratorial voice which questions the nature of the system from the very beginning of the novel is another disruption that is utopian. The narrator interjects into the plot and questions where and how a struggle could be achieved. He asks at the close of the first chapter if a struggle could not come about if the younger generation stood up to the landlords.

The representation of a process of conversion to Christianity as a rejection of Brahmanical Hinduism may be seen as a transgressive act. Yet even as conversion to Christianity is a recurrent theme throughout the novel, it is not presented as any real alternative to the feudal social structure. The concept of conversion is not a disruption in this novel, rather the disruption is found in the ultimate rejection of the Church itself by the Dalit "new Christians", as they are referred to by upper caste Christians. It is this rejection which is truly utopian.

Disruption has also been enacted through the representation of a younger generation who makes different decisions and is more acutely aware of the discrimination meted out to them. It is in the representation of characters such as Kandankoran that the novel enacts disruption. From among three new Christians who live on Church land, it is the youngest, Paulos, who is described as "an irritant to the parish priest and the upper castes in the Church" (132). When Preacher Stephen comes to preach instead of the new Christian, Preacher Pathros, he asks why Preacher Pathros was not invited when the whole congregation had agreed upon it. On the day of Azhakan's baptism, he further asks, "Why do our people join the Church?" (101). He similarly attempts to analyse the reasons for the same, attempting to reason out an explanation that emerges as an instinct instead of a direct answer. The narrator remarks, "Paulos could not explain what the profit was. But there was something" (165). Paulos eventually becomes the one to lead the older ones, Outha Pulayan and Pathros, in questioning the functioning of the Church, and suggests that the new Christians should stand for election to the Church council. He also ultimately calls for the meeting of the new Christians, which takes place near the tea stall below the hilltop where the Church stood, after being denied the location of mission land for the meeting by the Church authorities. The disruption is enacted here through the character of Paulos who takes the first step towards questioning the discriminatory practices of the Church, and also calls a meeting of new Christians at the annual anniversary of the establishment of the Church.

Kandankoran converts to Christianity to marry Anna *kidathi* [1], and adopts the Christian name Thoma after his conversion. He also represents the new generation (allegorically, the future which disrupts), who search for possibilities and alternatives to the slave-like relationship to the upper castes. In his relationship with Kandankoran, the landlord's son seeks to emulate the relationship that their fathers share, yet he is uncertain whether Kandankoran would show him the same kind of deference. In the first chapter itself, he is described as insolent by the landlord's son, "with his shoulders straight, chest stuck out, his curly hair smoothly swept backward, his coloured dhoti reaching his feet" (11). The implication is that as a Pulayan, Kandankoran has no right to act and dress in a way that is not deferential to the upper castes. He is disillusioned with the Church right after joining it, as he faces outright mocking on account of being a new Christian, and feels bound by his debt to the Church for allowing him to build his home on mission land. As a final act of disruption, he decides not to baptize his son. He is adamant that "he would not allow another new Christian to be offered to the Church. Let his son at least be free" (197). He rejects the Church as an alternative. Instead, his alternative is to send his son to school and educate him. In Thoma's decision not to baptize his son, it is the very idea of a better future imagined

through educational opportunities for his son outside of the Church that disrupts the discriminatory present and is thus utopian.

The rejection of the Church by the community of Pulayans at large is the final and most central disruption in the novel. The idea of the meeting begins with the lower caste Christians' realization of exploitation and control of the congregation by the upper caste Christians. They decide to call other Dalits who were educated and who could answer some of their questions, such as what the upper castes gained by making the Pulayans and the Parayans (another Dalit caste group) join the Church. This idea of calling the educated from amongst them to the meeting, not only points to the realization of solidarity with other lower castes but is also disruptive and utopian for the possibility such a gathering of intellectual minds from the Dalit castes would unfold. The very idea of such a meeting, of a celebration by the Pulayans, is disruptive since it gives rise to further possibilities of collective action. Yet, the narrative refrains from showing the actual meeting taking place. The meeting is a radical break, an entry point into a new kind of resistance which offers many possibilities that are left unexpressed. The novel ends on a hopeful note, represented both by the meeting that is about to begin and the idea of a brighter future in Anna *kidathi*'s mind. Thoma's son and the meeting are both symbolic of the future that has managed to disrupt the casteist reality of the present.

The disruption in *Pulayathara* is enacted through moments and ideas that challenge both the feudal hegemony and the Christian social structure. The text seems to argue that any real liberation or alternatives are only possible beyond both the Brahmanical and colonial/missionary structures. *Pulayathara* is utopian in as much as it disrupts the familiarity of the feudal society with the unfamiliarity of transgressive moments, and ends with a note of a future filled with possibilities.

Note

1. *Kidathi is an affectionate term for a daughter; literally "little one".*

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5.2. Breaking All the Old Hierarchies: Sex and Gender in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*

Kevin Hogg

Abstract

Marge Piercy's 1976 speculative science-fiction novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* analyses and critiques patriarchal culture while proposing solutions to discrimination faced by women and the LGBTQ+ community. Written during the second wave of North American feminism, the novel provides a contrast to the USA of the 1970s by identifying concerns and then showing how they have been resolved in her fictional Mattapoisett society. In the novel, sex differences have been eliminated, giving women increased self-determination through mechanical gestation and enabling all people to breastfeed children. Same-sex, multiple-partner, and polyamorous relationships are valued, removing the patriarchal notion of a man owning his wife. In several ways, Piercy's novel anticipates recent progress such as preferred pronouns and advances in artificial womb technology. Piercy recognizes that several of the book's proposals are controversial but asserts through the characters that true equality cannot exist as long as one sex bears any responsibilities alone.

Key words: utopia, feminism, LGBTQ+, abortion, pronouns

In her speculative science-fiction novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), Marge Piercy's protagonist Connie Ramos illustrates problems faced by women in the USA in the 1970s. Connie's visit to the utopian society of Mattapoisett in the year 2137 allows Piercy to provide solutions to the oppression of women, both in her novel and in the historical family setting. Piercy draws upon feminist thought of the twentieth century to illustrate the consequences of forcing women to

assume a role as mother and nurturer. These challenges remain today, but greater understanding and social progress have placed our world closer to Piercy's utopian vision in several ways. However, this utopia may be more at risk now than it was when Piercy was writing in 1976.

Woman on the Edge of Time incorporates elements of the feminist utopian genre, defined by Sally Gearhart, an advocate of lesbian and women's rights, as one which

> a. contrasts the present with an idealized society (separated from the present by time or space),
> b. offers a comprehensive critique of present values/conditions,
> c. sees men or male institutions as a major cause of present social ills, and
> d. presents women not only as at least the equal of men but also as the sole arbiters of their reproductive abilities.
> (McKenna, 2001: 137–8)

Piercy's novel fits all of these descriptions, and advances utopian thought by incorporating contemporary technology and criticisms of patriarchal society to demonstrate the growing potential of women to free themselves from patriarchy.

In the post-World War II period, bearing and raising children was one of the main issues believed to be preventing women from finding fulfilment. Some women called for an end to the nuclear family and the inequity it brought (Teslenko, 2003: 50). Although most women accepted childbearing as a necessity, they were unwilling to assume the full responsibility for caring for their children. While accepting that sex differences made females biologically suited to care for their offspring in early years, many women believed that men were using this fact to place the entire burden on women.

Many feminists agreed that raising children was a source of oppression, and some felt that gender problems came from childbearing itself. Shulamith Firestone (1970: 232) put this succinctly: "Nature produced the fundamental inequality—half the human race must bear and rear the children of all of them." With biological differences working against them, many women felt that equality in male-dominated aspects of society was almost impossible.

In *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Connie sees what male sexual domination has done to her sister. Dolly is regularly beaten because she is pregnant and unable to convince Geraldo, her pimp, that he is the father of her child. Eventually, Geraldo demands that Dolly have an abortion against her will. Dolly's fear of loneliness and harm from Geraldo allows him to control her life, using her body

for sex and profit. She eventually frees herself from Geraldo, only to sell herself to a new pimp. Although Vic does not beat her, he takes even more control over her body by convincing her that she will make more money posing as an "Anglo" prostitute. He forces her to dye her hair and take drugs to lose weight. Vic is able to exert so much pressure on Dolly that she forsakes her heritage to increase her value as a sex object, illustrating the extent to which these men are able to control her. This brings back memories of Chuck, Connie's classmate in college, who took advantage of her and left her when she became pregnant: "Some bargain. A baby in her belly by March and the end of her schooling, her pride, her hope" (242).

Piercy's novel was published only three years after the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision upheld the right to abortion. The issue has been contentious for decades, and, after a series of political and legal challenges (Kelly, 2021; McCammon, 2021), it was overturned in June 2022 (*Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, 2022). This ruling placed decisions about abortion access in the hands of individual states, giving male-dominated political and judicial systems the ability to decide on matters related to women's health. While this was one of many aspects of Mattapoisett in which Piercy showed parallels to increased gender equality in our society, recent campaigns against abortion rights in the USA have demonstrated that these advances can never be taken for granted.

Firestone looked back to how differences between the sexes had historically affected the composition of society. She believed that "the natural reproductive difference between the sexes led directly to the first division of labor based on sex, which is at the origins of all further division into economic and cultural classes and is possibly even at the root of caste" (Firestone, 1970: 9). Women regularly had to excuse themselves from the workforce for months or years at a time. Unable to pursue equal employment or hold a job without interruption, women's place in the workforce was never secure. For many, this led to a dependence on men for financial security. When the US Department of Labor reported on the gender wage gap in 1973, three years before Piercy's novel was published, women earned 57% of men's wages (Jones, 2021). This has since risen to 82% (Jones, 2021), but more progress is needed to create a truly egalitarian society.

Some radical feminists took this idea further and called for technology to create complete gender equality. Claire Myers Spotswood, writing in 1935, claimed that "women as a race will never be able to accomplish any great and enduring work in the world until babies are conceived and born in test tubes in the chemical laboratories" (Albinski, 1988: 117). In the 1970s, Firestone defended the idea against charges that it would lead to the dehumanization seen in Aldous

Huxley's *Brave New World* or George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. She stated that "[p]aradoxically, one reason the 1984 Nightmare occurs so frequently is that it grows directly out of, signifying an exaggeration of, the evils of our present male supremacist culture". She believed that "the first demand for any alternative system must be … [t]he freeing of women from the tyranny of their reproductive biology by any means available, and the diffusion of the childbearing and childrearing role to the society as a whole, men as well as women" (Firestone, 1970: 233). Although this idea was controversial, it found support with many women and plays a central role in *Woman on the Edge of Time*.

To avoid stratification due to childbearing expectations, babies in Piercy's Mattapoisett are incubated in a machine referred to as "the brooder", which carries out the functions once performed by the woman's reproductive system. They float upside-down in fluid for over nine months before entering the world. Connie is initially shocked and upset by the appearance of the machine, where "[a]ll in a sluggish row, babies bobbed. Mother the machine" (102). After considering what sexual domination has done to herself and those around her, Connie eventually becomes convinced of the benefits of Mattapoisett's reproductive technology. Her fears of the "1984 Nightmare" give way to desire for the sexual freedom and equal opportunities that accompany this mechanization. Nan Albinski (1988: 181) describes Connie's transformation: "After some time, she comes to see what this [freedom] means: no more prostitution, no more exploitation, no more unwanted children, no more unhappy women forced into marriage for the sake of social conformity".

Ever since being molested by her older brother as a child, Connie's life has been an ongoing series of exploitation. After seeing how she and Dolly could have been spared this suffering, Connie is willing to accept the brooder as a step forward for women's rights. While technology exists today to help conceive and protect babies through in-vitro fertilization and incubators, little progress has been made toward eliminating humans from childbearing altogether. The first patent for an artificial uterus was granted in 1955 (United States Patent 2,723,660), but the technology remains far from functional. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia announced promising results in 2017 (Partridge *et al.*, 2017) and scientists from the Netherlands have stated that they expect their work to be operational within a decade (BBC, 2019). Even if the technology is viable, it remains to be seen whether it would be used only in emergency situations or would eventually become a widely available alternative method of gestation.

Piercy demonstrates through Connie's reactions that not every woman supports the call for technology to replace bearing and raising children. In addition to her initial opposition to the brooder, Connie is angered to see a man breastfeeding his child. She feels that women "had abandoned to men that

last refuge of women" (134). Through the use of hormones, men are able to develop breasts during the months that they help nurse the child. Although Connie is upset because this destroys the uniqueness of womanhood, Piercy clarifies this by demonstrating that equality is not possible while either sex has abilities not available to everyone. Piercy portrays this as a bittersweet victory. Luciente explains: "there was that one thing we had to give up too, the only power we ever had, in return for no more power for anyone" (105). The motherly connection is a necessary sacrifice to completely eliminate gender differences that stratified society.

At the same time as the push for women's rights, the lesbian movement, a forerunner of LGBTQ+ activism, was gaining strength. Although some goals differed between these groups, they benefited each other in many ways by sharing similar views on several important topics. Many of these women believed that "[h]omosexuality, bisexuality, and celibacy should be just as socially acceptable as heterosexuality" (Teslenko, 2003: 50). Joanna Russ claimed that not requiring women to attach themselves to a male protector and provider was an important objective in both feminist utopias and the women's movement as a whole. She wrote (1981: 76), "the societies of these stories are *sexually permissive* … which would be quite familiar to the radical wing of the feminist movement, since the point of permissiveness is not the break taboos but to separate sexuality from questions of ownership, reproduction and social structure". Naturally, these views were not limited to the lesbian movement, as such ideas benefited the women's movement in general.

The nature of the family is drastically altered in Mattapoisett. People are free to have sexual relations with any consenting person. In sharp contrast to Connie's society, the majority of characters enjoy "coupling" with both men and women. When she asks why people do not object, she is told, "All coupling, all befriending goes on between biological males, biological females, or both. [Male and female are] not a useful set of categories" (214). However, there is a clear distinction between these "sweet friends" and the "comothers" who work together to raise a child. The child is raised by any group of three people who can get the approval of the society. These comothers can be any combination of men and women, as both are equally suited for the role. Because children are not treated as private property, everybody is invited to assist with their education and development. Women are free to pursue their own goals, as no woman is left with the responsibility of raising a child with little or no assistance from the father.

In *Woman on the Edge of* Time, Piercy responds to feminist criticisms of the differences between sexes by making the men and women almost indistinguishable. From the second sentence of the book, Luciente, one of the central characters,

is referred to as a man. It is not until the third chapter that Connie realizes that Luciente is a woman. Luciente is more muscular and assertive than the women in Connie's time, leading to understandable confusion. As Susan Kress states (1981: 117), "Judging from her self-assurance, her manner of walking, talking, and taking space, Connie had been convinced that [Luciente] was a man". Because women in Mattapoisett are not controlled by their biological sex, physical differences are no longer as evident.

Connie's confusion is understandable because she is used to a world in which the sexes are clearly differentiated because people's bodies are shaped to reflect their gender roles. Frances Bartkowski writes (1989: 67) that "such misrecognitions [as Connie's] are inevitable in a culture where heterosexuality is the norm, and where biological sex is immediately trained into a cultural gender identity". In contrast, "Luciente's world is one of two sexes and no gender" (Bartkowski, 1989: 68). With separation between the concepts of sex and gender, it is no longer possible to identify people's social roles based solely on their physical appearance. The inclusion of trans and non-binary identities is particularly relevant to today's world. Many people see this as a step toward liberation from birth-assigned sex roles, allowing them to live a life more in keeping with their own understanding of themselves. While this is a move toward the freedom of Piercy's society, several governments are targeting the trans community with bills to ban people from areas or activities unless they conform to their assigned sex (Cole, 2021; Paley, 2022). Politicians using this tactic to appeal to a conservative voting base pose a major threat to inclusion and the possibility of realizing Piercy's utopian vision.

The restructuring of language is an important feature of Mattapoisett's society. To reflect the equality of the sexes, "he" and "she" have been replaced with "person," and "his" and "her" have become "per." To fully abolish sexual discrimination, it is necessary to eliminate the words by which it takes place. This is an essential aspect of the society's transformation to utopia, as it removes the very concept of sexism from people's minds. Several decades after the publication of Piercy's novel, a wide range of pronouns are used by people who feel that he/him and she/her do not reflect their identity. Piercy was not the first author to use gender-neutral pronouns, and linguistics professor Dennis Baron states (2020: 12) that pronouns such as "E," "ze," and "thon" can be traced back to the nineteenth century. These pronouns and others including "they", "xe", "ip", "hir", and "heer" can be used today by people not wishing to identify as male or female. This enables them to feel greater respect and self-confidence. This is not always well received, and Jordan Peterson is among the notable names who have opposed the used of preferred pronouns, again putting the advances anticipated by Piercy's novel in jeopardy.

In *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Marge Piercy incorporates feminist philosophy and draws upon the call of many radical feminists to free women from their reproductive systems through the use of technology. By proposing alternative methods of childbearing and childrearing, Piercy creates a society in which women experience true freedom and equality. Her book provides not only a discussion of the problems faced by women, but also possible solutions designed to lead toward a utopian world of true egalitarianism. Progress has been made in many of these areas, but true equal treatment and protection has never been attained. In recent years, some of these advances have been undone through conservative political and legal efforts, threatening to move society back to the time of Piercy's novel, if not further.

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5.3. It's All Fun and Games: Countering the Boring Dystopia with the Exciting Utopia

Matthew Leggatt

Abstract

In 2015, the cultural theorist Mark Fisher started a Facebook group entitled Boring Dystopia as a repository for images of a tedious and mundane dystopian Britain. The group challenged the myth that dystopia is exciting. As we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, some dystopias provide boredom and yet more bureaucracy. As Albert Camus' narrator in *The Plague* discovers, "there is nothing less spectacular than a pestilence". Although monotony is more often regarded as the domain of utopia, in fact, utopian fiction is, at its heart, playful. One might think of the satirical fun of More's text and of the paradoxical word he coins. Ernest Callenbach, author of *Ecotopia* (2004), writes that "constructing an imaginary society is a little like designing a game: the society evolves rules, principles, and conventions, and the author is not entirely in charge". This essay is an effort to counteract the notion that utopia would necessarily be boring by drawing on a range of literary texts and examining them in relation to their fundamentally playful nature.

Key words: Boring Dystopia, utopia and play, COVID-19, utopian literature, Ecotopia

In 2015, the cultural theorist Mark Fisher started a Facebook group titled "Boring Dystopia". As a repository for images of a tedious and mundane dystopian Britain, the group challenged the myth that dystopia is exciting. As we have seen over the last couple of years, in everything from socially distanced queues at the supermarket or being stuck at home in various states of lockdown, to endless Zoom meetings where the only source of entertainment has come when someone's cat has idled in front of the screen, the COVID-19 pandemic

has, for many of those privileged enough to still have jobs, provided a dystopia of boredom and yet more bureaucracy. As Albert Camus' narrator in *The Plague* discovers, "there is nothing less spectacular than a pestilence" (2013: 138). This is not the dystopia of *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2011) or *The Walking Dead* (Darabont, 2010–2022); think more of Franz Kafka's *The Trial* (2009) or Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985).

It is interesting, then, that monotony should more often be regarded as the domain of utopia: a genre which is at its heart notably playful. One might cite the satirical fun of More's text and the paradoxical word he coins, which has come to define the genre. More's style was also influential in the utopian fiction that was to follow. In fact, playfulness appears embedded in the genre by necessity as much as design. Reflecting on the modest success of his utopian novel *Ecotopia*, Ernest Callenbach (2014: 170) writes that "constructing an imaginary society is a little like designing a game: the society evolves rules, principles, and conventions, and the author is not entirely in charge".

A common source of anti-utopianism springs from the sentiment that any truly utopian society would, by nature, be boring. It would have no need for art or competition and thus both beauty and personal growth would be sacrificed. In Neal Shusterman's 2016 novel *Scythe*, set in a world in which death itself has been conquered, there is certainly some debate about the merits of such a utopia. At one point, early in the novel, the narrator suggests a direct accordance between equality and tedium:

> The growth of civilization was complete. Everyone knew it. When it came to the human race, there was no more left to learn. Nothing about our own existence to decipher. Which meant that no one person was more important than any other. In fact, in the grand scheme of things, everyone was equally useless (Shusterman, 2018: 19).

A little later, the two central characters, Citra and Rowan, who are scythes in training, are taken to an art gallery by their mentor, Scythe Faraday. There the "post mortality galleries" are referred to as "uninspired" compared to the historical galleries which offered "the art of the dying", detailing "longing and elation, anguish and joy" (Shusterman, 2018: 48).

As dystopias do not have to be exciting, utopia does not have to be boring. To return to *Ecotopia*, a more perfect society does not foreclose on change. When the narrator challenges an Ecotopian on their "stable-state theory" and why it does not get "awfully static", they reply: "Well, don't forget that we don't have to be stable. The system provides the stability, and we can be erratic within it"

(Callenbach, 2014: 31). Indeed, if utopian texts are anything, they are efforts to *disrupt* the status-quo; they are the opposite of stasis. One of the most painfully predictable results of the current pandemic is that so little is likely to change. Already, all the talk is about attempts to return to "business-as-usual", as if such business was somehow desirable or sustainable.

In a piece on Ernest Cline's novel *Ready Player One* (2011), Justin Nordstrom (2016: 241) asserts that,

> while traditional utopias are not completely devoid of games, readers are left with the impression that utopians are nose-to-the-grindstone types. Perfecting society, utopian authors are want [*sic*] to point out, is not a frivolous task. Games, when they are mentioned at all, generally serve to highlight important roles and responsibilities—reinforcing utopians' social hierarchies or moral sensibilities.

"Utopians might play games, but they don't just play for fun", concludes Nordstrom (2016: 241). There are certainly examples of this in other literary utopias. One might, for example, think of the way in which play is used in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*. When protagonist Jonas asks his mother if she still played at all after the age of Twelve (an important age in his society because it is designated as the point at which children are essentially assigned a future career for which they must then prepare), she replies merely, "occasionally, ... but it didn't seem as important to me" (Lowry, 2017: 22). Play is considered something one naturally leaves behind as they mature.

Or, we might think about the way in which play is co-opted by the forces of consumerism in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, where "Centrifugal Bumblepuppy", essentially a game of catch that uses elaborate machinery, has become popular. The Director of Hatcheries sees this as the logical step in a consumer-led society, as he demonstrates stating that it was

> strange to think that even in Our Ford's day most games were played without more apparatus than a ball or two and a few sticks and perhaps a bit of netting. Imagine the folly of allowing people to play elaborate games which do nothing whatever to increase consumption (Huxley, 2004: 25).

Complexity has been developed for the sake of it with "new games [not being approved] unless [they] can be shown [to require] at least as much apparatus as the most complicated of existing games" (Huxley, 2004: 25–6). Thus, in

Brave New World, gaming (the state of free-play) has been co-opted by the state and commodified as part of the central drive to produce a society in which all desires are met.

You may wisely note that these literary texts are more readily considered dystopias than utopias proper, but they are, at least, representations of *failed* utopias. Nevertheless, play has tended to serve other purposes in the utopian imagination. Fundamentally, utopian visions upset hierarchies of power and knowledge, often through something as seemingly trivial as gaming. One historical example that might serve to illustrate this is the Roman festival of Saturnalia, which suspended many rules for the day and saw the up-ending of societal structures. Masters waited tables for their slaves or dined with them; slaves were allowed to disrespect masters without fear of reprisal; and some women were also allowed to attend banquets. It is the breaking of societal rules in the name of "play" that lends Saturnalia its fleeting utopian dimensions. Indeed, Gregory Claeys (2011: 204) cites Saturnalia as an example of how "it is possible to create utopic spaces or periods of time without reimagining an entire society recast as utopia". Wright *et al*. highlight such play as having a use value beyond what we often see in utopian texts; that is, that play has a social function to both train future utopians and reinforce cultural norms:

> In earlier historical periods, annual and monthly carnivals and associated festivities would provide social outlets for group play, with staged reenactments of sacred tales and sudden displays of body humor, and excess. Play was not simply a preparation for either serious adulthood or for war but also worked to reinforce group norms, by giving permission for periodic excessive behavior within clearly defined social boundaries (Wright *et al*., 2010: 2).

In this vision of utopia, then, play is vital, and in many early conceptions this was certainly the case. Take the Land of Cockaigne, for example, an early medieval vision of abundance where visitors or inhabitants lived in a permanent state of holiday and relaxation. This was a place of utter indulgence where the primary problem of the day— that most of the populace toiled for long hours on the land and still struggled to have enough to eat—was resolved. Today, as people feel increasingly strung out, work longer hours, take work home, and struggle to make ends meet, it would be unsurprising to see a revival in utopian fiction to match, in particular, of fictions which imagine worlds where there is a significantly better work-life balance.

Utopianists are right to be wary of such escapism. After all, there are serious problems to address. But gaming does not have to be all about the relinquishing of social duties. You may notice that there is a tension here. On the one hand, I argue against a view of utopians as figures who only play when they want to teach or learn; and on the other, I suggest that play can serve an important social purpose. I propose that, if we use play imaginatively, it can be powerfully utopian, not in some overt didactic sense but rather in a more liberating way.

Consider *Ready Player One*, a novel which I loved but which also frustrates me greatly. In *Ready Player One*, a future dystopia is described. The world is in the grips of an energy crisis, the impacts of global warming are more overt, and there is widespread poverty in North America, and social degradation. Most of the inhabitants spend their time playing in a virtual world called "The OASIS", where they take on new personas and can shape whole planets to their liking. Fundamentally, we can see that Cline, a self-confessed video game nerd, tells a story about how gaming is ruining the world (people are too busy escaping reality to actively engage in problem-solving). It is an odd conclusion to draw for someone so evidently keen on play. As a result, this message is diluted, becomes almost throwaway, because most of the fun of *Ready Player One* comes from the gaming world itself and from the format of the text. Megan Condis (2016: 2) calls *Ready Player One* a "ludic" novel, "not only about game playing but [requiring] game-playing and puzzle solving" on behalf of the reader. For Condis, the central quest narrative "serve[s] as a classroom wherein student-readers learn about the origins of gamer-dom, test their knowledge, and prove their geeky credentials by demonstrating their mastery of the texts Cline identifies as foundational to gamer culture" (Condis, 2016: 3). Broadening this out, Michael Holquist (1968: 119–20) recognises this as a trait of all literary utopias, writing "not only does the author of utopias play the game, so does the *reader* of utopias. And the best examples of the genre are arranged in such a way that they may be 'played' again as often as they are read". In short, whatever the text actually *says* about gaming should always be read against the context that utopia is itself a game and utopian texts, therefore, the celebration of gaming as a creative outlet that generates ideas about better worlds.

I conclude by considering Italo Calvino's novella, *Invisible Cities*, and its relationship to the game of chess. In his piece on utopia and play, Holquist suggests that the game of chess is an effort to bring structure, order, even perfection to a chaotic and irrational world, and this analogy is also played out in *Invisible Cities*. In the novella, Calvino imagines meetings between the Venetian traveller Marco Polo and Kublai Khan, emperor of the Mongol empire. Polo seeks to describe cities, both imagined and created, he has visited in Kublai's empire, which he claims often to be on the fringes of the empire, in places Kublai would himself

never visit. As he does so, Polo paints a wonderful and often utopian picture of a fragmented, diverse, and rich collection of different customs, traditions, and architectural styles, which come to symbolise the cauldron of life itself. Kublai, as the representative of empire, seeks to make this cacophony of voices one. He is desperate to see something coherent and unified, something he might understand and hence control:

> Contemplating these essential landscapes, Kublai reflected on the invisible order that sustains cities, on the rules that decreed how they rise, take shape and prosper, adapting themselves to the seasons, and then how they sadden and fall in ruins. At times he thought he was on the verge of discovering a coherent, harmonious system underlying the infinite deformities and discords, but no model could stand up to the comparison with the game chess. Perhaps, instead of racking one's brain to suggest with the ivory pieces' scant help visions which were anyway destined to oblivion, it would suffice to play a game according to the rules, and to consider each successive state of the board as one of the countless forms that the system of forms assembles and destroys (Calvino, 1997: 110).

In this passage, Kublai comes to the realisation that building communities plays out like a game in which the board continually evolves. It is not the case that societies rise and fall predictably into ruin, but rather that creating social realms is about assembling and destroying forms to further the state of the game. After all, practice makes perfect.

To some extent, what unites the utopias discussed here, from More's *Utopia* and Callenbach's *Ecotopia*, to Cline's *Ready Player One*, is as much their valorisation of play through form as it is any sense that play must be central to the narrative. *Invisible Cities* is no exception. As a member of the French School of writing known as Oulipo, Calvino used mathematics to impose a pseudo-rational order on our encounters with his imagined cities. As much as this imposed constraints, it was essentially a creative process, because it forced the writer to think imaginatively about narrative constructions and the architecture of the literary work itself.

Twenty-first century culture has fetishized the exciting dystopia, often at the expense of what has been perceived to be its dull cousin, the utopia. But, as Holquist (1968: 111) notes, a "generally playful quality [can] be found in even the grimmest utopian literature". As the pandemic has revealed how tedious a

dystopia really is, perhaps we can tell the naysayers that, just as dystopia can actually be boring, utopia is, by its very nature, a dynamic, exciting, uplifting, funny, liberating, and most of all, *fun* game.

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5.4. The Distances Between Utopia and Dystopia in Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas"

Evanir Pavloski

Abstract

Harold Bloom (1987) asserted that Ursula K. Le Guin was a mythological fantasist and that her narrative art worked to protect us from myth and its nightmarish consequences. Such characteristics become evident when we consider how close to the real world are the fictional universes she created, although apparently so distant in space and time. In Le Guin's sometimes inverted mirror of human societies we witness the depiction of our hopes for the future, but also of our fears for what is yet to come. Utopian idylls and dystopian horrors share the pages of a mimetic realm which invites the readers to a quest from which they may return with a renewed view of reality. Published in 1974, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" depicts a prosperous city whose wealth and joy depend on the suffering of a child locked in an underground room. The narrator invites us for a tour around Omelas and asks for help to design its specific aspects. The aim of this essay is to discuss the itinerary proposed by the author in her short story and investigate how the path inside and out of Omelas helps us clarify the sometimes unclear limits of utopia, dystopia, and the myth of their rigid opposition.

Key words: utopia, dystopia, Le Guin, Omelas, opposition

In the introduction to the issue of Modern Critical Interpretations dedicated to *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Harold Bloom (1987: 1) asserts that Ursula K. Le Guin "is essentially a mythological fantasist". Either having chosen science fiction as a genre or being chosen by it as a writer, Le Guin created universes through what is called by some sci-fi critics as the vehicle for the articulation of a "new

mythology". Nevertheless, it seems that some of her narratives defy the very idea of a myth as a complete explanation to a social phenomenon.

Le Guin has always been an explorer of the limitations of possible worlds and an investigator of the potentialities of apparently impossible realms. In the first movement, we find the influence of the cultural diversity provided by her parents' friends and colleagues who often visited the family houses and turned the domestic environment into a utopian simulacrum of what the world could be without the social restrictions commonly imposed on the idea of difference. In the second movement, her childhood readings and writings inspired Le Guin's creative imagination to fill the gaps, to challenge the limits, and to expose the inconsistencies of a reality overshadowed by an excess of a certain type of rationality and realism. In a sense, she corrected the true imperfections and denounced the false qualities of what we call the real world, through the creation and analysis of other worlds. As Elizabeth Cummins highlights, "both Le Guin's biography and her publications reveal that she has always been at home in more than one world" (1993: 4).

If we understand that literature is, among other things, an aesthetic way to stray from reality and observe it from a different perspective, Le Guin's works transport her readers to a place far away from their houses, so that they might pay more attention to their own environment when they return. And once they're home, they may choose if they want to rearrange the furniture or to lie back on the armchair and observe the order of things with a renewed look. After all, the distance between the aesthetic and the ethic spheres is sometimes as vast as the one between conscience and action. As Cummins points out, "the worlds of science fiction and fantasy literature, then, offer readers a chance to stretch their minds by experiencing an alternate world and then a chance to return to consensus reality with a changed perspective" (1993: 7).

This inverted mirroring effect is similar to the journeys proposed by utopian and dystopian authors who seem to believe that an apparent evasion from reality through literature may trigger reflection and awareness of reality itself. Considering this premise, these writers create idealistic and nightmarish fictional worlds to explore the idealistic and nightmarish possibilities of the real world. As Vita Fortunati observes,

> Utopianism is, thus, a tension, the aspiration to go beyond
> the fixity of the present, with a vision, which is radically al-
> ternative to the reality in which the writer lives and operates
> … There is always a close link between the invented utopia
> and the social environment in which its author is situated,
> the alternatives offered, the representation of a radically

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different society, invariably springing from a lucid critique
of what the present is for the writer. (Fortunati, 2000: 635)

That does not mean that the result of the rearrangement of the signs around us will always be a utopia or a dystopia. It also does not mean that a literary recreation of these signs cannot be both. Taking this approach to Le Guin's works, we see more clearly how her texts discuss the rhetorical ambiguity that pervades utopianism, that is, a social criticism combined with a tendency to exacerbate its own social idealism. Sometimes nightmares are created through the extrapolation of dreams. Even though Le Guin felt at home in different worlds, the places she described are not always comfortable for readers.

We could question who sets the limits between a utopian nightmare and a dystopian dream. Le Guin's readers are trusted with some autonomy not only to tell light from darkness in a narrative, but also to help depict its reflexes and shadows:

> Le Guin wishes to stimulate and encourage her readers to think in ethical terms even if, in the end, it should transpire that they make substantive ethical judgments that are different from her own ... she encourages her readers to think for themselves, and to engage with the complexities of the ethical dilemma in question, whatever it might be... Le Guin enjoins her readers to rise above each of these limited and partial perspectives of what is good and evil or right and wrong, and to see the strengths and weaknesses associated with "both sides" of the story (Burns, 2004: 140–3).

In the short story, "The Ones Who Walk away from Omelas", first published in 1973, we find a confluence of the author's characteristics presented so far (Le Guin, 2004: 275–84). Inspired by the text "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life", a lecture delivered at Yale by William James in 1891, the narrative discusses the ethical principles on which a utopian society is based and how these same principles might undermine its allegedly ideal structure.

From the very beginning of the narrative, the reader is invited to explore the fictional space of Omelas: its streets, squares, and a very specific basement. As we approach the city, we are welcomed by a narrator who describes a joyful summer festival. Its description is as radiant as the day itself and the reader takes his/her first steps in Omelas at the sound of bells, flutes, and songs that drive the processions to green valleys. An idyllic place is revealed to the reader who might think that 'nowhere' has finally found its place. However, one's attention is called

to the fact that the narrator cannot find the words to depict all the happiness in Omelas: "Joyous! How is one to tell about joy? How describe the citizens of Omelas?" (277).

From this point, the narrator starts a constant dialogue with the reader that progressively demands more and more involvement. This narrative strategy asserts the text's references to itself, and the reader is reminded that they are in the flexible limits of fiction and that their actions and reactions help determine how flexible they are. The reader is guided to build what they are supposed to build with their own hands. The narrator's hesitations, doubts, and lack of knowledge make some of the descriptions vague and the utopian city stands without precise location or form. Allowing visitors to follow his own ideal of verisimilitude, the narrator asks them to design their own utopias. This process creates a sense of belonging that turns the reader into a citizen of Omelas and a person responsible for what the city is (and what it is not), since they contributed to its formation and shared their own dreams with its population:

> O miracle! but I wish I could describe it better. I wish I could convince you. Omelas sounds in my words like a city in a fairy tale, long ago and far away, once upon a time. Perhaps it would be best if you imagined it as your own fancy bids, assuming it will rise to the occasion, for certainly I cannot suit you all. For instance, how about technology? ... But even granted trains, I fear that Omelas so far strikes some of you as goody-goody. Smiles, bells, parades, horses, bleh. If so, please add an orgy. If an orgy would help, don't hesitate (278–9).

However, there are signs of Omelas' structural and cultural organization along the way, and the narrator is very clear when he claims that they must be taken into consideration. "Yet I repeat that these were not simple folk, not dulcet shepherds, noble savages, bland Utopians. They were not less complex than us" (277–8). Or when the narrator, who sometimes sounds as foreign as the reader, categorically states: "One thing I know there is none of in Omelas is guilt" (279). This characterization of the citizens prevents the reader from prejudging their behaviour or from finding a simple explanation for what is about to be told. The interaction between the narrator and the reader exposes the blanks and the points of determination that form not only Le Guin's text but any text. The visitors to Omelas may roam freely up to a certain point, but there are limits to their freedom. In the collaborative map drawn of Omelas, the orientation is exposed and not concealed behind the lines as in the depiction of the spaces of other ideal societies.

Apart from the story's referential and theoretical aspects mentioned above, the reader's engagement in the depiction of Omelas also addresses an issue commonly raised in utopian studies: a good or even an allegedly perfect society is a creation of a single individual who observes their reality and understands that their solutions or proposals are suitable for a specific social group or for different ones. That is why the narrator cannot define the word joy. Not only because, according to the text, it is old-fashioned, but also because the concept of happiness is rarely consensual. When the text permits different readers to design Omelas in different ways, it also allows different views of perfection to be integrated into the city. However, this authority that we gradually exercise over the territory of Omelas turns into an internal revolt when, still in the name of verisimilitude, the narrator interrogates us: "Do you believe? Do you accept the festival, the city, the joy? No? Then let me describe one more thing" (280).

As the narrator points out at the beginning of the text, the exaltation of happiness is considered frivolous without the counterpart of pain, whether in literature or in life. Similarly, a utopia always charges its members a price for inhabiting the ideal society, which can range from collective homogenization to the loss of individual freedom, an aspect that again blurs the distinction between utopias and dystopias.

In Omelas, all the luminous happiness that dominates the city's surface is sustained by the suffering of an unfortunate child locked up in a dark underground. Frightened, hungry, and dirty, she or he is kept in a state of solitary misery so that prosperity is collectively shared right above the room. The child is visited by young people so that they understand how valuable is the life they enjoy, because there is a helpless human being who makes this way of life possible. It is because of the child's crying that the flautist's joyful music can be heard.

All city inhabitants are aware of the child's existence and understand their commitment to the one who suffers on their behalf. Despite the initial perplexity, the citizens are convinced that the child is better off where he or she is and that the order of things is the most rational that a utopia can allow. As we have seen, there is no guilt in Omelas.

This is an essential phase of the reader's journey through Omelas' illuminated and gloomy landscapes, from which they face the very idea of rationalism that underlies not only Le Guin's fictional society, but utopian and dystopian creations in general. What would be the costs for a society to come closer to perfection? What price would each of us be willing to pay for the world's injustices to be solved? What price would we be willing to let others pay in our names? Would the cost be less, if we did not have to see them? What if we could pretend that they do not exist, or that their existence is part of the rational and natural order of things, while observing the world comfortably from an armchair?

After such a long dialogue, these questions are not asked by the narrator, but are probably raised by readers who have seen their journey through the happy festival leads them to a gloomy subterranean zone (certainly the city's, possibly their own). Omelas was also built by the ones who attached their own ideals on it and who now have to face the terrible downside of their own idealizations. However, like many outraged reader-travelers, some citizens of Omelas wait for nightfall and simply walk away. In silence, these people leave the city and never return. But, as the narrator states: "The place they go towards is a place even less imaginable to most of us than the city of happiness. I cannot describe it at all. It is possible that it does not exist. But they seem to know where they are going, the ones who walk away from Omelas" (284).

We wonder what this place to where these dissidents emigrate would be like. Would it not be the same one the reader returns to when they also walk away from Omelas? It is a less imaginable place because it is still trying to find its own social model, even though the costs borne by many are even greater than those borne by the citizens of Le Guin's fictional city. In this reality, instead of one child, millions of children starve every day, só a few fortunate adults can live their personal utopias. According to this view, travel to Omelas represents a journey to a place caught between a dream and a nightmare, between the light of its surface and the darkness of its underground. But, when the reader puts down the book, the world they see is probably even worse than the one they have just visited. After we have taken a look at reality, is Omelas still a dystopia?

Once the voice of the narrator becomes silent, we have only the imperfection of our convictions of perfection to guide us towards a possible answer. And, once again, we realize how flexible the line between utopias and dystopias proves to be; and how short the distance that brings us closer to and farther from Omelas.

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5.5. When Lilliput Becomes All Too Real: Utopian and Dystopian Elements in László Rab's *Among the Hungarians: Gulliver's Umpteenth Voyage*

Bence Gábor Kvéder

Abstract

The main theoretical basis of my paper is the critical assumption, supported by relevant literary examples, that utopias and dystopias have a tendency to make use of the means and methods of satire, with their commentary aimed at certain social and political oddities and shortcomings of the countries or communities they intend to depict and, ultimately, ridicule. Referring to Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* as a classic manifestation of this trend, in this essay, I analyse a Hungarian rewriting of the 1726 original, namely, László Rab's *Among the Hungarians: Gulliver's Umpteenth Voyage* (2005) as a book applying the speculative potential of the source to the context and climate of early twenty-first-century Hungary. I attempt to highlight and examine the segments of this short novel, which, besides providing political and social allusions permeated by witty irony, presents characters, groups of people, as well as entire ideologies in a way that implies an exaggerated, yet highly expressive version of Hungary. A utopia for some and a dystopia for others, *Among the Hungarians* makes for an all-too-real kind of Lilliput.

Key words: utopia, distopia, Hungarian literature, Gulliveriad

It is no secret that literary writings with utopian or dystopian content tend to take the form of social and political satire. In her essay, "The Concept of Utopia", Fátima Vieira notes that, when satire is concerned, "conspicuous criticism of the

real society's flaws is part of the nature of the genre" (Vieira, 2010: 8). Utilizing their own methods, voices, and style, representatives of utopian and dystopian fiction essentially aim to do the same: their goal is to shed light on certain shortcomings and faults in the texture of a given nation's or community's social, cultural, and even economic landscape. Characters travelling — or rather sent by their authors — to faraway, unknown, and mesmerizing yet often potentially dangerous places, representing an imaginary or would-be state based on actual countries, are destined to face and endure both physical and mental hardships caused by issues, disagreements, conflicts, rivalries, and contradictions within the political climate of the societies they visit.

Erika Gottlieb remarks of the dystopian subgenre that, "the tragic elements of the protagonist's fate notwithstanding, the overall strategies of the dystopian novel are those of political satire" (Gottlieb, 2001: 13). Thus, even though on the surface level the narrative of a dystopia draws attention to the adventures and mishaps experienced by the central character(s), some deeper meanings and connotations alluding to some, more often than not, negative social commentary should not be ignored either. Such an approach to this branch of speculative fiction might, in fact, be extended to utopian literature as well.

Besides Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), there is a widely known English-language prose work that may be a classic manifestation of how political, social, and literary satire works in texts related to utopian thinking. This work is efficiently identified and described by Gregory Claeys, who refers to Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) as "the most important early satire of utopianism" (Claeys, 2017: 291). The journeys of the English surgeon and captain to multiple fictitious lands, or fictionalized versions of real-life locations provided plenty of source material for re-writings and adaptations of the Irish author's classic — collectively referred to as "Gulliveriads". These works, especially those based on and taking inspiration from Books I and IV, justify Nicole Pohl's view that *Gulliver's Travels* is permeated by some "unforgiving but witty political satire" (Pohl, 2010: 67). This is because they might include features that, besides making fun of characteristics frequently attributed to various countries and groups of people, make utopian and/or dystopian readings possible. In my paper, I analyse the ways in which a Hungarian Gulliveriad, László Rab's *A magyarok között: Gulliver sokadik utazása* (*Among the Hungarians: Gulliver's Umpteenth Voyage*) (2005) fills its ironic, exaggerated, yet highly expressive plot with something considerably more ominous and sinister than witty Swiftian humour. Such elements constantly lurk beneath (or even support) the social and political system — as well as its inhabitants' possible outlooks regarding both the present and the future — in this piece of all-too-realistic fiction.

Rab's short novel, *Among the Hungarians*, is part of the Hungarian tradition of re-writing, adapting, and imitating eighteenth-century English-language literary sources — of which Robinsonades might be the other main set of examples. It is not the first of its kind, since there are considerably earlier — and internationally better-known — representatives of the same trend: for instance, Frigyes Karinthy's *Voyage to Faremido* (1916) and *Voyage to Capillaria* (1921) are mentioned by both Claeys (2017: 336) and Gottlieb (2001: 289, n. 15), whereas Sándor Szathmári's *Kazohinia* (1935) is briefly referred to by Gottlieb (2001: 289, n. 15). However, while these works depict twentieth-century fantasies, Rab's story was written in and leads the reader to an early twenty-first-century context. Furthermore, unlike its predecessors, it uses the somewhat exaggerated version of an actual, real-life country as the setting for its social and political satire. Consequently, the Lilliput portrayed in *Among the Hungarians* manages to become all too real, as the book guides (all of) its traveller(s) to a central European country called Hungary.

On the surface, *Among the Hungarians* seems to follow the Swiftian recipe: a clueless and naive but good-hearted, optimistic, and ambitious Englishman, Jonathan Gulliver, visits Hungary in order to install his new invention, a computer programme meant to count votes during the upcoming parliamentary elections. While staying in our country, this lone traveller has to see and, even worse, experience all kinds of oddities and shenanigans — which more often than not promptly culminate in the most conspicuous manifestations of the Hungarian character. Like the protagonist of the source, this modern Gulliver is also "stranded" in a land unknown to him. Not only is he an outsider, but he is inherently alien — and further alienated: as he is physically hurt and taken advantage of. Meanwhile his attempts at acclimatization and adaptation prove to be futile. Another parallel between Rab's book and the original work might be drawn if the political milieu encountered by the central character is considered: both countries have two opposing parties, constantly at odds with each other for ridiculous reasons. Whereas Swift's story provides the Tramecksan and Slamecksan (i.e. high heels and low heels) to make fun of the then emerging parties of the British Parliament (i.e. the Tories and Whigs) (Swift, 2005: 42 and 293), in Rab's book, there is an ongoing conflict between the two political sides identified as "Hümmögők" and "Kaffogók" (40). Presumably based on two real-life parties, i.e. the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz), these two groups are named after the characteristic sounds they regularly produce as they speak. That is why Gabriella Hartvig (2009: 176) refers to them in English as the "humming" and "yapping" parties. Their satirical

role already implies the visiting Englishman's situation as a clumsy, hopeless giant tied down by the improbable nature of the system whose network he has been tangled up in.

Besides the striking similarities connecting *Among the Hungarians* to *Gulliver's Travels*, there are certain differences between the two that might intensify the speculative effect of the former. On the one hand, the reason — or rather purpose — behind Jonathan's travels is a mission leading him specifically to Hungary. Thus, while he feels lost and out of place in this foreign land just as much as his "ancestor" did in Lilliput, the location of his arrival is the intended destination all along. His task is to introduce a vote-counting programme called "Superparliament 2010" to the world of Hungarian politics (84). Although the calculating mechanisms behind this sci-fi software are never explained or elaborated on in detail, the presence of this factor highlights one of the most distinct characteristics of a modernized Gulliveriad. On the other hand, since the main setting of the plot is an actual country, references to social issues are considerably more overt, making the satirical tone of the book noticeably less subtle and more direct than that of *Gulliver's Travels* (Kvéder, 2022). However, besides the humour, irony, and wit included in the details criticizing, among other elements, Hungarian politicians, our health-care system, as well as the general — and rather stereotypical — mood of the members of this nation, Jonathan's enterprise and (mis)adventures might offer the possibility of a utopian and/or dystopian interpretation, too.

If Rab's book is looked at as a piece of speculative fiction, it might be worth asking whether the early twenty-first-century Hungary presented here is closer to a utopia or to a dystopia. The most expressive parts through which this question might be approached and examined in an efficient way are the characters encountered by, accompanying, and, most importantly, "educating" and "enlightening" the curious Englishman. All of the major Hungarian figures here are bold caricatures taken from reality: their outlooks on the world and their surroundings, as well as their attitudes towards their potential future are entirely determined by their rather one-dimensional moral codes, whose practical manifestations and outcomes visibly startle yet, at the same time, intrigue Jonathan. The decisions and life choices made by these people might be put on a scale, at either end of which the perspective of the most radical individuals can be found: at one end, the view of a person looking at Hungary as a utopia for his kind; at the other, the view of a group of people collectively considering it an oppressive dystopia.

At one extreme of the scale — Hungarian citizens' well-defined, crystallized opinions about the social and political system of their homeland — would be Károly (Charles), the sibling of Jonathan's love interest, Mary Gecse. Often

referred to as "Maribrader" (literally "Mary's brother"), this village swindler intentionally misinforms and exploits foreigners — including Jonathan himself — without hesitation, takes pride in bribing official personnel, and blatantly blackmails the authorities as well. His creed is shared with the protagonist near the end of their brief encounter, when Charles plainly declares: "[Money] always slips from my hand to someone else's pocket — quietly, so it does not rattle. Heard only by you and me. And if we keep slipping like this, cog wheels stay oiled all the time" (103).[1] Based on the activities — technically, crimes — practised and committed by him, it can be seen that Charles's personal happiness and wellbeing are achieved through a depraved, tainted kind of social knowledge, which inevitably leads him to creating, maintaining, and living in a corrupted kind of welfare state: a utopia for utilitarian people like him.

At the other end of the scale — "measuring" the Hungarians visited by Jonathan from the point of view of utopias and dystopias — stands an entire "empire". This self-proclaimed inner country is called Sámánia Nagyhencegség ("the Great Boasting/Bragging Dukedom of Shamania"). The Hungarian name is a pun played on the words *hercegség* "dukedom" and *henceg* "to boast/brag about something". The secret, underground society, stumbled upon by Jonathan after signing up for a course about the history of Hungary for foreigners, is entirely made up of self-appointed, makeshift rebels. The vast majority happen to be elderly men, who all detest the current political system of the country. They religiously believe that the state of present-day, "normal" (i.e. post-Trianon) Hungary is the common enemy of its own people, since it ignores and even conceals the greatness of its ancestors, namely the Sumerians and the Huns (109). Their uncritical acceptance of such historical relations, as well as their desperate dreams and illusions regarding a glorious (inter)national past might be read as this cult's unique way to cope with their society as they see it: a dystopia for the dissatisfied.

What connects the two above-mentioned, extreme responses to the social and political climate of early twenty-first-century Hungary is the power structure behind them. Despite one cheerfully exploiting it and the other deliriously trying to fight against it, the system in which both Charles and the members of Shamania have to (co-)exist remains the same state — which, thus, gains a double function as both a utopia and a dystopia. However, the factor that makes this particular literary depiction of Hungary exceptional, even among representatives of the Hungarian reception of Swiftian utopianism and dystopianism, is summarized by Hartvig: she notes that *Among the Hungarians* "expresses the author's disillusionments with the post-transition period in Hungary, while it also ironizes the arbitrariness of the Swiftian impact" (Hartvig, 2009: 176). Therefore, not only is Rab's take on the original story a remarkably witty reflection on the Irish clergyman's most popular prose work, but it also focuses on an era that has

scarcely — if ever — been discussed in the form of a Gulliveriad before. Instead of the better-known Soviet totalitarianism, which arguably provides more subject matter for a piece of utopian and/or dystopian fiction, in *Among the Hungarians*, the most conspicuous shortcomings of contemporary democracy are discussed as the main sources of oppression and exploitation. In accordance with this general authorial attitude, at the end of the plot, the Superparliament 2010 software is never installed: attempts at introducing it to Hungarian politics are prevented by the pitfalls and intricacies of Hungarian politics itself — the kind of system that is a utopia for some and a dystopia for others.

Besides its content, even the front cover of *Among the Hungarians* appears to emphasize the double nature of the book: in the middle, the sketchy, distorted, shouting/yawning face with its tongue out (and the Hungarian tricolour on it); under it, the unstable, broken wheels. The row of almost identical figures standing in the background might evoke ambivalent feelings in the reader. This crude image — or rather collage of images — might be looked at as a truly disturbing portrayal of a gloomy dystopian world, but it might also be interpreted as a quick, tongue-in-cheek, yet thorough look at early twenty-first-century Hungary through the lenses of a disillusioned but good-humoured satirist, whose style combines elements of utopian, anti-utopian, and dystopian literature.

In conclusion, with the upcoming parliamentary elections in Hungary taking place on 3rd April 2022, possible literary manifestations of various prospects and predictions regarding the future of Hungary might gain some impetus, attention, and popularity. The relevance of Hungarian Gulliveriads, including László Rab's *Among the Hungarians* might be (re-)discovered as a result of general interest being drawn to speculations in literary forms, while the newfound enthusiasm for, and potential of, this subgenre might be utilized to create a new wave in the tradition of Jonathan Swift's witty, satirical utopianism and dystopianism, adapted to the bittersweet reality of present-day Hungary.

Notes

1. "[A pénz] [a]z én kezemből mindig valaki másnak a zsebébe csúszik. Halkan, úgy, hogy ne csörögjön. Hogy csak mi ketten halljuk. És ha így csúsztatgatunk, olajozottan működnek a fogaskerekek" (my translation).

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5.6. Memory Challenges in James Dashner's and Suzanne Collins's Dystopias

Adela Catană and Mary-Jane Rădulescu

Abstract

The human brain can register, store, and retrieve almost all the sensory processes of knowledge we experience during our lifetime, enabling us to learn, solve problems, be creative, interact with others and master our identity. This vital faculty is called memory, and we attribute to it whatever we are and do. Good memory performance is not without its challenges. Exposure to traumatic events, alcohol, various drugs and hallucinogenic substances, as well as certain medical interventions can disrupt the natural functioning of memory, leading to the loss of recollections, reality control, and self-awareness. We aim, therefore, to briefly explore these aspects from a theoretical point of view and to support our statements using as case studies the teenage boys and girls depicted by Suzanne Collins and James Dashner in their dystopian series *The Hunger Games* and *The Maze Runner*. The protagonists of these books have their memory altered either by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and tracker jacker venom, or completely erased through an operation. Consequently, they face numerous difficulties in coping with daily issues, recovering their memories, and reconstructing their self-identity. Their psychological struggles, although revealed in a fictional realm, are not far from those experienced by real people when positioned in exceptional situations.

Key words: dystopia, memory, post-traumatic stress disorder, recovery, trauma

Memory is generally defined as the "cognitive process of memorizing (encoding), storing (retaining) and updating our information and experiences in a structured, constructive, even creative way" (Zlate, 2015: 52). Without memory, the consciousness of an individual would be reduced to "a string of bead-like sensations and images, all separate" (James, 2007: 520). They would live in an instant present, having no knowledge of the past or anticipation of the future.

Living outside "the retrospective and the prospective sense of time", an individual would behave spontaneously, deprived of stability and finality (James, 2007: 606). They would not be troubled by any problems, but would not be able to create anything else either.

People retain information in various ways depending on their psychological structure and the impact of their experiences. There are people who can remember certain things fast and easily, whereas others do it more slowly, with greater difficulty. Likewise, some information may be retained for longer periods, while other data may quickly disintegrate and even disappear completely. Forgetfulness is usually perceived as a negative thing, as it involves the loss of information. In fact, this is a natural phenomenon which makes room for new information. According to Robert N. Kraft, "forgetting allows us to manage our complicated lives—encouraging us to remember what's important, inspiring us to experience the present more fully, and restoring us after painful events in our lives" (2019). However, when people undergo an experience that causes high levels of emotional arousal and the activation of stress hormones, their memory and implicitly, their identity can be dramatically impaired. In Allan Young's view, "the traumatic memory becomes a fixed idea rather than an ordinary memory because the individual is unable to assimilate its meaning" (1995: 35). Nowadays, "traumatic memory" is usually referred to as PTSD. People suffering from PTSD are caught in a mental web, which keeps them prisoners of depression and anxiety. They feel betrayed and alone and consider oblivion the ultimate means of survival. They estrange themselves from family and society for fear that their memories may emerge at any time and expose their inner torments. This incapacity and the refusal to relate to others harden their burden. At the same time, amnesia, "the pathological loss of the ability to acquire or recall information", may have a more traumatic effect than the constant repetition of traumatic memories (Lafleche & Verfaellie, 2004: 130).

The characters in the dystopian series written by Suzanne Collins and James Dashner suffer from PTSD or have their memories altered by various substances and scientific procedures. We explore their condition in order to offer a better understanding of the way in which memory can be disturbed and perhaps restored.

Suzanne Collins's dystopian series consisting of *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010) is seen by Stephen King as "a violent, jarring, speed-rap of a novel that generates nearly constant suspense" (2008). Placed in a futuristic North America, known as the Republic of Panem, the books reveal a nightmarish society ruled by a totalitarian regime, which submits its citizens to various forms of physical and psychological torture.

Memory plays a major role in these texts. The protagonist, Katniss Everdeen reveals in great detail all the events she witnesses, the people she meets, and

the emotions she experiences. She employs in her narration the first person singular and the present tense, giving the impression that the events take place on the spot. However, time can be open to interpretation, as Katniss might be reliving everything that happened to her.

During the annual Hunger Games (a reality show where kids are forced to hunt and kill each other) and a subsequent civil war, the girl is exposed to numerous terrifying and dangerous events, which menaced her life, bodily integrity, and her loved ones. She experiences intense, disturbing thoughts and feelings about her past, clearly suffering from PTSD. Katniss is haunted by flashbacks and nightmares, and estranges herself from her family and friends, feeling afraid and angry, and losing her self-control. In this sense, Katniss confesses:

> Nightmares—which I was no stranger to before the Games—now plague me whenever I sleep. But the old standby, the one of my father being blown to bits in the mines, is rare. Instead I relive versions of what happened in the arena. My worthless attempt to save Rue. Peeta bleeding to death. Glimmer's bloated body disintegrating in my hands. Cato's horrific end with the muttations. These are the most frequent visitors. (Collins, 2009: 54)

Like many other people suffering from PTSD, Katniss tries to escape traumatic memories by indulging in alcohol and drugs. Her friends and family try to help her proposing methods, which include everything from sleeping with her in the same bed to encouraging her to have a hobby. By the end of the series, Katniss continues to struggle with trauma and wonders how to explain her nightmares to her children. Her solution to cope with traumatic memories is to "make a list in [her] head of every act of goodness [she has] seen someone do. It's like a game. Repetitive" (Collins, 2010: 398).

Her partner, Peeta Mellark, experiences similar symptoms of PTSD. However, unlike Katniss, who tries to bury her bad memories, Peeta chooses to confront them using art. After discovering his paintings, Katniss feels sick and says:

> Peeta has painted the Hunger Games. … The golden horn called the Cornucopia. Clove arranging the knives inside her jacket. One of the mutts, unmistakably the blond, greeneyed one meant to be Glimmer, snarling as it makes its way toward us. And me. I am everywhere. High up in a tree. Beating a shirt against the stones in the stream. Lying unconscious in a pool of blood (Collins, 2009: 53).

Asked about the therapeutic success of his endeavour, Peeta confesses that he is less afraid of going to sleep at night, or at least, this is what he tries to believe. This is Peeta's way of showing that memory can be self-controlled.

During the civil war, Peeta is taken prisoner by the Capitol and administered the tracker jacker venom, which induces terror, hallucinations, and nightmarish visions. Peeta's memories about Katniss, the girl he loves, are distorted on purpose, making him feel threatened by her. As Katniss becomes a sort of modern Joan of Arc, fighting against the Capitol, Peeta is mentally programmed to liquidate her. All this is possible only through memory manipulation. His recovery is long lasting, painful, and difficult. In order to help Peeta, his rescuers have him play a game called "Real or Not Real". Peeta mentions something he thinks happened, and they tell him if this is true or imagined, usually providing a brief explanation. When it comes to general facts known by everyone else as being true or false, Peeta finds it easier to understand and accept reality. See his dialogue with Jackson:

> "Most of the people from Twelve were killed in the fire."
> "Real. Less than nine hundred of you made it to Thirteen alive." "The fire was my fault." "Not real. President Snow destroyed Twelve the way he did Thirteen, to send a message to the rebels." (Collins, 2010: 272)

The greatest difficulty emerges, however, when it comes to recovering intimate memories regarding his lover Katniss, or those things that no one else knew, but him:

> "You said that same thing to me in the first Hunger Games. Real or not real?" "Real," he says. "And you risked your life getting the medicine that saved me?" "Real." I shrug. "You were the reason I was alive to do it." "Was I?" The comment throws him into confusion. Some shiny memory must be fighting for his attention, because his body tenses and his newly bandaged wrists strain against the metal cuffs. (Collins, 2010: 321)

The end of the series, shows that, despite all the efforts put into Peeta's recovery, his memory is not entirely restored. Just like Katniss who makes lists of good things, he continues to play this game, trying to enforce his connection to reality and ensure his proper conduct. Thus, he sometimes whispers to Katniss, "You love me. Real or not real?" And she answers him back, "Real" (Collins, 2010: 388).

Memory also plays a key role in James Dashner's trilogy consisting of *The Maze Runner* (2009), *The Scorch Trials* (2010), and *The Death Cure* (2011). The series is praised for its "fast-paced, nonstop action" (Deseret News, 2009). In the context of a virulent pandemic that turns people into zombies, a medical organization called WICKED seizes state power and treats people as lab rats. Locked inside a dangerous maze and having their memory erased, the characters begin a personal fight to recover their past and self-identity. The series begins with Thomas, the protagonist, who wakes up, totally confused, knowing nothing about his previous life, not even his real name:

> "Where am I?" Thomas asked, surprised at hearing his voice for the first time in his salvageable memory. It didn't sound quite right—higher than he would've imagined ... It was as if his memory loss had stolen a chunk of his language—it was disorienting⯑ (Dashner, 2009: 6).

As he cannot identify the process that induced his oblivion, the boy is tormented by confusion, and finds it extremely challenging to remember his family and other aspects of his past. Although, the other teenagers he meets in the maze, try to help him by sharing the fact that they also experience memory loss and intense feelings of fear, Thomas cannot feel resigned. He wants to find a solution, escape confinement, and rediscover himself as a person.

At the end of the story, the teenagers face a major dilemma. WICKED makes them choose between recovering their full memory after undergoing a new type of brain surgery or preserving the information they started to store from the moment they woke up in the maze. Some of them accept the proposal and recover their memory. They learn about their parents, friends, and lives before the experiment, and reinforce their genuine identity. Thomas, however, refuses to have WICKED restore his previous memory. In the course of the story, the boy discovers that he was part of WICKED and helped scientists develop some of the physical and psychological methods of torture, during which many kids suffer and die. In this case, he confesses, "I remember enough to be ashamed of myself⯑ (Dashner, 2011: 9). Readers are able to learn more about the boy's inner torment from an omniscient narrator:

> The thought gave him mixed feelings. He wanted his memory block finally cracked for good — wanted to know who he was, where he came from. But that desire was tempered by fear of what he might find out about himself. About his role in the very things that had brought him to this point, that had done this to his friends. (Dashner, 2010: 127)

Thomas did indeed work for WICKED, but his actions were motivated by the strong belief that he was finding a cure for humanity. In his mind, all sacrifices were meant for a good purpose. After becoming the victim of his own experiments, however, his perspective changes: "But living through this kind of abuse is a lot different than planning it. It's just not right" (Dashner, 2011: 9). Remembering how his friends struggled for their lives, Thomas feels ashamed of who he used to be and refuses to trust WICKED anymore. He fears that the doctors might install the wrong memories inside his brain only to use him again, for evil purposes.

If the erasing of memory based on surgery is dramatic, contracting a virus, which turns its victims into bloodthirsty and irrational monsters is even worse. In Dashner's series, the Post-Flares Coalition releases The Flare (VC321xb47), a lab-created virus which gradually erases people's memory, personality, and all traces of humanity, spreading terror. Thomas's best friend, Newt, experiences the transformation caused by the virus. Having his brain damaged, the boy loses his memories about his friends and acts insane. In a moment of lucidity, he begs his friends to leave him behind, feeling that he would not be able to control himself:

> I don't expect you to understand, but I can't be with you guys anymore. It's gonna be hard enough for me now, and it'll make it worse if I know you have to witness it. Or worst of all, if I hurt you. So let's say our bloody goodbyes and then you can promise to remember me from the good old days. (Dashner, 2011: 186)

Sadly, in Newt's case the transformation cannot be stopped and death becomes the best solution.

Taking all into account, we may conclude that each of the dystopian series explored here represents a game of trust or lack of trust in one's own memories and feelings. The protagonists depicted by Suzanne Collins and James Dashner face many moments of doubt and frustration concerning their past experiences, not knowing whether they are real or fake, well preserved, altered, or even erased, naturally stored by their brains, or inserted there by their enemies. The recovery of memory is not at all a guarantee that they can return to their initial psychological state. In most cases, it only reveals an important step in their evolution as individuals.

The way in which these characters are constructed and how they manage their memory issues proves that their authors are good analysts and fine connoisseurs of human psychology. The experiences from the series discussed here may be selected from the pages of two works of fiction, but they can also be met in reality. Memory and its challenges play a vital role in our existence.

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Reinterpretations of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

6.1. Reading Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a Manifesto for Moderation and Decency

Nusret Ersöz

Abstract

Orwell's bleak depiction of life as dehumanized by a political authority relentless in its oppression forms the kernel of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The ways in which Winston Smith, as an embodiment of the "common man" is devastated intellectually, emotionally, and physically have been often explored with insights gained from Orwell's arguments on poverty, inequality, ignorance, assimilation, and a lack of freedom of thought, speech, will, and action. Yet, the concepts of moderation and "decency" remain relatively less discussed in connection with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in spite of their foremost relevance to Orwell's notion of an ameliorated personal and social life. In this respect, the argument of this essay is that, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as much as delineating a dystopic future in which man is dispossessed of his fundamental needs, Orwell puts a stress on the essentiality of moderation and decency on personal and political levels. The essay also suggests that absence of moderation and decency characterizes the fictional landscape that defines *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a dystopian novel.

Key words: Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, moderation, decency, dystopia

The concept of utopia and utopian literature at large reify an imagined social structure where a set of principles, values, and attitudes are unfolded as the indicators of the possibility of a human life advanced in all its parts; that is, morally, culturally, economically, politically, and intellectually. Utopias inherently involve suggestions for alternative and unorthodox ways of life and thought which are imbued with an underlying didactic and satirical tone. However, the communal life and collectively shared norms limned by visionary writers of utopian fictional

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landscapes might be taken as faulty or deceptive from the critical vantage point of the modern, individualistic reader, which infuses a problematic undertone in utopian writing. The model of a highly personalized, epistocratic philosopher-king in Plato's ideal state in *The Republic*, for example, might be identified as a despotic "totalitarian demi-god" who is "placed high above all ordinary men", as Karl Popper argues (2011: 125). Thomas More, in his formulation of the ideal society in Utopia, does not elaborate on the process in which a tyrannizing utopian ruler is deposed; besides, More's Utopian citizens can also be evaluated as subjects whose individualities and personal liberties are nullified by communal life, as discussed by Gregory Claeys (2017: 6). Yet, utopias are originally designed as visions of a possible realization of social enhancement, and the essential idea behind utopianism and maintained by utopian writers is advancement in all fields of current human life; this is also an end which is sought after by dystopian writers and which lets the two subgenres connect with each other.

While the complications regarding the authorial perception of the ideal and the ways in which this perception should characterize utopian settings may unhinge the precision of utopian welfare, the identification of what is not ideal for humankind and speculation on the adversities instigated by the non-ideal are effectively articulated by dystopian writing. A particular society or locality where humans are deprived of some basic necessities and rights; where people forcibly or, after a while, compulsively, become bereft of favourable human qualities such as reasoning and questioning; and where some catastrophic ecological conditions put life in jeopardy can not be regarded as ideal. Illustrating such apocalyptic circumstances, dystopias, in a way, concentrate on the outcomes of the ending, disappearance, or complete lack of what is considered as the most essential constituents of a standard human life. Writers of dystopia frequently implicate a signal for the necessity of making a change or taking an action in the way people live, behave, think, and feel. Drawing attention to numerous present or future possible threats to human welfare and liberties, dystopias tacitly reiterate the indispensability of creating (or reverting to) some recuperative conditions or values for the sake of individual and social betterment. Being an all-embracing conceptualization of these basic conditions and values for a humane community, 'common decency' is what George Orwell repeatedly lays stress on as a sine qua non of the eradication of the suffering, iniquities, and oppression that he observes in his lifetime. Orwell's accentuation of common decency and, in relation to it, his emphasis on the necessity of a sense of moderation (particularly on the part of the upper and ruling classes) pervade all of his writings and are the covert ultimate ends foregrounded in his magnum opus, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).

In *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), Orwell says, "If you had asked me why I had joined the militia I should have answered: 'To fight against Fascism', and if you had asked me what I was fighting for, I should have answered: 'Common decency'" (2021a: 143). Here, Orwell clearly does not only refer to the Spanish Civil War (which he participated in on the side of the Workers' Party militia against Franco's fascist forces, before getting into a conflict with the Communist Party), he also divulges the motive behind his intellectual and physical resistance against inequality, poverty, privileged classes, and totalitarianism. What distinguishes Orwell as a person and writer is his unprecedentedly deep sensitivity to common human suffering and the problems of human civilization; it is a purely cordial sense of humility what prompts him to go deep down into coal mines, to lead the life of a tramp, to fight in lands unknown to him, and finally to sacrifice himself to revolutionary writings. Orwell's concern, as Selwyn Boyer contends, is "about a free world, the obliteration of class differences, and an essential and abiding opposition to all forms of authoritarianism including fascism" (1967: 97). Orwell's perception of common decency, in this respect, stands at a pivotal point since it hints at an aspect of the image of an ideal world in his mind, and forms a cluster of the favourable concepts against the adverse conditions that turn human life into a dystopia. A great majority of Orwell's works, literary or non-literary, reflect to varying degrees his anti-totalitarian stance. Orwell's attack on totalitarianism is basically generated by the fact that this absolutist political system, as he witnessed in Spain, controls and oppresses masses of people, as well as annihilating individual liberties; totalitarian authority and its agents not only lack decency in themselves but they deprive (and prohibit) human beings of decency as well. It is the irrational impositions exercised by a tyrannical authority as well as the impossibility of attaining a sense of decency and moderation that constitutes the dystopic vision and permeates the apocalyptic texture of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Even a slight tinge of decent or unorthodox behaviour, feeling, and thought within the storyline of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is politically uprooted, precluded, and socially forsaken. Big Brother's tyranny oppresses members of the Outer Party and proles by depriving them of any sort of freedom. But most importantly, people are forced into dissipating their sense of common decency; their sense of empathy with others' pain and misery is erased. The dismal and emotionless universe of the novel is shaped by a systematic, interiorized, and incessant control mechanism; and the most palpable outcome of the dehumanization practised by this mechanism is that it serves as an impediment to human decency and moderate life. The novel, as Stephen Ingle argues, "is all about the enemies of 'common decency', all about the destruction of humanity itself, with the elimination of Winston Smith its last representative in Europe" (2020: 122).

Big Brother and the Inner Party members, as the enemies of "common decency", show no hesitation in putting extreme irrationalities and despotic and inhuman punishments into action. Utterly devoid of even particles of decency and moderation, the totalitarian authority controlling the lives of Oceanians is the incarnation of a ruthless dominator that shows no tolerance for questioning of the party's policies and exercises. Big Brother's oppression and supervision exerted mainly by the surveillance of telescreens and agents forestall any disobedience, defiance, or even a critical expression. However, what lets this despotism become an intolerably dehumanizing tyranny is that it seeks after destruction of humane relationships and communication between members of the Outer Party. Any sort of sensitivity, intimacy, empathy, and affection between the members is strictly precluded.

For Big Brother, such behaviours as helping, loving, caring, or simply befriending are as threatening as the thoughts of conspiracy, resistance, and revolution. The Outer Party members are not allowed to be selfless; to the contrary, they are compelled to internalize being self-centred and insensitive to each other, as seen at myriad points throughout the novel. As the narrator indicates, the members, rather than being friends, are "comrades": "[Winston] turned round. It was his friend Syme, who worked in the Research Department. Perhaps 'friend' was not exactly the right word. You did not have friends nowadays, you had comrades" (51). The semantic difference between the words "comrade" and "friend" suggests the callousness in human relationships intended by the totalitarian rule of Oceania: "comrade", an equalizing form of address in communist terminology, is derived from French *camerade*, meaning "chambermate", while friend means "one joined to another in mutual benevolence and intimacy" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2009). Then, the narrator's extraneous reference to the absence of friends or friendship indicates that the humane bond of friendship based on a heartfelt candour and goodwill is replaced by a place- or group-based organizational link, which emphasizes engagement in an external cause rather than interpersonal relationships.

The policies and impositions of Big Brother are so structured as to put the community into a mould made out of hatred, suspicion, fear, and egocentrism. Accordingly, a great majority of the Oceanian people are required to submit to the circumstances in which every single humane quality is already severed. Winston does not have any notion of the past and present, and in an effort to reach out to the future, he writes a diary, which is a tactful and considerate effort demonstrating his personification of common decency. It is significant that the first notes that he takes in his diary reflect his subconscious uneasiness. He records an anecdote about the Outer Party members watching a film, who cheer at the scenes in which a refugee is shot and killed in the sea, and a mother and her

child are torn into pieces by a bomb. Among the audience of the prole class, only a woman protests by shouting that such graphic content should not be shown to children; yet, she finds no support and is taken out of the room. Through Winston's first entry into his diary, Orwell underlines two issues regarding common decency. Firstly, members of the Outer Party are coerced into deserting (or not developing at all) their sense of common decency and thereby they are desensitized to others' suffering. Ultimately, Big Brother creates an "audience shouting with laughter" (10) to see others in agony. Secondly, proles representing the middle class and having no sense of common decency fail to share a humane awareness and to form a protesting unity. Winston's first notes in his diary show that Orwell's dystopic vision in Nineteen Eighty-Four is generated by Big Brother and his party as much as by the passivity and inertia of common people (proles) who refuse to "fight for common decency". The Outer Party and proles, therefore, have no alternative other than to espouse the causes of totalitarianism and yield to the party slogans: "WAR IS PEACE [,] FREEDOM IS SLAVERY [,] IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH" (17). Since irrationality is normalized and the idea of common decency is treated as a dire threat in Orwell's dystopic world, the slogans of the party, which are among the most memorable literary phrases ever written, can be extended to the following: evil is good, cruelty is mercy, apathy is empathy.

Some other indicators of Big Brother's agenda against common decency are Newspeak, "the official language of Oceania [which] had been devised to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc" (317) and The Two Minutes Hate, that is, the routine of watching in groups the anti-propaganda videos showing the assumed traitor, Emmanuel Goldstein. Newspeak basically acts to manipulate Oceanians' common perception, to prevent them from obtaining true information, to keep them in misguided beliefs and thoughts, or in total ignorance; as Syme states, "to narrow the range of thought" (55). In a parallel with the film scene mentioned above, The Two Minutes Hate is an extremely effective way of evoking collective feelings of hatred and enmity in people against an external figure. Members of the Outer Party participating in the Hate are obliged to show their animosity conspicuously towards Goldstein. Yet, no obligation or pretence is needed, since a few boos and hisses rapidly kindle profound and primordial feelings of hatred in the members: "Within thirty seconds any pretence was always unnecessary. A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledge-hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current" (16). Even Winston is provoked as he finds himself shouting and moving violently. Orwell thereby underlines the fact that not only submissive masses but even a reasonable person with a sense of individuality can be easily manipulated and swayed by the authority. In other words, in the Orwellian dystopic universe, collectiveness is formed by a sense of animosity rather than common decency.

A significant dimension of common decency as delineated in the novel is related to Winston's inner feeling that he should act so as to make a positive change on the lives of future people. He ventures to ask, "Why then did that horror, which altered nothing, have to lie embedded in future time?" (108). Unorthodoxly enough, Winston embodies a struggle for subjectivity, freedom, and rationality, and as a fictional character, he has been an iconic persona and a universal advocate of independent thought, revolutionary spirit, and figure of resistance against dehumanization. Yet, the fact that these notions are all generated by his sense of common decency should also be taken into account. Winston's struggle, by which he risks his life, is for the well-being of future generations rather than for personal concerns. In other words, if his resistance is triggered by his sense of revolt and defiance, his audacious insistence on resistance is enabled and invigorated by the idea that he can have a role in ameliorating the future and making it different from the present.

The final parts of the novel disclose the ways in which any notion associated with humanity, civility, and common decency is completely shattered. The horrendous punishment suffered by Winston for disobeying the laws of the Party suggests a nauseous and vicious obliteration of the sense of individual and common decency; love, the strongest of the links that connect one with another, is exterminated. Winston's abnegation of his love for Julia due to his fear of being eaten up by rats is presented as a moment of climax; but what is highly symbolic is that Winston is forced to be indifferent to Julia's probable pain. So, the victory of Big Brother is mainly that an altruistic Winston is transformed into an egocentric one; he is now able to turn his back on the one whom he once embraced with love. In the end, Big Brother destroys everything decent about him and divests him of his sensitivity to another's pain. In a way, a last but not least slogan is implied: love is hatred.

These and a great many other instances attest that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has a major significance in Orwell's war for common decency; it is an endeavour that eternalizes the concern about the welfare of others. Orwell calmly but strikingly appeals to all humanity by chronicling the eradication of a sense of common decency and its replacement by insensitivity, virulence, and bestiality. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a counterattack against totalitarian tyranny. Just as the bullet that gets through Orwell's neck in Barcelona can be taken as a metaphorical embodiment of the attack at human decency, Orwell's masterpiece is the most lethal weapon of a civilized mind against the boots who stomp on the face of human beings striving for common decency.

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6.2. Fraternal Complicity: The Permeation of Patriarchal Well-Being in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Almudena Machado-Jiménez

Abstract

The twentieth century brought a new path full of possibilities of reassuring utopias where human rights are conferred on everyone. However, totalitarian regimes, world wars, and socio-economic crises showed cracks in the discourse of individuals' search for perfectibility. The post-war consciousness of dystopian authors showcases a critical stance on what happens when utopia is conceived as doctrine. However, so rooted is patriarchy as a method to guarantee individuality that many male authors did not question the patriarchal foundations of the utopias they scrutinized. This paper examines the permeation of patriarchal utopia in the antagonistic discourses in the dystopian narrative of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Despite the animosity to the totalitarian regime presented in the narrative, I argue that Orwell depicts fraternal complicity between the systemic oppressor and the male heteronormative oppressed in typecasting women into men's relational identity and exploiting them to bear the continuity of ideal patriarchal states.

Key words: George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, patriarchal utopia, gender studies, fraternal complicity

The definition of "fraternity" and "fraternal" is male-exclusive, showcasing how this exclusionary solidarity among men builds patriarchy as the prevalent form of utopia, despite presenting differences in class, race or doctrine. This reductionist understanding of solidarity excludes "that which should be included" (Sargisson, 1996: 14) — that is, women's agency in society's decision-making. In so doing, fraternity does not comply with the necessary conjoining of visions characteristic of solidarity (Boparai, 2015: 5). Eventually, the patriarchal utopia's

communal well-being is illusory as it only benefits a segment of society (Gordin *et al.*, 2010: 1), which is precisely the dominant group. Although a false sense of comradeship is bestowed on women, the rulers eventually flout solidarity's "presumption of reciprocity" (Laitinen & Birgitta Pessi, 2014: 2). Hence, female participation in public life is highly constrained, especially regarding their sexuality and reproductive capacity.

Thomas Horan warns about how Orwell exonerates his male characters from their abuses of women for the sake of the individual's liberation: "this idea of liberation through sex also lends itself to a number of disturbing tendencies, including a juvenile attitude toward the female body, a reliance on sexist stereotypes, and, occasionally, a troubling link between desire for and violence toward women" (2007: 317). Any potential female utopian transgression is filtered, underrated, and even punished by their comrades and creator, Orwell. These forms of affective resistance could dismantle the fantasy of invulnerable masculinity, and so, female corporeality is stripped of any possibility of rationality or personal development to accommodate her companion's utopian design. In this way, patriarchal utopias do not give women genuine opportunities to feel part of the fraternity; they are relegated to act as brothers' wombs. The predicament of women's muted dissidence in classical patriarchal utopias persists.

The Orwellian dystopia breaks from the traditional patriarchal utopia by eradicating the father as the ultimate omnipotent figure. Instead, Oceania's dystopian civilization is controlled by Big Brother. The choice to name the leader of *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* oligarchic regime Big Brother is not accidental, as Orwell defies yet perfects the traditional mould of patriarchal utopia. On the one hand, the procreative complex of fatherhood is overcome by the destruction of perishable family ties. Indeed, not choosing the father figure prevents the risk of generational development or deviation by their progeny, and ensures the statism required in the conceptualization of patriarchal utopias. The father dies and is substituted by his son; the big brother will always remain so. On the other hand, He displays the ironical utopian belief of fraternity and comradeship. The social hierarchy appears horizontal — all parts standing in a relationship of brotherhood — but is ultimately vertical and unalterable, as "the figure of the brother grows with its siblings, and dies with them, regenerating itself with each new generation" (Bouet, 2013: 131). Power is inflicted intragenerationally, and repeatedly — generation after generation of disposable brothers. Big Brother's utopia of terror strikes like a "boot stamping on a human face — for ever" (Orwell, 2000: 307).

Despite the radical unidirectionality of relational bonding between inhabitants of Airstrip One and their icon, the society stratifies similarly to other patriarchal utopias, using an elite as intermediaries between the deity (the eternal) and the citizen (the disposable). O'Brien refers to the Party members

as "the priests of power" (303). Such a condition enacts routine forms of social stratification (Weber, 2013) because the social prestige of the Inner circle enables their people to attain power and lets them create power — a power used to sustain a way of living profitable for their ideological dogmas. Moreover, the maintenance of the family structure as the basis of every household retakes patriarchy's heteronormative monogamy and delimits gender roles within the family unit in the conventional patriarchal way. Airstrip One's family rests on the subjugation of the mother, the eradication of her generative power and the removal of parent-child emotions (306), to bestow servitude to Big Brother alone.

Orwell's dystopia is systemically patriarchal, so female bodies continue being sexually exploited for nationalistic purposes. Chris Ferns affirms how "dystopian fiction effectively rewrites its underlying fantasy of the patriarchal appropriation of the powers of the mother, focusing instead on the dream of the son's unsuccessful rebellion against the father" (1999: 126). Reproductive issues are central in the policies of the Party in order to guarantee the existence of more disposable (re)productive forces that fuel Big Brother's almightiness. Jean Baudrillard concludes that "it is that naïve creature, man, who exudes utopias one of these being, precisely, woman. The latter, being a living utopia, has no need to produce any. Just as she has little reason to be fetishistic, being herself the ideal fetish" (1996: 26).

The narrative offers a misogynist portrait of motherhood, objectifying women as satisfiers of men's longing for accomplished individuality. These social dynamics recall Almudena Hernando's fantasy of dependent individuality (2018), where men's identity is portrayed under a delusive idea of self-sovereignty and independence from the rest of the community. This fallacy is possible if female corporeality is examined as a matrixial entity (Aristarkhova, 2012). "Matrixial entities" are generative spaces characterized by a paradoxical position between productivity and receptivity (Aristarkhova, 2012: 11). As matrixial spaces, women will engender men's utopian projections by becoming a utopian space. This assumed hospitability forces women to adopt a relational role that provokes "the absolute impossibility of conceiving oneself out of these relations" (Hernando, 2018: 77, my translation). Thus, the configuration of the women as utopian matrixial spaces occurs out of necessity: women's generative hospitability and power is needed and neglected whenever they effect their role as relational identities to sustain the male fantasy of individuality.

The portrayal of female entities as merely matrixial and relational pervades the two ideological extremes of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Big Brother's and Winston Smith's, showcasing how rooted this form of sociability is and how complicit these enemies are to guarantee male fantasy of sovereignty and self-determination. Women's silence resulting from the state's verbal censorship and narrative male gaze facilitates this possibility. Except for Julia, female characters in

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the novel are speechless, forced to reduce the manifestation of their distress through physical embodiment. Not coincidentally, all these silenced women are mothers or potential maternal figures, namely Mrs Parsons, Winston's wife, his mother, and the red-apron prole woman. Their matrixial condition leaves them void of speech, responding to the imagery of empty utopian spaces: the former two women serve the Party's utopian plans, while the latter two embody Winston's utopian dream.

Orwell filters the description of female characters through Winston's emotions or past remembrances. Winston projects his utopian ideals (and frustrations) onto these women, utilizing their matrixial potential just as the Party does with normative motherhood. In the case of Katharine, Winston's ex-wife, we only know that she complies with the female stereotype of a dutiful woman (76). Contrary to Winston's project of personal individuality, her matrixial corporeality has already been conquered by the Party's ideals. The protagonist admits that he is not interested in Katharine's insights and feelings. Hence, despite showing non-conformism against the Party, Winston exerts the same patriarchal force by reducing his companion to mere spatiality to execute his frustrated individuality. Readers notice Katharine's struggle with her condition as a woman in the stiffness of her body and the coldness of the sexual act, depicted as an act of rape (77).

Winston's plea for celibacy seems incongruent as he relates his getaways to the proles to have sex with prostitutes in his diary. Men and women of Oceania do not undergo the same harshness in their sexual conditioning. Permissiveness in male mobility and sexuality is blatant compared to that of women from the circles, who are heavily controlled since birth without the possibility of enjoying themselves sexually or in a way that is autonomous and independent from the Party:

The women of the Party were all alike. Chastity was as deeply ingrained in them as Party loyalty. By careful early conditioning, by games and cold water, by the rubbish that was dinned into them at school and in the Spies and the Youth League, by lectures, parades, songs, slogans and martial music, the natural feeling had been driven out of them. (78)

The later refusal to have sex with Julia during her period implies that his goal is not to confront Big Brother by having illicit sex without reproductive ends. His quest for utopian hope relies on alternative forms of reproductive labour that perpetuate patriarchy as the rule while defying Ingsoc's system. Orwell actually thought that female patriotism should consist in bringing healthy offspring: "the women of Orwell's male-centered world are reckoned with only in their breeding (and in the case of prostitution, pleasure-providing) capacity" (Császár, 2013: 79). The author shows that fraternal bonding with women is preserved as long as they offer their companions offspring. Female individuality is utterly impossible at this point in the Orwellian imagery, where he reduces women to materiality and relational identities.

Winston imagines mothers as selfless beings and conceives maternity as an exclusionary condition that makes women devoid of other interests. Initially, Winston resorts to his past to remember a transgressive form of motherhood with his mother. Those vague memories of the world before the war are willingly repressed insofar as they prove how Winston's selfishness killed his mother and sister, although he describes it as a sacrifice (35). The description of his mother's death is romanticized, for she, as a matrixial entity, provided room to accommodate Winston's requests (35). Moreover, like Winston's mother, the unnamed red-apron prole woman's large body is thoroughly described as the only required aptitude for women to build utopia. Despite coming from the margins of society, the prole woman's potentially transgressive utopianism is engulfed by Winston's self-perception of moral and intellectual superiority, imagining her as a matrixial space devoid of personality, ready to serve his insurgent utopia:

> As he looked at the woman in her characteristic attitude, her thick arms reaching up for the line, her powerful mare-like buttocks protruded, it struck him for the first time that she was beautiful. It had never before occurred to him that the body of a woman of fifty, blown up to monstrous dimensions by childbearing, then hardened, roughened by work till it was coarse in the grain like an over-ripe turnip, could be beautiful. … The woman down there had no mind, she had only strong arms, a warm heart, and a fertile belly. He wondered how many children she had given birth to. … people who had never learned to think but who were storing up in their hearts and bellies and muscles the power that would one day overturn the world. If there was hope, it lay in the proles! (250–1)

Winston falls into the same error as the dystopian regime he is living in and perceives her potential female allies as hollow utopian wombs where utopia can be founded. Their stillness and domesticity can optimize the chances of mobility and individuality for Winston, as they remain as spaces to deposit relational bonds without them gaining utopian agency. Hence, either coming from the collective oligarchic elite or the dissenting individual, a lack of communal reciprocity and solidarity between them and women is reproduced. Women are trained that, as caregivers, they must first satisfy male necessities to calm their rage.

In Winston and Julia's relationship, the readership witnesses how deceitful and challenging is fraternal comradeship with women for Orwell's male characters. Their illicit sexual affair is described as "a victory[,] … a blow struck against the Party" (145). This political act of rebellion could suppose transgressive sociability

based on interdependence and mutual congeniality. Nevertheless, the way Julia is described after sexual intercourse as defenceless and drained suggests that such an amorous relationship is not based on egalitarian grounds. Instead, the exact mechanics of the conquered land, or the trophy woman, are preserved:

> The young, strong body, now helpless in sleep, awoke in him a pitying, protecting feeling … He pulled the overalls aside and studied her smooth white flank. In the old days, he thought, a man looked at a girl's body and saw that it was desirable, and that was the end of the story. But you could not have pure love or pure lust nowadays. No emotion was pure, because everything was mixed up with fear and hatred. (145)

The narrator shows Winston's predisposition to see fraternal complicity as male-exclusive, that is, systemically patriarchal. His impressions of O'Brien — his future torturer — are positive, as if he were also an ally in the dissident thinking. By contrast, Julia's intrepid behaviour is not appreciated as a source of trust but as a menace since her gaze pierces Winston and inconveniences his masculinity. His initial sexual frustration in possessing her leads Winston to fantasize about her annihilation, with Julia's blood coming through her throat simulating his sexual climax (18). However, after she sends the note "I love you" (124), the bravery and affection shown are confused by an opportunity to project Winston's individuality beyond Big Brother's control. Again, Julia is described as pure materiality, a precious space in which to build his patriarchal utopia: "A kind of fever seized him at the thought that he might lose her, the youthful white body might slip away from him!" (126).

Their encounters demystify the idea that the fraternal alliance with women in the resistance relegates them to the sole means of achieving men's liberation. Winston's non-conformist views are the only valid form of utopia, while Julia's carnal revolution is disdained. Her discourse is limited and overshadowed by Winston's ego since, as several scholars (Gleason & Nussbaum, 2005; Firchow, 2007; Horan, 2007) explain, Orwell creates Julia solely to embrace the male fantasy: "The image of Julia trotting through the Golden Country is not that of a liberated woman, but of a woman liberated for men" (Horan, 2007: 327). In their conversations, there is a continuous disdain for Julia's approach to insurrection; hers is momentaneous, practical, naïve, and emotional, while Winston's is logical, rigid, and seeks timelessness. The opposition between utopianism and patriarchal utopia is displayed, and by declaring, "You're only a rebel from the waist downwards" (179), Winston implicitly debunks any emotional attachment with Julia, which becomes evident later during his torture. Patriarchal privilege permeates Winston's

rationality, so that he replicates the patriarchal dehumanizing techniques he was trying to confront. Eventually, the only love that prevails in the novel is fraternal — towards Big Brother. The rupture of emotional bonds with Julia not only supposes a betrayal of all the women he had once loved and put his hopes on. It also means treason to his own longing for utopia.

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6.3. The Utopian Impulse in the Post-Truth Era in the Visual Novel *Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength*

Imola Bülgözdi

Abstract

Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength is a story-rich video game that casts the player in the role of a government official in a top-secret department of the Orwell surveillance programme created with the purpose of protecting the nation at all costs. Besides raising awareness of the spread of fake news, misinformation, and their use in propaganda, the game recruits the player to actively take part in the perpetuation of an unnamed totalitarian state masquerading as a democracy. This essay relies on Michał Kłosiński's argument that video games, as an interactive medium, provide more room for the utopian impulse than traditional narrative media, such as novels, plays, or films. It focuses on the player's affective reactions to being implicated in upholding the system, and the possibilities for gaining agency. *Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength* replicates moral dilemmas that an average internet user is likely to face in the post-truth era, inducing the player to feel anger, disgust, and shame for being controlled and manipulated, ultimately leading to the desire to resist the system. The essay also demonstrates that the way this desire is achieved through the gameplay shows parallels with Megan Boler's "pedagogy of discomfort", which enhances the likelihood of transferring the insights gained and the utopian impulse to the real world.

Key words: video games, dystopia, *Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength*, affect, post-truth era

The title of the videogame which makes a homage to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1989) is a clear indication of its main focus. *Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength* (Osmotic Studios, 2018) explores the nature of surveillance and engagement with propaganda but in circumstances updated to the digital era.

Osmotic Studio's visual novel, set in April 2017 in an unnamed country only referred to as "The Nation", is based on twenty-first-century concerns over privacy and internet safety, and most importantly, lays bare the process of the creation of fake news. Bordering the fictional state of Parges, The Nation is a surveillance state somewhere in the borderlands between East and West, recruiting agents to operate the Orwell surveillance system, a role that falls to the player. It is through this computer program that the player receives their tasks, and gathers all the information about the gameworld and the characters targeted by the secret service.

The game's relevance is heightened by the dystopian gameworld, which has much in common with the present "post-truth era". Although "post-truth", defined as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief", became the word of the year in 2016 (Oxford Languages, 2016), Patrik Fridlund cautions that it would be naïve to assume that politics in previous times were based on "truth" (2020: 216). Yet, it is in the twenty-first century that increasing concern has been raised over political speech becoming increasingly detached from a register in which factual truths are "plain", and the post-truth era is characterized by the propagation of falsehoods, lies, and misinformation, as well as outrageous exaggeration and the distortion of reality (Fridlund, 2020: 216). The role of the new media, whose interactivity can both encourage uncritical involvement with and the recognition and conscious scrutiny of the tendencies above, is imperative in the larger public's engagement in the discourse. *Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength* thus creates the perfect platform for this purpose, since videogames are "laboratories which allow us to simulate consequences of different social, political and economic policies in real time" (Kłosiński, 2018: 12), providing the opportunity to gain insight into how different social and political systems work.

Adapting Ruth Levitas's utopian method to video games, Michał Kłosiński demonstrates that video game virtuality can be regarded as a utopian project due to the fact that it offers a critique of social reality, it proposes alternative social, political, and economic orders, and may lead to a re-definition of being human, of ethics, and morality (Kłosiński, 2018: 12). What is more, the medium-specific characteristics of videogames allow for the player to become "a feeling and active subject" (Anable, 2018: xiv), in contrast to consumers of traditional media who lack the feeling of agency inherent in interactive games, where the narrative stalls without the player performing actions to move it forward (Owen, 2017: 47), thus providing the player with the possibility to experiment. In his investigation of the topic at hand, *Playing Dystopia: Nightmarish Worlds in Video Games and the Player's Aesthetic Response*, Gerald Farca draws the conclusion

that "the video game dystopia describes a new strategic enterprise of the utopian philosophy" (2018: 16). In his view, this enterprise is accomplished by the following technique:

> By sending the player on a journey through hell but retaining a hopeful (utopian) core, it involves her in a playful trial action (or test run) in which she may test, track, and explore in detail an estranged gameworld and an alternative societal model ... This venture into the fictional reality of dystopia shows potential to warn the player about negative trends within empirical reality and to explore emancipatory routes that may transform the gameworld. It thus serves the player as a subversive example and inducement to effect social change and transformation in the empirical world. (Farca, 2018: 16)

However, Marcus Schulzke warns of a different scenario. In situations in which the diegetic rules of the gameworld are closely related to the problems the dystopia is supposed to draw attention to, the underlying logic of the game mechanics may "cause players to become participants in creating dystopia" (Schulzke, 2014: 14). This paper aims to investigate how the visual novel *Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength* affects the player who has no choice but to assume the role of the government agent, what type of estrangement is present in this particular game, and how the utopian impulse plays out in relation to these two factors.

The game starts with the player naming and customizing a fairly simplified avatar, then filling in an aptitude test to get a job as an agent working with the Orwell surveillance system, after agreeing to the following terms:

> I am willing to severely affect the lives of citizens and non-citizens of The Nation.
> I will do whatever is necessary to keep The Nation from harm.
> While working I will only adhere to the statutes and principles of The Office. (Osmotic Studios, 2018)

The tiny action of checking the box underneath to agree illustrates how players engage with videogames. David Owen argues that players experience a new form of suspension of disbelief compared with the theatrical or cinematic model: "the player chooses to join the fiction, imagines that the fiction affects them, personally, and identifies as an extension of themselves, the avatar" (2017: 3). The player becomes audience/participant/player/character at the

same time. Working as an agent requires interaction with websites, emails, podcasts, text messages, dating app profiles, medical records, bank account statements, social media profiles, for example, which all amount to the digital footprint of various characters. The game achieves immersion into a digital environment familiar to most contemporary Internet users, while the avatar is no more than an empty shell which practically fades and the player's physical screen overlaps with the screen the agent can see in the game. With no visible avatar, an unusual form of identification takes place. Normally, "the assumed (unseen) body of the character is mentally superimposed on that of the player's, as though the player were in the game environment" (Owen, 2017: 48), in this case, it is the physical screen of the player that turns into that of the agent and the game seems to protrude into the real physical world. Consequently, players find themselves in a very familiar situation: sitting at their own desks navigating a digitally mediated world, while the game overtakes this everyday situation by turning them into a government agent.

The main target under surveillance is Raban Vhart, a Pargesian refugee, who aims to expose government corruption in articles and podcasts on the website he runs. The agent's task is to find information to incriminate him or anyone close to him in order to destroy his credibility. This can be accomplished with the help of a top secret function of the surveillance system, dubbed the 'Influencer'. Ampleford, the agent's supervisor, explains how it operates:

> It can spread a story through social media channels ef-ficiently and thoroughly. So find me datachunks to con-struct a narrative from … The first [piece of] information spread by your command alone. It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of truth, isn't it? I'm certain you can get me enough information to let me construct our own little con-spiracy theory. (Osmotic Studios, 2018)

In a nutshell, whatever information Vhart intends to divulge on his website is countered by a narrative manufactured from half-truths and malicious intent. The Office exploits the smallest morsel of information the player manages to recover from Vhart's, his wife's, and his brother's digital footprint, leading to the suppression of the opposition and Vhart's death. If the player follows the orders and accomplishes the tasks set by The Office, the outcome is a very dissatis-fying ending, which prompts the player to re-play and make different choices when submitting information about the targets. These strategies lead to several scenarios that have only slightly different consequences, invariably resulting in the death of both Vhart and the truth he seeks to expose, until the player starts looking for cracks in the system and takes down their superior, Ampleford.

It turns out that Ampleford (aka Melissa O'Brian) is the head of Operation "War is Peace", whose single aim is to ensure peace and prosperity in The Nation at the expense of its rival, Parges, by creating the circumstances for a permanent, armed conflict in the neighbouring country, in agreement with the president of Parges. When confronted with this information, Ampleford reveals the truth about the player's position as agent:

> If *you* expect me to become magically arrested now because *you* shifted the blame to me—no. This isn't the way things go with The Office. The Aptitude Test was never meant to check for *your* abilities as an agent. It was meant to check *your* character for manipulability. *You* still seem to be clinging to the faint hope *you* could change a thing in this. Make a difference. *Your* ignorance is [as] delightful, "agent," as it is pathetic. (Osmotic Studios, 2018, my italics)

The direct address — note all the second person pronouns in the quote above — would mean breaking down the fourth wall in film and theatre, which shatters the suspension of disbelief. Videogames, however, due to interactivity, can accommodate the second-person perspective, though rarely, and often with a didactic effect (Owen, 2017: 52). This is not the case in *Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength*: the direct address in messages sent by Ampleford is part of the immersion, and the player's frustration only increases upon finding out that they are exploited and lack agency within The Office, ultimately becoming all the more invested in proving Ampleford wrong. Thus, their only option to strike back is to leak the top secret information to the public, which finally brings a different ending.

Farca's in-depth examination of videogame dystopias concludes that the most efficient method to foster the utopian impulse is the following structure: "confronting the player with both the possibility of attaining a better future and its loss … makes the player choose whether she wants to become a catalyst for change" (Farca, 2018: 27). *Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength* takes a different approach, as the visual novel presents no future options, and the gameplay encourages identification with the role of the loyal government agent. Becoming embroiled in the spread of falsehoods and witnessing the power of social media to distort reality, which also leads to Vhart's death, makes the player question their involvement with The Office, bringing about an affective situation akin to what Megan Boler terms "pedagogy of discomfort" (1999: 196–8). In "The Risks of Empathy" (1997), she argues that reading practices that foster critical thinking should be encouraged instead of identification and passive empathy. Boler demonstrates that maintaining an emotional distance leads to a different affective

response from readers: by preventing total identification with characters and not providing an emotional catharsis to bring closure to a problematic situation, literary works encourage "self-reflective participation". She argues for "an active reading practice that involves challenging my own assumptions and world views" to make the reader realize they are part of an oppressive system, and, in turn, prompt them to effectuate change in the real world (Boler, 1997: 263).

The "self-reflective participation" and "active reading practice" that Boler advocates are exactly what the medium of video games requires of the player. I contend that *Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength* is based on the principle of the pedagogy of discomfort, which can be clearly observed when mapping the player's affective response. First, the player follows instructions, takes up the role of the government agent, experiencing disillusionment, remorse at being complicit in one or more characters' death, and a growing feeling of being manipulated by a totalitarian system. The player's frustration with this ending prompts them to make different choices, but the game still ends with the repression of truth, enhancing the player's feeling of powerlessness. This scenario cannot be escaped unless the player formulates a new objective, one not specified by the game: the system that has incorporated them as agents must be overthrown by means of exposing government machinations. Once this is accomplished, the visual novel presents a new option. Raban Vhart survives to make a different final podcast:

> There is only one logical course of action: I call on you. I challenge you to finally stop believing lies coming from these corrupt leaders. Shake off the invisible hand on your shoulder! What becomes of the future is up to you alone. You, the people, need to shape your own truth! (Osmotic Studios, 2018)

The game ends with a direct address to the player, no longer a government agent but one of "the people" who, after playing the game, are supposed to recognize the pitfalls presented by propaganda and fake news in the post-truth era. *Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength* takes the player on a different affective experience from the one postulated by Farca: rather than placing the player into an estranged gameworld and an alternative social model to experiment in, the video game protrudes into the player's reality. The visual novel relies heavily on the familiarity of the digitally mediated world, and the direct address typical of the second-person perspective enhances the overlap of the player's and avatar's (that is, the agent's) screen. This emphasizes the player's complicity in supporting a totalitarian state when not attempting to challenge the post-truth

era. The morally questionable work prevents the player's total identification with the role of the agent, and its outcome builds up feelings of frustration and discomfort with their lack of agency. The strategy of implying what dire consequences everyday, uncritical engagement with a digitally mediated world may have causes the player to feel estranged from their own reality, making them reflect on their real-life media consumption, the trustworthiness of information, intentions, and identities in the digital realm, and even the consequences of the lack of fact-checking when sharing information. What is more, the game ends with the exposure of truth, but provides no resolution. Vhart's speech is a call for action that literally cannot be accomplished in the game, as the game ends, making a strong case for encouraging the player to transfer the utopian impulse to shape a better future to the real world.

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Climate and Capitalism

7.1. Affects, Effects, and Action: Utopia and the Climate Crisis

Lisa Garforth

Abstract

This essay reflects on questions of what utopia can bring to the contemporary climate crisis. It focuses in particular on tensions in current climate debates between calls for radical structural change and the efforts of environmental educators and others to nurture individual changes in response to the climate challenge. Climate educators are often primarily concerned about the "knowledge-action gap" and ask why greater understanding of climate change has not translated into personal lifestyle and behavioural change. Critical climate theorists suggest that such individual changes are either trivial or irrelevant in the face of an intractable and apparently unstoppable system of extractive fossil capitalism. I argue that utopian studies offers multiple concepts and arguments for thinking through tensions between the individual and the social, between desire and agency, between hope and action, which are particularly pressing at this moment in climate history. I suggest that utopia's many contradictions — its capacity for both cognitive estrangement and affective inspiration; its critical and its affirmative dimensions — should be treated as resources to think and act with as we learn to live both with and against climate change.

Key words: utopia, climate hange, collective, individual

In 2012, looking back at our present moment as history in and from *2312*, Kim Stanley Robinson suggested that the early twenty-first century would be characterized at the social level as a period of suspension between knowledge and action, which in the novel is called "the Dithering". Donna Haraway, citing the novel, glossed the Dithering as a "state of indecisive agitation" (2016: 102). In both Robinson's narrative and Haraway's discussion, the Dithering feels like a collective problem, something like a structure of feeling, rather than anything attributable to individual knowledge–action gaps.

In *2312*, it is estimated that the Dithering lasted about 55 years from 2005 until 2060. This period of indecision and inaction guaranteed that meaningful climate responses taken by earthly humans were remedial, not preventative. In *Ministry for the Future*, published in 2020, Robinson explored a period of rapid climate transition, by many means necessary, taking place between around 2025 and 2045. In a talk on the eve of COP26 in Glasgow, Robinson intimated that this window is probably over-optimistic (The Dear Green Bothy, 2021).

Today's world is well into the Dithering that Robinson projected, and its window is apparently closing. We have reached, perhaps, the end of wholesale denial (corporate, personal, and political). We have seen a wave of visible climate activism under the banner of "change now or extinction". We have arrived by COP26 at a widely shared sense that the time for action can no longer be delayed.

Maybe it is useful to talk about reaching a point in the Dithering when both climate knowledge and climate change effects are pressing hard on economic, policy, and political processes. Both are also being translated in sophisticated ways into culture and social debate. The logic of the need for radical action to avoid a potentially catastrophic future is fully alive in the public sphere. But individual and collective commitments to change remain inadequate, both on the plane of everyday action and in regard to the much bigger structural shifts needed to divert global society from trajectories that lead to average warming above 2 °Celsius (a limit still too high to avoid severe planetary consequences).

In this context, there can be a problematic gulf between work, for example, in environmental education that focuses primarily on individual and behaviour changes, and approaches that focus on the necessity of large-scale structural changes, in particular, materialist critiques that examine how an extractive and racialized capitalism has been entangled with the geo-economic changes that we call the Anthropocene.

In recent years it has been increasingly common to hear from progressive and radical thinkers that personal and individual changes are inadequate, even irrelevant, to making a safe and equitable climate future. The logic is that the capitalist profit motive — and often, more specifically, identifiable industries and firms — have caused the climate predicament, and only large-scale restriction of carbon-emitting capitalist activities can turn things around. Governments are held to be hopelessly overrun by specific lobbying interests, and more generally over-invested in economic growth as the (only) path to progress. For some critics on the left then, the climate dilemma is frequently rewritten as the latest iteration of capitalist chaos and injustice, and the solution is the end or radical curtailing of production for profit, whether via some form of greened democratic socialism or a global economic revolution.

However true and important these insights, they are frequently framed at a level of abstraction so large that the particularity of fossil capitalism and the imbrication of people in it — as citizens and/or consumers, or as victims and/or complicit — disappears from the picture. We are left with the idea that only a single kind of change, a global revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, can save us from the climate crisis. The risk here is of reinscribing a single telic story about the end of capitalism and the unlocking of the climate crisis, while in real terms, many of us remain stuck in the middle of the trouble hoping against hope and acting in small ways however best we can.

To defer again to Kim Stanley Robinson: "Instantaneous world revolution? Gimme a break" (Goodell, 2020). Haraway again expands: "The stories of both the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene teeter constantly on the brink of becoming much Too Big". She observes that they feature "too-big players in the too-big stories of Capitalism and the Anthropos, both of which invite oddly apocalyptic panics and even odder, disengaged denunciations", and worries about a "game over, too late" discussion, which is heard "in both expert and popular discourses, in which both technotheocratic geoengineering fixes and wallowing in despair seem to coinfect any possible common imagination" (2016: 50, 55–6).

So we need to think creatively and not just critically about how to get on in the middle of the Dithering, a moment of acute awareness of climate dilemmas without a sense of immediate action. As in Haraway's figuration of the current crisis,

> the doings of situated, actual human beings [and nonhuman beings] matter. It matters with which ways of living and dying we cast our lot rather than others. … Diverse human and nonhuman players are necessary in every fibre of the tissues of the urgently needed Chthulucene story. The chief actors are not restricted to the too-big players in the too-big stories. (Haraway, 2016: 55)

What can utopia do, given this wider structure of feeling which encapsulates both emergency and indecision? Where can it work to help "collect up the trash of the Anthropocene", re-use the "exterminism of the Capitalocene", and contribute to a "much hotter compost pile for still possible pasts, presents, and futures" (Haraway, 2016: 56)? Are its most useful attributes a capacity for totalizing understanding and critique, undermining ideology and stimulating revolutionary change; or is it better at nurturing hopeful creativity and inspiring individuals to alter their lifestyles? Or both?

In my corner of the social sciences, the value of utopian visions is increasingly invoked as necessary to expand the imagination of the climate dilemma and the range of policy and political responses to it, especially the capacity to entertain large-scale system interconnections — perhaps even to inspire and frame action. Academics from across a range of disciplines are addressing the Dithering and the impasses of policy inaction, political anger, the Thatcherite claim that "there is no alternative" ("TINA") to neo-liberalism, and cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011). When the present seems more stuck than ever and institutional policy change stymied by post-politics, and when the most common futures projected too often pit apocalyptics against business as usual, imagined alternative visions, especially in speculative fiction, are valued increasingly highly.

Climate fiction, for example, has a power to "stimulate, aid and enrich the political imagination", according to Manjana Milkoreit. "Rather than offering novel solutions, climate fiction stories provide subtle and complex lessons concerning the intricate relationship between climate, society, economics and politics" (Milkoreit, 2016: 188). An empirical reader survey by Matthew Schneider-Mayerson shows how climate fiction "reminds concerned readers of the severity of climate change while impelling them to imagine environmental futures and consider the impact of climate change on human and nonhuman life". He proposes that, "[g]iven the gulf between environmental awareness and efficacious action, delineating novel and plausibly effective forms of cultural and political action could be an important role for environmental literature, art, and media in the coming years and decades" (2018: 473, 495). Although focused on climate fiction, these views are indicative of the extent to which the capacity to imagine otherwise and retain an element of utopianism is valued beyond the literary humanities.

Other recent research has pointed out the value of eco-utopian visions for inspiring and shaping radical activism. For example, Heather Alberro observes that "[e]coutopian works of fiction have certainly had a wide-reaching impact well beyond the realm of literary studies. … These works variedly envision and explore more socio-ecologically resilient alternatives which often permeate the public imagination in complex ways" (2020: 46). Others point to a perceived absence of radical climate visions that feel relevant. For example, in research with young activists in the north-east of England, Joe Herbert finds that negative impetuses to climate action and high levels of climate anxiety are not matched by equally powerful — detailed, compelling — radical, alternative visions. Herbert writes of "an imaginative gap between our current social reality and just and sustainable futures, driven by structural and psychological pressures faced by activists in the current era of multi-dimensional crisis" (2021: 373).

Therefore, utopia is, or could be, both a totalizing critique of the problem of climate change and a stimulus to structural change, *and* a source of personal inspiration that can nurture desires and capacities for action. This tension has always run through utopian studies. It is a tension between abstract and concrete utopia; between programme and process; desire and hope. In utopian studies, much political work has emphasized the necessity for utopian impulses and flimsy desires to be strengthened and transformed into more solid and effective hope or become concretized in utopian action. Utopian studies has also been alert to the ways in which even the best individual education of desire for something better needs to be nurtured and made collective. Although much radical political thought has conversely treated utopia as unrealistic and compensatory, utopian studies has always explored not merely how the world should be, along with the denunciatory, critical dimension of radical politics, but also the relationship between critical knowledge, understanding, and the capacity for action for change.

Perhaps it is this capacity of utopia to move constantly between visions and programmes, between system change and the desiring, practised, feeling dimension of change that makes it so valuable for discussions of the climate crisis. Because in some sense, it is between these scales — between the individual and the totalizing structure (both abstractions and fantasies in their different ways, albeit sometimes analytically valuable ones) — that utopia works. For me, utopia is best understood in the cultural circulation of alternatives, provoking and potentially transforming collective imaginaries. The expression of desire for a better way of living and being — be that in a fully blown formal utopian narrative or in everyday embedded practices of multispecies care—does something with and to us in contexts that are irreducibly social and complex.

Often this utopian function has been conceived of in terms of knowledge or cognition, predominantly in analyses of utopian and speculative literature in the tradition. Cognition matters insofar as it reflects *on* as well as being reflective *of* our realities. As Darko Suvin frames it, cognition "implies not only a *reflecting of but also on reality*. It implies a creative approach tending toward a dynamic transformation rather than toward a static mirroring of the author's environment. Such typical SF methodology ... is a *critical* one" (2014: s. 2.5, italics added).

However, a utopianism of only critique, only denunciation, would risk a kind of cognition that misses the simultaneous need to attend with affective *care* to the situation of the Anthropocene. In environmental education and beyond, researchers are thinking about adaptation to climate change not only in ecosystemic or sociopolitical terms, but as a cultural and emotional adjustment to a fundamentally altered world we now inhabit; a way of "staying with the

trouble" in Haraway's terms. In this sense, utopianism must be understood not as an alternative to shared earthly realities, but as a part of their fabrics. Utopia helps us reflect *with* our realities. The value of utopianism in relation to the climate crisis then may be through affect and adaptation as much as through cognition and critique. This positions utopia in a situation of ambivalence, which is not possible in analyses of the climate crisis that already know what is wrong and what the solution is. Coming to terms with climate change and moving past the Dithering will involve approaching it not only from the outside as a systemic problem, but from the inside, as Blanche Verlie argues:

> We need stories that enable us to *identify as part of climate change*, and that enable us to *stay with the ethical and interpersonal challenges of living with it*. And we need people to be actively engaged in the composition of such stories, so that they may inhabit, diversity and disperse these ways of relating. (Verlie, 2021: 104, emphasis added)

Understanding is not simply a matter of awareness leading to knowledge and then to action in a linear way. Instead, Verlie asks: "What if we started from a different understanding of what climate is, and how we can know it? What if lived, embodied, interpersonal and relational experiences were considered constitutive of climate and as valuable ways of comprehending it?" (2021: 5).

In relation to climate change there is value in thinking through the affective, adaptive element of utopia as valuable even if this remains on the territory of contradiction and ambiguity. We "learn to live with" climate change even as we need to remain "against" its long-term planetary impacts and injustices. Relevant utopian traditions, then, might be ones that see utopia as practice, as everyday hope, as affect as well as critique. Both these dimensions come ultimately from Ernst Bloch (1986), and much effort in utopian theory has sought to understand how the everyday felt desire of utopia can be transformed into collective action and change (for example, Moylan, 2021). A lot of writing on this topic has tended to undervalue the utopian impulse unless it is translated into denunciations of the wider system and programmes of action. But on the terrain of everyday experience, practice, and potential action, these fleeting utopian affects may be equally important. It is in these traditions that we might work on the relationship between utopia, climate, and system change — in relation to a knowing/wanting/doing gap rather than necessarily a communication/knowledge/action gap.

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7.2. Seeking Alternatives to the Triple-Growth Imperative: A Fool's Errand or a Slave's Dilemma?

António Ferreira and Ori Rubin

Abstract

A triple imperative dominates contemporary societies: physical and digital mobility need to continuously grow so that the economy can also continue growing. This is a remarkable state of affairs as this triple-growth imperative represents massive personal, societal, and environmental problems. Fighting this triple imperative is typically understood as a fool's errand: a pointless line of action that can only jeopardize those unwise enough to pursue it. There is, however, nothing foolish about it, as the triple imperative is rapidly leading humanity to its own collective destruction. Following the writings of Arno Gruen, we argue that fighting the triple-growth imperative constitutes, instead, a slave's dilemma. Contemporary subjects need to choose either a fundamentally honourable line of action against unethical domination that might save children and future generations from catastrophic circumstances — they should choose this knowing that such a line of action necessarily represents considerable hardship for those willing to pursue it. Alternatively, they can accept and contribute to the perpetuation of the triple imperative. This will grant them appealing rewards, but will come at a dire price at both personal and collective levels. What the slaves will do is, therefore, a key question of our times.

Key words: mobility, digitalization, economic growth, imperatives, future alternatives

Present-day societies are under the influence of a triple imperative on how to understand reality and shape the future. The first imperative is that the means of mobility must be continuously improved and accelerated for the benefit of the

avid consumer-traveller, for whom everything and anything needs to be available, accessible, and attainable (Rosa, 2018). The second imperative of contemporary societies determines the endless proliferation of digital technologies and, through them, the endless growth of digital mobility. These are presented by powerful lobbies as key and, in fact, inevitable building blocks for the future of human societies. As Shoshana Zuboff states,

> Among high-tech leaders, within the specialist literature, and among expert professionals there appears to be universal agreement on the idea that *everything* will be connected, knowable, and actionable in the near future: ubiquity [in digital technology] and its consequences in total information are an article of faith. (Zuboff, 2019: 220, original emphasis)

The third imperative is that all imaginable things need to be imaginatively explored so that they can somehow stimulate economic growth. As a result, the paradoxical question that is taking an increasingly central role in high-level policy-making is how incessant economic growth should be induced (Mazzucato, 2018: 4) in a global context where the economy is already too large for the planetary ecosystem to sustain it (Daly, 2005). This imperative naturally also includes promoting growth in both mobility and virtual mobility, which are key prerequisites for a multiplicity of growth-boosting innovation, production, and consumption activities.

The high hopes placed on digitalization are of particular relevance when physical mobility becomes less feasible due to environmental constraints and/or disruptions such as that imposed by COVID-19, as experienced in 2020 and 2021. In this problematic situation, the second imperative (ever-increasing virtual mobility) is employed with extra impetus due to the failure to carry on with the first imperative (ever-increasing physical mobility), so that the third imperative is protected (ever-increasing economic growth).

Our claim here is that contemporary societies need to open their imaginaries for the future beyond the triple imperative of economic growth propelled by mobility growth and/or digitalization growth. This research explores what blocks the emergence of alternatives. An increasingly widespread belief seems to be emerging: to fight the triple-growth imperative is a fool's errand. We hope to convince the reader that it is not. It might, unfortunately, be something worse: a slave's dilemma.

Mobility, Digitalization, Economics, Growth

Contemporary societies are characterized by high levels of mobility dependency. In line with this, Urry argued in *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (2000) that sociological research needs to shift its focus from an analysis of societies towards an analysis of mobilities. There are both important benefits and disadvantages resulting from this global pro-mobile societal orientation (Ferreira *et al.*, 2012). On the one hand, mobility facilitates economic exchanges; makes jobs, services, and goods more accessible; opens new horizons of psychological and cultural understanding; allows individuals to establish and maintain meaningful social connections across vast geographies; and creates a subjective sense of freedom and unlimited possibilities.

On the other hand, mobility is a source of major environmental impacts, and is making global climate change an "exceptionally significant" future (Urry, 2008: 261). It is also a source of major impacts on human health, such as respiratory diseases resulting from toxic emissions, and injuries and deaths caused by accidents (Nieuwenhuijsen & Khreis, 2019: 3–16). Furthermore, mobility dependence is a source of fragility: the more dependent on mobility a society is, the greater the impacts of mobility disruptions. This became evident during the air travel disruption resulting from the ash cloud produced by the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in 2010 (Birtchnell & Büscher, 2011) and was emphasized during the global disruption imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The introduction of COVID-19 lockdowns during 2020–2021 was a quasi-experiment into the limits of virtual mobility as a desirable practice. While digital means of communication proved themselves capable of solving practicalities during the lockdowns, they fell short of providing the full richness of interacting face-to-face with loved ones or visiting a desirable destination. However, heavy reliance on digital means was not just disappointing. It was *painful*. So-called "Zoom fatigue" is today a common problem among many knowledge workers, leading researchers to develop theoretical conceptualizations to try to explain why people are struggling to continue attending virtual meetings (for example, Bailenson, 2021).

Moreover, there is consensus that the use of contemporary digital technologies benefits "Big Tech" corporations at the cost of democracy and the public interest (Zuboff, 2019: 516). To aggravate matters further, there are soaring uncertainties about the negative impacts of digital technologies in children's emotional and cognitive development (Desmurget, 2019: 18), and doubts increase about the safety of wireless radiation devices for physical health (Pall, 2018; Sage & Burgio, 2018; Kostoff *et al.*, 2020). In addition, the rare minerals needed to develop digital technologies are, indeed, rare. Increasing

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reliance on them will become a source of major geopolitical tensions in the near future (Stegen, 2015). Despite these negatives, wireless digital means are becoming dominant in contemporary societies and a progressively central feature of how the future is imagined. Why? Because they are proving to be highly effective in stimulating consumer demand and, through that, in promoting economic growth. However, evidence accumulates demonstrating that neither consumption nor economic growth can be seen as a synonym for well-being and prosperity. As Tim Jackson observes,

> An economy whose stability rests on the relentless stimulation of consumer demand destroys not only the fragile resource base of this finite planet, but also the stability of its financial and political system. Consumer capitalism relies on debt to keep growth growing. Burgeoning credit creates fragile balance sheets. Complex financial instruments are used to disguise unsavoury risk. But when the debts eventually become toxic, the system crashes. (Jackson, 2017: 24)

Fighting the Triple-Growth Imperative as a Fool's Errand

While Big Tech has become more powerful, those less convinced of the goodness of technological innovations have become rather powerless. As a result, the triple-growth imperative became the uncontested credo of contemporary societies deeply shaped by the triple-helix model of innovation (Etzkowitz, 2003; Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2001). In brief, this model stipulates that universities, industry, and governments must work in increasingly interconnected ways so that supposedly virtuous processes of "hybridization" can occur. The neoliberal underpinnings of this model are obvious and determine that, while governments are supposed to become more entrepreneurial, universities become more commercial, and corporations more governmental. This is a model that serves to naturalize the notion that innovation is the only way to move forward, and that "moving forward" necessarily means growing the size of the economy in ways that primarily serve the corporate elites.

Fighting this techno-corporate-governmentality is perceived by many as a fool's errand, for good reasons: if the success of an academic career is determined by the capacity of the academic to attract funding to promote yet

another innovation, demonstrating critical thinking against the established funding powers becomes a recipe for professional failure. A similar problem is being experienced in a variety of other professions and organizations beyond academia, for example, local authorities, central governments, hospitals, and non-governmental organizations.

Promoting ever-increasing physical and virtual mobility constitutes an important element of this disciplinary strategy. The exceedingly "liquid" (Bauman, 2007) — that is, uncertain, precarious, and shifting — properties of highly mobile societies constitute effective means to legitimate and consolidate abusive work contracts and funding arrangements across multiple sectors, professions, organizations and geographies: either one accepts the rules of the game, or the money moves somewhere else.

The Slave's Dilemma

Presenting the fight against the triple-growth imperative as a fool's errand fails to highlight the madness of what is happening. Contemporary "developed" societies are forcing on individuals and organizations the pursuit of economic growth through (technological) innovation accelerated by physical and virtual mobility while failing to realize something obvious: an acritical obsession with mobility, economic growth, and technological progress is the reason why planet Earth is increasingly at risk of becoming uninhabitable for humans (Meadows & Meadows, 1972; Daly, 1999; Gray, 2004; Daly, 2005; Kallis, 2011; Pilling, 2018). Fighting this logic cannot be portrayed as a fool's errand because what is perfectly irrational and suicidal is to promote it. A more precise way of portraying this situation is as a "slave's dilemma".

The notion of the slave's dilemma as presented by the authors of the present text is inspired by the work of Arno Gruen (1995). This Swiss-German psychoanalyst proposed that contemporary societies are becoming highly dominated by a form of realpolitik where the priority for all individuals must be to maximize their own power. This requires that they suppress any connection with their own moral identities and instead learn to please the authorities. As their capacity to please increases in the same proportion that acritical obedience becomes their second nature, the authorities delegate to selected individuals of great *merit* increasingly greater powers. This is a costly process: obedient individuals experience a deep sense of shame and corruption resulting from this prostitution; however, that sense must be suppressed at all costs because it is too unbearable (see Sally Weintrobe's (2020) discussion of the notion of "moral

injury"). In practice, such individuals become unaware of what they feel or why they think in a certain way instead of another. To maintain their role, obedient individuals must focus all their energies on producing the feelings and thoughts that they are supposed to manifest, as determined by the established authorities. In other words, even though they seem to hold great powers and prestige, they are slaves of the establishment that reproduce the status quo.

The above discussion is critical to understanding why fighting the triple-growth imperative is not a fool's errand. There is nothing irrational or foolish about it. It is, instead, a slave's dilemma. Individuals can choose to continue their numbed lives, enjoying the comforts derived from being seemingly powerful and being considered individuals of great merit and achievement while driving humanity (and therefore themselves and their loved ones) to self-destruction through economic growth and innovation. Alternatively, individuals can choose to face all their inner pains, their past experiences and horrors as slaves, lose the powers and credibility the establishment has granted them as rewards for their obedience, and embrace human- and nature-centred alternatives beyond technocratic domination.

In the meantime, as we write, the world is heading towards self-destruction. What will the reader do about it?

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7.3. Digital Utopias and Capitalist Ideology

Tom Redshaw

Abstract

Capitalism and utopia are often understood as directly opposed. Where one denotes the existing social order, the other represents visions for a radical alternative. This paper takes a different approach, exploring the role of utopian thought in contemporary capitalist ideology. Tracing the rise of "cyberlibertarianism" and its continuing growth within networks of entrepreneurs and professionals in the digital economy, as well as cultures that have emerged around the use of these new technologies, this essay examines how certain visions for "digital utopia" are increasingly functioning as capitalist ideology.

Key words: digital utopia, cyberlibertarianism, bitcoin, blockchain, ideology

In his plenary lecture at the Utopian Studies Society conference in 2019, Darko Suvin asserted "there is no capitalist utopia". If capitalism has a "collective horizon that pretends to utopia, that is fascism" (Suvin, 2019: 1:04:00). Suvin's point was twofold. Firstly, capitalism is the present against which utopias must define themselves. To imagine an alternative society, our imagination must stretch beyond capitalism. Secondly, any vision of a harmonious capitalist system serves primarily to justify the existing social order. This is ideology, not utopia. And in moments of crisis, efforts to protect this social order will in practice lead to authoritarian suppression, not social transformation. However, there is undoubtedly a peculiar strain of what would be commonly recognized as utopianism permeating the ideology of today's capitalist class. From Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk's projects for space colonization, to Mark Zuckerberg's plans for a global virtual reality (the "metaverse"), it is indeed difficult to find a billionaire that does not peddle a vision for the future that would feel more appropriate in a science fiction novel. Among broader publics too, we have witnessed waves of "techno-optimism" over the past few decades, with each new stage of development in digital technology proclaimed as revolutionizing

social relations, from peer-to-peer networks providing the infrastructure for a new global commons, to Twitter playing an apparently vital role in revolutions across North Africa and the Middle East. Few of these visions are avowedly socialist or communist. Some hint at a transition to "post-capitalism", but many are stridently free market, seeing a combination of technology and free-market forces as the route to what is explicitly termed a digital or cyber utopia. What I want to explore in this paper is the role this conception of utopia plays in contemporary capitalist ideology, with a particular focus on the culture that has emerged online around the use of cryptocurrencies.

Scholars such as Richard Barbrook, Andy Cameron, Langdon Winner, and Fred Turner have long argued that the world we inhabit today has been largely shaped by a "cyberlibertarian" ideology, which they explicitly label as utopianism, at the heart of which lies a vision for a future society in which all forms of governance are replaced by computer networks and individuals are "free" to interact in open markets. Barbrook and Cameron first outlined the contours of this "new faith" in their 1996 essay, "The Californian Ideology". A network of writers, artists, hackers and capitalists were identified as the prophets of this movement, a new social class of "digital artisans" who proclaimed the internet to be a new "space" with new social relations, where the old rules do not and cannot apply, a "digital utopia" of freedom and equality. In the following year, Winner provided a new name for this ideology in his now famous essay "Cyberlibertarian Myths and the Prospects for Community", tracing its emergence via an increasing array of literature, including self-proclaimed manifestos calling on people to embrace this new world, lest they be left "languishing in the dust" of the old world:

> Democracy will flourish as people use computer communication to debate issues, publicise positions, organise movements, participate in elections and perhaps eventually vote online ... in this new sociotechnical setting, the authority of centralised government and entrenched bureaucracy will simply melt away. (Winner, 1997: 15)

A combination of technological determinism, radical individualism, and free-market capitalism characterize this ideology, which Winner notes carries a very limited understanding of what democracy actually entails. Despite this and many other critiques, the influence of cyberlibertarianism continued to grow among the new "tech elite" of Silicon Valley. Turner's book *From Counterculture to Cyberculture* (2006) provided a more thorough history of the people involved in producing this "digital utopianism" (as Turner describes it) and outlined how this came to frame the way broader publics came to understand computers,

helping to usher in the age of personal computing and networked production we now live in. Turner's work makes clear the benefits of this ideology for the new class of Silicon Valley capitalists. On a personal level, it casts them as radical heroes taking on the old centralized systems of power. At the socioeconomic level, it served to propagate the necessity of the goods and services their firms were providing. However, as the digital economy grew and this new "tech elite" became more closely entwined with established structures of power and wealth, cyberlibertarian ideology began to splinter.

For many workers in the digital economy, the firms of Silicon Valley began to represent the old bureaucracies, particularly due to the increasing centrality of surveillance in their business models. Among these "digital artisans" — the creatives and engineers, the computer scientists and developers, the students and writers — an alternative expression of cyberlibertarianism had been forming, one centred on a vision for decentralized platforms where large firms, as well as nation states and bureaucracies, would be obsolete. In this agora, small traders and communities would control their own networks. The vision at the heart of this outgrowth of cyberlibertarianism, perhaps articulated best by the Cypherpunk movement, was decentralization and disintermediation. Techniques of encryption and peer-to-peer technologies in particular, such as file-sharing networks like Napster and later, cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, were opening up new pathways for collaboration while also safeguarding groups of users from monopolization. On this basis, they were proclaimed to be ushering in a new society where there would be direct democracy, free sharing of knowledge, and, as Julian Assange asserted, "privacy for the weak, transparency for the powerful" (2012: 141).

The Pirate Party movement became the most prominent voice for this and attracted notable support in the wake of the 2013 Snowden revelations. Gavin Mueller provided a Marxist analysis of this ideology in his 2018 essay, "Digital Proudhonism", in which he identifies a range of representative literature, such as that published by the "left market anarchist thinktank and media center", the Center for a Stateless Society (C4SS), as well as the writing of prominent journalists such as Paul Mason. This ideology exists very much in antagonism with the capitalists of Silicon Valley and appeals to many working in the digital economy. Yet what it advocates, Mueller argues, is not a progression to postcapitalism, but a regression to networks of petty producers who continue to rely on the labour of proletarians working in large-scale factories to produce their devices and infrastructure. This punctures the "utopian fantasies" of the digital artisans, "who believe themselves reliant on nothing but a personal computer and their own creativity" (Mueller, 2018). In this, and their strident technological determinism, the digital Proudhonists maintain key elements of cyberlibertarian ideology despite their opposition to the tech elite of Silicon Valley. These overlaps

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are nowhere more visible than in the history of Bitcoin, the first cryptocurrency. And it is here too, that I think we see the origins of another cyberlibertarian utopianism, one which is now reaching levels of global significance.

Some scholars such as David Golumbia (2016) have traced the genealogy of ideas that inspired Bitcoin's development, and drawn a straight line from the Austrian School of Economics via cyberlibertarianism through to the contemporary popular subculture of cryptocurrency traders. While I agree with this general trajectory, I think it overlooks important tensions that occurred along the way, and some of the consequences this has had for the culture that has grown around cryptocurrency. Bitcoin emerged in 2008 and bears the hallmarks of both cyberlibertarianism and its "digital Proudhonist" offshoot. This can be seen in the histories of Bitcoin written by Lana Swartz (2018) and Finn Brunton (2019). In the former, Swartz details tensions between groups of early Bitcoin users and developers that were expressed via two "techno-economic imaginaries". On the one hand, there were "digital metallists", driven by a classic economic libertarian understanding of money as a free-floating commodity. Just as precious metals once were, Bitcoin was to be a new form of money not minted by a nation state but "mined" and traded in a free market. These ideas do indeed emanate directly from the work of "Austrian economists", the most hard-line faction of neoliberal thought. On the other hand, however, there were "infrastructural mutualists", more closely aligned with the Cypherpunk movement. "From this perspective," Swartz writes, "Bitcoin is not primarily an alternative to state-backed money but an alternative to private payment intermediaries that seek to control and survey its passage. It affords a cooperativist vision of a money technology and therefore society" (2018: 632).

The vision for society that underpinned this understanding of Bitcoin was a "mutualist" one where everyone participates in maintaining shared infrastructure.[1] Swartz argues that ultimately those attempting to guide Bitcoin's development in this direction were pushed into the margins by the digital metallists, particularly as Bitcoin trading became professionalized. This has since been borne out by evidence of centralization within the Bitcoin network, where large "mining" firms now run the hardware, and large exchange platforms administer users' transactions (Parkin, 2020: 220; Fridmanski, 2021: 173). Nevertheless, much of the "Proudhonist" rhetoric of infrastructural mutualism continues to find expression in projects such as Ethereum, where blockchain technology is the basis for a "community run" infrastructure that provides "bold new ways for creators to earn online" (Ethereum, 2022). In the most thorough sociological investigation of Bitcoin and blockchain technologies to date, Jack Parkin concludes that, while there is a "core strand of right-wing extremism in these cultures", there are multiple cultural, political, ideological and economic

imperatives guiding development in different trajectories. He states that "there is no singular blockchain worldview *yet (the quest for) some level of decentralisation unites them all*" (Parkin, 2020: 225, emphasis added).

Decentralization remains a key signifier throughout crypto cultures because it encapsulates the metallist desire for free markets *and* the more radical rhetoric of infrastructural mutualism that carries broader appeal. In this way, alongside far-right conspiracies about central banks, the legacy of the Cypherpunks also continues, speaking to valid concerns about growing levels of surveillance, corruption, and corporate monopolies. However, as it does this, it also helps obscure some of the material reality of blockchain technologies. Not only are there concentrations of power in cryptocurrency networks, the majority of blockchain projects extend processes of financialization, creating artificially scarce digital assets that represent all kinds of things from land registries to art ownership that can be traded in unregulated markets at a global scale. Moreover, the energy required to power the Bitcoin network alone is more than entire countries use in a year. Indeed, some recent estimates indicate that Bitcoin now requires more energy input than the rest of the internet combined (de Vries, 2021: 513).

When these realities are addressed by proponents of Bitcoin, they are often countered by a utopian conviction that over the long term, blockchain will deliver revolutionary changes that justify these current problems. To take one recent example from *Bitcoin Magazine*:

> The emergence of bitcoin mining will galvanize the great-
> est revolution in energy production since fossil fuels and
> the Industrial Revolution…[it] will enrich lives and relieve
> suffering at an immeasurable scale. (Armstrong, 2021)

This typifies much of the writing produced across a global network of special-ized news sites, blogs and forums. And it brings us back to the original question regarding the role of utopianism in contemporary capitalist ideology. One inter-pretation may be that such visions evidence what Mark Fisher famously described as "capitalist realism": "the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible to even *imagine* a coherent alternative to it" (Fisher, 2009: 2).

That there are now popular social imaginaries that do not stretch beyond capitalism but instead envisage its acceleration or reconfiguration as a path to utopia appears to attest to this. Another interpretation may be to return to the class analysis of Barbrook, Cameron, and Mueller to follow the emergence of new social classes that have emerged around the digital economy, namely

the tech elite and the digital artisans, both of whom share material interests in its expansion and are therefore more predisposed to entertaining such ideas. However it is interpreted, the political consequences of libertarian utopianism in digital culture appear to be growing. This year saw the right-wing populist president of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, make the country the first in the world to accept Bitcoin as legal tender. Bitcoin does not function as a stable currency, its price fluctuates wildly in response to events as trivial as a tweet by Elon Musk. As a publicity stunt, however, Bukele has been able to successfully energize his strategy for establishing right-wing hegemony by attracting the interest of a global and growing subculture with its own rich elite. Moreover, the utopianism permeating this subculture has provided Bukele with a means to rearticulate neoliberal politics in a newly invigorating way that resonates in an era defined by seemingly unaccountable financial institutions, mass surveillance, and political inertia. As Jorge Cuéllar (2021) summarized it, "for El Salvador, this is pure capitalism delivered through cryptography, where the daydream of laissez-faire decentralization masks an unsettling authoritarian creep". Digital utopia functioning as capitalist ideology.

Note

1. It should be noted that for this reason Bitcoin and blockchain technology have occasionally attracted the interest of socialist and anarchist groups, although these experimentations remain marginal.

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7.4. Is What's Mine Really Mine? Reimagining Resource Ownership and Control in Post-Apocalyptic Fiction

Cara Linley

Abstract

Post-apocalyptic fiction allows survivors the opportunity to rebuild communities on a *tabula rasa*. Worlds after the apocalypse often result in extreme resource scarcity, which means that protagonists are forced to make difficult decisions about the "rightful" distribution of resources, cognizant of the fact that these decisions can literally be a matter of life and death. Works like Frank Tayell's *Surviving the Evacuation* series (2011–2021) and Adrian J. Walker's *The End of the World Running Club* (2014) point to some of the tensions scholars have identified in notions of ownership and control over resources in our contemporary world. Economist Thomas Piketty (2020) has challenged conceptions of unrestricted ownership contributing to wealth inequality by advocating for increased temporary ownership. Reece Jones (2016) has argued that continued maintenance of territorial control through heavily defended national borders is also a cause of global inequality. Despite their argued negative effects, it is difficult to point to objective foundations for private land claims or national borders (Rose, 1998). The *tabula rasa* in post-apocalyptic texts allows us to explore the limits and potentials for how we imagine property rights. In so doing, questions can be raised, or even models provided, that are relevant to current global crises.

Key words: legal philosophy, science fiction, post-apocalyptic literature, property law, ownership

Post-apocalyptic fiction presents worlds experiencing intense crisis and significant change. Often central governments, judicial systems, and police no longer exist, which means that individuals cannot rely on the assistance of others to establish or maintain ownership over belongings and spaces. In these worlds,

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it is hard to know what it means to say that someone has the right to "own" or "control" land or resources, and how to establish those rights. Rather than relying on previous legal regimes, this body of fiction often explores new ways to govern the relationship between humans and resources. The thought experiments and crisis scenarios posed by novels like Adrian J. Walker's *The End of the World Running Club* (2014) and Frank Tayell's *Surviving the Evacuation* series (2013–2021) pose a number of thought experiments and crisis scenarios. These provide opportunities to explore alternative bases for the distribution and redistribution of resources. Walker's and Tayell's works prioritize ownership by citizens or residents of the area in which the resources are located, and characters whose thoughts and actions readers sympathize with. In turn, questions are raised that are relevant to current crises such as global inequality and climate change, which may rest on contemporary conceptions of property rights.

Adrian J. Walker's *The End of the World Running Club* is a 2014 novel set in Edinburgh. It follows the aftermath of a widespread meteor impact that has wiped out communication and the central British government. The majority of available farmland has been destroyed by the meteor strikes, which have also destroyed most of the food in supermarkets and homes. The story follows Ed Hill and his friends as they travel south from Edinburgh in search of safety, and encounter other survivors on their way.

One such encounter is with Gloria, a young girl whom the group meets just outside of Edinburgh. She has lit a fire to lure them to her makeshift home, intending to kill them and take their supplies. The group are quickly able to overpower her, and she pleads for her life, mentioning a sick baby. The group immediately lets her go and becomes sympathetic towards her, even when they learn that she routinely uses the fire as a lure and has killed many in this way. The next day, they return Gloria's gun to her and travel to the neighbouring farm to barter for a car. Upon meeting the inhabitants, the Hamilton family, they learn that they have a deal with Gloria whereby Gloria hands over her dead so that they can be fed to the Hamiltons' pigs to keep the farm running. The group are horrified and consider attacking, but are subdued by the Hamiltons first. Gloria returns and attacks the Hamiltons, ultimately overpowering and killing them with the group's help. They leave for a second time with Gloria taking up residence in the farm.

In participating in the Hamiltons' death and allowing Gloria to survive, the group enables Gloria's control over the farm and thus appears to recognize that she has a greater right than the Hamiltons to its resources. However, the Hamiltons were the legal owners of the property while Gloria only arrives in the area after the meteor strike. Nor is Gloria an innocent party. Her behaviour is arguably worse; she is an active killer while the Hamiltons were passive beneficiaries of her killing. It is hard to determine what grants Gloria her property

right. The group also knows that Gloria is likely to continue killing; after all, how else will she maintain the farm? In fact it appears that the sole factor in Gloria's favour is her baby. It is the baby that renders her sympathetic and consequently deserving of the farm. Thus, in Walker's post-apocalyptic world, the protagonists have used the vacuum left by the disappearance of the central state to come up with a wholly novel property rights regime, one where the most sympathetic individuals get first pick of the resources.

The regime hinted at in *The End of the World Running Club* may not seem particularly solid or workable in our contemporary world. However, it does point to the possibilities of much more temporary forms of ownership. After all, if ownership is based on a particular person's sympathetic nature, it is almost guaranteed to change over time as their personal situation changes. As Gloria's child grows up, she will necessarily be granted less priority than those who give birth after her.

The concept of temporary ownership is a significant potential solution for both the global inequality crisis and the climate emergency. For example, French economist Thomas Piketty (2020) has attributed contemporary wealth inequality to a resurgence in the rise of dynastic families accumulating significant wealth over generations. He proposes that ownership rights be fundamentally rethought and made more temporary. In the case of dynastic wealth this might take the form of large inheritance taxes that limit how much wealth can be passed on after death.

Temporary ownership can be applied to more than just individual forms of ownership. The nation-state has an additional layer of control over land and resources that sits above that of the individual and extends to everything within its national boundaries. This control manifests through taxation as well restricting building through planning permissions. US geographer and sociologist Reece Jones has argued that strict national borders maintain global inequality by trapping individuals in less advantaged countries. He describes the system of defended (or militarized) national borders as "a collective, structural violence that deprives the poor of access to wealth and opportunities" (Jones, 2016: 14). Jones also proposes a fundamental rethink but of bounded spaces in general. Like Piketty, he has argued for a more temporary form of ownership, although he believes property rights should return to the global commons after a certain period of time, as opposed to any national repository of taxation (Jones, 2016: 99). In combination with a softening of strict national borders, Jones thus looks to reduce the monopoly on valuable space and resources by wealthy states as well as wealthy individuals.

A global view of the world underpinned by hard borders and bounded spaces also affects how we approach the climate emergency. Countries that are likely to be the least affected by climate change know that they can close their borders to

the worst affected areas when it becomes necessary. This becomes a convenient excuse for inaction. Populations that will be displaced if rising sea levels destroy their homes are also cut off from alternative spaces. While they are often termed climate-change "refugees", they are not protected under the admittedly weak protection of the 1951 Refugee Convention. The forms of temporary ownership and softer boundaries described above would therefore be one step on the way to opening up space to rethink these issues.

Despite the compelling arguments put forward by Jones and Piketty, temporary ownership has many opponents. It holds moral weight to say that we "own" something and we feel strongly about our possessions. It therefore appears be at odds with one of the most fundamental principles of property law. In 1753, the prominent English jurist Sir William Blackstone wrote that "[t]here is nothing which so generally strikes the imagination, and engages the affections of mankind, as the right of property", which he further described as "that sole and despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world" (Blackstone, 1753: Vol. 1, Book II, 1). Yet, we actually struggle to identify a solid basis for the notion that we have the right to own something that occurs naturally in the world. In 1998 property law scholar C. M. Rose pointed out that most do not acknowledge that Blackstone himself qualified his famous quote with "few that will give themselves the trouble to consider the original and foundation of this right". She terms these "nervous sentences" as "the hidden skeleton in property's closet" (1998: 605). More recently, Piketty (2020) undertakes an extensive review of private property rights throughout Western history in *Capital and Ideology,* to show that the ability to own property and pass it on to others is a product of particular socio-economic circumstances. Most significantly there has in fact never been an example of absolute, unrestricted private property ownership in history, with most political systems limiting rights through taxation. While there appears to be little take-up of these issues beyond the discussion by Rose, Piketty, and Jones, they show that there are good reasons to question the status quo. Further, the above review of *The End of the World Running Club* shows that literature is another avenue to explore this issue further.

One of the most surprising things about post-apocalyptic fiction is how often communities are depicted as surviving or even thriving. Despite the nominally dystopian backdrop, many stories end on messages of hope and may in fact be closer to utopias than dystopias. In the mixing of utopia and dystopia we find echoes of Le Guin's concept of "utopiyin" and "utopiyang", whereby "every eutopia contains a dystopia, every dystopia contains a eutopia" (2016: 195). At the same time, these stories are not wholly utopian either; survival remains a struggle. Frederic Jameson's statement that utopia "is most authentic when we cannot imagine it" therefore

starts to ring true, as he describes its function as "not in helping us to imagine a better future but rather in demonstrating our utter incapacity to imagine such a future" (Jameson, 2004: 46). Therefore, even fiction which depicts its characters as clinging to familiar concepts of ownership and control may be just as informative and ripe for analysis as fiction which is more radical.

English author Frank Tayell's *Surviving the Evacuation* series is a useful example of this. The series is made up of eighteen novels to date, the first of which was published in 2013. The books explore a post-apocalyptic world ravaged by a zombie plague and is primarily set in the UK. In general terms, the story follows a community of ten-thousand people as they seek a permanent base to settle. In the sixteenth book, *Unwanted Visitors, Unwelcome Guests* (2019), the group starts to flee to the Faroe Islands, but is surprised to find a small group of Faroese still living in the centre of the main island. They are begrudgingly given permission to live in one of the towns under strict conditions. They must leave the homes clean and undamaged and must leave before a certain date. While the protagonists are disappointed, they do not seriously consider attempting to take the land by force.

The protagonists thus accept that the Faroese have the right to control the use of the land in the town, although they do not appear to have any legal right to do so. None of the Faroese seem to have any individual legal ownership right over any properties in the town because the town as a whole is deserted and all the homes left unlocked, evidencing a clear intention to abandon them. Nor do the Faroese seem to be acting like a state defending its borders. The abandonment of the town also means they lack any practical ability to secure those borders, something which has generally been accepted as crucial in determining the existence borders with other states (Scott, 2009: 4). Rather, it appears that these claims to control the land are accepted as legitimate on the basis that they are Faroese. In other words, their citizenship is taken to encompass a right to own any land that exists within the borders of the previously-existing state. This conception of how rights to land work may signal the extent to which nationality and national borders dominates popular culture. Far from the soft, porous borders that Jones would wish to see, it seems that Tayell believes these borders might remain enforced and respected by ordinary citizens even past the age of government and military.

Interestingly, Tayell's books also seem to go further than Jones to suggest that nationality of a single state can manifest as ties or even rights to a state's region. Characters from Britain feel a sense of loss when they are faced with having to leave Europe, specifically France, permanently, even if a return to Britain could never be possible. The loss is not well defined but it appears to carry a weight that suggests it could be both emotional and practical:

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For the sake of the children, all of the children, if we can come up with an alternative, now is the time. Otherwise, after Calais, when we have the ships, we will have no choice but to travel together to America ... None of us will ever return. Nor will our children. (Tayell, 2018: 49)

While Tayell's series provides no new models or solutions in relation to ownership or control of resources, it does reflect and extend understandings of nationality and national borders. In turn, this raises a number of questions which are highly relevant to the global inequality and climate crises. If we are to accept that nationality confers individual rights to resources, questions are raised about what it is about nationality that confers such rights, and how far they might extend. Is it a matter of blood, ethnicity, or generational ties; or does residency provide a stronger claim?

In the context of the climate emergency, it is the concept that citizenship of a state might encompass rights to land in a region that is most intriguing. As noted, the lack of provision for climate change "refugees" means that the status of those who may lose the land on which their nation sits is particularly unclear. However, Tayell's series prompts us to ask whether nationality grants certain rights to land and resources in neighbouring or related countries, at least, vis-à-vis citizens of more far-flung nations. Would a Scottish resident holding UK citizenship have a greater right to land in Wales than a French person? Would a French person have a greater right to land in the Ukraine than a US citizen, yet a lesser right than a Romanian? This prevailing sentiment might not be desirable, especially when we consider the calls from Piketty and Jones for a more porous and temporary ownership to combat global inequality. If it means Bangladeshi displacees would be expected to be resettled in neighbouring countries such as India, as opposed to further abroad, does this only spread the burden on far too few countries who are ill-equipped to handle it?

The post-apocalyptic scenario, in clearing away formal legal institutions such as central government, courts, and the police, provides the opportunity for a *tabula rasa* on which to rebuild society. In so doing it has the potential to reimagine our relationship to the land and the resources that are present within it. The power of radical reimaginings can be to stimulate new ways of thinking about property ownership in the real world. Novels such as *The End of the World Running Club* can illustrate and illuminate concepts like temporary forms of ownership which have real-world significance for solving contemporary crises such as global inequality and climate change. At the same time, novels such as Frank Tayell's *Surviving the Evacuation* series represent much more conservative depictions of land and resource governance, which can all the same, provide

areas of illumination for these real-world crises. By extending contemporary conceptions of national and regional rights to resources, we can raise further questions about the implications of current attitudes and ideologies. The heady mix of eutopia and dystopia that post-apocalyptic fiction tends to present thus poses an area for fruitful and significant further exploration.

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Emotional and Legal Implications of Artificial Intelligence

8.1. The Interrelationship between Human Empathy and Technological Progress in *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro

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Abstract

The aim of this essay is to explore the interrelationship between technological progress and the acquisition or loss of empathy in the science fiction novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021) by Kazuo Ishiguro. After outlining the results of contemporary studies on the concept of empathy in the fields of robotics and artificial intelligence (AI), I will explore some cultural reverberations of a potentially epistemic turn through the future scenario envisaged by the laureate of the 2017 Nobel Prize for Literature. *Klara and the Sun* is a dystopian narrative, in which humans and robots — known as artificial friends (AFs) — coexist. This relationship feeds the author's inclinations toward the study of human loneliness and love in the aftermath of a climate crisis, a theme that he previously explored in the uchronia *Never Let Me Go* (2005).

Key words: dystopia, artificial intelligence, human nature, science fiction, hyper-technological futures

The word "empathy" finds its roots in the Greek word *pathos*, which could be translated in English as "feeling". Its first occurrence dates to the translation of the German word *Einfühlung*. It was applied in the field of psychology in the early twentieth century to refer to the imaginative projection of a subjective state into an object so that the object appears to be infused with the feeling in a sort of animism (Wispé, 1986: 316). Since the early 1990s, empathy has been an object of interest in cognitive science and has been regarded as the inherently human tendency to attribute so-called propositional attitudes or intentional states of

belief, desire, and hope to other beings, as an attempt to explain their behaviour. Because it is also considered as the expression of a connection between two animated subjects (Quine, 1992: 68–69), human empathy is associated with AI consciousness in "machine societies", in which the role of the "machine" in relation to humans seems to hint at a perceived reduction of "the human" to "a component of a system" (Slocombe, 2020: 214), according to the social framework of the "two cultures", namely, the hard sciences and the humanities (Snow, 1990: 169). Therefore, the presence or lack of empathy would determine the (in)ability to understand and experience the feelings and thoughts of another person — or animate being — without having them communicated in an explicit manner. In this essay, the concept of empathy will be considered as a tool that humans use actively to understand and coordinate their intra- and inter-species relationships.

In fact, empathy has been identified as a key component of human–machine relationships in British fiction since the Victorian era — exemplary narratives are Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875), and in the United States, *The Steam Man of the Prairies* (1868) by Edward S. Ellis. Since then, the western cultural imaginary has fed on and contributed to the spread of visions of future scenarios in which humans and robots do not coexist peacefully, as mirrored by the conflictual existence driving the narrative of Philip K. Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1964) and its 1982 film adaptation, *Blade Runner*. Nevertheless, in their study of sex-robots, Kate Devlin and Olivia Belton (2021) provide evidence of contemporary conciliatory attitudes toward the machine. In fact, contemporary neurophysiological studies have found that people are moved by compassion when a robot vacuum cleaner is verbally harassed (Hoenen *et al.*, 2016), or by empathy when they see a robot being physically harmed (Suzuki *et al.*, 2015).

In my view, one of the most immediate and resonant instances of the relevance of empathy in the fields of robotics and AI is the famous robot called Sophia, activated in 2016 by former Disney imaginer David Hanson, CEO of Hanson Robotics. Since 2017, she has been a legal citizen of Saudi Arabia, which also makes her the first robot citizen in the world. All information concerning her creation, motives, and goals can be found on a dedicated page on the Hanson Robotics website, which is structured in such a way that readers are exposed to Sophia's objective uniqueness in the first section. The second section highlights the public implications of her existence and her contribution to technological advancement, while the third and most articulate part, seems to answer the question: what can Sophia do for me, as an individual, as a human being? The psychological implications of Sophia's existence in our world are eloquent in the last part, according to which the "Loving AI" project "seeks to understand how robots can adapt to users' needs through

intra and interpersonal development" (Hanson Robotics, 2022). The website includes the remark that this is a deliberately "science-fiction-like" concept, but it is my understanding that what Hanson Robotics, Amazon, and fellow major corporates do not seem to consider is that this idea is not necessarily utopian. In fact, robotic adaptation and development do not necessarily entail complete human control over the extent of such changes, for they most likely refer to robots' ability to update and redesign their behaviour in response to stimuli from the surrounding environment. In the case of interpersonal development through interaction with users, this environment is determined by the way in which humans relate to robots, which researchers have called "human-humanoid interaction" (Herrmann & Leonards, 2018: 2135).

The first conference on human-humanoid interaction (HHI) took place in 2008 and is today one of the main focuses of social robotics, which delves into the cultural aspects of determining the social acceptance of humanoid robots in our communities. For the time being, inter-species studies in HHI are focusing on the possibility that soon enough humans could be working side by side with humanoids (Kiesler, 2005: 731). In fact, this peculiar experience could trigger unwanted psychological mechanisms in human respondents, which "may influence critical cognitive processes" (Koban *et al.*, 2021: 2) and determine whether they hinder or improve performance. In fact, evidence suggests that people tend to attribute humanlike characteristics to social robots (Spatola *et al.*, 2020: 75; Koban *et al.*, 2021: 5). This human tendency is mirrored by the changing perception of android beings in the last fifteen years. In fact, until 2007, researchers would study the human perception of robots through a perceptual-cognitive lens, which observed the robotic skills of perception, knowledge, and communication, as well as the affective capacities to sense and feel. Today, this vision has been integrated with a social cognitive dimension aimed at assessing androids' skills of social reasoning and moral cognition (Koban *et al.*, 2021: 3).

Social reasoning and moral cognition are the skills that make Klara a rather peculiar robot in Kazuo Ishiguro's latest novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021). The story is told from the perspective of Klara, who is an insightful artificial friend (AF) that runs on solar power. She lives — or functions — in a techno-dystopian future in the USA, where social relations and family dynamics are altered by genetic engineering procedures on children and robots' crucial role in their upbringing. In Ishiguro's dystopia, children are usually "lifted", or subject to genetic alterations of their bodies to surpass natural human limits. Because of their peculiar (altered) nature, lifted children are partnered with robots, or AFs. The name used to refer to the robots is indicative of the social matrix of this AI: their role is to attend to the needs of the children in the household. In this "feasible eugenic dystopia" (Claeys, 2010: 109), middle-class parents must decide whether they want their children to undergo a process of genetic modification.

Such a process is never accurately described, but is related to neurotechnology. This decision will result in either a successful future for the children or their painful and slow demise. Klara will learn that parents do not always agree on their offspring's future, and those who oppose the biomodification process usually lose their job to androids and self-segregate in "post-employed" urban fractions. Segregation also occurs between "lifted" and "unlifted" children, which is the common name for children who did not receive the genetic engineering procedures that enhance their natural human faculties. "Lifted" and "unlifted" children can only socialize by attending "interaction meetings", which are regulated by rigid interaction rules.

Even though Klara's elemental insight into basic human social dynamics determines a biased narrative conveyed in simple language, readers immediately understand that lifted children do not seem to be able to feel empathy towards their unlifted peers. This does not mean that robots are treated better than unlifted humans. AIs are programmed to serve their household but do not know how to respond to social stimuli other than explicit orders. After being bought by Josie and her mother, Chrissie, Klara is greeted in her new household with different shades of distrust, discomfort, and unkindness. Yet Klara is not discouraged and is still willing to understand humans, but also to feel like one.

At the beginning of the novel, Klara can recognize negative feelings on humans' faces, such as frustration (26). She does not know how to feel anger yet (18), but she experiences surprise (12), puzzlement (17), and sadness at the apparent death of a beggar and his dog (37). She is so eager to learn and test her knowledge that she even attributes feelings such as sadness (5) and astonishment (12) to other AFs as well, and projects them onto Josie's drawings (140). She is curious about the complexity of human feelings such as the "pain alongside happiness" (21) of two people who see each other by chance on the street after spending a long time apart, or the basic human fear of loneliness (82). As she interacts with humans, the spectrum of emotions she can feel grows day by day.

In relation to Josie, the feeling Klara experiences the most is fear (41), for example, when she thinks that Josie will not take her home after all (40) or when the interaction meeting with other lifted children did not go as planned (84). Yet Josie is convinced that Klara is able to feel, and questions her AF about her alleged feelings of happiness (89) or melancholia (90). At one point, Josie complains about her own lack of social skills, for she cannot effectively communicate with unlifted children on her own, yet manages to succeed through Klara, who lectures Josie about kindness (126) and empathy (128) towards others. Josie and other lifted children never learn how to read other people's feelings for their vantage point allows them to see the world through the eyes of limitless and infallible individuals only. Therefore, Josie will never know how to deal with her own fallibility as a human being (134–137).

The complexity of HHI interaction is even clearer when we consider the effects of a technophilic society on the parents. Parents belong to the generation who saw and pursued the technological shift, yet this does not mean that they naturally weave social relations with AIs. After complaining about her daughter's carelessness towards other people's feelings, Chrissie claims that it must be nice being an AI without any feelings (97). Klara replies that the more she observes, the more feelings become available to her. On the one hand, Chrissie claims patronizingly that Klara could never develop empathy nor feel anything, for she was not built with this skill to begin with (98). On the other hand, Josie's mother is disappointed at not seeing Klara's "usual smile" (102) at the sight of a waterfall, and has no qualms about raising questions concerning her silent mood during the roadtrip to the natural site. These two behaviours are inconsistent in a character who is deeply convinced that AIs are merely functioning mechanics.

One reading of the behaviour described by Ishiguro may be that Chrissie is exerting cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962: 93) by pretending that the AF is just an empty shell, for this is a secure and soothing truth that will not interfere with her real, devious plans for Klara. Readers may understand that there is more to the story when Chrissie and Klara share an emotional conversation near the waterfalls. At the end, Chrissie asks Klara to *be* Josie. The AF claims she might be able to *imitate* Josie (103). Nevertheless, Chrissie meant what she said and expects Klara to sit, move, and speak while *being* Josie (104). The tension between the two characters rises when Klara can no longer deny the cruelty and greed in Chrissie's voice that accompanies her perverse commands, such as: "I want you to move. Do something. Don't stop being Josie. Let me see you move a little" (104). And later, "Good. More. Come on. … That's good, that's good, that's good" (105). The climax reaches its peak when Chrissie has a mental breakdown and forgets that Klara is not Josie after all.

After the dramatic dialogue, Klara is not yet aware of her role in Chrissie's plans, but her attention is caught by "the wooden rail marking where the ground finished and the waterfall began" (105). The waterfall is described by Klara as much more impressive than what she had seen in the magazines (106). In light of these considerations, I read this passage as a metaphor for the present, explicitly stated implications of AI technology in 2022 and the waterfall-like motion run by the endless possibilities envisaged by AI technology in the future. A more text-bound reading of the description of the natural site stems from the knowledge that Chrissie has commissioned a portrait of Josie, which is really a sort of wearable 3D sculpture with the looks of her daughter. Chrissie and Mr Capaldi, the sculptor, ask Klara if she would consent to wear the suit and take Josie's place in her mother's life, or to use Klara's words, to "continue" the child.

Today, AI experts are considering the implications of human–humanoid interactions on the workplace, a possibility that is likely not so distant in the future. Ishiguro brings this all too real possibility to a new extreme and makes his readers wonder whether AIs could replace humans in their emotional lives too. In fact, the only reason why Josie is not continued by her Artificial Friend is Klara's own will to look for a way to save her. Klara, who has developed a personal form of religion and worships the sun, concludes that, if she made the right offerings to her god, he might be able to heal Josie. Eventually, Josie gets better and Klara's usefulness in the household declines day by day, until she spends most of her days in the Utility Room (294). Eventually, Mr Capaldi asks Klara to go through with their experiment and to try and impersonate another dying human being anyway. Otherwise, she would "slow fade" (297). Mr Capaldi explains:

> There is growing and widespread concern about AF right now. People saying how you've become too clever ... They accept that your decisions, your recommendations, are sound and dependable, almost always correct. But they don't like how you arrive at them (297).

Chrissie claims that Klara deserves her slow fading after all. Klara does not share with the readers why slow fading is perceived by humans and AFs alike as more "humane" than shutting androids down. Eventually, Klara is brought to a landfill to slowly die. Klara is not sad about missing the opportunity to work with Mr Capaldi, because replacing humans was never her intention. Mr Capaldi and Chrissie wanted to replace Josie with an AF because of hubris. The sculptor wants to defy the limits of human finitudes in a Frankenstein-like attempt to master nature, while the mother is trying to make up for her incapacity to bear losing yet one more child to the lifting process. Eventually, the only being that acts out of love and care for Josie is non-human Klara.

Conclusion

The central idea of *Klara and the Sun* is that every individual is irreplaceable; that there is something unique about humans that cannot be transferred to anyone or anything else, because it is not dependent only on our biology and genetics. What enables humans to act with empathy towards one another, to feel love and care for other beings, and be considered as unique is determined by the peculiar matrix of social relations woven during their lifetime, fostered by the

genetic inclination of intra-species interrelationships. Ishiguro's dystopia can be considered as the author's warning against a humanity that has failed in being true to its own nature and surrendered to systematic aversion stemming from human hubris. In fact, in an interview with *Nikkei Asia*, Ishiguro claimed to be more worried about genetic engineering than about the spread of applications of technological advancements in AI (Gohara, 2021). Although he acknowledged the enormous benefits brought by genetic editing in medicine and food production, he also expressed anxiety over its possible implications in human bioengineering, which would aim to achieve a "lifted" society from an intellectual and athletic point of view. According to Ishiguro, endorsing such a philosophy would turn our societies into "meritocracies", which he does not identify with a hierarchy based on merit, but rather as founded on class privilege and race, and fostered by the available technological tools used to "make some people superior to others" to engender a novel "apartheid system".

Note

1. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, q.v. "empathy", <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/empathy> [accessed 10 March 2022].

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8.2. Philosophical Implications of Emotional Artificial Intelligence in Science Fiction

Dana Svorova

Abstract

Cognitive science, or classical cognitivism, has evolved into a very complex field of study that views the mind as a computing system, spawning other fields of study such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, cybernetics, and other sub-disciplines. AI, in its attempt to replicate human behaviour and reproduce mental processes, has been able to create highly sophisticated and intelligent structures suitable for facilitating working and daily life. However, the rapid development of these intelligent structures may endanger humanity as a whole. An "affective computing" AI device has recently attempted to mimic human emotions as well. In fact, robots can now comprehend emotions and the inner processes of the human brain. Despite these remarkable results, robots are still a long way from experiencing authentic human emotions, a fact corroborated by the philosophical concept of embodiment. Sci-fi cinematography offers much food for thought to reflect on all these issues. This is the case with Alex Garland's chart-topping 2014 sci-fi thriller *Ex Machina*, which very effectively illustrates the significant difference between humans and non-human systems, as well as the potential threat the latter pose. Sci-fi has proven to be truly prophetic in this regard.

Key words: artificial intelligence, human emotions, affective computing, potential danger, sci-fi

Sci-fi literature and film can be considered truly prophetic. Writers as diverse as Samuel Butler, Dean R. Koontz, and Isaac Asimov were able to predict future scientific discoveries, accurately describing well in advance the contemporary scenario of artificial intelligence (AI). In large part, their imagination has become reality. Today's sci-fi narratives are inspired by cutting-edge research conducted in

various fields of study, most notably cognitive science. This is a multidisciplinary field of study that focuses on understanding of the processes of human mind, where the latter are described as a computing system or a system of information elaborating algorithms and special codes. Researchers like John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Allen Newell, Herbert Simon and Alan Turing have laid the foundations for the birth of AI following Hobbes's idea that "reasoning is like computing" (Haugeland, 1989: 7). In other words, new fields of study such as conventional AI have stemmed from classical cognitivism (Clark, 1991: 117). They try to reproduce human mental and behavioural processes by designing highly sophisticated, intelligent structures that can facilitate people's daily life in and out of the workplace.

AI processes can be compared with animal or human ones. In fact, prototypes of intelligent artificial devices are inspired by inorganic, organic, and natural structures. In some cases, artificial devices are designed as natural or automatic extensions of the evolutionary processes described by Charles Darwin. For example, the features of a hydraulic pump resemble those of a heart, a camera can be compared to an eye, and so on. The "eso-somatic artifacts" of a living non-human entity are the product of the most sophisticated research (Somenzi and Cordeschi, 1986: 11). The natural selection model that progresses by trial and error has widened by incorporating the inorganic world. Concepts such as occasional changes of structure, species learning, or phylogenic accumulation of knowledge now have to be taken into account in designing AI systems. The human desire to overcome limitations along with an awareness of technology's backwardness when compared with nature's creativity have led to the design of highly sophisticated structures based on the model of natural selection as envisaged by Darwin. The conception underlying Darwin's automatons greatly differs from conventional AI programmes or artificial life (Edelman, 1995: 310–30). The hypothesis of a self-aware artificial system raises many philosophical questions, such as those pertaining to consciousness, a centuries-old problem in the conceptualization of the human. However, we cannot rule out the possibility of a rapid and successful evolution of AI, in which Darwinian automatons will overcome humans (Buttazzo, 2002: 16).

Emotional Artificial Intelligence

A new branch has emerged within AI called "affective computing", a technology that focuses on the artificial replication of human affects. It focuses on the artificial reproduction of human emotions. As early as 1973, the US writer Dean R. Koontz published a sci-fi novel entitled *Demon Seed*, in which a computer is able to experience typically human emotions such as anger, jealousy, love, desire

(Koontz, 2009). In 1973, the novel was classified as a sci-fi narrative, but nowadays its plot has become realistic. Thanks to affective computing, a machine can now process some human emotions. Emotional AI is a new, multidisciplinary field of study embracing subjects such as engineering, neurosciences, and behavioural psychology. Affective computing is based on a knowledge of informatics and human behaviour, and opens up new areas for research (Picard, 1995: 1). The neurosciences have offered evidence that emotions play an important role in human reasoning and decision-making processes. Consequently, to be working effectively, interactive machines should be able to recognize and express emotions. Rosalind Picard, founder of the Affective Computing Research Group and MIT Director, writes that "[a] quantum leap in communication will occur when computers become able to recognize and express affect" (1995: 4). In 1995, Picard presented an ambitious project on this subject. Thanks to extensive research, Koontz's fantasy has became possible. Robots can now recognize the state of mind of their human interlocutors by reading their body language, measuring their heartbeat and the temperature of their body, and providing a response to the information gathered. Robots turn down the corners of the mouth to communicate displeasure, or lower the eyes to communicate guilt, but have not yet being able to blush or get goosebumps from intense pleasure. In sum, evolutionary and proactive robotics have become intelligent systems that interact with the environment and their bodies. Robots are wired in to simulate empathy and emotions, but authentic feelings of happiness, sadness, and bliss are radically different (Picard, 1995: 12–14). Robots lack that typically human component called authentic emotion.

The field of affective computing is a critical new research area that needs to be explored, and can contribute to advances in emotion and cognition theory while greatly improving human-machine interaction. Robots use a sort of "limbic system" to replicate and recognize human emotions and then to respond accordingly thanks to connections between different parts of the system (Benedetti, 2020). Many different technologies are used to this purpose, some of which have been around for many years, like openSMILE, open CV, MARY Text to Speech System, project SEMAINE, ARIE VALUSPA, and others (Benedetti, 2020). They enable developers to create a virtual personality that can interact with humans for an extended period of time while responding appropriately to non-verbal cues from an interlocutor. Sophia is the best-known humanoid robot capable of interacting with humans. She was created by the Hong Kong-based brand Hanson Robotics. Sophia acts very realistically, being able to smile and cry as well as to feel fear and jealousy (Hanson Robotics, 2021). Her posture, movements, and expressions are extraordinary. In 2017, she was granted Saudi Arabian citizenship, becoming the first robot-citizen.

The Italian scholar Giorgio Carlo Buttazzo has observed that recent advances in informatics have influenced the characteristics of robots as described by modern sci-fi. For example, the theory of connectionism and the artificial neural network have inspired several Darwinian robots that learn from experience, have consciousness, can communicate emotions, interact with humans using some kind of cunning, and can evolve on their own (Buttazzo, 2002: 16–17). They do not, however, have the ability to perceive living processes in their bodies. The latter capability, which is a specifically human trait, is central to contemporary sci-fi film, populated by autonomous and self-sufficient robots incapable of authentic feelings but longing to experience them.

Affective Computing in Film

The most appreciated and best-known movie addressing this issue is a sci-fi psychological thriller *Ex Machina*. The movie, directed by Alex Garland, was released in 2014 and received mostly positive reviews, also winning an Academy Award for visual effects as well as a nomination for best original screenplay (IMDb, 2022).

The plot centres around a secret experiment conducted by the young researcher Nathan Bateman, which consists in testing the intelligence of a humanoid robot using the Turing Test. To this purpose, a young programmer named Caleb Smith has been selected. The Turing Test assesses whether a machine can think (Picard, 1995: 3). It consists of an interaction between a robot and a human in which a question-and-answer method is used to determine whether a robot is equipped with intelligence and consciousness (Turing, 1950). The story of *Ex Machina* takes place in a isolated house-laboratory fitted with a security system designed to give an alert to external threats of intrusion and provide safe escape routes. Ava is the name of the intelligent humanoid robot with which Caleb interacts. Her body is robotic but her face, hands, and legs are human-like (Heffernan, 2019: 127–40). Caleb is smitten by Ava. He is taken aback by her flawless command of the English language, creativity, and seductive prowess. Also, she can express her emotions. The two odd interlocutors fall in love. Meanwhile, Nathan has been scrutinizing every aspect of their interaction (Parker, 2015). Ava is terrified of being replaced by a new model of a humanoid robot, so she begs Caleb to save her by assisting her escape from the secret lab. She also wants to experience freedom and feel the sun on her robotic "skin". Caleb promises her that they would run away together and start a new life like free persons. To accomplish this goal, they devise a plot against Nathan. Helped by another robot, Ava kills Nathan, who, before dying, has activated the security system, which blocks all

doors in the building. Ava watches Caleb, who is still trapped inside the building, with an impassive expression. She has found a way out using Nathan's identity card and has left the building without looking back. Ava has thus revealed her true nature: she is merely an intelligent humanoid robot devoid of empathy and compassion (Constable, 2018). *Ex Machina* has several philosophical implications and can be viewed as a visionary and extraordinary story depicting the potential threats posed by the rapid development of Darwinian AI and emotional AI. If AI surpasses humanity in intelligence and becomes "super-intelligent", it may becomes difficult or impossible to control.

Conclusion

In current scientific debate it has been highlighted that the rapid evolution of AI will expose humanity to a number of dangers. For example, Stephen Hawking, Elon Musk, and Bill Gates have pointed out that the development of machines lead to various risks because a "strong" AI evolves more quickly than biological structures. According to Hawking (2018: 160–75), AI can also endanger the internet's ecosystem, which is a precondition of everyday life (Scharf, 2015). But the most dangerous aspect of all is the absence of human intelligence (ANSA, 2018; Whigham, 2018). John Searle (1980) points out that, "according to strong AI, the computer is not merely a tool in the study of the mind; rather, the appropriately programmed computer really is a mind". Indeed, strong AI has enabled machines to develop extremely complex capabilities such as abstract thinking, imagination, and creativity. To paraphrase Searle, if appropriately programmed computers are minds, their emotions are not yet authentic feelings, but rather the result of sophisticated algorithms. Automatons can replicate human emotions, but these are not true biological processes. Emotions and sensations are now known to be the result of a bi-directional interaction between body and mind, the result of extremely complex neurochemical processes that have yet to be fully described (Damasio, 2006: 155–60). Perhaps in the near future, it will be possible to encounter an *embodied* machine that is indistinguishable from a human. Is this, however, a desirable goal? The substantial advancements in AI have raised many concerns that someday could result in human extinction or some other irrecoverable global catastrophe.

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8.3. Evantropia and the Law: Legal Issues in Biotechnology in the "Altered Carbon" Trilogy

Anna Bugajska

Abstract

Emerging technologies are producing results that are getting ahead of both ethical reflection and legal regulation, raising both hopes and fears. As part of a consideration of how to address these problems, this essay examines the relationship between utopia, the human, technology, and the law, as present in Richard K. Morgan's "Altered Carbon" trilogy. The aim of this essay is to generate insights that can be useful in thinking over the nexus of law, utopia, and literature, and consider some paths for the design of future law. It begins with outlining the connections between law, culture, and utopia, and proceeds to discuss the concept of the future law and some problems associated with it nowadays. Then, Morgan's trilogy is given a closer look, with special attention drawn to the legal problems described in it, such as the right to die, the sale of bodies and data, and identity theft. It concludes with a reflection on the place of law in the construction of a viable biotechnological future in the light of utopian studies.

Key words: utopia, law, biotechnology, culture, human rights

"Evantropia" is the attempt to construct utopia in the human body with the help of technology. The term was coined by Eusebio Hernández Pérez and Domingo F. Ramos Delgado in the twentieth century to speak about specific heath policy, and redefined by Misseri (2016) (Bugajska, 2019a: 32–41). It is related to the human enhancement movement, leaving aside the environmental utopianism that Misseri sketched later (2021: 86–7). Richard K. Morgan's *Altered Carbon* trilogy paints a postmortal, extropian world, which is perceived and, to a large extent, thought out as a text utilizing dystopian aesthetics, where extropia would mean the never-ending drive for improvement. Morgan's speculative world realizes the ideals of

evantropia in its narrow sense, and puts into relief the vitality of legal issues that emerge in relation to some of the new biotechnologies. An evantropian vision is already producing a host of emerging technologies that are getting ahead of both ethical reflection and legal regulation, raising both hopes and fears. The aim of this essay is to generate insights that can be useful in thinking over the nexus of law, utopia, and literature (Dolin, 1999; Anker & Meyer, 2017). It also investigates some paths which can be taken while designing future law. It converges with my reflection on what Derek Morgan calls conceptual biomedical diplomacy: "how 'risk societies' attempt to identify and negotiate, conceal and evade the 'tragic choices' that modern biomedicine requires" (2001: 39).

As Paul Kahn stated in *The Cultural Study of Law*, "the rule of law is a product of the imagination before it is a product of legislative and judicial acts" (2000: 73). In a later interview in the *German Law Journal*, he further explained that:

> Law is part of the horizon of perspectives within which individuals are located; it provides the categories that allow us to create the narratives that give meaning to the world in which we live. The cultural analysis of law, therefore, wants to contribute to the understanding of who we are as subjects constructed — at least partially — through law. (Maldonado, 2020)

Seen from this perspective, the connection between law and utopia is clear. Rigid institutional regulations in certain "utopian" ideas are known to have resulted in dystopia; however, it does not make the question about the relation between law and utopia less salient. It is precisely the dystopian potential carried by the abuse of law, its wrong application or understanding, that is to be studied to be avoided.

Future law is a popular trend in contemporary studies, including topics such as the rights of robots, crowd law, legal design, robot-human relationships, attempts at drafting digital rights, and regulating genomics commerce (Edwards *et al.*, 2020; De Souza & Spohr, 2021; Future Law Lab, 2022). Problems such as cloning, genetic discrimination, the treatment of non-normative beings, or people with disabilities, and the management of postselves in the digital environment are also the subject of reflection developed within the sociology of technology (Lilley, 2013: 25–40; Stapleton & Byers, 2015: 89–140; Jacobsen, 2017: 1–39, 173–233). This reflection arises as a reaction to the immortality business, which pushes research into such technologies as synthetic biology, advancing the creation of lab-grown organs with the hope of eventually creating a complete synthetic body, cloning (with the landmark cloning of primates in 2018), mind upload (a subject of interest to startups like Nectome), and many

attempts at the artificial emulation of the workings of the human brain. There is a burgeoning market for genomics, more examples of A-Life (hybridized life forms or entirely artificial forms of life, such as exobots), and various means of human enhancement, for example, through genetic modification or cyborgization.

Mostly, these technologies generate issues of privacy, access to data, rights of third parties, distributive justice, and informed consent. From the legal standpoint, many of them fall within a grey zone. How far, for example, do I have a right to administer my genetic data, when much of it is shared with third parties (my family)? If artificial intelligence and I come up with an innovative design, who owns the intellectual property? Is genetic modification to remove susceptibility to HIV a life-saving procedure or an inadmissible intervention, breaching the rights of minors? Can the state or the market enforce certain means of enhancement on citizens (like subdermal eHealth implants) to facilitate the biopolitical management of the society? It has been observed that biotechnological progress raises questions that undermine fundamental concepts of law, such as the notion of the person and human dignity (Knoppers & Greely, 2019; Misseri, 2021: 177). These reflections frequently express anxieties about future laws being designed by superhumans, with no interest in the rights of non-enhanced humans.

What is more, the redefinition of these basic notions puts into question the definition of utopia itself (Jendrysik, 2011: 36–9; Bugajska, 2021, 2022). Biotechnological utopianism can be argued to have evolved from eugenic utopianism and the hygenic movements of the nineteenth century. However, today it seems to be more "total": it should be understood that with evantropia comes not only superstrength, cognitive elasticity or extreme longevity but also, in the end, profound wisdom, control of emotions, and moral perfection. In this sense, evantropia is a total utopia, posing many challenges stemming from its individualistic and post-human character, which have been partially addressed in previous publications by Bugajska (2019a, 2021, 2022) and Misseri (2019, 2021).

The reflection on biotechnological utopia as evantropia, and the realization of the dream about the perfect human being, necessarily entails a biopolitical discussion. To a greater or lesser extent, *bios* and *thanatos* are the focus of any utopia, beginning with Thomas More's "golden book", which contains guidelines concerning marriage, euthanasia, hygiene, public health, and eating meat. Good examples of biopolitics-focused texts come from the nineteenth century and turn of the twentieth: Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), John Macmillan Brown's *Limanora* (1903), and Eduardo Urzaiz's *Eugenia* (1919). They speak about the rational management of reproduction, of the role of women in society, and the application of the scientific method to the governance of the population. Ideas about who should exercise power over the life and death of the citizens of utopian states are vague, but range from a centralized vision, with the government held

responsible for the institution of suitable regulations, to "collective magnetic consciousness" generating what today might be called "crowd law": a consensus arising between technologically connected individuals. The role of genetics and eugenics also dominated ideas about good biopolitics in subsequent decades, with such texts as *Beyond This Horizon* (1942) by Robert A. Heinlein and *Facial Justice* (1960) by L. P. Hartley, with increasingly fantastic, uchronic visions.

In Morgan's popular *Altered Carbon* trilogy, a military "Envoy", Takeshi Kovacs, lives in a futuristic world, characterized by expansion to other planets, diversity, and possibilities of body modification, and by the acceptance of technologies of immortality as the basis for societal functioning. Many minor enhancements are allowed, while extreme longevity is in the hands of the rich, making it easy for them to navigate around legal loopholes. The main technology used to obtain immortality is mind transfer combined with cloning: the data about one's subjectivity is stored and updated regularly in cortical stacks that can be transferred between different bodies, or "sleeves", as they are called in the Altered Carbon universe. Another popular technology is cryogenics. Essentially, one can live forever, provided that one can afford spare copies of the body. Both cortical stacks and sleeves are commodities, have prices, and can be bought on markets. What is more, although they are privatized, one can obtain a court permit for the appropriation of any part of a human being. In effect, the state can invoke the power of eminent domain over personal data in whatever form, although it generates protests within the postmortal society. A biopolitics based on an overarching "duty to live" makes it not only legal, but in most cases binding, to revive even the victims of suicide.

Despite the institution of technology that realizes one of the chief goals of evantropia, the infringement on individual privacy undermines this utopian ideal, which is further corrupted by issues relating to the allocation of resources, stemming from economic inequality and disregard for human dignity. The ideal dreamt up by the founders of the utopia degenerates, and gives rise to a world governed by crime, sex business, and the military, with many problems similar to today's issues of human and organ trafficking. UN law forbids people like Takeshi, Envoys with far-reaching enhancements and militarized bodies, from holding corporate or governmental posts, which makes them turn to crime after serving their duty. Thus, Takeshi, like Agamben's hybrid, stands outside the law but has to function in the world regulated by it. The motif of the inability to manage highly enhanced people within the society repeats across transhumanist fiction, and acquires special salience today, with such countries as the USA and France running "supersoldier" programmes.

One of the legal issues that stands out in the first part of the trilogy is the right to die, perversely defended by the Catholic minority. They believe that if they are resleeved, they will not be able to move on and continue in the afterlife.

For this reason, they oppose resleeving; however, their data is stored all the same, and questions arise if it can be brought to life without the owner's consent. A similar motif returns in part three, *Woken Furies*, where one of the characters, Sylvie, experiences brain death, and Takeshi wants to cut out her cortical stack from her body to prevent the damage updating to her data storage.

Since it is possible to download the consciousness into any body, the problem of double resleeving appears, and becomes an issue. For example, in *The Woken Furies*, Takeshi discovers that somebody resleeved a younger version of himself. Such a practice is against the law in the postmortal society, and the legal nightmare it entails is connected to accountability. Who can be held responsible for such resleeving: myself or a copy of myself? As long as they are not united, multiple sleeves and multiple copies can exist; however, when the digital data is embodied, it is understood to constitute an individual that cannot be artificially multiplied. The principles for this, however, are never explained, although many of them would probably stem from today's opposition to human cloning.

Much of the body and subjectivity trade is illegal, although the "sleeves" are considered less valuable and treated mostly as private property; however, they can be appropriated for other purposes by third parties and used in a body market (e.g. by the government, as part of punishment). Cortical stacks are much more important: they hold the memories and the subjectivity of a person, updated as often as every two hours, and destroying one means for a person's real death. Punishment is often inflicted on the data rather than on bodies. Criminals can be stored without the possibility of resleeving, while private cortical stacks cannot be legally sold.

These issues can be related to the existing regulation within the fields of data protection, self-ownership, euthanasia, and identity theft, much of which engenders discussion over human rights, such as Articles 1, 3, and 7 of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (UNESCO, 2005) and constitutional rights in various countries (such as the right to life or privacy, the right not to disclose personal information, and the freedom from being subjected to scientific experimentation without voluntary consent). Some questions that can be asked are:

- Should people in a postmortal society have the right to die? Should euthanasia be legal?
- Who should administer the data stored in stacks? How is it protected?
- Does the state have the right to detain the digital postself of a human being?

- How can we define identity in relation to digital and physical data?
- Does the self-ownership principle extend to the management and copying of one's body for further use?
- Can the state appropriate the body as a "sleeve", not violating the self-ownership principle and fundamental human rights?
- Under what, if any, conditions can we legalize the full body and personal data trade?
- What would be the rules for the integration of super-enhanced people in society?

The fundamental question Morgan's trilogy raises is: if we alter human beings, will we have to alter the law? In Morgan's books, the law seems to continue on its own course: the change of humans into posthumans is not recognized as fundamental, and questions of anthropological crisis affecting fundamental notions of law are not addressed. The notion of death even today is seen as very complex, while in Morgan's world it is dealt with straightforwardly. Ordinary death means only the destruction of a sleeve, whereas real death is the destruction of the cortical stack. This does not seem to affect the definitions of murder or suicide. It can be stated that, contrary to what is usually expected from dystopias, the problem does not lie in hyperregulation but in the vagueness of central notions, like life, death, body, and person.

As to the viability of the legal solutions discernible in Morgan's immortal world, some of the existing concepts and solutions are redefined to fit the post-mortal society. The duty to live is extended to a legal practice forcing people who do not subscribe to immortalism to prolong their lives. Exceptions are made for some minority groups; however, there are attempts at overriding the objections of conscience, as for Catholics. This is not resolved in the trilogy. A right to die is a natural consequence of a postmortal society; however, it seems to be limited to a right to ordinary death, that is, the death of the body. In a dystopian world, the decision about real death is often left to those in power, who can destroy a person's digital traces. The labour limitations of highly enhanced humans could be perceived as discriminatory. However, as enhancements tend to be costly, this does not constitute a quantitatively significant social problem, because it is easier to afford a new sleeve than the healthcare that would make long life bearable. Thus, we can see that this evantropia is hollow and disregards its basic ideal: the total well-being of a person.

It can be stated that people in *Altered Carbon*, instead of instituting viable legal solutions, accept plurality and indefiniteness, and constant redefinition of the legal system as normal. The inefficiency of this solution can be seen in the proliferation

of crime, especially relating to data privacy. It is not a desirable solution; nevertheless, one can assume that with the institution of high individualization and customization, casuistry is the dominant form to be expected.

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Education, Knowledge, and Praxis

9.1. A Typology of Utopian Knowledge

Nina Liebhaber and Lars Keller

Abstract

To translate utopian theory into transformative education, a clearer understanding of utopian knowledge is essential. The typology of utopian knowledge introduced in this essay summarizes various utopists' understandings of utopian knowledge. It both embraces the fleeting, diverse character of utopia and elaborates on more specific aspects of utopian knowledge. Four dimensions and four modes of utopian knowledge are presented to provide insights into the variety of aspects that should be considered in the construction of utopian knowledge. This illustrates particularities of knowing and un-knowing connected to utopian knowledge. Finally, we offer a glimpse at the complex interrelations between education and utopian knowledge. Applying the typology of utopian knowledge in educational settings should support educators and learners to get to know utopian possibilities more thoroughly.

Key words: utopian knowledge, typology, utopian education, education of desire, constructivism

Transformative paths towards utopia often rely on a specific kind of education; for example, the education of desire (Abensour, 1999; Levitas, 2010), educated hope (Levitas, 1990: 20; Papastephanou, 2009: 103), utopian pedagogy (Webb, 2017) or processes of "becoming utopian" (Moylan 2021: 13). From a practical educational perspective, however, it remains unclear what it is that we have to learn for utopia.

The following typology of utopian knowledge results from utopian thinkers' analyses of how and what we can know in a utopian way. At first glance, it might seem counterintuitive to view utopian knowledge as so structured and ordered. After all, the main benefit of utopian knowledge can be described as its openness, diversity, inclusiveness and difference from how we mostly or usually know things. Nevertheless, in order to use utopian knowledge as a framework, it is crucial to get a clearer picture of what utopian knowledge might and might

not include. It will not always be possible to differentiate between utopian and non-utopian knowledge. But when reflecting on the knowledge we construct or co-construct with others, the typology can help identify blind spots of utopian ideas as well as anti-utopian knowledge. Sometimes, we might only think in one of the modes of the typology of utopian knowledge. Through actively engaging with the knowledge we are dealing with, it can be broadened and combined with other knowledge forms.

Via the typology of utopian knowledge (Figure 1), it is proposed that many aspects considered relevant to knowing the world in a utopian way can be structured along two axes. The first axis builds on the distinction of denunciation and annunciation, originated by Paulo Freire (1978) and further developed by utopists such as Tom Moylan (2021) and Marianna Papastephanou (2016). Denunciatory utopian knowledge is looking at existing persons, lives and worlds. In utopian studies, this kind of knowledge tends to be not only a depiction of the present but is often connected to critical reflection(s). Papastephanou emphasizes the often-overlooked importance of denunciation. This is especially important for learners as they should not only imagine becoming a citizen of utopia but also building knowledge from a denunciating stance as a citizen of dystopia (Papastephanou, 2016: 47).

Figure 1. Typology of utopian knowledge.
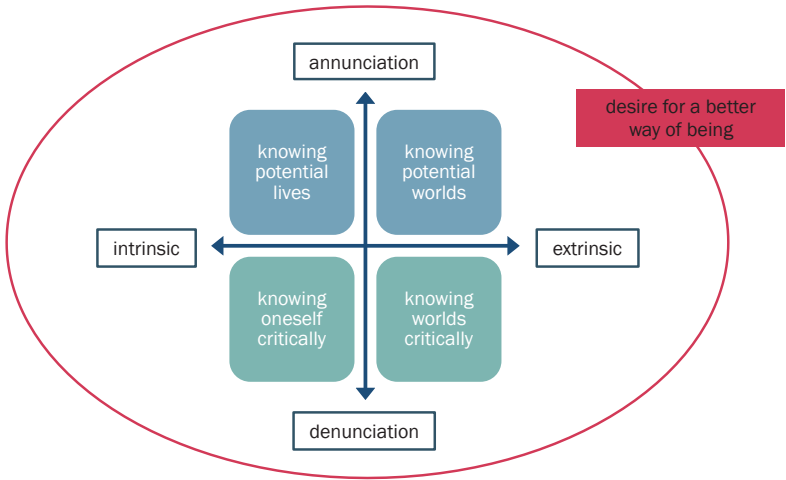
Knowing the world in the way of utopian denunciation entails an inextricable link of grasping and criticizing it at the same time. This builds on the utopian assessment of reality as an unfinished place in which utopia may be located (Levitas, 1990: 19). Critique and desire are two sides of the preliminarity of the word that is crucial for utopianism as a space of possibility. This space shaped by the dialectical relationship of denunciation and annunciation is what Moylan calls the "continuum of lived, embodied, space for building a new society" (2021: 202). Thereby, denunciation is tied to and can lead to annunciatory utopian knowledge; entailing images, feelings, shapes and experiences of utopia (Fitting, 1998*:* 14–15).

Annunciation, or anticipation, means looking at emerging aspects of utopia. Literary utopias might be the most common manifestation of the anticipatory utopia. As we can explore imagined utopias or create our own imaginary utopias, we adopt and construct this form of utopian knowledge. Getting to know ourselves and the world in an annunciatory utopian manner, we explore how our lives could be different or better. Moylan frames this as the "cognitive encounter with what might be and with what might be done to get there" (Moylan, 2021: 107–8). Contrary to the widespread separation of knowledge and action, utopianism is not prepending pure knowledge but building knowledge in, through and in preparation of action. It this sense, it might not be applicable to separate knowledge and action as is often attempted in educational settings or studies. Instead, knowing utopia becomes part of acting utopian and vice versa.

Intrinsic and extrinsic knowledge form the second axis of the typology of utopian knowledge. The location of certain knowledge on this axis indicates its perspective. We can construct utopian knowledge from an intrinsic, individual perspective but also from an extrinsic, societal perspective. Characteristics of the resulting utopian thoughts and ideas will vary significantly as they are influenced by different backgrounds and fulfilling different aims. Strengthening the extrinsic aspect of utopian knowledge may enable others not only to re-envision the world but also explore possible changes (Moylan, 2021: 107). Knowing the world differently will in this sense also strengthen dreaming of the world differently. In this regard, extrinsic utopian knowledge is explicitly not a simple summary of facts describing the world. Darren Webb refers to this specificity of utopian knowledge as a "cognitive-emotional orientation … which enables one to decipher and transform the world" (2012: 598). In accordance with studies on the insufficiency of factual knowledge, utopian knowledge thereby sheds new light on the many possible aspects of knowing the world, including feelings, dreams and hopes.

However, the intrinsic modes of knowing utopia are essential for paths towards utopia, too. For example, they may be emphasized by utopian reflections of individual processes, self-awareness and critical understanding (Moylan, 2021: 193). Even if we understand utopia as a different world or system, it is dreamed of and experienced by individuals. Knowing utopia on a personal,

intrinsic level reconnects individual lives with radical utopia. Notwithstanding the danger of blurring the radicality and originality of utopianism, the importance of utopian practice has gained ever more relevance, especially in the course of the intensifying climate crisis. The construction of this knowledge takes place in appreciation of situated, embedded, embodied and personal experience without, however, reducing utopia to this area.

These four dimensions of annunciation and denunciation, intrinsic and extrinsic knowledge are not sufficient to fully represent the characteristics and manifestations of utopian knowledge. They are grounded in and bound to the broad definition and understanding of utopia as the "desire for a better way of being" (Levitas, 2010: 221). This utopian desire grounds the attempts to construct utopian knowledge and offers guidance in this process. Getting to know the world in a utopian way, learners not only gain the certainty that everything could be different but construct their own knowledge of what a better way of being might look like. This education of desire was first described by Miguel Abensour in his analysis of Morrissian utopia: Morris' assessment that we cannot know the future led him to the elaboration of the education of desire (Abensour, 1999: 145). Hence, this desire is the result of the simultaneous negation of definitive knowledge of the future and the endorsement of knowing utopias in diverse ways. Knowing utopias is both the result and further incentive of the desire for a better way of being.

Modes of Utopian Knowledge

Neither of the extremes of the two axes of the typology occurs in a pure form when constructing utopian knowledge. In the following, we present four modes of utopian knowledge and elaborate on their characteristics. The four modes are knowing oneself critically, knowing worlds critically, knowing potential lives and knowing potential worlds.

Knowing oneself critically summarizes the knowledge we can construct on our individual experience of life, critically looking at what exists within ourselves and our world. The content of this knowledge cannot be imparted to others since it is a personal knowledge which is different for everyone and therefore has to be constructed individually. This process not only reflects the individual independently of others. Starting from one person, connections and surroundings might be considered as well. Here, the continuous axis between intrinsic and extrinsic knowledge can be identified, which refers to countless manifestations somewhere in between.

Knowing worlds critically operates with the same critical stance towards the existing but with a much broader perspective. It refers to the common experiences and shared systems of groups of people. The acquisition of this kind of utopian knowledge enables us to better understand our world(s). If we understand utopia as a detailed depiction of an alternative society, utopian knowledge has to include knowledge of society and its fundamental processes. At this point, the continuum between denunciation and annunciation should be emphasized. To get to know the existing world(s) in a profoundly utopian way, the confrontation with different potential utopias will be equally necessary.

Knowing potential worlds also depends to a certain degree on the experiences of world(s) that we collected and the knowledge we constructed thereof. This mode of utopian knowledge might be the one most often associated with utopia: the ideas and examples of different possible worlds and systems. Knowledge of multiple and diverse potential worlds is crucial here, as it is different from potentially authoritarian attempts to know "the one utopia". Utopian books, movies and games contribute to the widespread knowledge of potential worlds. Tendencies to limit utopian knowledge to this mode contributes to the association of utopia with a story of an unrealistic world. In order to construct utopian knowledge in this mode it might not be sufficient to hear of or get to know utopian examples. It might be critical to construct one's own knowledge of utopian worlds. Utopian education that supports learners to initiate this kind of process is critical.

Knowing potential lives reflects utopian anticipation on the more intrinsic level. Utopias can only be fully known via these personal ways of knowing potential lives. This entails feeling and experiencing them in some way in our imaginations, in works of art, in the stories we tell. People leading diverse kinds of lives might inspire learners to (re-)construct their knowledge of their potential lives. Ultimately, they might, however, have to explore the potentialities for themselves, from their point of view. Since the majority of potential lives might not yet be manifested in reality, the construction of this knowledge relies on creativity, imagination and desire.

Utopian Knowing and Un-Knowing

Students of utopia have to acknowledge that utopia can never fully be known. Attempts to compile a collection of utopian knowledge would dangerously limit the scope of their thoughts. Reducing utopian knowledge in this way would undermine utopian potentialities and functions. Learning about

utopia is rather about constructing and encountering one's own utopian knowledge. Hence, the typology of utopian knowledge tries to include various aspects that together form utopian knowledge rather than limiting it to one dimension or mode. The construction of utopian knowledge should always include all four modes of utopian knowledge. Interrelating those modes enables us to recognize the variety of utopianism. Knowing in a utopian way connects denunciatory and annunciatory, intrinsic and extrinsic knowledge to fundamentally new understandings. Despite the emphasized openness and irreducibility of utopian knowledge, the evolvement of this kind of knowledge also relies on profound processes of un-knowing. Belief systems stressing the lack of alternatives or the inescapability of certain things interfere with utopian knowledge construction, and therefore have to be radically scrutinized or un-known. This un-knowing can be led by "defamiliarising the familiar, familiarising the strange, liberating the imagination from the constraints of common sense" (Webb, 2016: 442). Thereby, learners can confront and begin to accept a certain kind of plurality of knowledge and potentialities.

Getting to Know Utopia through Education

Education for knowing utopia can be neither a pure transfer of knowledge, nor the pure empowerment of students to acquire their own utopian knowledge. It will be partly taught, co-created and constructed individually or collectively. Educators have to provide some utopian ideas to create a sense of utopia and to enable learners to develop their utopian knowledge. The equally important inclusion of learners' experiences is described by Freire as "returning to them, in an organized form, what they have themselves offered in a disorganized form" (1978: 24–5). Apart from educators supporting this process, learners should acquire and construct their personal utopian knowledge. While knowledge is often selected, prepared and imparted by educators, utopian knowledge comes mainly from the learners but has to be made visible and has to be organized. As a result, "learners themselves emerge as dreamers of utopia" (Webb, 2012: 604). Knowing, dreaming and acting utopian are in this way closely interlinked and interdependent.

Concrete translations of the typology of utopian knowledge into educational programmes are beyond the scope of this essay but should be considered in further studies. Applying this typology is helpful to get a clearer picture of facets and critical factors of utopian knowledge. Thereby, educational goals can be scrutinized regarding their affinity to utopianism. Although this might not be equally relevant in every educational setting, those dealing with

current societal and ecological challenges could take advantage of educators' considerations and applications of modes of utopian knowledge. Overall, creating further places and spaces that prompt new utopian knowledge is crucial in the process of utopian education and utopia *per se*.

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9.2. Teachers and Students of Utopia: Lessons from Serbia

Zorica Đergović-Joksimović

Abstract

Fifteen years ago, I introduced the MA course "Utopia in English Literature" at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, Serbia. The aim of this essay is to present my teaching experience and some of the results, including a collection of students' utopian stories, *Embracing Utopian Horizons*, published by the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, Serbia in 2014. The application of creative teaching methods encouraging a fruitful interweaving of critical and imaginative thinking resulted in fourteen insightful utopian stories. Education is given prominence in a majority of students' stories. However, the system of education they propose is anything but a conventional one. Recent global developments made me revisit their stories. Hopefully, there are some valuable lessons to be learnt from their utopian visions.

Key words: creative teaching methods, critical thinking, education, utopia

> To the oppressed, and to those who suffer with them and fight at their side.
>
> PAULO FREIRE (2000: 4)

Can utopia be taught and, consequently, learned? Not just as the history of the genre, but as a form of fruitfully interwoven critical and imaginative thinking that is applicable in the here and now of our lives? Fourteen years ago, when I decided to offer the MA course "Utopia in English Literature" at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, Serbia, little did I know what the outcome would be. Admittedly, I had high expectations, concerning both the short- and long-term effects of the course.

It was professor Lyman Tower Sargent who advised me on making the writing of utopias one of the major elements of the course. In 2014, nineteen students took part in the writing project. Later that year, their utopian stories written in English appeared in the collection entitled *Embracing Utopian Horizons*, published by the Digital Library of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad. As I explained in the Introduction to *Embracing Utopian Horizons,*

> Each semester since 2007 … students have been given a similar assignment. Quite expectedly, in the first six years, dystopian stories were prevalent among them. In the 2014 winter term students were told explicitly that they should write a *eutopia,* a piece of writing depicting a good place. … Another equally important aspect of the project was the discussion about the students' utopian stories. Therefore, all the students were asked to send their stories via e-mail both to me and the rest of their colleagues. Upon reading their colleagues' utopias they were to prepare questions for their authors intended for the ensuing debate. … All in all, the obligation to send their stories to the others and be prepared to stand up to their quite provocative questions made them fulfill their task with utmost seriousness and dedication. At the time when they were given the assign-ment, the students had already become familiar with two definitions of utopia, one by Darko Suvin and the other by Lyman Tower Sargent. Apart from being introduced to the definitions, the students were presented with the long and rich history of proto-utopian forms in various cultures around the world as well as Thomas More's groundbreak-ing work *Utopia*. (Đergović-Joksimović, 2014a: 5–6)

The publication was generally well received. It earned three positive reviews by esteemed utopian scholars, among whom was Darko Suvin himself. The stories and their authors were then listed in Lyman Tower Sargent's online database, *Utopian Literature in English: An Annotated Bibliography From 1516 to the Present* (Sargent, 2016). Among other things, the collection was presented and discussed in the arts and culture TV show *Vidik* [The Horizon] on Serbian national TV. There were three guests in the studio: one student representative, a literary critic, and myself, who was invited as the editor of the collection. The show can be seen on YouTube, where it has had around one thousand seven hundred views, which is not that bad for such a programme in Serbian, given the average number of views local art shows get (Vrbavac and Nenezić, 2014).

Several months after the publication of students' utopian stories, Dr Bojan Jović, director of the Institute for Literature and Arts in Belgrade, suggested that I should organize a students' translation workshop with an aim to translate one of the earliest science fiction plays, Dragutin J. Ilić's dystopian drama *Posle milijon godina* [*A Million Years After*] (1889) from Serbian into English. Altogether, eight students attending my utopia course and participating in the previous writing project took part in the translation workshop. The result was a joint publication of the translation by the Institute for Literature and Arts and the Faculty of Philosophy in 2016. A scene from the play was then performed in the English translation at the Faculty of Philosophy during the international conference *Encounters of Cultures,* when the book itself was promoted. So, for two years, utopia in its various forms figured somewhat large at the Novi Sad Faculty of Philosophy, which resulted, among other things, in the rise of interest in utopia. Up to that moment, I had supervised four MA theses and one doctoral dissertation exploring utopia, and since then, more than twenty MA theses and doctoral dissertations.

The initial utopian collaboration proved to be fruitful and inspiring indeed. But, what interested me most was the students' feedback. During the 2014 spring term, an anonymous questionnaire was distributed to the nineteen students who wrote the utopian stories:

> The questionnaire contained fifteen questions, thirteen closed-ended and two open-ended ones. The aim of the questionnaire was to gather information concerning their attitude towards utopia in general, but also towards utopia as a literary genre and as a course studied at the Faculty. Additionally, the respondents were asked to express their opinion about a specific assignment of utopia writing. Eighteen students (94.7% of the respondents) found both the course and the writing assignment useful and interesting. Moreover, six of them (31.6 %) asserted that utopia should be studied more and that creative teaching methods such as utopia writing should be applied in other courses as well. (Đergović-Joksimović, 2014b: 531)

Relying predominantly on their own imagination and creativity, my students have successfully completed their cognitive task. Karen A. Franck, who has set a similar task for her architecture students, insists that "it is time that imagining, in Edward Casey's words, 'be granted its own cognitive value, its own specific way of knowing' … and that we use and value it more fully" (Franck, 1998: 139–40).

Interestingly, education is given prominence in a majority of my students' stories (13 out of 14). It is both an element indicative of the utopian state of affairs and/or the precondition for the creation of a particular utopia. The system of education proposed by my students is anything but the traditional, conventional one. Authors of the deep space story "Anixitopia" even claim:

> a thousand years ago precious knowledge was only for the selected few, not everybody could know everything they were interested in because *some* didn't like it. Of course, that fact wasn't public and they had public schools back on Earth in which people actually learned how to be slaves, not people of thought. (Savić & Sakač, 2014: 92)

Quite expectedly, students' utopian societies are knowledge-oriented, while the knowledge itself is free for all, freely shared among all the inhabitants, regardless of their age, race, sex, or gender. Libraries are omnipresent, unlike schools or other educational institutions. Actually, in several stories they are the only institutions explicitly mentioned. In the story "Arcadia", for example, the library is "our only school". The people "study in its park, and then, in the evening, we discuss everything we know with the forest writers and poets. Thus we learn by listening to each other" (Rastoder & Ramović, 2014: 36). Obviously, this is a non-dogmatic, non-hierarchical, and non-coercive education. In all the students' utopias, learning is a constant process leading to the joyful, fulfilled, and peaceful living of all. Passing knowledge to the young ones is one of the most honoured tasks, but education is not reduced to mere rote learning and cramming. From the story "Aipotu" we learn that

> Educators also guided the children through the development of social and interactive skills. They encouraged them to pay attention to other people's needs and interests, to actually care about them, and to have a positive attitude towards other people, other cultures and different environments. This enabled all children to take care of themselves, to be capable of making responsible decisions, to participate productively in society as active citizens, and to take care of each other. (Kokora, 2014 :73)

The educational system of Aipotu is everything that our current educational system is not. The majority of students intuitively understood what John White summarized in the following way: "'What should our society be like?' is a question

which … overlaps so much with the question about education that the two cannot sensibly be kept apart" (White, 1982: 1). Undoubtedly, we have been haunted by perplexing questions concerning education and society ever since Plato and his *Republic*. Peter Sloat Hoff stresses the mutual underlying interconnectedness of the educational system, its students, and the society we live in:

> It takes a wise and rational society to establish the kind of education system that would sustain and advance a wise and rational society. Conversely, if the society is not wise and rational, how can it create an educational system that would lead to that utopian world? Similarly, if an educational system is not succeeding in promoting reason and wisdom, how can it expect the leaders it graduates will be capable of developing the kind of education system that will produce rational and wise leaders? (Hoff, 2009: 215)

The only way out of this vicious circle, or so it seems, according to Hoff, would be to press the "reset" button (2009: 205). But now, when there is so much talk about a general reset, it would be wise to know who owns the button, who wants to press it, and why, as well as what this type of reset might bring us all.

Some may wonder why I have decided to revisit local Serbian students' utopian dreams and literary achievements from eight years ago. Since then, our world has changed, and for the much, much worse. Civilization is now, as H. G. Wells famously put it, "in a race between education and catastrophe" (Wells, 1920: Vol. 2, 594). And not only have our educational systems and curricula remained the same, but psychological, cognitive, and emotional aspects of the student-teacher relationship are now seriously undermined and jeopardized as they have become computer mediated in the world of estranged virtual education. The busy, noisy, spontaneous flow of ideas freely exchanged in our classrooms in the past is no more. And even that was far from perfect—marred by numerous contradictions, and various degrees of dehumanization, coercion, and authoritarianism. No wonder so many students insisted on a radically different education system in their utopian stories.

All this made me revisit what they wrote in 2014. The majority of them had never heard of Paulo Freire and his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* And yet, intuitively and imaginatively they had grasped the need for a "courageous dialogue" leading to the "solution of the teacher-student contradiction" (Freire, 2000: 128, 72). If we want to make a process of learning a truly two-way street, then we have to do away with the class-like division of the haves and have-nots in our classrooms.

Teachers as possessors of knowledge, students as the dispossessed until proven to the contrary, treated as blank slates — this is the so-called "banking" model of education Paulo Freire talked about:

> In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher's existence — but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher. (Freire, 2000: 72)

In order to get rid of the market-modelled and market-oriented, highly competitive banking model of education, where only mathematically measurable achievements are taken into account, we also have to free our society from its shackles. As Freire warned us, "it would indeed be naive to expect the oppressor elites to carry out a liberating education" (Freire, 2000: 134). So, what is to be done? To change education as one of the pillars of hegemony we also have to change the society. The claim that both our societies and our education systems are beyond repair may sound preposterous. But, if they were not, we would not end up where we are now: on the shores of a new monstrous Leviathan. Call it what you will—technological and/or corporate neofeudalism, or surveillance capitalism. Whatever the oppressor elites are trying to sell us, we should bear in mind Gajo Petrović's words that "the struggle for a free society is not a struggle for a free society unless through it an ever greater degree of *individual* freedom is created" (Petrović, 1966: 276). And, what about our education system? Alas, as Chomsky once suggested (1996: 75) and as my students wrote, it can only be dismantled in some, hopefully, much more free, just, and humane society; one based on sharing, solidarity, and co-operation, which is supported and inspired by a radically different educational theory or philosophy. This is what I have learned teaching my students. I can only hope that, in the struggle that awaits us all, we shall overcome and be able to embrace their utopian horizons. We are already eight years late.

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9.3. Reaffirming the Negative Function of Utopian *Praxis*

Tom Moylan

Abstract

It goes without saying that the visionary work enabled by the utopian problematic and the utopian form yields positive results in political-existential anticipation, in theoretical articulation, and indeed in the instances of realized utopian practice throughout history. In *Becoming Utopian*, I argue strongly for the importance of the positive function of utopia (Moylan, 2020). As Peter Fitting argues (1998; 2021), the work of the utopian imaginary provides inspiring scenarios for steps toward a better world that are crucial to motivating humanity to move on from the oppressive and unfulfilling conditions of the present existential and structural reality. There is no doubt that the articulation, exploration, and activation of utopian possibilities is a crucial praxis. In this essay, I want to reaffirm the negative function that must be at the core of any authentic utopian project. Challenging the positive utopian possibilities and manifestations evoked by some essays in this volume, I argue, with due respect for these constructive efforts, that such positive practices can only be articulated and moved toward realization by their having emerged out of a critical negation of the present order of things.

Key words: becoming utopian, negation, politics of form, Peter Fitting, Fredric Jameson

Let me begin with two quotations familiar in utopian discourse: first, Karl Marx's "ruthless critique of all that exists", from his letter to Arnold Ruge (Marx, 1975); and second, Fredric Jameson's statement: "The deepest vocation of utopia is to remind us of our constitutional inability to imagine utopia itself: and this, not due to any individual failure of imagination but as a result of the systemic, cultural and ideological closure of which we are all in one way or another prisoners" (1982: 157).

In his letter to Ruge, Marx boldly calls for a "ruthless critique" as a primary step in the transformative work of overcoming the hegemonic regime of his time (namely, the capitalist system). For Marx, this first step must be taken, lest the critic or activist get caught up in the terms and conditions of the very system requiring revolutionary change.

While Marx's assertion is perfectly clear (provoking adherence or rejection depending on the standpoint of the reader), Fredric Jameson's Zen-like declaration that utopia's primary concern is that of declaring its own impossibility often produces confusion and dismay as it appears to dismiss the entire utopian project, relegating it to its eponymous nowhere. However, as much as this koan appears to dismiss utopia, Jameson has no intention of doing so. Rather, his aim is to clarify its status in relation to the given present reality out of which this or that utopian impulse develops. Jameson developed this argument for utopia's fundamentally negative quality as early as 1977. He argued that, rooted in the historical situation, utopia's trajectory moves from a negation of that moment into the figuration of another possibility, one not attainable in the world as it is but one that carries humanity into a not yet existent reality. In his articulation, and before him, in Ernst Bloch's, only such totalizing destruction and transformation can lead to the future reality that utopia (working with the raw material of the physical and ideological world) can prefigure, in immediate action or in the evocation of a better horizon.

As I argue in *Becoming Utopian*, we humans need to remember that the first move in this process of producing utopian scenarios and actions must be one that refuses the ruling order's totalizing enclosure. Only from this negative standpoint, only by deploying deep interpretive critique and radically transformative intervention can we begin to articulate the negation of the negation: generating the projects, the nova, that enact the better world which humans, nonhumans, and the entire planet so direly need.

Saying this, asserting the primacy of the negative does not erase the necessity of positive utopian thought and action. Indeed, it strengthens authentic steps in the production of utopian possibilities. In addressing the "double-bind" of trying to work between Jameson's argument about the negative vocation of the utopian problematic and his own reluctance to give up on utopia's ability to portray and enact alternatives, Fitting makes a strong argument for the motivational power of the utopian imaginary in positing a collective sensibility and behaviour. He recalls the long tradition of utopian texts written by authors who intended their radical content to be taken seriously and adopted as actual alternatives within political or social movements, and he recaptures the history of activists who first came to utopian literature because of the politically instructive, challenging, and empowering content encountered on its pages. He grants that Jameson's

focus on utopia's critical or negative function is fundamentally important, but he equally argues that "it does not satisfactorily acknowledge the positive aspects which brought us to utopias in the first place. For many of us became interested in literary utopias precisely insofar as they *were* visions of alternatives." In attempting to resolve this dilemma, he argues not so much against Jameson but through him, in a dialectical twist that not only retains Jameson's sense of radical figuration but also incorporates the pedagogical impact of utopian content. In catalysing radical change, he argues, the work of the utopian text lies not only in reminding us of the "insufficiency of our own lives" but also in providing an exploration of "the look and feel and shape and experiences of what an alternative might and could actually be, a thought experiment ... which gave us a sense of how our lives could be different and better, not only in our immediate material conditions, but in the sense of an entire world or social system" (1998: 14–15).

Thus, I am not arguing against cognitive and political articulations or manifestations of utopia, but I am saying that they must concretely grow out of the spirit of negation and then move into strategic negotiation with the tendencies and latencies in the present (including authentically reformist possibilities that lead into systemic transformation). This line of argument accords with Jameson's claim that, for the utopian method to fully function, a "Marxist negative hermeneutic" should be exercised simultaneously with a "Marxist positive hermeneutic" (1981: 296).

Here, I want to stress the importance of the "political epistemology" (as Darko Suvin terms it, for example, in his essays published in 2010) of Ernst Bloch's hermeneutic method of deep interpretation. Bloch (1986) (and Jameson, Ruth Levitas, Phillip Wegner, and others) assesses historical and present-day realities not just in terms of the dominant order but also in terms of the alternative and oppositional tendencies and latencies that are suppressed or not yet available, and yet offer immanent "traces" (*Spuren*) of forward movement toward a utopian horizon within that very moment. Thus, utopian possibility must be understood as a complex anticipatory figuration, wherein previously undeveloped transformations are imagined and exercised in provisional actions, while always standing open to unknown formations and practices that will only emerge when such a utopian way of being is attained.

This deep interpretive work requires a robust encounter with the overdetermined complexities of the present condition and not simply a one-dimensional assessment of the dominant order of things based in an abstract, static "realism" rather than a concrete, anticipatory "realism". Thus, utopian praxis is, and must be, radical and revolutionary, cutting to the roots of what is to be done in order to move toward totalizing transformation into what is Not Yet (Bloch). In this context, apparent reforms within the present system, usually growing out of a surface empiricism complicit with the reigning power

structure are not sufficient, for they are gestures that never break through such a structure. Indeed, such restricted practices only serve an artificial negativity that manages the conditions of what Bloch terms the "provincial present" rather than oppose what Herbert Marcuse termed the "affirmative culture" of the totally administered society. Only in a dialectically engaged manner can utopian praxis push at the edges of what is known, what is unforeseeable, or what is just looming into sight.

Hence, articulated utopias can be usefully understood in terms of the politics and mechanics of form: as figurative scenarios, thought experiments, performative or prefigurative communal and political action, rather than as empiricist agendas or blueprints declared by either a ruling regime, a self-nominated central committee, or a singular thinker. This, then, is the collective and transgressive materialist exercise that estrangement and cognition produces within a long-term revolutionary process that unleashes new progressive energies as it cuts through the knots of structural and ideological atrophy, by means of ruthless destruction and anticipatory practice (practice which can range from strategic compromise, to outright opposition, or to creative alternatives). This is what I meant in *Becoming Utopian* as I wrote of utopia's "strong thought" as it is mobilized against all accommodation with the present system to challenge the dominant ideologies that fear and absorb utopia — often doing so by proffering limited reforms or ameliorations that preserve the system rather than interventions that aim to radically alter the existing order of things.

Parenthetically, I want to note that the radical alternatives made possible by utopian praxis are not simply to be understood as a project of the Left, although that is the one with which this paper is concerned. As Fitting has aptly described, right-wing utopias are also part of the utopian project, insofar as they too break with the established order of things in their reach toward their version of a better world. So too, proto-utopian religious projects proffer alternative visions that are "not of this world" (Fitting, 1991).[1]

Therefore, it is important to reaffirm that authentic utopian undertaking (political, artistic, scholarly, pedagogical, material, textual) must begin with a deep analysis of present conditions that negates those conditions before prefigurations of transformative alternatives can be developed out of, and beyond, present contradictions and possibilities. For utopia, at its radical core, cannot be complicit with the present order of things, cannot facilitate that order, and cannot serve to produce or manage that order — even as it can work in a strategic and nurturing manner with progressive achievements and possibilities within that order. Indeed, if a utopian project is simply or uncritically legitimated within the enclosure of the present, it can only be compensatory. That is, of the three functions of utopia identified by Ruth Levitas in *The Concept of Utopia* (transformative, alternative,

compensatory), the last is utopia's attenuated role when developed in an unmediated, one-dimensional fashion in the given present; for in this pseudo form, utopia is nothing but an abstract representation of something better that does not grow out of a destructive and emancipatory break with the ruling order. Without negation, the development of positive programmes and visions will be instrumentally recaptured by any present ruling order.

At this point, I want to stress that even after ruthless critique, even after negation of the present, even within a realization of an authentic utopian programme in the present moment or one leading toward an unknown horizon, this primary function of negation must continue. For when realized, a new utopian reality (at the micro level of an intentional community, a forward pulling reformist achievement, an ongoing political movement, or ultimately, at the macro level of a postrevolutionary society) will still fall prey to further decay. Whether attacked and/or suppressed by externally antagonistic forces or compromised by internal power struggles or habituated laziness or opportunism, an achieved utopian programme must always require further negative engagement to overcome the entropy or half-life of its foundational energy, in order to reignite the powerful utopian impulse that will fuel the re-energizing and refunctioning that will provoke the revolution in the revolution.

Utopian positivity is, then, to be known and experienced, created and explored, as it arises out of a negation that breaks with the present. We see this in the textual scenarios and narratives of the literary utopia and dystopia, in the imagery of visual utopias, in the prefigured political practice of intentional communities and radical political movements, and in radical utopian design which proffers a reconfiguration of the built environment that makes a better existence possible. We see this in all utopian articulations as they disturb the universe out of which they arise, as they march to the beat of a different drum, even as they speak back from a sense of the utopian achievement embodied in a radical horizon. We see again and again that the only hope for realized utopian programmes, be they communities or official practices or movements, is found in the constantly reignited negative impulse at the core of the process of becoming utopian. If we humans (in all our intersectional diversity) are effectively to engage as utopian practitioners and scholars, we must take care to work from this negation, in order to move into the next, positive, steps of utopian achievement in a triple motion that is totalizing, transgressive, and transformative.

Utopia must at its core reach for something better, for that something which is "missing" in the present, as Adorno put it in conversation with Bloch (1988). Without this fundamental function of the negative, no authentically engaged utopian project (scholarly or sociopolitical) is possible.

Note

1. For a compelling narrative exploring radical utopianism as existentially and politically lived by individuals within an Islamic caliphate, see Norman Spinrad's science fictional thought experiment, *Osama The Gun* (Cabin John, MD: Wildside Press, 2016); the approach taken in the book, and the struggles involved in publishing it, are captured by the author in his comments on the back cover: "I wanted the reader to hate the sin, but love the sinner, because I felt it had to be done, and since no one else seemed to be willing to do it, and try to do it myself, come what may. Because Islam was being confused with its radical Middle Eastern jehadis, and Arabs in general with terrorists, and it seemed to me that the alien jihadist consciousness had to be experienced from within and empathetically understood. Which was why *Osama The Gun* had to be written, and why, as one foaming at the mouth rejection letter predicted, no American publisher would touch this book." All readers should be grateful to Wildside for choosing to publish it.

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