

PART II
Topics and Debates

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Utopia

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Any discussion of Utopian in relationship to science fiction needs to begin by first distinguishing between the specific genre of Utopian literature and what we can describe as a more general Utopian impulse. The latter refers to the deeply human desire for an utterly transformed, radically other, and/or redeemed existence, a desire that manifests itself in a wide range of cultural documents. Being that which remains fully alien to our current form of life, Utopia in this first sense is fundamentally unrepresentable, and thus becomes evident only indirectly through figures, images, signs, or traces scattered throughout a text. While such notable students of Utopia as Ernst Bloch and Fredric Jameson point out the ubiquity of such figures of the Utopian impulse – which we can find in everything from children’s toys and classical music to fascist propaganda, free market ideologies, and Hollywood films like *The Godfather* – they have a specially prominent role in the imaginative worlds of science fiction. To point toward only a few examples, manifestations of this Utopian impulse occur in the image of the postinvasion world of H.G. Wells’ *War of the Worlds* (1898), in the new and unexpected realm of freedom announced at the end of Alfred Bester’s *The Stars My Destination* (1956), in the collective entity Man seen in Joe Haldeman’s *Forever War* (1975), in the declarations that conclude the Strugatsky brothers’ *Roadside Picnic* (1977), and in the Earthseed project of Octavia Butler’s *Parable* novels (1993 and 1998). Haldeman’s vision is especially revealing in this regard, in that it also highlights the existential anxiety that any encounter with such an alien existence produces for us.

If manifestations of such a Utopian impulse are abundant, the works that compose the genre of the literary Utopian form a much more limited set. There have been numerous attempts to define the genre, two of the more significant being those offered by noted literary and science fiction critic Darko Suvin and political theorist Lyman Tower Sargent. Suvin defines the literary Utopian in this way: “Utopia is the verbal construction of a particular quasihuman community where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect

principle than in the author's community, this construction based on estrangement arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis" (Suvin 1979: 49). There are a number of aspects of this definition worth highlighting. First, Suvin's notion of the "quasihuman" aspect of the Utopian community marks the difference between this genre and a number of kin forms, such as myths of the Golden Age or millenarian visions: these communities are very much presented as part of (or potentially a part of) our world, subject to same natural laws, and the products of human rather than divine or mystical labors. In short, Utopian is a materialist rather than idealist genre – something that is also the case in the later genre of science fiction, which bears such a deep kinship to Utopian.

Second, Suvin stresses the ways works making up this genre focus on the larger collective social and cultural machinery – sociopolitical institutions, norms, and relationships – rather than individual characters or character psychology. Indeed, a good deal of the creative energy in any particular Utopian text is invested in the detailed description of the various practices, institutions, values, beliefs, and so forth of this fictional world. In this respect, Utopian literature reveals its roots in the prose romance rather than the later form of the novel, the romance taking as its central project, as Jameson maintains, the mapping of space – something that is also the case, he argues elsewhere, for science fiction. The critical commonplace that holds that all classical Utopian fictions describe homogenous worlds without a place for the individual are thus the result of a basic category confusion, applying to the Utopian form the very different criteria of the novel.

Finally, Suvin's definition emphasizes the inseparable link between any specific Utopian and the historical context out of which it emerges. That is, any individual Utopian vision appears as "more perfect" only in comparison to the society of its historical moment, and we run into great difficulty in our reading if we forget this context and evaluate these visions according to the values and practices of our own cultural and social moment. Moreover, the Utopian text takes up a critical role – what Suvin means by his use of the Brechtian concept of "estrangement" – in relationship to that context: through its presentation of this alternative community, the Utopian narrative has the effect of both highlighting in a negative light many of the problems of the reigning social order and, perhaps even more significantly, of showing that what is taken as natural and eternally fixed by the members of that society is in fact the product of historical development and thus open to change. Once again, as Suvin emphasizes throughout his criticism, this operation of estrangement is a central dimension of the very best work of science fiction as well.

Sargent begins by defining the Utopian most broadly as "a nonexistent society described in considerable detail and located in time and space." As with Suvin, Sargent stresses a number of crucial things in this concise definition: the fictional status of the society represented in these works, the amount of effort expended in elaborating the various social machineries of this fictional society, and the particular location of this imaginary world within our universe. However, the real value of Sargent's intervention lies in his elaboration upon this foundation of a rich typology of various expres-

sions of the Utopian narrative form. Each is differentiated from the others, he argues, according to the individual author's "intentions" in developing her vision. Thus, in the "eutopian or positive Utopian," the form that most immediately comes to mind when we think of the genre of the literary Utopian, the author offers us a detailed description of a nonexistent society that he intends "a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than the society in which that reader lived." However, in the "dystopia or negative Utopian" (the form of Utopian narration that, as we shall see momentarily, only came into its own in the last century), the author intends a contemporaneous reader to see the society described in the text "as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived." In the "Utopian satire," the vision offered in the text is meant "as a criticism of that contemporary society," while in the "anti-Utopian" it serves "as a criticism of Utopianism [which Sargent defines as "social dreaming"] or of some particular eutopian." Finally, in the most recent of these subgenres to emerge, the "critical Utopian," the society presented in the work is intended to be understood as "better than contemporary society but with difficult problems that the described society may or may not be able to solve and which takes a critical view of the Utopian genre" (Sargent 1994: 9). With this, Sargent emphasizes the fact that these various practices cannot be considered in isolation from each other and that all are parts of the larger genre of the Utopian. Moreover, any particular Utopian text can embody simultaneously different aspects of this typology, although one tends to be dominant. Of course, recovering the author's intentions after the fact can often be a difficult task, and there is nothing to prevent a reader from misreading any particular literary Utopian, often with the result being a protracted and sometimes heated debate about the work's meaning.

What might be less apparent in either Suvin's or Sargent's definitions, however, is the relatively recent emergence and thoroughgoing modernity of Utopian as a literary institution. Utopian is one of those relatively rare genres that has a precise moment of birth, as both the form and the term itself come into being in 1516 with the publication of the great English Renaissance humanist Thomas More's masterpiece, *Utopia*. This is not to say that there were not portrayals of ideal societies or forms of social dreaming preceding More's work. Indeed, these imaginings are probably as old as human history itself. To take only a few of the more well-known examples, there are the ideal societies represented in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*; in the earthly paradises and Golden Age visions of the Judeo-Christian biblical book of Genesis or in the works of the classical authors Pindar and Hesiod; in Augustine's *City of God*; and in the popular medieval folk tales of the Land of Cockaigne and of the kingdom of Prester John. In fact, we know that some of these older visions were among the diverse resources drawn upon by More in the composition of his work. Nor is such an imagining the exclusive property of the Western and European world, Utopian strands being evident, for example, in Confucianism and classical Chinese poetry. However, the specific formal strategies deployed by More set the template for subsequent work in the genre, and a great number of the earliest works make explicit their reliance upon their predecessor.

More's Latin text is composed of two short Books, the second of which was written before the first. In Book One, More tells of his meeting while on a diplomatic mission with the imaginary traveler Raphael Hythlodæus. Their ensuing conversation touches on a wide range of issues of contemporary concern, including the then accelerating enclosure of common lands and the massive displacement of rural populations that occurred as a result (these insights were praised by Karl Marx in *Capital*); the dissolution of the older feudal retainer system; the crime of theft and its punishment; the dangers of standing armies; private property; the best way for a prince to rule his people; and the advisability of a philosopher serving as an advisor to the monarch (a role More himself would soon take up). Then, in order to demonstrate the possibility of living in other ways, Hythlodæus describes certain aspects of a few of the societies he has visited, including those of the Polylerites, the Achorians, and the Macarians. If More had chosen one of these other fictional titles as that of the kingdom described in Book Two, we might be referring to the genre, as well as the more general form of social dreaming, by another name (Achorian literature? Macarianism?). All of this then opens up onto Hythlodæus' detailed description in Book Two of the form of life he finds in Utopia. Hythlodæus' goal in Book Two is best summed up in his famous statement near the conclusion of his discourse, a statement that might also be taken as a definition of the genre to which he has just given birth: "Now I have described to you, as exactly as I could, the structure of that commonwealth (*Reipublicae*) which I judge not merely the best but the only one which can rightly claim the name of a commonwealth" (More 1965: 237). Hythlodæus' narration is wide-ranging, and includes, among other things, a description of the geography and founding of the Utopian community; the layout of their cities; their political institutions; occupations and working day; dress; household structure; dining habits; forms of travel and trade; use of gold and silver; moral philosophy; education; medicine; marriage customs; legal structures; foreign relations; attitudes toward and engagement in war; and religious practices. This narrative structure – where a visitor describes or has described to her in great detail the organization of social and cultural life in this community – will be a commonplace in many subsequent works in the genre. While Hythlodæus remains convinced of the superiority of all aspects of Utopian society to that which currently exists in Europe, the character of More is a bit more skeptical, although he admits, without however offering any specific guidelines, "There are many things in the Commonwealth of Utopia which I wish our own country would imitate – though I don't expect it will."

With these closing words, More begins a debate that will continue throughout subsequent discussion of this work and others in the genre: how seriously are we to take the author's vision? There is an ambiguity already at play in the term Utopia: is it a compound of the Greek roots, "no (*ou*) place (*topos*)" or "happy (*eu*) place;" or even both? Does More mean to tell us that we should take his work as simply a display of humanist wit and creative linguistic play, much like his friend Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* (1509); or as a critique of contemporary society, presented in an indirect way so that its author might escape censure for his heterodox views; or as a workable plan of an

alternative society; or all of these, and more? Hythlodæus' Greek surname too has been translated as "expert in trifles" or "well-learned in nonsense" – but does this mean that we dismiss his vision, as some would do, as sheer silliness and fantasy, or does More mean in this way to highlight the fact that from within the dominant perspective of his moment, Hythlodæus' insights can only appear as nonsense, thus ironically commenting on the narrowness and lack of imagination to be found in those who rule? There is no way to definitely answer these questions, and debate will continue for a long time to come.

However, what is clear is that many of More's contemporaries were struck by the singular power of his unique work, and would follow his lead in creating their own "Utopians." And it is these first readers – readers that include More himself, who continues to work in the new genre in the mini-Utopians of Book One (remember, written after Book Two) – who create the genre of Utopian. They perform what literary critic Gary Saul Morson calls a "re-authoring" of More's text: "In an important sense, it is really the *second* work of a genre that creates the genre by defining conventions and *topoi* for the class. Read in the context of the second and subsequent works, the style of the first becomes the grammar of the class, and its idiosyncratic themes and rhetorical devices are rediscovered as the motifs and tropes of a tradition" (Morson 1981: 75). Without these later readers and writers, *Utopia* would have remained a brilliant and original contribution to Western literature, a tribute to the tremendous creative energy of More's time and place, but would not be the progenitor of a new genre that would have a tremendous impact of the subsequent history of modern life.

One of More's first readers was his French contemporary, François Rabelais, who would not only refer explicitly to the Utopian people in the second book (1532) of his great work, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, but also includes in its first book (actually first published two years later) his own Utopian fiction, entitled "The Abbey of Thélème." Rabelais not only helps establish the new genre, but also offers one of the first critiques of More's vision. Rabelais replaces the strict regulation of so many aspects of daily life evident in More's Utopia with a society whose fundamental maxim is "Do as Thou Wouldst," where there are no clocks, where people are encouraged to come and go as they please, and where sensual pleasures and sumptuous dress are celebrated. The couple of More and Rabelais establish a pattern that will recur throughout the subsequent history of the genre. Sargent points out two strands of social dreaming that predate More's founding work in the genre, which he calls the "Utopians of sensual gratification or body Utopians" and "the Utopian of human contrivance or the city Utopian." The former is exemplified for him in the fables of the Land of Cockaigne and the latter by Plato's *Laws*. However, with More and Rabelais, these two poles come into a dialectical coordination, one standing as the determinate negation of the other. This pattern of thesis and antithesis is then repeated later in the history of the genre when, for example, William Morris offers his *News From Nowhere* (1890), with its sensual and pastoral vision of an "epoch of rest" as a direct "reply" to the highly structured urban existence portrayed in Edward Bellamy's monumentally influential *Looking Backward* (1888); and when Samuel Delany writes his

“ambiguous heterotopia,” *Triton* (1976) as among other things a critical commentary on Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* (1974).

The centuries following the publication of *Utopia* witness a proliferation of literary Utopians that explicitly take More’s work as their model. Some of the more prominent examples include Johann Valentin Andreae’s *Christianopolis* (1619), Tommaso Campanella’s *City of the Sun* (1623), Francis Bacon’s *The New Atlantis* (1627), Gabriel Platt’s *A Description of the Famous Kingdom of Macaria* (1641), Gerrard Winstanley’s *The Law of Freedom in a Platform* (1651), James Harrington’s *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), and Margaret Cavendish’s “The Inventory of Judgements Commonwealth, the Author Cares not in what World it is established” (1655) and *The Description of a New World, call’d The Blazing-world* (1666). The full titles of Harrington’s and Cavendish’s first Utopian also point toward a central contribution that More’s work would make not only to the genre but also to modern life more generally: for Utopia is not only the one place that could lay the claim to being ordered in the interest of the “public good” – the older definition of the Latin term *respublica* or its subsequent English translation “a common weale” – but is also the only place that was already a “commonwealth” as the term would subsequently be defined, as a synonym for the modern nation-state. The imaginary community contributes to the establishment of what Benedict Anderson calls the “imagined community,” as More’s work, and the genre to which it gives birth, helps to establish the nation-state as the “natural” scale for imagining collective social and cultural belonging. While there will be notable exceptions – an early example being Campanella’s *City of the Sun* (1623 – the majority of the most influential achievements in the genre over the next few centuries will take the nation-state as the scale for Utopian imaginings. This is true even of a work like Bacon’s, for while it appears that the concerns with society as a whole that were so central to More, and which once again come to the fore in Winstanley’s and Harrington’s Utopians, had apparently given way to a more particular interest in promoting the institution of the new “natural philosophy,” or empirical science, it was precisely through the emerging institutions and ideologies of science that the “modernity,” and hence the historical uniqueness, of the society as a whole, the English nation-state, proclaims itself in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Two of the most important Utopian works published in the eighteenth century mark significant developments within the genre. Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) signals the growing influence of what Sargent calls the “Utopian satire.” Swift tells the story of the four sea journeys of Lemuel Gulliver, and his adventures in the lands of the miniscule Lilliputians, the gigantic Brobdingnagians, the abstract and theoretically inclined Laputans, and the hyper-rational horse creatures, the Houyhnhnms. Not only does the culturally conservative Swift use these various communities as a tool for parodying the excesses of the Enlightenment middle class, his work also, especially in its third and fourth books, satirizes earlier Utopians such as Bacon’s *New Atlantis* and Plato’s *Republic*, and the more general Utopian desires of his historical moment. Swift’s work would not only serve as a the model for later Utopian satires such as Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon* (1872), but also would be an important

resource for the development of the dystopia and anti-Utopian forms that will play such a central role in the twentieth century.

In its presentation of Gulliver's journeys, Swift's work continues in the tradition of the Utopian travel narrative established by More. The French writer Sébastien Mercier's *The Year 2440: A Dream if There Ever Was One* (1771), however, marks the definitive transformation of the Utopian into a "uchronia," the voyage occurring in time rather than in space and the Utopian community thereby becoming a vision of a transformed present. *The Year 2440* tells the story of discontent contemporary of Mercier who falls asleep, only to awaken in a twenty-fifth century Paris that has changed dramatically. Intimations of this shift from space to time as the vector of Utopian travel are already present in More's founding fiction. There is evidence in *Utopia* to suggest that we view the Utopian nation as an England transformed: for example, Utopia's 54 cities are the equivalents of the 53 counties and the city of London in historical England; the strange ebb and flow of Utopia's Anydrus River is the same as that of the Thames; and the description of the river's bridge makes it almost identical to London Bridge. However, what can at best only be implied in More's fiction becomes explicit in *The Year 2440*; or as Paul Alkon puts it, the originality of Mercier's work lies in the fact that "his Utopian is given a local habitation, a real name, and a real if distant date" (1987: 118). Although largely forgotten today, the book was wildly successful in its own day, despite initially being banned in France and by the Catholic Church. By the century's end, it had gone through eleven French editions, was quickly translated into a number of languages, and is the first Utopian text published in the USA (copies were owned by George Washington and Thomas Jefferson). Moreover, its influence on the subsequent development of the Utopian genre is inestimable. The dream narrative form likely influenced Bellamy and Morris, and the use of the date as the work's title would be a device of the single most important Utopian narrative of the twentieth century, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a great period of change and revolutionary ferment in Europe and elsewhere. Not surprisingly, this moment witnessed not only an outpouring of Utopian writings, but also to the establishment of a number of experimental Utopian communities, what are now referred to as "intentional communities," within the then recently founded USA and in the territories bordering it. Some of these communities – such as those of the Shakers, the German pietist Amana community, and the Christian perfectionist Oneida settlement – were religiously based, while others were founded on the ideas and principles presented in the work of the group who would later be described as "Utopian socialists" by Friedrich Engels in his influential pamphlet, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880). Among the most prominent of these Utopian socialists were the Scottish industrialist and reformer Robert Owen, who founded the communities of New Lanark in Scotland and New Harmony in southern Indiana; the French thinker, Henri de Saint-Simon, who argued for the formation of a common European union whose peaceful industrialization would be led by an enlightened scientific, philosophical,

technical, and artistic elite; and Saint-Simon's brilliant and eccentric countryman Charles Fourier, who in his *Theory of Four Movements and of the General Destiny* (1808) and other voluminous writings proposed the dismantling of the restraints imposed on the natural passions, and the reorganization of society into a series of "phalansteries," economic units of 1620 people, with all labor being divided according to people's natural tendencies.

One of the more interesting and now largely forgotten figures of this moment, who himself bridged the gap between Utopian fiction and social experimentation, was the French political radical and author Etienne Cabet. While in exile in England for his political activities, Cabet encountered Owen's Utopian socialism and, even more significantly, read More's *Utopia*. Inspired by their ideas, he produced his own Utopian fiction, *Voyage in Icaria* (1840). This work was a tremendous success, and it led to Cabet to become the leader of a Utopian socialist political movement whose membership at its peak was said to number 400,000. However, as time passed Cabet became increasingly frustrated by both the slow pace of change in France and the increasing governmental persecution of his followers, and he decided to lead a group to the USA to form a colony based on the principles he had outlined in his fictional work. Despite the protests of Marx and others, a small group departed for Texas in February 1848. After a series of fiascos, in part brought on by crooked land dealings and in part by their lack of preparations for the harsh conditions of rural Texas, the initial colony was soon abandoned. It would exist in a fitful state until the end of the century in a few other locations, including Nauvoo, Illinois, the former settlement of the Mormons. However, Cabet himself, becoming increasingly inflexible and intolerant, was purged from the community a few years later, and died in 1856 in St. Louis an embittered man.

It was later in the century and from the USA that the single most influential Utopian fiction of the nineteenth century would emerge. Although the American novelist and influential taste-maker, William Dean Howells (who later would also write his own Utopian fiction, *A Traveler in Altruria* [1894]) once called him "the first writer of romance in our environment worthy to be compared with Hawthorne," Edward Bellamy was a journalist and minor man of letters until the 1888 publication of *Looking Backward, 2000–1887* thrust him into international fame. *Looking Backward* tells the story of upper-middle-class Julian West who is cast into a hypnotic slumber, only to awaken in a new Boston in the year 2000. The bulk of the narrative follows the major contours of the classical Utopian, Julian being introduced to the wonders of the new world by his host, Dr. Leete (although Bellamy did spice things up by including a romantic interest in Dr. Leete's daughter, who turns out to be the descendant of West's nineteenth-century fiancé). Here, West discovers a world in which the political chaos, social divisions, and incipient violence of his own moment have been replaced by a rational and equitable system, the labor force organized into a pyramidal "Industrial Army" and the circulation and distribution of goods occurring through a standardized and centralized national system of warehouses. William Morris described this vision as a "cockney paradise" (Kelvin 1996: 59), one content

to leave in place the main contours of industrial civilization, and Morris would offer an agrarian world of simplicity, beauty, and unalienated labor in his celebrated and influential “reply,” *News From Nowhere* (1890).

Few books in the history of American letters can rival the contemporary success of *Looking Backward*. In the USA alone, the book sold more than 200,000 copies within two years of publication, 400,000 by the appearance of its sequel *Equality* (1897) – an extension and revision of some of the elements of *Looking Backward* – and it eventually became only the second American work of fiction with sales to surpass the one million mark. It was also widely circulated in Great Britain, and translations were soon executed in German, French, Norwegian, Russian, and Italian. The book’s literary influence was equally tremendous: it spawned hundreds of imitators, “sequels,” and responses, ranging from Ludwig Geissler’s simplistic defense, *Looking Beyond* (1891), to Arthur Dudley Vinton’s deeply critical dystopia, *Looking Further Backward* (1890). *Looking Backward* is so central to the explosive growth of the literary industry of Utopian that Kenneth Roemer dates his survey of American Utopian fiction from its publication. Moreover, the work had a direct impact on the political discourse of its day. *Looking Backward* even gave birth to a political movement, named Nationalism by Bellamy himself, which while short-lived, did influence both the emerging platform of the Populist Party and progressive calls for, among other reforms, the nationalization of public utilities. All of this led the philosopher John Dewey, the historian Charles Beard, and the publisher Edwin Weeks in 1935 to judge Bellamy’s narrative of all the works published in the preceding half century second in importance only to Marx’s *Capital*.

An increasingly diverse group of literary Utopians continued to be produced in the early years of the twentieth century. Perhaps the most significant English language writer of these Utopians at this moment, H.G. Wells, also played a prominent part in the establishment of the modern genre of science fiction. Beginning with *A Modern Utopia* (1905) – a work that draws inspiration from Bacon’s *New Atlantis* and presents a vision of a clean, orderly, and efficient society, a triumph of rational organization and centralized planning, directed by the Samurai, a voluntary scientific and bureaucratic elite – and continuing in later works such as *Men Like Gods* (1923) and *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), Wells produced a wealth of influential Utopian visions to complement his now more well-known science fiction stories and novels. Indeed, it was Wells’ Utopian fictions more than any others that became the target of later critiques of Utopianism more generally. The new century also saw the re-emergence of a rich tradition of Utopian speculation in Russia. These fictions looked back to Nikolai Chernyshevsky’s *What is to be Done?* (1863), a work that would serve as a major inspiration for the Russian revolutionary movements, and which would become the target of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s bitter scorn in *Notes from the Underground* (1864), a landmark work in the development of anti-Utopianism. The most significant and widely circulated of these new Russian Utopians was written by Alexander Bogdanov, a colleague of Lenin and an important figure in his own right in the 1905 Russian Revolution. Bogdanov’s *Red Star* (1908) tells the story of a young revolutionary’s

journey, via space craft, to the planet Mars, a world where the norms of individualism and competitive capitalism have been supplanted by those of collectivism and egalitarian socialism, and where money, compulsory work, and artificial limits on personal consumption have been eliminated. (Bogdanov would tell the story of the founding of this Utopian society in his prequel, *Engineer Menni* [1913].) These years also saw the publication of the US writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Utopian fictions, "A Woman's Utopia" (1907), *Herland* (1915), and the latter's sequel, *With Her in Ourland* (1916). As the titles of these works suggest, Gilman was one of the first English language Utopian writers to put the issue of gender and women's rights at the center of discussion (gender issues had in fact been given more prominence in Russian Utopian fiction). Gilman's influence on the development of Utopian fiction would become even more pronounced in the 1970s with the "rediscovery" of *Herland*.

Three crucial developments occur in the first part of the twentieth century that will influence the development of the genre in the years to come. First, the older vision of a Utopian as a location "somewhere else" in the world continues to wane, and Utopian is increasingly identified with speculations concerning the future. (There are, of course, some notable exceptions to this trend, among them, James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* [1933], B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two* [1948], and Aldous Huxley's *Island* [1962].) One consequence of this development is that Utopian writing more and more is read as a subset of the expanding genre of science fiction, so much so that Suvin will later describe Utopian as the "sociopolitical subgenre of SF" (Suvin 1988: 38). Second, there is a growing sense within the genre of the insufficiency of the older form of the nation-state as the container for Utopian speculation and experimentation (an identification that still very much holds, for example, in Bellamy's work). Wells makes this shift explicit in the opening pages of *A Modern Utopia*: "No less than a planet will serve the purpose of a modern Utopia. Time was when a mountain valley or an island seemed to promise sufficient isolation for a polity to maintain itself intact from outward force. . . . But the whole trend of modern thought is against the permanence of any such enclosures . . . World-state, therefore, it must be" (Wells 1967: 11–12). However, rethinking community in this global framework would not be an easy thing – just as the nation-state is not the local writ large, so the global is so much more than a planetary nation-state – and a good deal of the energy in Utopian writing of the last century, and indeed up until our present moment, would be invested in the efforts to re-imagine the very nature of communal belonging on a new global scale.

The final event will perhaps have the greatest consequences for the development of the genre: the emergence and growing influence of the dystopia. Some of the most prominent dystopias in the first half of the century include E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" (1909), Karl Čapek's play *R.U.R.* (1920) (which also gave us the word, "robot") and *The War With the Neuts* (1936), Yvengy Zamyatin's *We* (1920), Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1926) – one of the first of the many film dystopias produced in the century – Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and most importantly of

all, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). The modern dystopia develops in the latter part of the nineteenth century by way of a fusion of what would appear at first glance to be two very different genres: on the one hand, the literary Utopian with its vision of a future other world, and on the other, the naturalist novel, which offers a bleak picture of both the present and humanity more generally. Not surprisingly, Jack London, the author of one of the first great modern dystopias, *The Iron Heel* (1908) – a book that would have a marked influence on radicalism in the USA, Russia, and elsewhere – was also one of the leading practitioners of naturalism. Orwell also makes this link explicit when he writes to the publisher of his masterpiece, “I will tell you now that this is a novel about the future – that is, it is in a sense a fantasy, but in the form of a naturalistic novel. That is what makes it a difficult job – of course as a book of anticipations it would be comparatively simple to write” (1998: 329–30).

Perhaps the most significant legacy of naturalism to dystopian fiction lies in its vision of human nature: if at the heart of the classical “eutopian” there is not only the belief in the possibility of historical movement and progress but an assumption of the potential for improvement, if not perfectability, of human beings, in naturalism humanity is presented as animalistic in nature, ruled by the most primitive instincts of self-preservation, uncontrolled passion, violence, and a lust for power. Thus, at the heart of naturalism lies the belief that society can, at best, contain these drives, but not overcome them. The differences between the vision of the future and of humanity that naturalism bequeaths to dystopia and that found in the classical Utopian is summed up in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the Inner Party member O'Brien's chilling speech to the idealistic, even Utopian, protagonist Winston Smith: “But always – do not forget this, Winston – always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face – forever” (Orwell 1949: 220).

Many of the great dystopias paint a far more complex picture than often assumed. Zamyatin's *We* offers a rich schema of different Utopian “possible worlds,” and even maintains an open-ended Utopian horizon in its intimations of the “world” of the “infinite revolution;” Huxley's *Brave New World* contains hints of a Utopian primitivism that will be realized more fully in *Island*; and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* critiques both the superpowers, US mass media culture as much as Soviet state bureaucracy, that emerge in the aftermath of the Second World War. (Moreover, there is a debate whether the book's Appendix, “The Principles of Newspeak,” without which Orwell refused to allow the book to be published, also represents a dim kind of Utopian hope.) However, what is unquestionable is the fact that these works are often read as expressing a more general anti-Utopianism, and thereby they become crucial ideological weapons in an assault on all forms of Utopian thinking, or even of social planning. This is precisely the role that Orwell's fiction was called upon to have in the struggles of the Cold War, as it was often read not only as a denunciation of the horrors of Stalinist Soviet Union, but as a more general attack on the misguided efforts of

intellectuals and political activists in the previous century to transform society in some fundamental way – or even for having the temerity to imagine that such a sweeping change might be possible. Utopia was now understood as a dangerous naivety, if not a direct path to the Gulag, and the environment became more and more unfavorable to any form of eutopian fiction and speculation. This is evident in the general reception of the psychologist B.F. Skinner's Utopian, *Walden Two* (1948), which despite the cautious experimental nature of its proposals, arguing as it does for a more general application to social problems of the tenets of Skinner's behaviorist psychology, had the misfortune to be published only a year before *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and was unfairly measured against it.

However, such a general anti-Utopianism proves to be a position that is difficult to maintain for very long, and many dystopias also contain strains of what the sociologist Karl Mannheim calls a "conservative Utopian." (In his important work, *Ideology and Utopia* [1929], Mannheim produces a schema of what he calls the four "ideal types" of the Utopian mentality, a schema that is useful for thinking about work in the genre as well.) According to Mannheim, the mentality underlying such fictions contrasts with that of the "liberalism" found in most eutopians:

Whereas for liberalism the future was everything and the past nothing, the conservative mode of experiencing time found the best corroboration of its sense of the determinateness in discovering the significance of the past, in the discovery of time as the creator of value. . . . Consequently not only is attention turned to the past and the attempt made to rescue it from oblivion, but the presentness and immediacy of the whole past becomes an actual experience. (Mannheim 1936: 235).

Again, this proves to be the case in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as Winston Smith nostalgically looks back toward the vanished moment of Orwell's own youth, a moment that not coincidentally also coincided with the high point of British global power.

The dystopian form continues to flourish in the years after the Second World War, especially within the realm of popular science fiction, producing such memorable specimens as Vladimir Nabokov's *Bend Sinister* (1947); Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *Player Piano* (1952); Frederick Pohl and C.M. Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants* (1952), Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953); Anthony Burgess' *Clockwork Orange* (1962), as well as Stanley Kubrick's 1971 film adaptation of it; and Philip K. Dick's *Martian Time-Slip* (1964), *Dr. Bloodmoney* (1965), and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), the last the basis for Ridley Scott's film adaptation *Blade Runner* (1982). Many of the best dystopias of the 1960s and 1970s reflect the major concerns of their moment, raising the specter of overpopulation, urban decay, and environmental catastrophe. This includes works such as Harry Harrison's *Make Room! Make Room!* (1966) and its film adaptation, *Soylent Green* (1973); John Brunner's loose quartet of *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968), *The Jagged Orbit* (1969), *The Sheep Look Up* (1972), and *The Shockwave Rider* (1975); and Samuel Delany's *Dhalgren* (1975). Meanwhile, works like

Suzy McKee Charnas' "Holdfast Chronicles" – *Walk to the End of the World* (1974), *Motherlines* (1978), and *The Furies* (1994) – and Margaret Atwood's bestseller *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) use dystopia as a way of raising awareness about some of the central concerns of the women's movement.

The ascendancy of dystopia and anti-Utopianism more generally did not, however, mean the end of Utopian, or more precisely eutopian, writing. Indeed, a celebrated "rebirth" of the form occurs in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Some of the first inklings of this revival are to be found in works like R.A. Lafferty's *Past Master* (1968), a text whose critical engagement with the generic traditions of the Utopian narrative (its central character being "Thomas More" transported to another world a thousand years after his death) also deftly invokes the radical political energies and Utopian hopes of its moment; and Monique Wittig's *Les Guérillères* (1969), which announces the emergence of a true feminist Utopian tradition. At its height in the mid-1970s, this flourishing of the genre produced such works as Christiane Rochefort's *Archaeos, or the Sparkling Garden* (1972), Mack Reynolds' *Looking Backward, From the Year 2000* (1973), Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974) (and her later, *Always Coming Home* [1985]), Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* (1975), Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975), Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), Samuel Delany's *Triton* (1976), E.M. Broner's *A Weave of Women* (1978), Louky Bersianik's *The Eugélonne* (1978), and Sally Miller Gearheart's *The Wanderground: Stories of the Hill Women* (1978). These works are very much the products of the global political, social, and cultural ferment of the late 1960s and 1970s, and as a consequence a whole series of concerns – ecology, the environment, race, gender, and sexuality – are given a prominence that had not been evident earlier in the genre's long history. Moreover, as with the so-called New Left's relationship to the old, these works take up a skeptical relationship to their predecessors. Tom Moylan marks this difference in describing these works as "critical Utopians," fictions that are cognizant of the dystopian and anti-Utopian interventions, and which signal an:

awareness of the limitations of the Utopian tradition, so that these texts reject Utopian as a blueprint while preserving it as a dream. Furthermore, the novels dwell on the conflict between the originary world and the Utopian society opposed to it so that the process of social change is more directly articulated. Finally, the novels focus on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection within Utopian society itself and thus render more recognizable and dynamic alternative. (Moylan 1986: 10–11).

This upsurge of Utopian fiction would again dwindle with the neoconservative retrenchment of the 1980s. Within the genre itself, the outer limits of this period could be marked by the publications of the founding works in cyberpunk, most centrally, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), with its advocacy of a kind of free-market libertarianism, and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, the latter standing in relationship to the 1970s flourishing of feminist Utopians as did the work on which it was in part modeled, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, to the histories of Utopian thought

and writing in the first part of the twentieth century. However, there also occurs in the late 1980s a mutation within the dystopian form, resulting in the new hybrid Moylan calls the “critical dystopia.” These works “look quizzically, skeptically, critically not only at the present society but also at the means needed to transform it,” and thereby maintain a “militant optimism” in a situation deeply anathema to it (Moylan 2001: 133). Among the most significant examples of the critical dystopia are for Moylan Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Gold Coast* (1988), Marge Piercy’s *He, She and It* (1991), and Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and *Parable of the Talents* (1998).

The unexpected fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the end of the Cold War destabilized the dominant global order, challenged long-established practices and beliefs, and created a situation favorable once again to the publication of Utopian visions. The most important of these is Robinson’s Mars trilogy – *Red Mars* (1993), *Green Mars* (1994), and *Blue Mars* (1996) – a monumental narration of the physical transformation, or terraforming, of the red planet, the adventures of its first colonists, and their ultimate break with Earth and formation of a new planetary community. (Robinson has also written an earlier more modest Utopian fiction, set in his homeland of Southern California, *Pacific Edge* [1990].) Equally important is the Scottish writer Ken MacLeod’s “Fall Revolution” quartet: *The Star Fraction* (1995), *The Stone Canal* (1996), *The Cassini Division* (1998), and *The Sky Road* (1999). In this extended work, MacLeod offers not a single Utopian vision, but rather a proliferation of what Suvin calls Utopian “possible worlds,” as he narrates a future history that moves from the late 1960s through the twenty-fourth century and expands in space from Scotland out into a vast galactic network of worlds. Significantly, both works differ from many of the Utopians that precede them in that they focus a good deal of creative energy on the process by which these new communities are established. Both Robinson and MacLeod’s work mark the obsolescence of some older forms of oppositional political struggle, revise others, and articulate forms of action most appropriate to our global situation. In this respect, these works reveal a kinship with perhaps the most significant “nonliterary” Utopian of this moment, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* (1999).

The 1990s also witness the publication of Utopian fictions that draw upon new resources in imagining other worlds. These include Alasdair Gray’s *A History Maker* (1994), set, as with MacLeod’s work, in a future Scotland; Mike Resnick’s *Kirinyaga: A Fable of Utopia* (1998), which uses the author’s experiences of traditional Kikuyu practices and beliefs in constructing a Utopian community on a terraformed planetoid; and Nalo Hopkinson’s *Midnight Robber* (2000), a work that draws upon the traditions of Caribbean literature and culture in imagining the worlds of Toussaint and New Half-Way Tree. In many ways, the events following September 11, 2001, mark the closure of this particular historical conjuncture, and how the traditions of Utopian fictions will respond to this latest historical change remains an open question. However, change it will. Utopia has played a significant part in modern history, and will continue to do so in any foreseeable future.

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