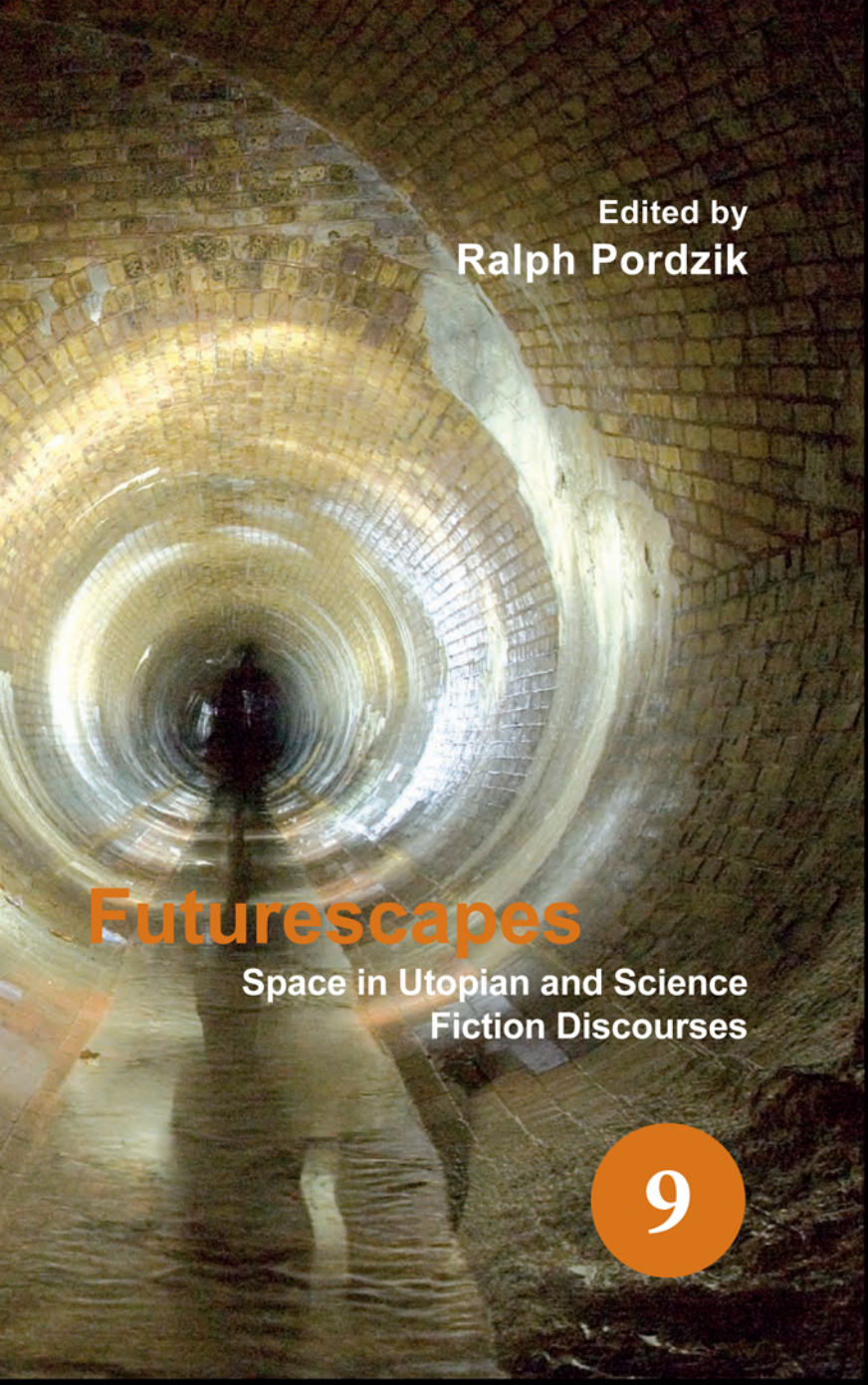

Edited by
Ralph Pordzik

Futurescapes

Space in Utopian and Science Fiction Discourses

9

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Spatial Practices

An Interdisciplinary Series in Cultural History, Geography and Literature

9

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Rodopi

Amsterdam - New York, NY 2009

Cover photo: “Westbourne drain - London”
~martino~ MMG Zegwaard
www.mmgzegwaard.nl

Cover design: Pier Post

The paper on which this book is printed meets the requirements of “ISO 9706:1994, Information and documentation - Paper for documents - Requirements for permanence”.

ISSN: 1871-689X
ISBN: 978-90-420-2602-5
E-book ISBN: 978-90-420-2603-2

Printed in the Netherlands

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The series *Spatial Practices* belongs to the topographical turn in cultural studies and aims to publish new work in the study of spaces and places which have been appropriated for cultural meanings: symbolic landscapes and urban places which have specific cultural meanings that construct, maintain, and circulate myths of a unified national or regional culture and their histories, or whose visible ironies deconstruct those myths. Taking up the lessons of the new cultural geography, papers are invited which attempt to build bridges between the disciplines of cultural history, literary and cultural studies, and geography.

Spatial Practices aims to promote a new interdisciplinary kind of cultural history drawing on constructivist approaches to questions of culture and identity that insist that cultural "realities" are the effect of discourses, but also that cultural objects and their histories and geographies are read as texts, with formal and generic rules, tropes and topographies.

Robert Burden
Stephan Kohl

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Acknowledgements

Despite the fact that it is the name of only one editor that appears on its cover, this volume is the result of the efforts of many people, all of whom have contributed to its creation. The initial idea was received in the context of a discussion among colleagues arguing that within the current paradigm of space and spatial research, the area of utopian and science fiction has been sadly neglected. To actually bring together a group of inspired and like-minded scholars in one bound volume was made possible by Robert Burden and Stephan Kohl who kindly offered to publish the collection in their *Spatial Practices* book series. I am also grateful to all the authors who agreed to contribute to this volume and, in doing so, allowed me to realize a project that I had long felt needed to be put in print.

There are several other people, aside from the series editors and the authors of the particular essays, whose efforts need to be acknowledged. Of vital importance in the making of this book was the assistance of Elke Demant, whose work on every technical aspect, from the minutest detail to its larger conception of layout, has been a condition of its existence at all. Florian Niedlich steered the manuscript through its various stages with patience, criticism and care and helped remedy the variety of technical and organizational mishaps that came with my editorial tasks. Officially, he has been my 'assistant' on the project; in fact, he has been my co-editor.

Würzburg, January 2009 R.P.

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Introduction: The Overlaid Spaces of Utopia

Ralph Pordzik

Recent decades have seen a growing awareness of the significant role played by space not only within the interpretation of literature but within all aspects of our social and cultural experience of the world.[1] General recognition of the contribution to be made by issues related to space in deepening our understanding of society and culture has led to a proliferation of books and essays, many of which do not merely attest to changes in the critical assessment of space but also to changes in the very nature and experience of space itself; the effects of transformation in the areas of information technologies and the new media, e.g., the impact upon individuals and the globalised societies they live in, cannot be overstated. At the level of literary and cultural analysis, understanding spatial practices appears to be an increasingly urgent prerequisite for any attempt at understanding the production of cultural artefacts at all.

This volume intends to put to the test some of the theories developed and applied in recent years, asking in how far and to what effect the constitutive and active potential of space and spatiality has been realised as a fruitful method or tool of examining literature and culture. The testing-ground is that of utopian writing and thinking which is currently enjoying a significant renaissance in the human sciences, in English and in Cultural Studies. The number of critical accounts of utopian thought and practice in "post-western"[2] literature and culture has increased substantially in recent years, comprising

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1 See, among others, Burden and Kohl (eds.) 2006, Ehland (ed.) 2007, Lefebvre 2004, Massey 2005, Sack 1990, Soja 1989, Thacker 2003, Tuan 1977, and Urry 1995.

2 The phrase is Tom Moylan's who must be considered as one of the finest theorists in the field of contemporary Utopian studies at the moment; see Moylan 2002: 268 and Moylan 2004.

studies of feminist prospects of utopianism[3] as well as monographs on utopian fiction produced in the so-called 'new' or postcolonial English literatures, including Ireland.[4] Especially in Great Britain which looks back upon a most influential tradition of utopian imagination (cf. Kendrick 2004: 5, 28ff) the mode has been given new impetus through a number of writings attempting to transform standardised views of utopian and dystopian forms of aesthetic representation. The renewed interest in a pattern of thought that has always advocated the quest for the best possible way of life indicates that the notion of utopian change, prematurely denounced as a relic of modernity and its fatal commitment to a radically different society, is still very appealing to many writers and critics and constantly encourages them to test the relational and transformational potential ascribed to it.

The articles collected in this volume intend to 'map out' on utopian and science-fiction discourses some of the new and revisionist models of spatial analysis applied in Literary and Cultural Studies in recent years. Their overall aim is not only to inspect the various forms of analysis inherent in current concepts of spatiality but also to expose utopian writing as a locus of literary innovation where writers in the past as well as in the present have experimented with different spatial metaphors in order to explore the experience of power, progress and modernity. In generic terms, utopia as a mode of imaginatively shaping the vision of an ideal society or form of life is a "spatial practice" (De Certeau 1984: 115) specifically designed to serve a universal purpose: it depicts future or alternative societies and imaginary landscapes or invented worlds that construct, sustain and circulate the idea of a culturally and politically unified – or, for that matter, fragmented – community of individuals. In the case of anti-utopias or dystopias, we may argue that their ironical or sceptical attitude challenges or even deconstructs the plausibility and feasibility of these ideal spaces.

Where formerly many fictions employed a narrative mode of representational realism based on causal relations and a logically ordered succession of events in order to convey a future compatible with their readers' conception of history and identity, much recent utopian and speculative or science fiction writing offers a view of alternative

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3 See, among others, Donawerth and Kolmerten (eds.) 1994 and Sargisson 1996.

4 See, e.g., Ketterer 1992, Pordzik 2001a/b, Sargent 1996, and Wicht 2000.

spatialities in which fragmentation, discontinuity, and ambiguity determine the course of action and in which the striving of the readers to make sense of what they are given to understand is constantly undermined by the introduction of new perspectives and points of reference that cannot be integrated into a conclusive whole (cf. Broderick 1995). It is especially since the 1970s with their celebration of a whole new range of "spatial utopias" that the ongoing transformation of individual relations and social institutions has increasingly been projected onto "the vision of place and landscape, including the human body" (Jameson 1991: 160). The new spatial utopias are marked by their creation of a narrative fabric of relations between various discourses, narratives, and points of view sustained by a seemingly unending process of differentiation and re-adjustment in the text and the genre itself. With respect to more recent developments in the genre, utopian thinking and the critical examination of space are thus linked by their notable function as discursive arenas in which to explore the rich and topical questions of identity, regionality and cultural belonging.

The same applies to neighbouring fields of academic discourse in which the new methodology is increasingly brought to bear on areas of experience and perception less frequently submitted to spatial readings, such as the history of eugenics (R. Nate) and utopian discourses in film (A. Balasopoulos) and theology (R. Pordzik). Here, the close study of different ways of living in/with space or of employing space in terms of mediating fresh perceptions offers insights into a wide variety of approaches, geographies and specific cultural phenomena. All of them occur within and are mediated by space; all play a constitutive role in forming the places, the land-, data-, media- or ethnoscapes we inhabit (cf. Appadurai 2000). They all involve a textual element, however, as many of the essays collected here show; their subjects therefore include the homogenization of space in the translation of utopian concepts and genres (G. Schmidt), the radical dissolution of narrative space into non-space as employed in *cyberpunk* fiction (D. Hartmann), and the exploration of the mutuality of utopian and cartographic space (geographic maps and their historical or imaginative influence on utopian writing; E. Leane) or the relation of ideological and rural space, respectively (N. Pohl).

On the historical and socio-political plane, some essays examine the spatial relationship between politically entrenched societies and their alternative or 'othered' political possibilities (C. Ehland, M.

Mittag), the historicity of utopian space and spatiality with respect to those historical periods when utopian discourse was transformed by new discoveries and explorations (H. U. Seeber), or the de-hierarchization of homogeneous cultural space, e.g. in the context of postcolonial and post-western literatures (S. Schabio). A final rewarding object of analysis is the construction and cultural function of artificial languages and identities in literary utopias and dystopias (D. Mohr).

The essays collected in this volume thus testify to the growing interest in debates dealing with the many *spaces of utopia*. Their major aim is to open classical analysis of utopian discourses to new lines of inquiry and thus to side-step the established generic binary of utopia, anti-utopia and dystopia (or science fiction). As such, the volume proposes to think of utopia not so much in terms of fictional texts about change and transformation but in terms of a cultural process through which social, spatial and subjective identities are formed. Utopias can and will be read as semiotic systems implying a distinct spatial *and* temporal dimension; their formative strategies (extrapolation, imaginary projection, spatial juxtaposition, etc.) are linked with a large variety of generic structures and narrative typologies such as the pastoral, the exotic, the sublime and the picturesque.

Futurescapes sets out to absorb recent constructivist approaches to questions of culture and identity into a prospective, multiply affiliated theoretical panorama that would ask not just what utopia 'is' or means but what it actually *does*, how it works as a cultural and spatial practice. Not least, its contributions try to show that utopia as literary form and medium fulfils a double function with respect to ideology: some utopias naturalize a cultural and social construction (that of the 'good life', the radically improved welfare state, the Christian paradise, the counter-society, etc.), representing an artificial world as if it were given or even politically inevitable, and they also make that representation operational by 'interpellating' their readers in some determinate relation to their 'givenness' as sites of political and individual intervention and improvement. Some of the difficult terms of this ideological constellation are argued out in the essays put together here in conjunction with the spatially inspired terminology needed to elucidate issues of geopolitical, architectural or anti-colonial resistance to a united sense of place as proposed in the globalised world of technological postmodernity.

Utopian discourse, as envisaged in this volume, is thus not merely a body of work to be interpreted in a historical context but a set of cultural and economic practices that *makes* history in both the real and represented alternative environment, playing a central role in the formation of public selves figured by imagined communal, global-local or scientific identities. Bringing into focus these manifold, *over-laid* spaces of the utopian, the essays explore as well as define the various ways in which, in western cultures, utopian views and genres have circulated as media of exchange *and* homogenization, as sites of cultural and linguistic appropriation and as foci for the spatial formation of national and regional identities in different periods, areas and cultures.

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CHAPTER I

CONSTRUCTING BORDERS, DEFINING LIMITS: THE IDEAL SPACE OF UTOPIA REVISITED

The Translation of Paradise: Thomas More's *Utopia* and the Poetics of Cultural Exchange

Gabriela Schmidt

Abstract: This essay is an attempt to interlink the origins of utopian literature with the history of humanist translation. It conceives of *translatio* – in the broad linguistic, spatial and cultural sense for which the term was used during the 16th century – as a crucial structural principle and interpretive key to Thomas More's *Utopia*, the founding text of the genre. From the very first pages of its 1516 principal edition, More's enigmatic dialogue is steeped in problems of translation, which are symbolically anticipated in the imaginary Utopian alphabet and quatrain with which his text begins. Whether in the mythical origins of his model New World commonwealth, in its dealings with other nations, or in the envisioned transmittance of its moral and cultural accomplishments to early modern Europe, translation in *Utopia* is always simultaneously present as an ideal and as an illusion. By emphasising the fallacies inherent in the humanist dream of a perfect *translatio* between Classical antiquity and the present, More to some extent reconceives of translation as a dialogue in which both sides actively influence and profit from each other. This kind of productive openness is constitutive for the entire hermeneutical framework of More's book, as its reader – faced with the impossibility of simple 'translation' – is forced to engage with the text in a creative process of adaptation and exchange.

Key names and concepts: cultural transfer – discourse of the New World – humanism – Thomas More – translation – utopian poetics

> This is the merging place of Utopia, a neutral place, an island between two kingdoms, two states, the two halves of the world [...].
>
> Louis Marin, "Frontiers of Utopia"[1]

Though most modern editions would have it otherwise, Thomas More's *Utopia* begins with a translation. The very first lines of the 1516 Louvain *editio princeps*, only preceded by a woodcut illustration and a curious array of exotic-looking characters entitled "Vtopiensium Alphabetum", together form a little poem "in the Utopian vernacular",

[1] Marin 1993: 411.

accompanied by a European transcription and followed by a "literal translation of the above lines" into Latin (fig. 1).[2] Although responsibility for the Utopian alphabet and quatrain is explicitly claimed by Peter Giles in one of the prefatory letters (cf. More 1965: 23), the question of who actually wrote these two little texts remains contested. In fact, the paratexts of *Utopia* are replete with similarly unsupported claims to autopsy, authorship or editorship, providing the reader with a whole network of potential leads for interpretation, all of which are far from undisputed within the book as a whole. Ultimately, we can never be quite sure whether such information is meant to be taken at face value or whether it is rather part of More's intricate strategy of pluralizing and obscuring his authorship. Nevertheless, we may safely assume with J. D. M. Derrett that, if the alphabet appeared both in the 1516 and in the more costly 1518 edition, More must at least have given it his approval and probably had a hand in it himself.[3] It thus seems consistent to treat the little text and its translation as an integral part of More's literary hide-and-seek game, in which he constantly challenges his readers' critical judgement, simultaneously questioning and reaffirming the credibility of his own text.

The easily discernible morphological parallels between the two versions of the poem – Latin and Utopian – make clear to what an astonishing degree it is indeed meant to represent a 'literal' translation. From the exact correspondence between the two sets of characters in the alphabet through the striking similarities in morphology and case (e.g. 'gymno-sophaon' – 'philo-sophia'; 'cham*a*'/insul*a*' – 'chama*an*'/ 'insul*am*') even to the very word order, the two languages seem to harmonize so perfectly that translating the poem from one to the other appears at first glance no more difficult than merely transcribing it. Does this brief exercise in humanist philology then epitomize the ideal of a perfectly harmonious coexistence, even commutability between Latin and the vernacular, and thus, ultimately, the hope for a consen-

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2 Unless indicated otherwise, my English translations from *Utopia* follow the version given in the Yale edition.

3 Derrett (1966) leaves the question of whether the alphabet was really composed by Giles, whether More and Giles cooperated on it or whether it was More's own work, basically open to discussion. However, he concludes by considering the last possibility as the most likely.

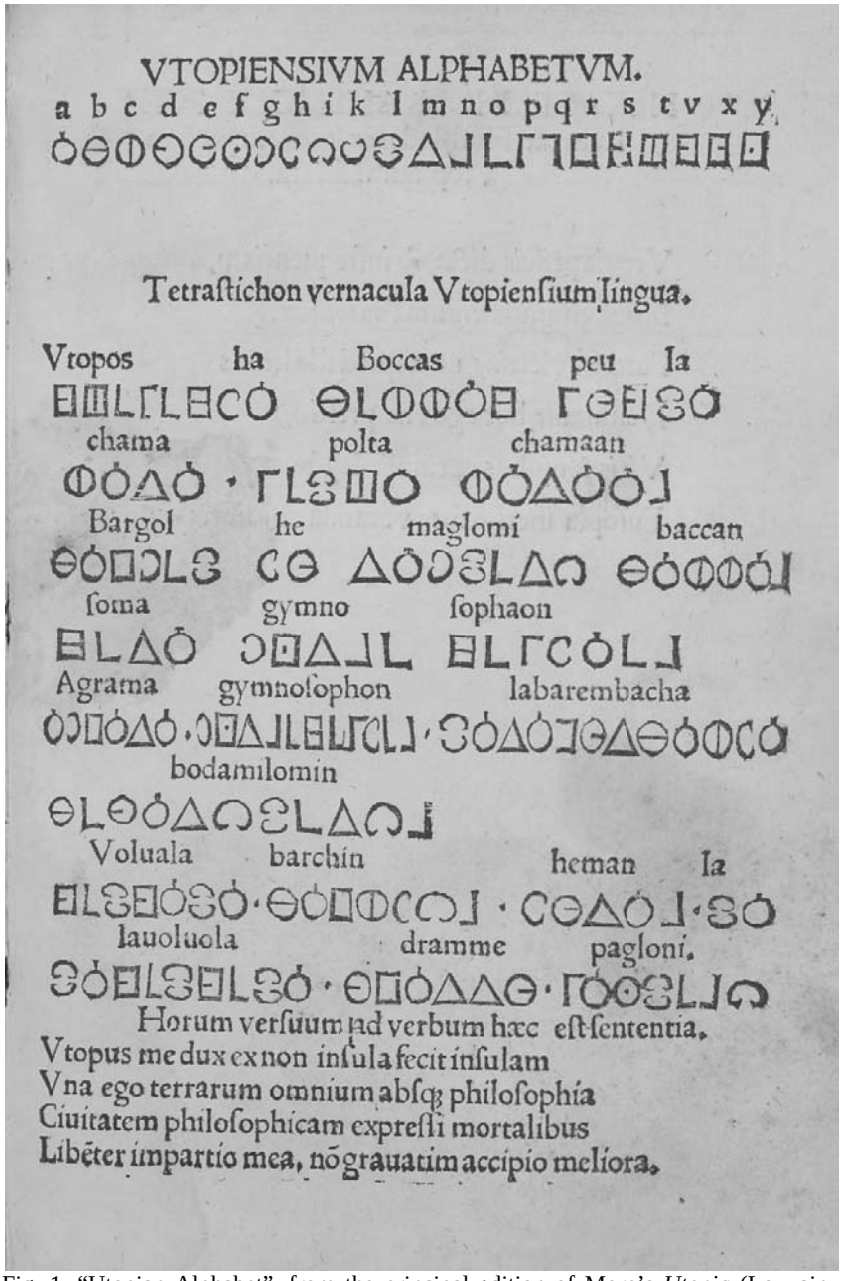

Fig. 1. "Utopian Alphabet", from the principal edition of More's *Utopia* (Louvain, 1516); Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, P 351.4° Helmst. (3).

sus, for an unhampered communication between languages and cultures, which is, according to Lawrence Venuti, the implicit "utopian dimension" (2000: 485) behind any translation?

So it seems. Looking beneath the surface, however, one quickly discovers hidden discrepancies. Precisely so as to not impair the word order, a metrical form originally resembling dactylic hexameters has of necessity been converted into Latin prose, thus depriving the poem of one of its most vital characteristics: verse.[4] This leads to further questions: why does the most popular of Classical metres, used by both Homer and Vergil, appear in an unknown, exotic vernacular, whereas the Latin text presents itself in plain prose? Should it not have been vice versa? This strange order of things ostensibly undermines the archetypal status traditionally accorded Classical antiquity and makes a clear hierarchal relation between the original and its translation at least questionable. What is more, a number of strikingly artificial formulations, like 'non insulam' instead of 'paeninsulam', cause the Latin version to resemble a makeshift reading aid, comparable to medieval interlinear versions of the Bible, rather than a genuine translation. One has the impression that More's little poem exemplifies a practice which Gerda Haßler has called 'transcoding' – the illustration of the properties of one linguistic system by *formally* reproducing them in another – rather than 'translating' proper, which must be based on both form and meaning. While for the former activity an artificially produced coincidence in structures may be sufficient, the latter requires an acknowledgement of linguistic difference, of the peculiar semantic and pragmatic qualities of the target language (cf. Haßler 2002: 158-63).

In spite of the striking outward similarities between the two versions of More's Utopian poem, which caused some critics to read it as a kind of cryptographic code,[5] the opening verses of *Utopia* are thus something very different from a perfect translation. They open up a gap between *verba* and *res*, a gap which not only exposes the illusory nature of the humanist ideal of perfect *translatio studii*, an uninter-

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4 On the metre and its problems, cf. the commentary in More 1965: 585.

5 Quite some ink has been spilt over attempts to deduce a precise grammatical structure and etymological genealogy for More's imaginary "Utopian vernacular" from this 'interlingual exchange' (cf. the commentary in More 1965: 277f, as well as Vossius 1689 and Pons 1930).

rupted communication of Classical learning and literature across the cultural and historical divide into the present, but also of More's Utopian enterprise itself: the reform of early modern society by 'translating' a set of ideal values and institutions into an imaginary New World society, whence they can be transferred back again into the European context. The brief utopia of perfect translatability with which the first edition of *Utopia* begins serves as a fitting prologue to the paradoxical journey into nowhere that the reader is about to undertake, and also as an implicit poetics for the new literary 'genre' More's text was to inspire. Translation (in the more broadly cultural sense that governs early modern as well as most recent applications of the term) is, as I shall argue, not only a crucial key to the understanding of More's multilayered and enigmatic work but also defines and illustrates the way in which all utopian literature seeks to construct and re-construct history.

1. Transfer or Transformation? – The Paradoxical Nature of Early Modern Translation

The word 'translation' by no means indicated a purely linguistic process in early modern usage. A comparison of contemporary dictionaries makes this more than evident.[6] Taking over almost the entire spectrum of meaning inherent in the Latin word *translatio* (as it had been charted earlier by Thomas Elyot and Thomas Thomas), John Florio gives the following significations for 'traslatione' in his 1598 *Worlde of Wordes*: "a translation, or transposition, a transporting or carying ouer, a transferring or remoouing from one to another. Also the vsing of a worde in signification, lesse proper" (Florio 1598: 429). Characteristically, transposition "from one language to another" (Elyot 1538: sig. Dd^{v}) is the only one of Elyot's definitions which Florio carefully seems to have avoided. Similarly, Randle Cotgrave privileges the spatial connotations of the word in his French-English dictionary of 1611, giving "[t]he Translation of Saint Martin; a holy-day (kept in some places) the fourth of Julie" as his only example (Cotgrave 1611: sig. Iiii2^{r}). Still more disconcerting to modern ears are the explanations

6 The following survey is based on a search in the database *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. by Ian Lancashire (University of Toronto Press). [http://leme.library.utoronto.ca].

provided in Richard Tomlinson's English translation of Jean de Renou's *Dispensatorium medicum* and Edward Phillips' *New World of English Words*. 'Translation' is there defined as "the removal of an humor or disease from one part of the body to another" (Renou 1657: sig. N2^{v}) and as "a changing from one [...] place to another [...] when a light Planet separateth from a more weighty one, and presently applieth to one more heavy" (Phillips 1658: sig. Pp3^{v}).[7] Whereas most of these definitions, however specialized, seem to imply that the object of transposition remains essentially the same during the process, some early modern applications of the word indicate the very opposite, imagining translation as a practice of alteration and change (cf. Cawdry 1604: sig. F2^{v}). Such is implied, for instance, by Peter Quince's earnestly concerned, though somewhat comic exclamation "Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated" in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (3.1.105, Shakespeare 1997: 833). It is precisely these two seemingly irreconcilable semantic perspectives of the term – the notion of static transposition on the one hand, and of dynamic transformation on the other – which endow the early modern understanding of *translatio* with its characteristic duplicity.

As has recently been shown, *renovatio* (or 'renascence'), the leading metaphor of Italian humanist cultural thinking, necessarily had to be reconceived as *translatio* when humanism crossed the Alps (cf. Robert 2002: 92ff). It is therefore hardly surprising that translation soon became one of the most popular means of gaining access to Classical literature in England. What was at stake for Northern European humanists was not primarily the revival of a 'glorious past' that had been concealed by centuries of obscurantism, but the transposition of Classical culture into their own national tradition, thereby enriching and ennobling this tradition, until it finally surpassed antiquity itself. Even where not explicitly acknowledged, this pervasive ideal of competitive emulation, which is the central theme of contemporary debates about literary imitation,[8] contains the notion of transformative

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7 However, Phillips is also the only one to explicitly include our more familiar understanding of 'translation' as "a turning out of one language into another" (Phillips 1658: sig. Pp3^{v}).

8 Most famous among them was Erasmus' dialogue *Ciceronianus* (1528), which has been claimed to be largely based on an earlier debate between Thomas More and the French scholar Germain de Brie (cf. Daniel Kinney's introduction in More 1984: 589).

adaptation and change – a fact which perhaps becomes most evident in the startling liberties that a great number of early modern translators took with their originals, and in the predominant metaphors (such as re-dressing, currency exchange, or even conquest) employed by many of them in order to justify their own methods (cf. Morini 2006: 35-61).

Nevertheless, the equally important humanist principle of returning to the original source texts of Classical antiquity ('*ad fontes*') caused a number of leading translators and theorists, among them Leonardo Bruni, to imagine translation as something quite different from creative appropriation. For them, a perfect translation resembled the building of a bridge across the cultural, linguistic and historical divide in an effort to gain access to the pure essence of the originals themselves, a bridge that had to be as seamless as possible, transferring not only the sense but also the verbal, phrasal and idiomatic qualities of the author's style and, where possible, even its word order and prose rhythm (cf. Bruni 1996: 160ff). Thus in a letter to his patron Humphrey of Gloucester Bruni is able to assert, quite naturally, about his own translation of Aristotle's *Ethics*: "[D]o not doubt you are reading Aristotle when you read this" (Bruni 1987: 156). And a few years later he states, with equal clarity: "Alteration is the translator's sin" (207). As is the case with most humanist programmatic theory, Bruni's far-reaching methodological claims are not entirely without a polemical edge. They are explicitly directed against the thirteenth-century scholar and bishop Robert Grosseteste, whose previous blundering version of Aristotle's work Bruni pretends to emend. This competitive approach to philological translation as "an act of physical retrieval" (Norton 1981: 177) – a retrieval concentrating above all upon matters of style, now considered as crucial to the integrity of meaning – was shared by a great number of early modern humanist translators, not least among them Erasmus in his influential 'emendation' of the Vulgate.

However, the words and images which Bruni employs to describe the translator's task, such as the faithful re-production of a painting (*ad exemplum picturae aliam picturam pingere*) by means of the two significant activities *transformare* and *exprimere* (cf. Bruni 1996: 160), make clear how much even this concept of 'restorative' translation owes to its seeming opposite: creative emulation. Even as humanists became increasingly aware of the historical word's transformative power, which turned style and expression into important

ends in themselves, they also began to realize that the assumption of such a close interconnection between form and meaning was not without risks in translation. Re-phrasing an author in *their own* language, even if it was a language carefully moulded after the models of Cicero and Vergil, always implied, instead of an unimpaired return '*ad fontes*', an act of displacement (cf. Copeland 1991: 223), of rewriting, of transformation. And this eventually made it doubtful whether the much sought-after ideal of an 'authentic' transfer of meaning, a "flight of essence" (Norton 1981: 202) from Classical literature to the present, was possible at all.

Thomas More's fictitious translation at the beginning of *Utopia* graphically captures this characteristic dilemma of humanist theory. Through its deceptive structural coincidence, which on closer analysis quickly proves a fake, the poem embodies Bruni's quest for an exact reproduction of the original in all its features, as well as the illusory nature of such an enterprise. While perfect transfer turns out to be impossible, translation is at least partly reconceived as a reciprocal process of transformation, leaving its mark on both the product of transfer and the language that receives it. Instead of measuring the degree of structural and semantic coincidence between an archetypal 'original' and a derivative 'translation' (more or less based on the traditional dichotomy of 'literal' versus 'free'), More's linguistic *trompe l'oeil* thus points to a feature of the translation process which Homi Bhabha once called the insurmountable "foreignness of languages", the "nucleus of the untranslatable that goes beyond the transparency of subject matter" and causes a 'given' content to be transformed, alienated and estranged through the act of translation (1990: 314f).[9] It is this 'foreignness' that becomes traceable in More's curiously artificial Latin prose, which clumsily seeks to reproduce a Utopian original whose real essence eludes transmittance.

However, More's quatrain not only embodies and problematizes the humanist ideal of perfect interlingual transfer, it also widens

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9 Similarly, Lawrence Venuti stresses the transformative impact of translation and exposes the utopian character of perfect communication: "Translation never communicates in an untroubled fashion because the translator negotiates linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text by reducing them and supplying another set of differences [...] drawn from the receiving text and culture. [...] The foreign text, then, is not so much communicated as inscribed with domestic intelligibilities and interests." (2000: 468)

the perspective towards a more comprehensive vision of 'translation' and takes into account the spatial and cultural connotations implicit in early modern *translatio*.[10] In it, the entire history of Utopia is imagined as a complex chain of mutually intertwined instances of cultural transfer. By turning the former peninsula into an island (l. 1) and changing its name from 'Abraxa' to 'Utopia' (cf. More 1965: 112), King Utopos transforms its culture and society into what it is for the reader: an ideal 'expression' of Plato's philosophical city (ll. 2-3), thus translating into the 'reality' of a recently discovered New World what was once only a literary expression of philosophical ideas in Greek.[11] In spite of its newly achieved isolation, this New World, which Gillaume Budé in his prefatory letter to the 1517 edition identifies as "undoubtedly [...] one of the Fortunate Isles" (More 1965: 12), does not keep its cultural and philosophical accomplishments exclusively to itself but claims instead an openness to cultural exchange that initiates an entire series of mutual translations and re-translations: "Ungrudgingly do I share my benefits with others; undemurringly do I adopt whatever is better from others" (l. 4). It is, finally, precisely this kind of openness to innovation and growth through translation that Budé seeks to confer on More's European readers when he speaks of the book as a kind of "nursery of correct and useful institutions from which every man may introduce and adapt transplanted customs [*translatitios mores*] to his own city" (More 1965: 14).

All these varieties of Utopian translation – the island's translational origin and its relation to Greek culture, its ongoing interactions with the surrounding peoples, and its alleged status as an ideal archetype for the translation of social and political values into Europe – are

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10 Marina Leslie thus reads More's Utopian quatrain as a commentary "on the linguistic, literary and sociohistorical processes of translation as humanist method and subject", as well as "an important meditation on the problems of cultural translation and transmission" in general (Leslie 1998: 58, 69). This in turn emphasizes the insoluble knot between languages and cultures which is so crucial to modern translation studies that some critics even speak of a "cultural turn" within the discipline (cf. von Flotow 2001: 13).

11 Cf. also the fictional "Hexastichon Anemolij poetae" which immediately follows the Utopian quatrain in the 1516 edition. There, Utopia is said to be superior to Plato's City: "[W]hat he [i.e. Plato] has delineated in words I alone have exhibited in men and resources and laws of surpassing excellence." The result is another 'translation' of the island: "Deservedly ought I to be called by the name of Eutopia." (More 1965: 20)

presented by More as far from smooth and unproblematic. Through their loose ends and contradictory results they effectively participate in and recur to the rifts and fissures inherent in humanist *translatio* as well as in any other translation. They expose the futility of the translator's paradoxical endeavour to bring about a comprehensive (and one-sided) transfer from source to target culture, a transfer which cannot but affect both sides through a mutual dynamics of transformation and exchange.

2. Measuring the Distance to Nowhere: The Paradoxical Origins of Utopian Culture

According to More's cosmopolitan narrator Raphael Hythloday, the origins of Utopian society reach far back into prehistoric times: "[T]here were cities among them before there were [even] men among us" (More 1965: 107). This astonishing age of the island and its culture is brought forth by Hythloday as an argument against the slightly incredulous objection of his interlocutor Peter Giles that there could hardly be found a better-ordered people in the new world than in the old, since in the latter, commonwealths were undoubtedly far richer in experience, knowledge and discoveries. Hythloday's response, "[a]s for the antiquity of commonwealths, [...] you could give a sounder opinion if you had read the historical accounts of that world", not only successfully counters Giles' claim about Europe's supposed advantage in experience and technical know-how, it also provides Utopia's beginnings with the aura of an uncontested archetypal condition, from which all the best traditions and institutions of human culture took their origin. No wonder that this original condition creates the impression of radical novelty in the eyes of a corrupt 'old world' whose agents, as Hythloday has declared a few pages earlier, stubbornly defend their own faults on the grounds that "Our forefathers were happy with that sort of thing, and would to heaven we had their wisdom" (More 1965: 59).

Hythloday's paradoxical argument about an ancient new world exactly mirrors the common humanist strategy of reassessing traditional notions of 'old' and 'new', 'ancient' and 'modern', by presenting the authors of Classical antiquity and patristic theology as the truly 'new' paradigm with sufficient potential for social and cultural re-

form, whereas the 'modern' methods of Neo-Scholasticism, current within contemporary academia, were denounced as hopelessly futile and outdated. Thomas More repeatedly and directly voices this theme in his epistolary defences of Erasmian theology, which were written about the same time as *Utopia* and which are indirectly connected to that most famous of humanist satires, the *Epistolae obscurorum virorum*.[12] The rationale behind this strategy was, of course, nothing other than a defence of the humanists' own methods against the widespread objection of 'newfangledness' and to assert their superiority by investing them with the authority of a long-standing tradition. What appears to be new, is in fact nothing less than the rediscovery of an uncorrupted, exemplary past that must be unearthed from the rubble of more recent degenerations. Utopia in Hythloday's account represents exactly this recently rediscovered 'new' world, which on closer inspection turns out to be older than anything else within the familiar universe of the known one. Accordingly, a journey to this land for the reader is by no means a journey into the unknown, but in fact a return to the unspoilt sources of humanity ('*ad fontes*'), to its cultural, social and linguistic origins which have to be translated back into the present, in order to rejuvenate and restore it. This paradox is succinctly expressed by another member of More's circle of humanist friends, Cornelius de Schrijver (Grapheus), in a dedicatory poem to the 1517 edition, in which he asks the reader: "Do you want to see *new* marvels now that a *new* world has been discovered not long ago? Do you want to learn ways of living different in nature from our own? Do you want to know the *sources* of the virtues? Do you want to uncover the *original* causes of the world's evils [...]?" (More 1965: 31; my emphasis)

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12 One of More's Erasmian defences, the "Letter to Maarten van Dorp" (1515), was written at the height of the controversy between 'grammarians' and 'theologians' at the University of Louvain, which had originally been triggered at Cologne by the publication of Reuchlin's *Augenspiegel* and of which the *Epistolae* were also an offshoot. In this letter, More repeatedly contrasts the 'modern' neo-scholastic methods at Louvain and elsewhere with those of the 'old', venerable theologians, i.e. the Fathers of the Church and the apostles. In his 1520 "Letter to a Monk", he ironically cites one of his opponent's arguments against Erasmus' 'newfangled' Latin style – "older is better" – only in order to beat him afterwards with his own weapons (cf. More 1986: 222). On the paradoxical revaluation of 'old' and 'new' in early modern historical thinking, cf. Müller 1991 and von Leyden 1958.

Nevertheless, the straightforward presentation of Utopia's history as going back in a direct line to an original, paradisiacal Golden Age is complicated within the text by several other competing theories about the origins of Utopian culture. Immediately after his claim about the island's great age and unsurpassable experience, Hythloday goes on to narrate a certain episode from its chronicles:

> [T]welve hundred years ago a ship driven by a tempest was wrecked on the island of Utopia. Some Romans and Egyptians were cast on shore and remained on the island without ever leaving it. Now mark what good advantage their industry took of this one opportunity. The Roman empire possessed no art capable of any use which they did not either learn from the shipwrecked strangers or discover for themselves after receiving the hints for investigation – so great a gain was it to them that on a single occasion some persons were carried to their shores from ours. (More 1965: 109)

Here, the static attitude rehearsed above (as perfection necessarily excludes change for the better) is suddenly complemented by its very opposite: the notion of development and progress. The new situation Utopian society finds itself in *after* the arrival of the strangers is better and preferable to the one before.[13] What is more, the very agents of this progress are not the allegedly superior Utopians themselves, but messengers from a younger and less experienced 'old' world, more precisely, the Roman empire (the Egyptians do not seem to have left any impact), and that (if we think through Hythloday's clue of "twelve hundred years ago") during the 4th century AD, when it was already in a state of decline. In this event, the 'archetype' Utopia itself takes on the role of a receiving culture, translating, imitating and emulating foreign customs and, through them, enriching its own store of cultural skills and knowledge. Yet, since every act of translation ultimately results from a latent defect within the target culture (cf. Venuti 2000: 469), how can this idea accord with Hythloday's bold vision of an age-old, prototypical society, living in a continual state of paradisiacal perfection, which he offered to his listeners only a few lines before?

To complicate the picture of Utopia's history offered by the text even further, a third myth of origin, which was already alluded to in More's initial Utopian quatrain, comes into play at the beginning of

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13 This has led André Prévost to think of progress as the foremost characteristic of Utopian society (cf. Margolin 1989: 315).

Book II. It postulates, instead of an uninterrupted tradition, a radical break. King Utopos' decision to sever the Utopian island from its neighbouring mainland and his changing the country's name from 'Abraxa' to 'Utopia' constitutes just as much an act of translation as one of authorship. According to Hythloday, it was Utopos "who brought the rude and rustic people to such a perfection of culture and humanity as makes them now superior to almost all other mortals" (More 1965: 113). If they are *now* superior, they cannot have been so before – and the original Golden Age is thus quickly transformed into one of primeval primitivism. What Utopos does is not so much to recover a lost exemplary culture from oblivion as conquer a part of the world hitherto unknown "at his very first landing" (cf. 113), fix his own name to it and 'civilize' it according to his own ideas.[14] The analogy between his behaviour as a conqueror and the colonialist attitude of the early modern discoverers of America is quite obvious.[15] Yet, it has also been noted that the mystical connotations associated with the original name 'Abraxa[s]' (whose letters, when read according to the Greek number system, make up 365 and were thus employed by the Gnostic Basilides to denote the 365th or highest sphere of heaven)[16] greatly problematize Utopos' conquering act (cf. Herman 1999: 119f). By giving the island its new name 'U-topia' or 'No-place', he not only civilizes it, but effectively wipes it off the map, turning the country from Paradise into Nowhere. He thus not only assumes the role of the great heroic civilizers and lawgivers, like Lycurgus, Orpheus or Hercules, who were worshipped in Classical as well as humanist myths about the origins of culture, but also that of the biblical Serpent, whose persuasion causes the first humans to fall from their original state of innocence and forever closes to them the door that leads back into Eden (cf. Herman 1999: 119f). Whether the translation of 'Abraxa' into 'Utopia' is interpreted (with Hythloday) as a decisive quantum leap from primitivism to culture, or as a tragic fall from grace, resulting in a less than sufficient replica of a once paradisiacal original, is left for the reader to decide.

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14 For example, Hythloday mentions later that Utopos made detailed plans concerning the entire layout of Utopian cities (cf. More 1965: 121).

15 What is particularly remarkable is the fact that Utopos, just like the early colonizers, takes possession of the conquered land by a re-defining speech act, overwriting the island's name with his own (cf. Herman 1999: 118f).

16 Cf. the commentary in More 1965: 386 and 585, as well as Drucker 1995: 84.

Since the origins of Utopian society are presented to us by the narrator Hythloday in so paradoxical a fashion, we can never be quite sure about the internal hierarchy of the historical translation processes that accompany them. Just like in More's initial quatrain, whose exotic Utopian hexameters are transformed into a curiously foreign-sounding Latin prose, we never know where to locate the archetypal 'original' and the derivative 'recipient'. Instead, both sides of these processes of cultural transfer – be they Abraxa and Utopia or Utopia and Classical Antiquity – reflect upon each other in an undecided 'contest' over precedence in age and cultural excellence.

3. Blessing or Curse? – The Utopians and Cultural Exchange

Utopos not only changes the island's name but also, crucially, its language. Whereas the original language of the natives resembled strange oriental tongues like Persian, the new idiom which Utopos introduces bears distinct etymological traces of Classical Greek.[17] This seems to be the reason why the Utopians are able to master Greek effortlessly within "less than three years" after Hythloday's arrival, a fact which makes him speculate about the possible Greek origins of their race (cf. More 1965: 181). As a consequence, one modern critic has concluded that the real "point zero" in human history, the pre-Babylonian "nostalgia of non-difference" More envisions as an ideal, is Classical Greece, not a nebulous mythical Golden Age (Bony 1977: 11, my translations). This reading would turn More's text once more into a fairly straightforward defence of humanist *translatio studii*: Utopia, the true inheritor and transmitter of all that is best in Greek culture, would function as a shining example for the 'mistranslation', Europe, whose relation to the 'original' has been disfigured almost beyond recognition. Such an interpretation seems to be entirely consistent with those among the paratexts which (like More's initial Utopian quatrain) draw attention to Utopia's role as a (re)incarnation of Plato's *Republic*.

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17 On the two stages of the Utopian language ('ancient' versus 'newer'), cf. More 1965: 123. Some of the forms directly juxtaposed by Hythloday are 'phylarch' versus 'syphogrant', 'protophylarch' versus 'tranibor' and 'Ademus' versus 'Barzanes' (133).

Reading the figure of Utopos as "a Greek lawgiver who crossed the Atlantic" (Cave 1991: 221) would, moreover, clearly privilege the advantages of Utopia's openness to historical development and change through cultural transfer over its isolated bliss. It would make the island, as Alfred Cave puts it, "the product of a historic confrontation between primitive people and a civilizing conqueror" rather than "the benign outgrowth of an unspoilt paradise" (221). Cave thus interprets *Utopia* as "a metaphor for both the absence of civilization and the promise of a new beginning", opposed to both the decadence of Europe *and* the primitive lawlessness of the natives in early modern accounts of the New World. "The primitive condition of Abraxa offered Utopus the lawgiver a singular opportunity to create a new order, rational and humane, untrammeled by the weight of ancient errors." (229) The uncultured original condition of the natives is in Cave's view not an idyllic source of inspiration but a potential threat to be overcome.[18] – Can *Utopia* thus be read as a blueprint for a 'humane' variety of early modern colonization, providing an essentially cultureless New World with the blessings of a perfect Platonic form of civilization, which in turn may be translated back from thence into a degenerated Europe? The text has certainly sometimes been interpreted in this sense, not only by modern critics but also by some of More's own contemporaries.[19]

However, the results of the Utopians' conquest of this fortunate part of the world are by no means exclusively positive. Not only Utopos' role as a usurper of what was once known as 'Paradise' (Abraxa), converting it into an isolated 'Nowhere', arouses certain doubts about such a straightforwardly optimistic reading of Utopian cultural ex-

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18 Thus Utopos' conquest had been facilitated from the very beginning by the natives' constant quarrelling among each other on religious grounds, which is why he once and for all puts an end to such dissensions by introducing religious pluralism (cf. More 1965: 219-21).

19 Jeffrey Knapp (1992: 18-36) reads *Utopia* as "perhaps the first Tudor attempt to elaborate a theory of colonization" and an effort "to turn England's classical nowhereness into a way of seeing England and America as destined for each other". Knapp also considers the possibility that More's fictional new world inspired More's brother-in-law, John Rastell, "to seek a real one", attempting a colonial expedition by himself (21). For an account of other early modern readers like Vasco de Quiroga who tried to realize More's fictional commonwealth in the new world, often in deliberate opposition to actual colonial practice, which they considered inhumane, see Arciniegas 1986: 65-71.

change. While it would probably be an exaggeration to affirm with Peter C. Herman (1999: 110) that More was deliberately anticipating post-colonialist criticism, his text certainly contains a number of unsettling elements that disturb and challenge the positive image of cultural export underlying both the humanist ideal of *translatio studii* and early modern colonialist ambitions. Although these may not always be as obvious as their affirmative counterparts, they can undoubtedly be detected by a reader who is sensitive to the subtle ironies underlying a good number of the descriptions of Utopian institutions and customs offered by Hythloday. Even the consequences of Hythloday's own attempts at imitating the benign Utopos and endowing his New World acquaintances with the blessings of European culture are sometimes rather dubious. The members of one tribe, whom he has taught the use of the compass, soon afterwards become so dangerously over-confident in their navigations that Hythloday is forced to hesitatingly admit that what he thought would be a great benefit to them "may, through their imprudence, cause them great mischief" (More 1965: 53). And the art of printing which the Utopians eagerly pick up from their European guests (More 1965: 183) is soon employed by them not only for the reproduction of good literature at home but also, quite dishonestly, to manipulate their enemies in foreign wars. When setting up printed placards on enemy territory, which offer head money for the apprehension and assassination of chief officials, they deliberately sow suspicion and undermine their opponents' morale. Although Hythloday praises this method because it avoids unnecessary bloodshed, he also has to admit that "bidding for and purchasing an enemy [...] is elsewhere condemned as the cruel deed of a degenerate nature" (More 1965: 205). Can this kind of behaviour be the fruit of the Utopians' celebrated aptness "in the invention of the arts which promote the advantage and convenience of life" (More 1965: 183) and their propensity to "adopt whatever is better from others" (More 1965: 18)?

Read in this way "against the grain" (cf. Herman 1999: 110), More's text soon becomes something quite different from a humanist's plea for the projection of an idealized form of Classical civilization onto an uncivilized New World, which is nevertheless capable of learning from its conquerors in an exemplary way. What Utopos achieves for his new kingdom in the first place, is not openness towards progress through translation, but isolation and seclusion, symbolized within the text not only by the island's nearly inaccessible

situation but also by the key metaphor of the garden. "There is nothing which their founder seems to have cared so much for as these gardens", Hythloday remarks at the beginning of his account (More 1965: 121), and Utopos must have had his reasons. Through its refreshing atmosphere, a garden produces the *illusion* of opening up the closed urban environment to immediate contact with nature, whereas in fact it brings nature under control, enclosing it within a limited space and excluding everything which might threaten its isolated harmony.[20] Similarly, the Utopians, in spite of their ostensible openness towards learning from other cultures, pay great attention to what they receive and what they reject. In their trade relations to foreign nations they prefer to carry their goods out of the country themselves, instead of having them fetched by foreign messengers. Hythloday's comment that "[b]y this policy they get more information about foreign nations and do not forget by disuse their skill in navigation" (More 1965: 185) tells only half the story. It neglects to mention that through this practice, the Utopians keep the influx of information under control, having it conveyed only by select go-betweens and avoiding any unchecked contact of their own people with strangers. In Utopia, "frontiers are considered to be a protective device, and the Utopians keep entire control on them" (Hatzenberger 2003: 121).

There is one episode in the book, in which direct intercultural communication between Utopians and non-Utopians nevertheless occurs – and splendidly fails. I am referring to Hythloday's famous anecdote about the reception of the Anemolian ambassadors in the capital Amaurotum. At first glance, the only purpose of his "choice tale" (More 1965: 153) seems to be a demonstration of Utopia's moral superiority over all other – especially all European – countries. Being unfamiliar with Utopian manners and customs, the Anemolians follow the common habit of appearing at the meeting with their distinguished hosts in the most refined garments available. To their great dismay, however, their apparel produces exactly the opposite effect to the one they had intended. Rather than "dazzl[ing] the eyes of the poor Utopians" (153), the proud magnates are ridiculed by the common people, who bow instead to their lowest servants. What they did not know, of

[20] Antoine Hatzenberger, too, considers Utopian gardens as a means of closure and "a rejection of everything that could arrive from outside the frontiers" (2003: 120).

course, was that the value system of the Utopians differed radically from all others, since they considered gold and 'valuables' as base, whereas earthenware and plain clothes were regarded as most precious. The Utopians, on the other hand, were for the most part completely insensitive to the possibility that there might exist elsewhere cultural standards different from their own, which is why the only explanation they have for the Anemolians' strange behaviour is folly.

Thus far, this amazing instance of intercultural miscommunication[21] can still be seen (and the narrator seems to intend it this way) as an indication of the Utopians' childlike innocence, so completely untouched by the monster Pride, which is identified by Hythloday at the end of his account as "the chief and progenitor of all plagues" (More 1965: 243). However, the immediate context in which he places the episode makes his story appear in a rather different light. The particular reason which Hythloday adduces for the Utopians' eccentric use of gold deserves to be quoted in full. He proceeds from the observation that they keep a vast treasure for military reasons and goes on to explain:

> If in Utopia these metals were kept locked up in a tower, it might be suspected that the governor and the senate – for such is the foolish imagination of the common folk – were deceiving the people by the scheme and they themselves were deriving some benefit therefrom. [...] To avoid these dangers, they have devised a means which [...] is extremely unlike our own [...] and therefore incredible except to those who have experience of it. [...] [B]y every means in their power they make gold and silver a mark of ill fame. (More 1965: 151-53)

Viewed against this background, the Utopians' peculiar hierarchy of values seems to be no other than the result of a deliberate, manipulative distortion by a knowing elite (can it be the descendants of Utopos and his conquerors or is it just the leading intellectuals?), who thereby prevent the common people from aspiring to a treasure which the rulers wish to reserve for their own ends. This is further confirmed by the fact that only members of this privileged elite seem to be allowed to maintain direct contact with other cultures. Accordingly, the Anemoli-

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21 To Hythloday, the whole episode is a revelation of the incisive impact of cultural difference: "What opposite ideas and feelings are created by customs so different from those of other people came home to me never more clearly than in the case of the Anemolian ambassadors" (More 1965: 153).

ans' disparate behaviour does indeed make sense to a few, namely only those "who for a good reason had visited foreign countries" (More 1965: 153). In this sense, the Anemolian episode may be taken as evidence for J. H. Hexter's pre-Foucauldian hypothesis that More's 'best state of the commonwealth', like Machiavelli's near contemporary *Il Principe*, subtly manipulates what Hexter calls "the fabric of imperatives" by radically altering the value of a few key social concepts (cf. Hexter 1964: 959f).[22] The isolated uniqueness and close control over its intercultural relations which the Utopian commonwealth achieves through this calculated manipulation of values appears to be primarily an instrument of power, not only for a ruling elite over its own subjects but also for the entire island over its surrounding neighbours. "[T]he relationship of Utopia with its outside is not symmetrical", Antoine Hatzenberger (2003: 121) concludes in his analysis of the island's dealings with other cultures. While it is significant that the Utopians do maintain some communication with other nations on a carefully selected basis, more often than not they use these contacts to force on others their own moral superiority: "the conditions of this communication are defined unilaterally by the Utopians, on their own grounds" (121).

It is precisely this skilful exploitation of cultural differences for the sake of personal profit that Stephen Greenblatt also sees as a key feature of the Europeans' first dealings with the New World: "[T]he discourse of the New World celebrates the power not only to survive through improvisation but to profit hugely from the adroit manipulation of alien signs" (Greenblatt 1991: 98). This is especially true where economic contacts are concerned:

> The concept of relative economic value – the notion that a glass bead or hawk's bell would be a precious rarity in the New World – is alien to most Europeans; they think that the savages simply do not understand the natural worth of things and hence can be tricked into ex-

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22 This manipulation, however, is not as uncontested within More's text as is Machiavelli's redefinition of *stato* and *virtù* within *The Prince*. At the very end of the book, it is More's author-like first person narrator himself who voices a distinct scepticism against the Utopians' depreciation of money and valuables, which in his view "utterly overthrows all [...] nobility, magnificence, splendour, and majesty" (More 1965: 245). It is thus precisely the semantic ambiguity in which these concepts are continually held throughout the dialogue that provokes the reader to rethink his own judgment about them.

> changing treasure for trifles, full signs for empty signs. (Greenblatt 1991: 110)

Is this not exactly the way the erstwhile conquerors of Abraxa treat their own subjects, exchanging earthenware for gold, trash for treasures?[23] Yet, Hythloday's anecdote, his graphic depiction of the Anemolian ambassadors' ridiculous naiveté, can also be read vice versa, namely as a subtle ironization of the Europeans' own way of thinking. It is *they* (the Europeans) who, like the Anemolians, do not understand the true value of things, whereas the Utopians have learnt from their more humane conquerors to distinguish between true worth and false appearance, as they do between genuine and counterfeit pleasure (cf. More 1965: 167). In the first reading, the Utopians mirror the European's exploitative practice, in the second, they provide a radical counter-image to it.

What makes neither of these two perspectives on Utopian intercultural relations – the 'colonial' and the 'postcolonial' one – fully convincing, is the doubtful suspension in which the reader's attitude towards Utopian culture is retained throughout almost the entire text. More's Utopian society is neither a primeval exotic Golden-Age culture nor a derivative European projection, but both: it continually oscillates between the status of a defective recipient improving itself through translational import, and a perfect archetype, which not only has no need of translation, but is only altered for the worse by it. Through this curious suspension of judgement, More's text effectively participates in an ambivalence which is traceable in most early modern encounters with the New World. Both Vespucci and Columbus, the first of whom served as an explicit pretext for More's "Truly Golden Handbook", described their experience of New World cultures as an ambiguous mixture of wonder and fear. On the one hand, America was imagined as an unspoilt paradise, where people "live after the maner of the golden age" (Richard Hakluyt, quoted in Greenblatt 1991: 94), on the other, the primitive natives were considered a clear threat, of which alleged cannibalism was only one expression. In the first case, the experience of otherness generated the desire to receive

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23 A parallel between the Utopians' attitude towards their neighbours and that of the European conquerors towards native Americans has also been noted by Peter C. Herman in the context of Utopian colonial practice (cf. Herman 1999: 121f and More 1965: 137).

from the other's bounty, in the second case, it produced the ambition to export one's own civilizing model.

Thus native institutions and customs were often interpreted by the Europeans in their own terms (like 'king' and 'servants'), a translational optimism which went at times as far as to assume that the language barrier was not a cultural barrier at all, but could easily be overcome by signs and gestures.[24] It is precisely such optimism that seems to govern Hythloday's outlook on the New World from the very moment he has been left there by Vespucci. After he manages to ingratiate himself with the natives and their ruler (*princeps*) through signs, he is taken on a journey, during which he soon discovers "very populous commonwealths with excellent institutions" (More 1965: 53). Whereas the peoples around the equator are "no less savage and harmful than [...] beasts" and have flat-bottomed ships with papyrus sails, the further Hythloday moves away from the equinox, the more civilized people become: some have "ships with pointed keels and canvas sails, *in fact, like our own in all respects*" (53; my emphasis). As a logical continuation of the growing familiarity Hythloday observes, the final destination of his journey and culmination of all his discoveries – Utopia – would thus have to be imagined by the reader as an exact (though idealized) equivalent to Europe, even England, in all its particularities.[25]

Nevertheless, the experience of miscommunication and insurmountable foreignness, which was equally common in early modern travelogues, is just as traceable in Hythloday's account. Utopia is both a rewriting of the Other as a version of the Self (cf. Herman 1999: 122) and at the same time a symbol for the inescapably foreign – a metaphor of perfect translatability *and* of the untranslatable. Referring back to the utopian nature of the ideal of perfect communicability implicit in humanist *translatio*, it is precisely this inherent paradox that conditions the hermeneutic framework of the entire text, and that of all utopian literature to come.

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24 Greenblatt quotes the Spanish discoverer Cabeza de Vaca who states that the natives "always understood us, and we them. We questioned them, and received their answers by signs, just as if they spoke our language and we theirs." (1991: 95)

25 On the seemingly close parallels between Britain and Utopia, cf. Morgan-Russell 2002.

4. Utopia and Europe: The Translational Structure of Utopian Literature

Hythloday's Utopian travel report is not delivered by him without a cause. It is his answer to a number of very concrete historical problems within English society, which have gradually been exposed by himself, Peter Giles and the fictional persona 'Morus' throughout the preceding dialogue in Book I. This 'response character' to historical reality (Voßkamp), which was to govern the entire tradition of similar fictional 'commonwealths' after More, has been pointed out by some more recent critics as the leading characteristic of utopian literature.[26] "One simply cannot think utopia without measuring it against history" (1998: 5), Marina Leslie states in her incisive study of More's *Utopia*, Bacon's *New Atlantis* and Cavendish's *Blazing World*. This holds especially true for early modern utopias, which, in contrast to their later companion texts, usually situate the particular counter-image they produce as separated from its historical point of reference by a distance in space rather than in time. Instead of an imagined future development, early modern utopian texts thus present their readers with what Amy Boesky has described as a "speaking-picture" (1996: 15), a displaced counter-image to a simultaneously existing social reality. Spatial dislocation in this model generates essentially the same representational effects as a mirror or a metaphor: it makes "more sharply visible the outlines of one's own domain" (10). "Mirror" is precisely the image which John Desmarais of Cassel uses to describe More's treatise in one of the prefatory letters to Peter Giles: "Whatever pertains to the good constitution of a commonwealth may be seen in it as in a mirror [*velut in speculo*]." (More 1965: 27) Since the functioning principle of the mirror is essentially one of double translation – a given reality is displaced onto a reflecting surface and thence transferred back again to the observer's eye – the conclusion which Desmarais' fellow humanist Guillaume Budé draws from More's text is only logical: all its readers have to do is to appropriate and retranslate the customs they have discovered on their journey to More's exemplary New World commonwealth back from thence into their own city

[26] Cf. e.g. Voßkamp 1990 and Leslie 1998.

("unde translatitios mores in suam quisque ciuitatem importent & accommodent", More 1965: 14).[27]

Yet this journey is certainly not as easy as it appears at first glance. For the utopian mirror is something other than a faithful reflecting glass. Although its effect is always based upon some sort of referential relationship with history, its leading principle is first and foremost one of *negation* (cf. Voßkamp 1990: 274f). It is, in the words of Michel Foucault, "a placeless place" that makes my own standpoint look "at once absolutely real [...] and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there" (1986: 24). To transfer back features from the 'No-place' Utopia into the reality of Europe, this 'Nowhere' needs in the first place to be located and defined. Yet More's Utopia is, in a way, neither here nor there. It is, as Louis Marin has famously called it, a "neutral" place (1984: 7), vacillating "between the antipodal positions of historical impossibility and historical imminence" (Leslie 1998: 5).[28] The resulting paradox between an earnest desire on the reader's part for the possibility of intellectual traffic between Utopia and Europe (cf. Leslie 1998: 9) and the continual frustration of this desire, which is a key interpretative crux of More's dialogue incessantly voiced throughout the accompanying paratexts, can be best understood as a further reference to the inherent ambiguities of humanist *translatio*, which underlies the whole text as a structural pattern.

The textual reasons why the translation between Utopia and Europe/England becomes thus problematic are twofold: first, the island's notorious geographical elusiveness, its curious interim position between fact and fiction, calls its status as a translational archetype into doubt; secondly, the dialogue's internal suspension of judgment and the dubious nature of certain Utopian characteristics make it difficult to decide which features should be taken over and which rejected, or even emended vice versa by European example. Budé himself, who was the first to postulate a direct *translatio* of Utopian customs into

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27 John Busleyden, in his letter to More, proposes a very similar kind of 'literal' translation: European commonwealths, he says, may easily avoid all calamities and disasters, "provided that they organize themselves exactly on the one pattern of the Utopian commonwealth and do not depart from it, as they say, by a hair's breadth" (More 1965: 37).

28 Very similar are the conclusions of Elizabeth McCutcheon's seminal article about the role of litotes in *Utopia* (McCutcheon 1977).

Europe, is also the first to directly mention the island's doubtful status as an 'original'. He calls it "Udepotia" – 'Never-never-land'. Twice he emphasizes Utopia's constructionist nature, its dependence on the mere authority of a narrator's report: "if we are to believe the story" – "[i]f we are to believe Hythlodaeus" (More 1965: 11).[29] After thus measuring the island's existence against the credibility of its reporter, Budé then starts to systematically debunk this credibility by deferring it from one possible authority to the other:

> On the one hand, *Hythlodaeus* is the one who has built their city for the Utopians [...]. On the other hand, beyond question it is *More* who has adorned the island and its holy institutions by his style and eloquence, who has embellished the very city of the Hagnopolitans [Budé's nickname for the Utopian citizens] according to precept and rule [...]. It was the testimony of *Peter Giles of Antwerp* which caused me to have full faith in More [...]. I have never known More in person [...] but I love him on account of his sworn friendship with the illustrious *Erasmus* [...]. (More 1965: 13-15; my emphasis)

Peter Giles, who, like Desmarais (More 1965: 29), initiates a similar chain of tradition, inconclusively comparing the faithfulness of More's and Hythloday's respective contributions to the transmittance of facts about the island, refers any readers who may still have doubts about the credibility of the whole tale back to Hythloday himself (cf. More 1965: 23). The narrator's whereabouts, however, cannot be easily traced: "There are various reports circulating about the man. Some say that he died during his travel. Others declare that, after his return to his native land [...] because he was moved by his longing for Utopia, he made his way back again to that country." (More 1965: 25) Here, the chain of narrative authorities literally ends in 'Nowhere'.

The second translational problem between Utopia and Europe, the doubtful moral value of some Utopian institutions, is already implicitly present in the semantic ambiguity of Budé's request to confer "translatitios mores" from the new onto the old world. Thomas Thomas gives for the Latin 'translatitius' not only the more obvious signification of "Transferred or transposed, taken from other", but also "of no great weight, not excellent, nothing curious or exquisite" (1584:

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29 Budé's device has provided the title for a famous article by Richard S. Sylvester on the multiperspectivity of More's work: 'Si Hythlodaeo Credimus' (Sylvester 1977).

sig. Ooo2^{v}). More himself openly addresses this problem, to which he claims to have been alerted by a particularly 'perceptive' reader, in his afterword to Peter Giles, appended to the 1517 edition. He replies to the critic's objection that nothing could be more natural than that there be some flaw in his 'perfect commonwealth': "Why should he be so minded as if there were nothing absurd elsewhere in the world or as if any of all the philosophers had ever ordered the commonwealth, the ruler, or even the private home without instituting some feature that had better be changed?" (More 1965: 249) Therewith, More once and for all proves any attempts at seamless *translatio* to be futile: the more 'true' an original is, the more flawed it must of necessity be. If not even the philosophers of Classical antiquity were capable of producing a blameless archetype requiring no further improvement, what purpose can there be in trying to convey every single feature of Classical culture into a present which would be much better advised to open itself up to a fruitful mutual dialogue? It is exactly such a creative dialogue that More seems to have envisioned between his readers and his text, rather than only the one-sided transmittance of a given model. According to More's most prominent biographer, *Utopia* is thus "not [...] a blueprint but a touchstone against which we try various ideas [...]. It helps us see what we are without telling us in detail what we are destined to be." It becomes part of an unending chain of mutual translations, "crossing and uncrossing with past and present in the unending debate about human nature and the best possible society" (Marius 1995: 11).

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Utopia, Nation-Building, and the Dissolution of the Nation-State Around 1900

Hans Ulrich Seeber

Abstract: The classical utopias of the Renaissance mirror and anticipate the emergence of the nation-state. However, globalization, which makes possible these utopias, also undermines the very notion of the nation-state. Around 1900 globalization and empire-building transform utopia into a world-state which is either a triumph of functional and technological rationality and modernity (Wells, *A Modern* U*topia*) or the result of a culture-conflict (Benson, *Lord of the World*). A third type envisages a dependent pastoral utopia which resembles a forgotten colony (Whiteing, *The Island*).

Key names and concepts: Robert Hugh Benson – Peter Carey – *civitas Dei* – cosmopolitanism – globalization – heterotopia – Augustine of Hippo – meta-utopia – modernization – spatial utopia – Martin Waldseemüller – H. G. Wells – Richard Whiteing

The genesis and the rise of narrative utopias in the Renaissance coincide with the rise of European colonialism and the global spread of European culture and power. Early globalization and the rational and imaginative construction of highly homogeneous communities resembling and, indeed, anticipating closed nation-states are apparently related to each other. These inventions are given a credible fictional existence (*vraisemblance*) in the yet unexplored parts of the world. Unlimited expansion and mobility are unleashed by strictly closed and separate socio-political units. Given this situation, my paper attempts to answer two questions. What are the reasons for and the aesthetic implications of this striking correlation of events in the history of fiction? How does this constellation change around 1900 when, due to an accelerated process of modernization, nation-building was more than ever transformed into empire-building and the creation of transnational networks in the spheres of politics, economics and culture?

1. Globalization, Nation-Building and the Emergence of Narrative Utopias in the Renaissance

The expansionism of European monarchies (Spain, Portugal, England, and France) in the sixteenth century was motivated by political, religious and economic motives. Seizing territories overseas which had been made possible by improved navigation technologies increased the political weight of monarchs who were constantly engaged in power struggles with each other. The riches and resources of the overseas territories ensured tremendous economic and military advantages. This is why Columbus sailed to the West in the expectation to find gold for the Spanish monarch, and this is why nation-building and empire-building were inseparable. Furthermore, this expansionism made possible the spreading of Christianity which was threatened by the rise of Islam. Cordoning off Islam was, therefore, an important topic on the European agenda since the fall of Constantinople. Monarchs and later national governments were, in other words, the political agents of European modernization which eventually transformed the whole globe.

But it was precisely this new European activism in all fields, politics, trade, religion, philosophy, and science, which also led to a critical evaluation of the social and political order which was the basis of all these enterprises. Explicitly or implicitly, the structure, ideology and interactions of the new monarchies emerging at the end of the Middle Ages came under scrutiny either from a realistic (Machiavelli) or a critical utopian (More) point of view. The latter, which was also a moral one, required a new stance and a new perspective which was provided by the narrative utopia. The narrative and philosophical experiment of the new literary utopias needed a global context for various reasons:

(a) The world had become the playground for the political and economic activities of monarchs and nations.

(b) So far, alternatives to existing conditions and the above activities had been offered by the Church. Monasteries and the vision of a heavenly Jerusalem provided a metaphysical perspective on existing political and social spaces and practices which allowed seeing their defective and morally reprehensible nature. Now, in the age of discoveries, the invention of secular cultural alternatives was encouraged

both by ancient models (Plato) and the experience of other cultures. The world appeared to be a repository of cultural alternatives shedding a critical light on European conditions (social inequality, militarism, poverty, legal arrangements). Cultural contacts induced cultural creativity particularly with respect to the crucial question of how commonwealths ought to be ordered and governed.

(c) Narrative utopias fulfilled this function by devising fictional models which were both more efficient and more just than the political realities of Europe they meant to overcome. They envisioned improved national communities which did not yet exist. In this way they accompanied and gave direction to the process of modernization which needed the framework of the nation-state. The founding act of the communities was their separation from the rest of the world. King Utopus turned a peninsula into the island of utopia. Justice and efficiency reflect two different types of thinking, i.e. ethics and political philosophy or sociology. But they do not rule out each other. Ultimately, a just society will be more stable and therefore more efficient than an unjust one, unless culture is turned into nature (by genetic manipulation, for example), as Huxley suggests in *Brave New World.*

(d) For these imaginary communities to become mimetically and aesthetically plausible it was necessary to give them a location on the map. This was no problem as long as maps of the globe such as the one created by Waldseemüller in his *Introductio Cosmographiae* (1507) referred to large territories as *terra incognita.* Postmodern spatial utopias such as Peter Carey's *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* (1995) sidestep the issue by relying on a tacit contract with a reader whose sophisticated fictional awareness does not take offence with an author who fictionally redraws existing maps of the earth for satiric purposes or creates a purely imaginative geographical fiction with no reference to cultural geography. In the first case signals are given to enable the reader to decode the reference to geographical and historical reality. Carey's postcolonial heterotopia refers to the USA (Voorstand) and either Australia or New Zealand (Efica) respectively, but the parallels are not too precise, because the fictional geography's function is really to provide a vivid model or type of a perverse relationship between centre and periphery:

> My name is Tristan Smith. I was born in Chemin Rouge in Efica – which is to say as much to you as if I declared I was from the moon.

> And yet if you are going to make much sense of me, you have to know a little of my country, a country so unimportant that you are already confusing the name with Ithaca or Africa, a name so unmemorable it could only have been born of a committee, although it remains, nonetheless, the home of nearly three million of the earth's people, and they, like you, have no small opinion of themselves, have artists and poets who are pleased to criticize its shortcomings and celebrate its charms, who return home to the eighteen little islands between the tropic of Capricorn and the 30th parallel, convinced that their windswept coastline is the most beautiful on earth. Like 98 per cent of the planet's population, we Eficans may be justly accused of being provincial, parochial, and these qualities are sometimes magnified by your habit of hearing 'Ithaca' when we say 'Efica'.
>
> If I say 'Voorstand' to you, that is a different story entirely. You are a citizen of Voorstand. You hold the red passport with the phases of the moon embossed in gold. You stand with your hand over your heart when the Great Song is played, you daily watch the images of your armies in the vids and zines. (Carey 1995: 5)

(e) There is a profound ambivalence concerning the national and the transnational dimension of the Renaissance utopias. While they no doubt mirror and promote the emergence of the modern nation-state, as Phillip Wegner (2002) has pointed out, and the dismissal of feudal and monarchic traditions, they also, as models, lay claim to having universal significance. They do not support the Romantic notion of cultural relativity and the right of each nation to unfold its own identity. They are, rather like the democracy of the United States, models and norms expecting world-wide imitation. This normativity explains why Raphael Hythloday, who is really a Cosmopolitan Stoicist philosopher and global traveller, can recommend the ideal national order of the island of utopia. He represents a position which has been called national universalism (Coulmas 1990: 102).

In the process of modernization normativity disappears, but the fact of economic globalization makes national structures increasingly superfluous. World-wide modernization undermines the very national structures it created and unleashes cultural, religious and ideological differences which the nation-state more or less successfully tamed by its appeals to national unity, identity and sovereignty. This taming of religious difference by the national authority can already be observed in More's utopia because violence, also in the sense of heated religious arguments, is strictly forbidden. Utopian thought and narrative utopias of the turn of the century (1900) reflect and interpret this de-

velopment with remarkable clarity. In Whiteing's *The Island* (1899) the secluded island, unlike More's utopia, cannot escape the destructive impact of the world. Wells' *A Modern Utopia* (1905) represents a functional world-state, which is not only one utopia among possible other ones, but also potentially the battleground of conflicting worldviews and cultures. Wells, Huxley and the fathers of the United Nations believed that only a global order could guarantee economic and political stability, because, on the one hand, relations between nation-states are potentially destructive, and, on the other, the weakening of the nation-state leaves us, both in reality and in fiction, with a global space full of conflicts between cultures, economic interests (multinational corporations), value systems and regions. In Benson's dystopic tale of the future *Lord of the World* (1907), the cosmopolitan and socialist movement operates on a world-wide scale and eventually overcomes its fiercest opponent, Catholicism. Social conflict is replaced by cultural and ideological antagonism.

2. Globalization, Nation, and Utopia at the Turn of the Century

2.1. The Dissolution of the Nation-State: Whiteing's *The Island* (1899)

Richard Whiteing's *The Island or An Adventure of a Person of Quality* was originally published in 1888. A second edition, revised and expanded, from which I quote, came out in 1899. Whiteing's satiric utopian romance is not well-known. I therefore begin with a survey of its content and structure.[1]

The narrator and protagonist of the story, a sophisticated and disillusioned gentleman, is catapulted out of his familiar cultural space. In a sort of epiphany experienced on the steps of the London stock exchange, his vision of society is suddenly transformed from a 'normal' to a distorted satiric one. No longer able to endure the alienation of a greedy society and its victims, he retreats first to a country house, then to Paris. However, the decadent Parisian culture he encounters at parties and *soirées*, where the Decadent School, the Symbolist School, the Devil worshippers and Nietzsche's disciples meet,

[1] For a brief analysis of the text, see Hans Ulrich Seeber in Griem and Seeber 2003.

to say nothing of international anarchists (whom he meets in Italy), only deepens his problems: "My soirée of nations was but an evening party for the Dying, after all" (Whiteing 1899: 45). He flees to Genoa where an Italian skipper agrees to accept him as a passenger on a ship bound for the Pacific and eventually for a voyage around the globe. However, the Englishman is left alone on a tiny island in the Pacific because the captain thinks he drowned when he attempted, with no one else accompanying him, to visit the island in order to find fresh fruit.

What the Englishman finds on the island is a pious and innocent, pastoral community governed by an Ancient, which does not know the rules of a competitive liberal market economy. Their principles are sharing and giving rather than grabbing. He falls in love with a beautiful young woman called Victoria who cannot reciprocate his feelings because she is promised to another young Englishman, Curly, who visited the place with his crew three years earlier. The ensuing emotional complications fill much of the book. Evidently love and sex with partners coming from the outside world are potentially disruptive for the island community. Victoria persuades the visitor to tell her and the ignorant islanders the truth about England, which for them functions, by way of dramatic irony, as a cultural model, a fiction which stabilizes, in the Nietzschean sense of the term. After the visitor's report she realizes that a union between them is out of the question. The pain of separation is inevitable. Eventually discovered by his wife and his friends, the protagonist returns to a world which he despises. For the narrator, the pathological acceleration of life outside the confines of the tiny Pacific island is the result of greed:

> The greed makes the hurry, and the wasteful idle hurry spoils the life. The grim set of our jaws, the thinly veiled hardness of our eyes, even at the sacred hour of rest and relaxation! Verily, we are but huge river-pike in black and white! (Whiteing 1899: 177)

With the exception of the love story, which is totally absent from More's *Utopia*, the satiric message, the geography and the opposition of contrasting cultural spaces of Whiteing's tale are all reminiscent of the classical model; so is the convention of using a first person narrator. The cultural other embodied in the geographical other of the Pacific island represents an ethical challenge to European and worldwide modernity. Similarly, the global traveller has become thoroughly

disenchanted with his own society. However, his 'conversion' is an intellectual experience, an utter change of focus, which is confirmed and given direction by the island experience, not triggered by it. Furthermore, in the global network of economic and political activities borders have lost their former significance. Whereas the classical utopian space was autonomous both in a geographical and a cultural sense, the tiny community of Pitcairn is virtually dependent on its communication with England in particular. Textiles and technologies are usually imported from England, and complicated legal problems are left for prominent English visitors to solve. The geographical and cultural position of the islanders on the geographic and metaphoric map (utopia is after all a map for a better world) is, therefore, curiously ambivalent. It is located somewhere between a utopian model arousing pastoral nostalgia and contempt for the ways of civilization on the one hand and an insignificant colonial/postcolonial periphery or retreat which depends on the centre on the other. Rather than being a fictional 'nowhere' somewhere outside history, Whiteing's island is presented as a chance leftover of the history of modernization and colonialism. It is the product of a successful mutiny and a successful religious conversion. English sailors, disposing of their unpopular captain, settled, long undetected, on a tiny, hitherto allegedly unknown pacific island ("Lat. 25° 4' S.; long. 130° 8' W.", Whiteing 1899: 1) to mix with the natives. Self-destructive sexual libertinism which led to murder and near-extinction of the hybrid community was eventually overcome by a turn towards religion. In political and economic terms, the island community appears to be vulnerable and fragile, really at the mercy of the powerful world surrounding it. In ethical terms, however, it manages to retain its authority through the person of Victoria in particular. Because of the ethical and aesthetic values she embodies and because of her conscious act of renunciation she keeps open the possibility of a cultural alternative to the sad realities of Queen Victoria's England. After all, it is Victoria whose example teaches the visitor a new lifestyle reminiscent of socialism, although the word is, no doubt deliberately, avoided. With her help, the English visitor gets his life in "focus".

The text is entertaining, it invites emotional identification as a romance should, but its primary function is cognitive and critical. The chief vehicles of social and cultural criticism are caricatures – a mad American entrepreneur proposes to utilize animal energy ("think of

the waste of power in a cage of apes", 257), "the pedigree of a poor stupid" (ch. XXI) is the history of the "Swarts of Norfolk" (195) who are loyally and stupidly serving as soldiers for the cause of British imperialism throughout the centuries – and representations of geographical and cultural spaces. Thus urban social and cultural space is heavily semanticized – as the epitome of the failures of modernity. At the very beginning of the novel the narrator juxtaposes his present pastoral situation on the island with remembered urban spaces and activities:

> OUT OF FOCUS
>
> Lat. 25° 4' S.; long. 130° 8' W.: August 18
>
> Rest, peace, the sounds of a summer noon, and the murmur of waves. The calm of a peak in the Pacific thirteen thousand miles away from the dome of St. Paul's, and completely out of sight of it, if only by reason of the curvature.
>
> I hardly know how I came here. When last I took stock of myself, I was standing on the steps of the Royal Exchange, on another summer afternoon, and looking down. I was busy as usual. I am playing with my little pocket-agenda now (perhaps the last I shall ever buy) as I lie here on the broad of my back, and I turn to the entry for that day: '8, Gallop Row; 9.30, letters, coffee; 10.30, article for *Quarterly;* 12.30, City (I wanted Staples to put something on Turks, and thought I had better be on the spot); lunch; 2.30 to bedtime, horse sale, chrysanthemums, calls, club, early dinner, address Working Men's Constitutional Association – "Social Harmonies," dance at Mrs. G's, club again, D'Annunzio, bed.' (1f)

The geographical and cultural contrast suggested here could not be more profound. Surrounded by pastoral sights and enjoying pastoral rest on a mountain of a secluded island in the Pacific, the narrator recalls his busy life in London. The entries of his "pocket-agenda" indicate a hurried movement from one urban locality to the other (office, City, club, horse sale, etc.). Modern time-management, as mirrored in the "pocket-agenda", documents the harassment of modern man. Significantly, the gentleman is, just like other members of the stock market ("The Exchange I had just left, with its groups of millionaires gossiping Bagdad and the Irawaddy, Chicago and the Cape", 2), involved in the world-wide activities of the Royal Exchange. Economic transactions are totally globalized and society has become an international one.

The profusion of characters and professions he views from the "steps of the Royal Exchange", as sketched in the following two pages, is confusing, but he manages to control and order the confusion by subsuming it under the metaphor of "machinery": "What a wonder of parts and whole! What a bit of machinery!" (4) Syntactically, the fast succession of sketches unconnected by conjunctions creates the impression of speed and kinetic energy. But then the narrator's vision changes entirely. Assailed by a "sort of intense vertigo" (4), he suddenly sees the men and women below him, clerks, businessmen, brokers, clergymen, etc., scratching themselves as if they were a horde of apes: "and when an entire civilization begins to do that, it is a serious thing" (6). Traditionally, the panoramic view is meant to provide a first survey of an unknown territory; it is often a colonial gaze followed by actual conquest. In the age of tourism it also serves the aesthetic pleasure of the tourist as it does, in a sense, when the narrator admires the beauty of the island in many passages:

> The whole island lay before me, from sea to sea, quivering with life in the morning sun. [...] All this beauty of nature and homely sweetness of ordered life, lying to the north of the dividing ridge, had been hidden from me in my rude landing-place, even the cultivated valleys being shut out by a transverse section of the rock. (65f)

There is a suggestion of eroticism in this descriptive passage ("lay before me", "quivering life") which would be quite apt in colonial discourse because it might hint at rape. Here it simply reinforces the theme of desire and love.

In Whiteing the colonial gaze is also transformed into a satiric view of society which produces a shock of recognition. This satiric mode is reminiscent of Swift. The photographic metaphor "out of focus" relates this technique to a new medium of representing natural, social and cultural space. When the focal distance is not correct the photographer gets a blurred picture. What is at stake in life is the need to find the right distance, to find and adopt a point of view which allows one to see life in the right perspective. The narrator's flight from London to the islanders is a frantic attempt to regain the right focus on life. The Parisian "Light of the Age" (19) is not capable of providing the desired "Focus", i.e. "the guidance of life" (19). Unlike the Parisian experience, the narrator's stay on the island proves to be profoundly healing since Victoria, "a great artist in being" (175), teaches

him by being an unobtrusive example a new view of life which overcomes the traumatic modernity of the Exchange steps:

> That picture of the old life troubled me so, that grand composition of the Exchange steps. It would not come right. Here is one whose mere presence brings everything into its place. Now I see where I was wrong; now could I go among the rushing, blurred figures of some of my sitters, and ask them, for the love of God, and, still more, for the love of man, to keep still. I could say to them, and above all to myself, as at her bidding, 'Piano! piano! we are perishing of overstrain. Why this frantic scraping for useless currency? How much peace comes out of it, how much of fineness of life?' (176)

The way of life one adopts is a cultural choice, just as the artist is free to choose a role, a style, a subject matter. For Whiteing, the satirist, the aesthetic view of life thus contains a utopian possibility. It does not necessarily entail decadence.

Again and again Whiteing's first person narrator evokes the beauty, the peace and the tranquillity of the island's landscape and society only to eventually contrast it with comprehensive views of the world his traveller has come from. Since England and the world are frequently the theme of the conversations and since the islanders wish to learn from the English example they admire without really knowing it, we get a mix of satirically effective dramatic irony, ironic encomia and also, after Victoria's request to learn the truth, realistic and satiric accounts of what is going on. What emerges is the familiar picture of the results of liberal self-help and imperialist aspirations: class divisions, the rat race, luxury and poverty, British imperialism. The parallel between "Old England and Old Rome" is explicitly drawn with the help of a panoramic view of the world:

> England, my friends, you are to understand, is in the position of Old Rome after conquest. She is sitting down to enjoy the world she has won. She feels good: after dinner, the lion would not hurt a fly. She suffers lassitude of digestion, especially in governing circles. Yet somehow, the duties of empire are still carried on. [...] Take a bird's-eye view of our hemisphere, and you would see its main roads of earth and ocean speckled with the foam or dust that marks the movements of her legions. 'Tis a pretty sight! (232f)

Telegraphy in a sense destroys space and time. It makes possible the simultaneous presence of every corner and culture of the globe par-

ticularly in the media. Instant world communication has become a reality. Finally, therefore (ch. XXVI), a grotesque view of the mad world from outer space and, by way of montage, a cacophony of newspaper reports from all over the world pass judgment on things as they are outside the island:

> The Captain's bundle of newspapers lay on a chair, and I took them up to read myself to sleep.
>
> I might as well have taken coffee as an opiate. As I turned these fatal leaves, life in all its littleness seemed to beat in upon me, with a suffocating rush, from every quarter of the globe. I was in the fever-struck crowd once more, after my spiritual quarantine of months. It was as a coming to consciousness after chloroform: my brain throbbed, every pulsation was pain. I darted from column to column, from page to page. I had lost the art of selection: one thing was as another thing, and each impression was a shock. Once again, I realised Europe and America, Asia and Africa, but only masses in a whirl. The Ball itself, with all its continents, seemed to have suddenly whizzed my way, as I lay dreaming on a cloud of space. Every particle was in movement, as well as the mass; it was a huge rolling cheese, putrid with unwholesome being – a low-bred world, not a world at all, a mere glorified back-court, with all its cheatings, thefts, lies, cruelties, small cares, and small ambitions, multiplied into themselves, and into one another, to make a whole. The finer things alone seemed without an entry, as though, in a business reckoning, such trifles would not count.
>
> I did not know how to read it. Picking and choosing was impossible; I took it as it came. 'Brigandage in the public Thoroughfares;' 'Foreign Paupers blocking the City Streets;' 'Outrages on English Fishermen;' 'Parliament – two Members suspended;' 'Afghanistan – Five hundred killed;' 'Moonlighting in Ireland; a Policeman's Head beaten to Pulp;' (264f)

Newspapers relying on instant telegraphic communication trigger in the narrator an imaginative, almost nihilistic view of the world from above becoming reality with the beginning of space travel half a century later. Interestingly though, nostalgia returned with space travel since it quickly became clear from an ecological point of view that the earth is ravishingly beautiful and unique. Furthermore, nations are clearly no longer important in the narrator's view of the globe and its inhabitants.

2.2. The World-State Replaces the Nation-State: Wells' *A Modern Utopia* (1905)

Globalization in the name of modernization and the author's critical evaluation of this process are clearly the two main factors shaping Whiteing's version of utopia. As we move from Whiteing to Wells' *A Modern Utopia* (1905), published only a few years later, it is clear that a modern utopia can no longer envision a nation-state. The modern utopia is conceived as a world-state.

Why Wells embraced the idea of a world-state so wholeheartedly and made the propagation of this idea the business of his life comes out crystal-clear in his seminal sociological study *Anticipations* (1902), a "sincerely intended forecast of the way things will probably go" (Wells 1999: 1) in the twentieth century. This exercise in social speculation is for Wells a legitimate project since present technical, social, economic and cultural trends can be analysed with a considerable degree of accuracy. Improved world-wide transport and communication have an enormous impact on the economy and the social structures of nation-states which lose their autonomy in the process. Inherited codes of belief and behaviour, as for example religious creeds, increasingly lose their hold on people and become matters of personal choice in larger social and political structures which ensure stability and peace. For Wells, a world-state is the logical goal of a development which leads to almost unlimited mobility and dynamism. It is the only chance to overcome and control, under the guidance of a functional elite of experts (whom he calls Samurai in *A Modern Utopia)*, what he calls "the present social chaos" (76). He describes the emergence of a "larger synthesis" (138) as follows:

> We have seen that the essential process arising out of the growth of science and mechanism, and more particularly out of the still developing new facilities of locomotion and communication science has afforded, is the deliquescence of the social organisation of the past, and the synthesis of ampler and still ampler and more complicated and still more complicated social unities. The suggestion is powerful, the conclusion is hard to resist, that, through whatever disorders of danger and conflict, whatever centuries of misunderstandings and bloodshed, men may still have to pass, this process nevertheless aims finally and will attain to the establishment of one world-state at peace within itself. In the economic sense, indeed, a world-state is already estab-

> lished. Even to-day we buy and sell in the same markets [...] There is no real autonomy any more in the world [...]. (138)

For Wells, modernization changes the very concept of utopia. Shedding its Swiftian heritage, it becomes a tool of flexible sociological analysis and speculation. Although it is still important to construct an ideal model, its construction must benefit from the changing insights and inventions of modern science and technology. Divorced from the insights of science, of sociology and historical analysis, utopian thinking loses its utility and relevance. Utopian thinking may influence an historical trend; it is never a substitute for it. Unlike Whiteing, Wells therefore analyses globalization as an irreversible historical trend which has to be taken into account by utopian thinking if it wishes to contribute to our orientation. Maps and plans are iconic signs of what is and what is to be. They refer to geographical, architectural and social spaces. What Wells offers in *A Modern Utopia* is both a map of (economic, social, technological) cultural reality as it exists around 1900 and a plan – for Wells a synonym of the word utopia ("our plan for the World State", Wells 1967: 332) – for its reconstruction. The book is an effort at educating mankind and offering it necessary orientation. In Wells the borderlines between sociology, futurology and utopian discourse become blurred.

Because of his preference for scientific and technological solutions Wells does not even consider the possibility of a religious utopia and pokes fun at nature worshippers who recommend a return to the simple life. Instead he envisages a complex global civilization which fundamentally deviates from the societies of the utopian tradition. Constantly reflecting upon and criticising the shortcomings of classical utopias, Wells creates a meta-utopia which is a new start in utopian thinking and in the history of the genre. He proposes a multiethnic global community of individuals which is subject to constant change. By introducing into utopian thinking historicity, freedom and individualism, the key concepts of nineteenth-century culture, Wells overcomes the frightening or at least boring uniformity and static quality of traditional utopias. Homogeneity in the old sense is abandoned, but the shared ideal of a global modern civilization, i.e. a welfare state mixing capitalist and socialist elements, provides a new unifying framework which is expected to overcome national, racial and cultural differences. His Kantian concept of synthesis veers toward the

postcolonial notion of hybridity: "The modern utopia is to be, before all things, synthetic" (212). For him, alternatives to this solution such as straightforward imperialism or a weak liberalism unable to prevent chaos are, for ethical and intellectual reasons, unsound and unacceptable:

> If you are not prepared to regard a world-wide synthesis of all cultures and polities and races into one World State as the desirable end upon which all civilising efforts converge, what do you regard as the desirable end? Synthesis, one may remark in passing, does not necessarily mean fusion, nor does it mean uniformity. (344)

Since national isolation is no longer possible, the globe and even galaxies turn into appropriate arenas for modern utopianism. A planet in space somewhere "beyond Sirius" (12), but otherwise a perfect simulacrum of the earth and its people, is the site of Wells' new order:

> 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; the Republic of Plato stood armed ready for defensive war, and the New Atlantis and the Utopia of More in theory, like China and Japan through many centuries of effectual practice, held themselves isolated from intruders. [...] But the whole trend of modern thought is against the permanence of any such enclosures. We are acutely aware nowadays that, however subtly contrived a State may be, outside your boundary lines the epidemic, the breeding barbarian or the economic power, will gather its strength to overcome you. The swift march of invention is all for the invader. Now, perhaps you might still guard a rocky coast or a narrow pass; but what of that near-tomorrow when the flying machine soars overhead, free to descend at this point or that? A state powerful enough to keep isolated under modern conditions would be powerful enough to rule the world, would be, indeed, if not actively ruling, yet passively acquiescent in all other human organisations, and so responsible for them altogether. World-state, therefore, it must be. (11f)

For the literary representation of this new world Wells invents a new medium, a combination of academic, sociological exposition, spoken by the "Voice", and narrative scenes providing glimpses of utopian life and conversations between the fictional, pro-utopian author (first person) and an anti-utopian botanist: "I am aiming throughout at a sort of shot-silk texture between philosophical discussion on the one hand and imaginative narrative on the other." (xxxii) This mixture is appar-

ently inspired by the recently invented media of the film ("moving pictures", 2) and the gramophone or "phonograph" (239). This new communicative situation is illustrated by spatial analogies: The reader of Wells' text is supposed to be sitting in a lecture hall or theatre listening to the voice of the created author, but he is also given the role of someone watching movies:

> Occasionally the picture goes out altogether, the Voice argues and argues, and the footlights return, and then you find yourself listening again to the rather too plump little man at his table laboriously enunciating propositions, upon whom the curtain rises now. (4)

In the passage about the site of the world-state quoted above it is obviously the 'Voice' we listen to. What is important from a formal point of view is the fact that the Voice's propositions, i.e. its discursive reasoning, enable him to generalize, i.e. talk about global space and global order as such. Both the mixture of media and the reflexive stance of the meta-utopian discourse prevent the illusion-making of classical utopian fiction and capture the intellect of the reader more than his desire to be entertained in a hypnotic manner. Large parts of *A Modern Utopia* resemble a lively academic essay. But there are also passages where Wells seeks to render "impressions", i.e. subjective perceptions of utopian life, as one would expect in a novel proper. During their journey to London in a fast train the botanist and the author get snapshots ("the leap of a camera shutter") of utopian life and landscape:

> The botanist touches my arm and nods towards a pretty lead-paned window, through which we see a village sleeping under cloudy moonlight go flashing by. Then a skylit lake, and then a string of swaying lights, gone with the leap of a camera shutter.
>
> Two hundred miles an hour! (240)

The last sentence is clearly meant as free indirect speech registering the author's admiring thoughts. Even so, a complete immersion of the reader into the new world of triumphant modernism is made impossible by, for example, the use of the future tense. The architectural and social space of the new London is evoked thus (I quote at length from the introduction of Mark Hillegas):

> Utopian architecture is the architecture of a machine age, and we get vivid glimpses of it with the various inns at which the visitors stay and with the buildings of utopian London. The inns, constructed in plain quadrangle fashion, have rooms marked by clean functionalism: electrical heating for floors, walls, and even mattresses; sealed windows (with fresh air pumped in) so that there are no draughts; neither carpets, curtains, nor sharp corners to gather dust; furniture and decorations of "succinct simplicity." One can easily imagine how Wells, unable to forget the clutter and uncleanliness, the ugliness and inconvenience of his childhood home in Victorian Bromley, would have loved these inns. More astonishing as change are the buildings of utopian London, intended as a contrast with those of our world's London.
>
> New London is a city designed by the artist-engineer who builds, with thought and steel, structures higher than stone or brick can yield, having completely discarded the past, having discarded "the squat temple boxes of the Greek, the buxom curvatures of Rome." With its towering skyscrapers, its moving ways, its domes of glass, it is a forecast of the line of modern architecture which ultimately traces its origins, as Le Corbusier tells us, to the Crystal Palace (a building Wells would have seen often in its new location at South Kensington):
>
> They will have flung great arches and domes of glass above the wider spaces of the town, the slender beauty of the perfect metalwork far overhead will be softened to a fairy-like unsubstantiality by the mild London air... The gay and swiftly moving platforms of the public ways will go past on either hand, carrying sporadic groups of people, and very speedily we shall find ourselves in a sort of central space, rich with palms and flowering bushes and statuary. We shall look along an avenue of trees, down a wide gorge between the cliffs of crowded hotels, the hotels are still glowing with internal lights, to where the shining morning river steams dawnlit out to sea. (xxii-xxiii)

Clearly Wells' imagination is obsessed by visions of the technological sublime. The spaces of the future must be clean and shining, functional and huge, efficient and bright, full of light which really symbolizes the victory of the technological mind, of what Horkheimer might have identified as instrumental rationality. Elements of the utopian garden city are integrated into this imaginary space.

> We are standing above the ground in the loggia into which our apartments open, and I point across the soft haze of the public gardens to a tall white mass of University buildings that rises with a free and fearless gesture, to lift saluting pinnacles against the clear evening sky. "Don't you think that rather more beautiful than – say – our National Gallery?"

> He looks at it critically. "There's a lot of metal in it," he objects. "What?" (251)

The white "University buildings" suggesting a "free and fearless gesture" are transformed from objective architectural facts into symbols of modernity's Promethean and Faustian nature. Reminiscent of the tower of Babel, their "pinnacles" greet and maybe challenge the sky with striking self-confidence. The spatial and anthropomorphic metaphors reveal the mythic implications and dimensions of what on the surface appears to be a rational discourse. The passage reads like a somewhat laboured plea for the redemptive power of modern knowledge and the beauty of functional architecture.

The strengths and the weaknesses of Wells' mixture of forecast and constructive utopia are not difficult to spot. In many ways he anticipates the agenda of today's modernity: education, knowledge, constant technological innovation, efficiency, social security, and globalization. Even the central databases for purposes of control in *A Modern Utopia* have assumed a new (and potentially sinister) significance. However, Wells' preoccupation with functional technocratic solutions prevents him from seeing cultures as shaping forces which are not simply neutralized by an appeal to efficiency and abstract "synthesis". Samurai may be able to master the complexities of modern society better than elected members of Parliament, but giving them power would mean to ignore important aspects of political modernization. Division of power and human rights are somehow filtered out by Wells. The pursuit of these ideals and values may not increase efficiency, but it is a cultural imperative of enlightened societies. From today's vantage point it is also clear that Wells underrates the potential for conflict the issues of religion and ecology contain. Wells seems to be unable, despite his talk about clean air in "Utopian London" (313), to perceive that the earth is an endangered space because of the very forces unleashed by modern science and technology. Apparently he is not aware of the fact that electricity, the use of which he recommends (314), is not a clean energy insomuch as its production requires coal. In Wells' defence one must concede that the dangers CO^2 poses for the climate of the world were not yet known at his time.

Ultimately, Wells' vision is in many ways still valid, although a world state does not promise much efficiency; but the present clash of civilizations is a burning issue Wells did not foresee with sufficient

clarity. It is an issue which seriously puts in doubt the very plausibility of Wells' "plan" unless rationalization proves to be, as Wells seems to assume and as one must hope for in view of the dangers of bellicose fundamentalisms, the prevailing force of history. His ruling caste of Samurai draws strength and discipline from a relation with "a transcendental and mystical God" (302) whom they approach in solitary, dangerous places of the earth. Since, in the vein of the Protestant tradition, Wells completely individualizes this relationship with God and seems to identify it with a sort of work ethic, he does not envision the persistent power of religious traditions, practices and institutions such as Islam, Christianity or Hinduism. The fate of these versions and structures of religion is not even mentioned. They somehow disappear in the reflections of the author. What he does mention is that "Utopia [...] will have its temples and its priests" (300), "but the samurai are forbidden the religion of dramatically lit altars, organ music, and incense" (301). The "cardinal belief" of the Utopians "that man, on the whole, is good" (300) is certainly incompatible with basic Christian doctrines. Religion, one must conclude, is a somewhat hazy affair in Wells' discourse and does not play a major role in his rational design of a new world.

2.3. The World as the Site of Global Cultural Conflict: Robert Hugh Benson's *Lord of the World* (1907)

As one moves from Wells to Benson's *Lord of the World* (1907) the picture changes dramatically. Although he, too, transcends national limitations, his vision of future global developments focuses on a conflict between the party of secular progress, represented and led by Julian Felsenburgh, and the Catholic Church. According to Wells none of the world's religions would have a real say in the shaping of the future. From his point of view Benson's novel is a rearguard battle of Catholic propaganda. Benson, the Catholic apologist, would not have denied this. The didactic purpose of his sensational cautionary tale, an apocalyptic novel of the future, is precisely, by depicting the violent end of Catholicism at the hands of humanitarian progressivism, to make readers aware of the dangers inherent in the kind of secular utopianism embodied by Wells and others. But Benson's basic insight that the struggle for world dominance will be and already is

fought by camps representing not only different political and economic interests but also different cultures and religions is perceptive. For him humanism, progressivism and cosmopolitanism are not simply secular cultural forces and ideologies but also a form of religion. In fact, the coexistence of rationalism and charisma, science and the fetish, enlightened secularism and religion, is, as recent theories of culture have pointed out (cf. Böhme 2006), a hallmark of modernity.

The novel has been summarized as follows:

> Prefaced by the narration of historical events and apocalyptic prophecies, Benson's novel highlights either the point of view of Father Franklin, the champion of Catholicism, or of politician Oliver Brand, the spokesman of socialist Humanitarianism. The twenty-first century's religious controversy has led the world on the verge of palingenesis: Brand's party is prevailing owing to Felsenburgh's, a charismatic American whose policy of globalization aims to reunite the tripartite world into Universal Brotherhood. Oliver and Mabel Brand forbid Father Franklin to assist Old Mrs Brand, who has secretly summoned him to her deathbed, and consent to her euthanasia. After being appointed Head of the three world departments, Felsenburgh demands the conversion of the Catholics and the extermination of the supernaturalists: thus Rome, the seat of the newly founded Order of Christ Crucified, is wiped out by an aerial attack. Suicide through euthanasia is Mabel Brand's reaction to the genocide.
>
> Franklin's papal election in Jerusalem revives primitive Christianity: his secluded pontificate in the Holy Land guides the Order throughout the world. Finally, the violent extinction of the last Catholic ecclesiastical community on a Sunday morning in Nazareth signals the Day of Judgment and the Second Coming of Christ. (Fortunati and Trousson 2000: 365)

The world of the future is characterized by a conflict between devout, orthodox Catholicism, which is daily weakened by members losing their faith, and a strong wave of "Humanity-Religion" (Benson 1907: 172), i.e. communism and cosmopolitanism. In many ways the goals and values of the religion of humanity and of Catholicism are the same. Human beings should love each other and become brothers in a world-wide community. However, the priorities of values and allegiances differ profoundly. Whereas humanism elevates human beings to the position of God, Catholicism believes that humans are in need of a being "above" them. The term "Supernatural" (173) expresses an abstract meaning with the help of an implicit spatial metaphor. The implied spatial metaphor expressing spiritual values and planes of

existence is, however, perverted by dragging God "down" (or elevating man) and by thus obliterating the distinction between him and mankind. The secular movement of humanism which triumphs because of Felsenburgh's charismatic leadership is interpreted by Benson as a substitute religion. For him, religious feelings and needs do not simply disappear, but reassert themselves in a new guise. Consequently, Felsenburgh is adored like a saviour whose appearance and rhetoric fascinate the believers. His "advent" (book I) in London resembles that of Christ. In other words, secularization seems to derive its strength and appeal from a not eradicable human craving for religious symbols and ideas. The old faith is destroyed in the name of a new one which is denied a legitimacy of its own. Although Benson manages to portray the mentality of the supporters of the new faith convincingly, particularly in the dialogues between Oliver and Mabel Brand, his ultimate verdict on it could hardly be harsher. By practising euthanasia even against the will of the victim and by destroying the last strongholds of Catholicism with military might the propagandist Benson apparently wishes to disclose and to denounce the hidden violence of the scientific and humanist world-view. Since cultures are essentially made up of different interpretations of the world and different value-systems, the clash in Benson's dystopian novel between the, broadly speaking, socialist movement and Catholicism resembles the war of cultures diagnosed by contemporary critics of culture (Huntington and others). Percy Franklin's belief in the Catholic Faith as the revelation of ultimate truth is a form of fundamentalism which the text illustrates with a spatial metaphor ("as the bones of the universe"). It seems to confirm the anti-modernist position of Pope Pius X:

> There was the Catholic Faith, more certain to him than the existence of himself: it was true and alive. He might be damned, but God reigned. He might go mad, but Jesus Christ was Incarnate Deity, proving Himself so by death and Resurrection, and John his Vicar. These things were as the bones of the Universe – facts beyond doubting – if they were not true, nothing anywhere was anything but a dream. (173)

Yet there is a painful contradiction between spiritual and political significance. The utter defeat of Catholicism is at hand and is translated into the spatial metaphors of the sandcastle and the coming tide:

> The world indeed had risen like a giant over the horizons of Rome, and the holy city was no better now than a sandcastle before a tide. So much he grasped. As to how ruin would come, in what form and from what direction, he neither knew nor cared. Only he knew now that it would come. (172)

The water and the tide of modernity will eventually dispose of the rock of Christianity. From a poststructuralist view this demise is foreshadowed by the inappropriate use of the comparison "bones". After all, bones are far less durable than granite.

The use of spatial metaphors and descriptions of space in literary fictions for the expression and communication of meaning has been analysed by theoreticians of semiotics (Lotman and others). As we shall see, a reflexive use of representations of space can also be observed in Benson's novel of the future. First of all Benson redraws the political map of the globe. The priest Templeton explains the new map in the "Prologue":

> "Have you a Comparative Atlas, sir?" he asked. The old man pointed to the shelf.
>
> "There," he said.
>
> Percy looked at the sheets a minute or two in silence, spreading them on his knees.
>
> "It is all much simpler, certainly," he murmured, glancing first at the old complicated colouring of the beginning of the twentieth century, and then at the three great washes of the twenty-first.
>
> He moved his finger along Asia. The words EASTERN EMPIRE ran across the pale yellow, from the Ural mountains on the left to the Behring straits on the right, curling round in giant letters through India, Australia, and New Zealand. He glanced at the red; it was considerably smaller, but still important enough, considering that it covered not only Europe proper, but all Russia up to the Ural Mountains, and Africa to the south. The blue-labelled AMERICAN REPUBLIC swept over the whole of that continent, and disappeared right round to the left of the Western Hemisphere in a shower of blue sparks on the white sea. [...]
>
> "Briefly," he said, "there are three forces – Catholicism, Humanitarianism, and the Eastern religions. About the third I cannot prophesy, though I think the Sufis will be victorious. (8f)

According to Benson's history of the future, imperialist concentration will produce a tripartite world which corresponds to three dominant

religious (cultural) formations. What the American Felsenburgh does is to unite the World in the name of socialist Humanitarianism. In Benson's scenario of the future the merging of nations into mankind can only be accomplished by overcoming the fortresses of traditional Western (Catholicism) and Eastern religion ("those damned religions of theirs...", 25). Although modernity in the sense of technological achievements is of crucial importance in all three Empires (Eastern Empire, Europe, America), cultural differences, i.e. different world-views and value-systems, are apparently considered to be more important. The solution eventually achieved follows the model of imperialist thinking. The question of a global economy is largely ignored.

To provide both imaginative participation and rational explanation Benson combines dialogues with frequent panoramic views. Political and religious discussions involving Brand, his independent and finally rebellious wife, Percy, the Pope and others in a sense conceptualize and historicize the social and religious spaces experienced by Percy and Brand in particular. The information discussed in these dialogues has usually been communicated by modern media such as the telegraph, the newspaper or the telephone which transform the world into a global media event. There are, of course, traditional letters and reports, too. Benson frequently conveys his message by contrasting panoramic views of profane and sacred urban spaces. Oliver Brand takes a look at London:

> He stood a moment or two at the door after his wife had gone, drinking in reassurance from that glorious vision of solid sense that spread itself before his eyes: the endless house-roofs; the high glass vaults of the public baths and gymnasiums; the pinnacled schools where Citizenship was taught each morning; the spider-like cranes and scaffoldings that rose here and there [...] this vast hive of men and women who had learnt at least the primary lesson of the gospel that there was no God but man, no priest but the politician, no prophet but the schoolmaster. (32)

The vision is nearly Wellsian. London's architecture is tangible, visible evidence of the victory of modernity. Aircraft ("volor"), fast trains, telephones and telegraphs ensure efficient world communication. The spirit of the place Percy experiences in Rome before its destruction is quite different:

> A heavy bell beat faintly from far away, and the drowsy city turned to murmur its good-night to the Mother of God. From a thousand towers came the tiny melody, floating across the great air spaces, in a thousand accents, the solemn bass of St. Peter's, the mellow tenor of the Lateran, the rough cry from some old slum church, the peevish tinkle of convents and chapels – all softened and made mystical in this grave evening air – it was the wedding of delicate sound and clear light. Above, the liquid orange sky; beneath, this sweet, subdued ecstasy of bells.
>
> "*Alma Redemptoris Mater*," whispered Percy, his eyes wet with tears. (226)

What this passage suggests is not modernist triumphalism but a vision of spiritual peace. The various churches of Rome are transformed into parts of an orchestra whose music moves Percy to tears.

It is also Percy who offers the appropriate interpretation ("the significance of all that he saw", 164) of such contrasting urban images:

> The two Cities of Augustine lay for him to choose. The one was that of a world self-originated, self-organised and self-sufficient, interpreted by such men as Marx and Hervé, socialists, materialists, and, in the end, hedonists, summed up at last in Felsenburgh. The other lay displayed in the sight he saw before him, telling of a Creator and of a creation, of a Divine purpose, a redemption, and a world transcendent and eternal from which all sprang and to which all moved. One of the two, John and Julian, was the Vicar, and the other the Ape, of God … (168)

The different spaces represent Augustine's Christian reading of history as a conflict between the evil, secular world-state, inspired by self-love, and God's state (*civitas Dei*), inspired by the love of God. The "devil" Felsenburgh, i.e. the lord of the world of the title, borrows, as ape, spatial religious practices to create and maintain his charismatic rule. Just like God's vicar on earth he presents himself to awed masses on an elevated chair – a spatial practice, which stresses the importance of distance (cf. 111).

The three utopian/dystopian scenarios analysed in this paper all dismantle the classical tradition of the utopian nation-state and its literary presentation. The space of Whiteing's *The Island* (1899), which is a blend of romance, satire and pastoral utopia presented by a first person narrator who is far more sophisticated than those of the

utopian tradition, functions as a temporary pastoral retreat from the pressures and the alienation experienced in the world of modern civilization. Since it lacks political autonomy its status reminds one of a near-forgotten colony on the periphery. In fact, Pitcairn can be located on the map as one of Britain's overseas territories even today. However, this tiny exotic space and its hybrid community offer an ethical and cultural challenge to the rest of the world. To produce the illusion of a comprehensive global view Whiteing makes use of panorama and montage. Wells' *A Modern Utopia* (1905) is an ambitious, meta-utopian exercise in creating order for a chaotic world, where globalization and modernization have constantly reduced the importance of the nation-state. His scientism, inspired by sociology and biology, implies a critical "metaism" which favours functional solutions (experts as leaders), respect for history and individuality and a method of presentation doing away with the traditional patterns of the genre's ironic realism. In a sense he, therefore, attempts a combination of gramophone and film, of academic lecture (the "Voice") and dramatic scenes. Benson's piece of Catholic propaganda, *Lord of the World* (1907), may have been conceived as an answer to Wells since it radically rejects the possibility of salvation without the intervention of God. For him, the world is riddled with cultural conflicts which ultimately reflect and enact Augustine's model of a secular world fighting the *civitas Dei.* Formally, Benson uses the familiar devices of realism such as dialogic scenes and multiple points of view, often in combination with panoramic views. Panorama is needed because he wishes to create the effect of a comprehensive picture of cultural division and global developments.

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Discoveries of the Future: Herbert G. Wells and the Eugenic Utopia

Richard Nate

Abstract: When the process of geographical expansion came to a halt at the end of the nineteenth century, the preferred settings of literary utopias also changed. Inspired by Darwin's theory of evolution, H. G. Wells set out to 'discover' the future in his fictional and non-fictional writings and speculated on the biological development of the human race. Beginning with his *Anticipations* of 1901, a strong interest in Francis Galton's programme of eugenics is also traceable in his works. Wells' attitude to this programme, however, remained ambivalent. While he was highly sceptical about the feasibility of any positive eugenic measures, such as breeding schemes, he did not reject negative ones, such as sterilisation programmes for the 'unfit'. In this essay, particular attention is paid to two of Wells' writings: the semi-fictional essay *A Modern Utopia* (1905) and the purely fictional narrative *Men Like Gods* (1923). While in the former the author is careful not to suggest any extreme eugenic measures, the latter includes his most radical vision of a society shaped by eugenic policies. This vision, however, is clearly qualified by the fact that it appears only within a fictional framework. When viewed as a whole, Wells' writings gradually reveal his growing scepticism towards eugenics, culminating in his downright rejection of the idea at the end of his life when the issue of human rights had become his central concern.

Key names and concepts: British imperialism – concepts of race – counter selection – degeneration – euthanasia – positive and negative eugenics – science fiction – social Darwinism – sterilization programmes

When Herbert G. Wells gave a lecture entitled *The Discovery of the Future* to the Royal Institution in 1902, he may have been aware of the fact that he was using a metaphor. Since the Renaissance period, 'discoveries' had been geographical or scientific ones. Although they were closely linked to the idea of progress and thus also carried temporal connotations, the future itself was not regarded as an object of discovery. It was something that had to be awaited. In order to understand Wells' use of the term, it is helpful to remember that throughout his life he considered himself not only a writer of science fiction but

also a promoter of scientific theories. As a young man he had studied at the Normal School of Science under Thomas Henry Huxley, who was known as a fervent promoter of Darwin's theory of evolution (Smith 1986: 10f, 51). Wells' scientific enthusiasm was so distinct that it may be compared to that of Francis Bacon and the early Fellows of the Royal Society, who in the seventeenth century had made scientific discoveries their main concern (Nate 2001).

In the early days of science, geographical discoveries had played a decisive role. Spurred on by the rapid growth of natural knowledge, which had become possible through contacts with the New World, geographical explorations and scientific progress seemed to be almost inseparable. An early illustration of this view can be found in the frontispiece to Francis Bacon's *Instauratio Magna* (1620), which shows merchant ships sailing through the "Pillars of Hercules", a metaphorical image of the straits of Gibraltar. Bacon's emblem carried a double meaning. Not only did the sailing ships bring home goods and information from hitherto unknown territories, but, in leaving the Mediterranean, they also metaphorically transcended the intellectual boundaries of the ancient world as they had been defined by Plato and Aristotle.

The geographical discoveries of the early modern period had found a literary echo right from the beginning. It is no accident that the utopian genre, which had started with Plato's *Republic* in the fifth century B.C., witnessed a revival only a few years after Columbus' discovery of the New World. In Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), which gave the genre its name, this connection is reflected in the fictitious narrator Raphael Hythloday, who discloses himself as a longstanding companion of Amerigo Vespucci. The New World experience also inspired the imagination of later writers, who would set their ideal communities on remote islands, prominent examples being Johann Valentin Andreae's *Christianopolis* (1619), Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun* (1623) and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627). The extent to which the literary imagination was stimulated by the geographical discoveries of the day is discernible in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). While Crusoes's encounter with the exotic reality is presented as a process which leads from initial personal despair to a successful colonisation, Gulliver's tales of societies inhabited by dwarfs, giants, mad scientists and speaking horses also have their roots in the Age of Dis-

covery, even if they do not glorify the scientific spirit but satirically reflect on the utopian visions by which it was accompanied.

When Wells spoke of 'discoveries' in 1902, however, the age of exploration was over. European expansion, which had been triggered off by the discoveries of explorers such as Christopher Columbus, Vasco Da Gama and Amerigo Vespucci, had come to a halt in the second half of the nineteenth century. In a world that had been explored and mapped almost to the last few square miles, few opportunities for transgressing geographical boundaries remained. At the very time the British Empire saw its largest geographical extension and was glorified as the territory 'in which the sun never set', the first disturbances were also felt. The year 1857 brought the Indian Mutiny, and the Boer Wars of 1888 and 1899 revealed the limits of empire (Pallua 2006: 50). A complementary development took place on the North American continent, where the frontier, which had inspired the idea of a 'manifest destiny', was declared closed in 1890. Equally, the African 'heart of darkness', which a character called Marlow set out to explore in Joseph Conrad's narrative of the same name, had become a thing of the past when the book appeared in 1899. Despite the gloomy atmosphere which characterises the narrative, the book almost had a nostalgic ring since the 'blank spaces' on the map that fascinated the young Marlow had long since ceased to exist (Conrad 1995). When the 'scramble for Africa' was over, competition between the imperial powers of Europe grew fiercer. The world was speedily heading for the first global conflict: the catastrophic First World War.

If the geographical expansion of former ages had been reflected in contemporary literature, so was its crisis in the nineteenth century. While some authors would still use remote islands for envisaging alternative social realities, others opted for more exotic realms. Narratives such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871) or Jules Verne's *De la terre à la lune* (1882) make it obvious that, as far as the literary imagination was concerned, the earth's surface was no longer sufficient. Although utopian islands did not disappear completely, the settings increasingly included hitherto neglected spheres like the centre of the earth or distant galaxies.

As spatial categories became problematic, time offered itself as a possible setting.[1] Darwin's evolutionary theory worked as a catalyst in this respect, since it had generated a new understanding of history, which offered new perspectives not only on the past but also on the future (Schnackertz 1992: 96ff). Wells' narrative *The Time Machine* (1895) is of particular importance in this respect, since it was one of the first literary works which used Darwin's theory for an imaginary speculation on the future of humanity and provided the model for a number of works to follow. Although these would differ in their conclusions about the future of man, they had two things in common. They all sprang from a feeling that the age of expansion was over, and they considered the theory of evolution to be a point of no return.

1. Social Darwinism and the Future of Mankind

In *The Time Machine*, the geographical explorer of earlier ages has turned into an explorer of the future. While spatial categories no longer play any significant role, the fourth dimension which the "time traveller" discovers is still viewed as a realm in which man can move just as he would do in space. Accordingly, his "time machine" is described as a vehicle, aptly equipped with a lever for manipulating the travel speed. Conceived in temporal terms, the time traveller's journey is a long one, covering a time span of almost one million years; conceived in spatial terms, however, the distance travelled is negligible, restricted to the confines of his laboratory. Because the time machine has been moved during his sojourn in the future, the traveller discovers that he returns a few meters away from where he started a week before.

The future reality in which the time traveller finds himself resembles a utopia only at surface level. The peaceful tribe of the Eloi, whose simple life at first sight reminds him of a pastoral paradise, are in fact held as cattle by an underground species, the Morlocks. As he is eventually able to deduce, by the year 802,701 humanity has developed into two distinct species, one feeding on the other. What gives the story a satirical quality is the fact that the two species still bear

[1] For an early typological description of possible imaginary worlds, see Pfister and Lindner 1982.

some traces of their evolutionary heritage. While the childlike Eloi turn out to be the descendants of a degenerate British aristocracy, the Morlocks are the offspring of the former Victorian proletariat. Increasingly obliged to work beneath the surface of the earth, they have been forced to adapt gradually to underground conditions and remind the narrator of lemurs. In accordance with contemporary social Darwinism, the time traveller's explanation of the future reality is marked by a conflation of social and biological categories. Within the course of the evolutionary process, he argues, socially defined classes have ultimately changed into biologically defined species.

The satirical function of Wells' narrative is not as clear as it may appear at first sight. On the one hand, the inverted power structures of the former ruling class and the former proletariat reveal an ironic twist, which seems to be in perfect accordance with Wells' socialist orientation. When viewed in this light, the evolutionary process sketched in the narrative enables the oppressed proletariat to take a late revenge on their former oppressors. Viewed against the background of late Victorianism, however, the Morlocks also bear traces of what contemporaries would have described as the 'people of the abyss'. In the second half of the nineteenth century, these had often been described as a distinct group of people with racially inferior qualities. As social Darwinists argued, modern society with its public health system had made possible a so-called 'counter selection', which allowed for the propagation of 'inferior types' who would have perished under 'natural' conditions. As the 'people of the abyss' produced more offspring than the upper classes, fears spread that they could ultimately overrule the civilised societies. Seen in this light, the Morlocks not only represent a fantastic species of the future but they also reflect a threat that many of Wells' contemporaries perceived as real.

Wells' *The War of the Worlds*, which appeared in 1898, was even more radical in playing upon contemporary feelings of uncertainty. Apart from being a fictional narrative that gave an account of a Martian invasion, it also represented a satirical inversion of the tales of exploration that the age of geographical expansion had produced. That Wells chose the city of London, the administrative centre of the British Empire, as a possible Martian 'plantation' was hardly accidental. Being confronted with a war of extermination from outer space, the Europeans are suddenly forced to give up their role as the makers

of history and turn into the mere objects of a military operation they are unable to control. Wells' narrator never tires of pointing to the fact that in the eyes of the Martians human beings do not appear as individuals at all; they rather resemble the *infusoria* a scientist may watch under a microscope. This perspective is already highlighted in the first sentences of the narrative:

> No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinised and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. (Wells 1993: 5)

Although the Martian invasion is depicted as a brutal enterprise and would undoubtedly have created feelings of aversion among contemporary readers, the narrator is keen on drawing a parallel between the Martian conquest and the process of Empire building. The provocative character of his narrative becomes obvious when he calls upon his readers to show some understanding of the Martians' behaviour. By pointing to the indigenous population of Tasmania, who had perished only a few years before as a result of the British settlement, the narrator maintains that the Martians do not differ very much from the humans they are planning to eliminate. Posing as a true social Darwinist, he explains:

> The intellectual side of man already admits that life is an incessant struggle for existence, and it would seem that this too is the belief of the minds upon Mars [...]. Before we judge them too harshly we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, but upon its own inferior races. The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit? (Wells 1993: 6f)

By drawing comparisons which contemporary readers would have found hard to swallow, the book satirically commented on the complacency of contemporary Europeans who would still fancy themselves as belonging to a 'superior race'. Although the term 'survival of

the fittest' was usually employed to underline the alleged superiority of the European population, Wells' story indicated that it was more like a Delphic phrase. As Darwin had demonstrated, what counted as 'fit' could not be determined in advance but depended upon circumstances. *The War of the Worlds* created a feeling of uncertainty among readers, especially at a time when England's military supremacy was being increasingly challenged by other European powers such as France, Germany, and Russia (Farrall 1985: 50f). Wells' narrative symbolically reflected the fact that at the turn of the century the feeling of supremacy which had inspired the imperial politics of the nineteenth century slowly gave way to a feeling of losing control.

While narratives like *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds* offered bleak visions of the future, Wells' *Anticipations* of 1901 marked the first of many attempts to provide solutions for the problems which the end of the period of geographical expansion had brought about. Written at the beginning of a new century, the essays were concerned with the future of traffic and commerce in a world that had turned into a relatively small place. Regarding the communication systems of the year 2000, for instance, Wells' forecasts prove farsighted. He predicted that as a result of new systems of locomotion, a global idiom would exist side by side with the several native languages. This global idiom, he maintained, would probably be English.

More controversial, however, were Wells' views on the future society. He predicted a world state, which, in allusion to Plato's ancient model, he called the "New Republic". In outlining this society, Wells adhered to the logic of social Darwinism. He envisaged an "ethical reconstruction" that would dispense with the sentimental "belief in human equality", which was considered to be a residual burden from the eighteenth century (Wells 1924: 249f). In alliance with contemporary social Darwinists, Wells maintained that the existence of 'inferior' and 'superior' people could not be denied. As the former posed a threat to the "civilising fabric", the author concluded: "To give them equality is to sink to their level, to protect and cherish them is to be swamped in their fecundity" (Wells 1924: 250f).

When Wells wrote about the coming world state, he was eager to point out that it would not be characterised by "blissful stagnation". Far from being a "millennial paradise", the New Republic would take

to heart the lesson that life consisted of a universal struggle for existence and shape its social policy accordingly:

> [...] the ethical system which will dominate the world-state, will be shaped primarily to favour the procreation of what is fine and efficient and beautiful in humanity – beautiful and strong bodies, clear and powerful minds, and a growing body of knowledge – and to check the procreation of base and servile types, of fear-driven and cowardly souls, of all that is mean and ugly and bestial in the souls, bodies, or habits of men. To do the latter is to do the former; the two things are inseparable. (Wells 1924: 256f)

Resembling his own narrator of *The War of the Worlds*, Wells showed little mercy for the victims of the cosmic struggle for survival. As Nature's method of dealing with the "multitude of contemptible and silly creatures" was to weed them out, the leaders of the New Republic would also show "little pity and less benevolence" towards them. Of the several ways of dealing with inferior types, "inflicting death" was regarded as the most efficient.[2]

Although Wells did not mention the writings of Francis Galton in this context, he expressed an attitude often heard among contemporary eugenicists. As will be demonstrated below, the "euthanasia of the weak and sensual" that he suggested in the last chapter of his *Anticipations* could be read, in fact, as a very radical version of what was commonly referred to as 'negative eugenics'. In alliance with the 'scientific' spirit of the age, such measures were regarded as 'hard but necessary', while opposing views would be dismissed as 'old fashioned' or 'sentimental'.[3] As opposed to his later writings, in which he would set man's policies against the "blind" and "cruel" workings of nature, Wells at this point obviously thought that measures to prevent the 'unfit' from reproducing were in perfect accordance with the cosmic process of natural selection.

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2 Wells' remarks actually appear quite ruthless: "People who cannot live happily and freely in the world without spoiling the lives of others are better out of it. That is a current sentiment even to-day, but the men of the New Republic will have the courage of their opinions." (1924: 260)

3 This attitude was widespread among social Darwinists; as late as 1917, Madison Grant in his book *The Passing of the Great Race* would write about "a sentimental belief in the sanctity of human life"; see Grant 1924: 49.

In an intellectual climate which favoured heredity above the environment as the shaping force of man's identity, human inequality was regarded as a natural law. In the never-ending 'struggle for existence', organisms which evinced a lack of efficiency were counted as 'inferior' and appeared as ultimately doomed. The social Darwinists of the late nineteenth century would apply this verdict to individuals as well as to entire communities (Farrall 1985: 306). It is within this theoretical framework that the following sentences of *Anticipations* must be read:

> And for the rest – those swarms of black and brown and yellow people who do not come into the new needs of efficiency? Well, the world is a world, not a charitable institution, and I take it they will have to go. The whole tenor and meaning of the world, as I see it, is that they have to go. So far as they fail to develop sane, vigorous, and distinctive personalities for the great world of the future, it is their portion to die out and disappear. (Wells 1924: 274)

That these remarks have caused some irritation among critics is hardly surprising.[4] If there is little doubt, however, that Wells' words were ill-chosen, it would be wrong to detect in them a racist attitude like that to be found among so many of his contemporaries.[5] The opposite is true. In nearly all of his writings, Wells criticised or even condemned the racial theories of his time. In *A Modern Utopia* (1905), he ridiculed the racial views of contemporary anthropologists and in *The Open Conspiracy* of 1928, he stated that the alleged differences between the races were nothing but "phantoms of the imagination" (Wells 1928: 90). On the other hand, it must be admitted that his ideas on the "New Republic" show a conflation of biological and social categories which was typical of social Darwinism. The law of nature was as simple as it was merciless. Cultures which failed to pass the 'test of efficiency' forfeited their right to exist. As will be shown, Wells would soon distance himself from such reasoning.

In *The Discovery of the Future* of 1902, Wells explained the theoretical groundwork on which his *Anticipations* rested. The title was revealing because it once again reflected the general shift from the spatial to the temporal categories which marked the intellectual

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4 For a summary of contemporary criticisms, see Partington 2003a: 53ff.

5 See Mosse 1978 for a detailed account of the history of European racism.

climate of the turn of the century. In what would soon become known as ‘futurology’, Wells insisted that predictions concerning the future of mankind should be extrapolated systematically from present observations. He distinguished between two principal forms of thought. One, which was retrospective and dogmatic, focused on the past; the other, constructive and pragmatic, concentrated on the future:

> The first of these two types of mind [...] interprets the things of the present, and gives value to this and denies it to that, entirely with relation to the past. The latter type of mind [...] interprets the things of the present and gives value to this or that, entirely in relation to things designed or foreseen. While from that former point of view our life is simply to reap the consequences of the past, from this our life is to prepare the future. (Wells 1989: 19)

The two ways of thinking were themselves identified with certain periods of time. While the retrospective view had been preferred in the past, prospective thinking was a thing of the future. Wells left little doubt as to where his own sympathies lay. The retrospective orientation, he argued, had stood in the way of human progress long enough.

By suggesting a scientific investigation of the future that should be devoted not only to the social but also to the biological future of mankind, Wells continued to think within an evolutionary framework. In comparison to his earlier science fiction, however, some differences can be observed. While *The Time Machine* had depicted a future society marked by biological retrogression, his lecture of 1902 sounded far more optimistic. Compared to his earlier visions, the conclusion of his lecture had an almost euphoric ring. Wells dreamed not only of ‘new’ but also of ‘higher’ forms of life, which would characterise the future of the earth. He ended his lecture by explaining:

> We are in the beginning of the greatest change that humanity has ever undergone. [...] If we are to look, we can foresee growing knowledge, growing order, and presently a deliberate improvement of the blood and character of the race. [...] We are creatures of the twilight. [...] All this world is heavy with the promise of greater things, and a day will come, one day in the unending succession of days, when beings, beings who are now latent in our thoughts and hidden in our loins, shall stand upon this earth as one stands upon a footstool, and shall laugh and reach out their hands amid the stars (Wells 1989: 35f)

If the content of his visions had changed, his method had not. What had formed a central argument in *The Time Machine*, namely the fact that the human species did not represent a timeless quality but merely a passing step in the evolutionary process, now became the object of Wells' theoretical speculations. Mankind, he continued to stress, represented no more than a transitional stage; accordingly, the future held organisms in store which would sooner or later evolve in the evolutionary process, even if they were as yet unknown.

From a present-day perspective, Wells' prophetic statement in *The Discovery of the Future* is difficult to assess. At the turn of the century, ideas of the 'new man' were widespread and appeared in different intellectual contexts. Visions of the "superman", which Friedrich Nietzsche had expressed in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-1892), were not primarily biologically inspired, but they nevertheless proved to be compatible with the contemporary social interpretations of the theory of evolution.[6] To avoid reading too much into Wells' lecture, it is important to bear in mind that its author was not concerned with man's abilities to manipulate the evolutionary process; he merely called for a deeper sensitivity towards the dynamic forces in the history of life. In the following years, however, Wells would make his opinions on the possibility of preparing for the 'future of mankind' more explicit. In the utopian schemes he outlined after the turn of the century, these ideas formed an important ingredient. As the Wellsian 'world state' reveals many points of contact with contemporary discussions on eugenics, these will now briefly be considered.

2. Eugenic Utopias

It is hardly accidental that the emergence of eugenics in Britain coincides with the general reorientation from spatial to temporal categories outlined above. Once geographical expansions were no longer possible, eugenics seemed to offer yet another path to progress. It would certainly be wrong to view eugenics merely as a biological concept and to ignore its close ties to British Imperialism (Farrall 1985). Charles Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton, who was the founder of the concept of eugenics, left little doubt that his ideas should also provide

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6 On Nietzsche and Darwin, see Ottmann 1987: 265ff.

a tool for strengthening the power of the nation in the ever-increasing competition between nations and races (Galton 1904: 3).

Galton outlined his ideas in a number of writings, among them *Hereditary Genius* (1869) and *Enquiries into Human Faculties and Its Development* (1883). As an old man he gave a lecture at the University of London, in which he summarised his theory. At its core, he stated, eugenics was concerned with improving the biological qualities of the human race. He was careful to point out that 'improvement' in this case was not to be confused with the goals of humanism. What made a person morally good or bad depended on the given situation and was not considered relevant for scientific analysis (Galton 1904: 1). On the other hand, it was generally agreed that physical strength was preferable to a weak constitution. Among those qualities which deserved cultivation, Galton numbered "health, energy, ability, manliness and courteous disposition" (Galton 1904: 2). If scientists concentrated on these qualities, he insisted, this would result in a stronger nation better equipped to fulfil its imperial duties and to meet the challenges of the new century.

The utopian quality of Galton's eugenics is illustrated by the fact that he also formulated his ideas in two fictional narratives which were modelled on the traditional utopian pattern.[7] Although these texts remained fragments, they reveal much about the author's social ideals. "Kantsaywhere", the first of the two, gives a report of an examination the first person narrator has to undergo in the "College of Kantsaywhere", a eugenic institution devoted to classifying and evaluating the biological qualities of the inhabitants. The college owes its existence to the will of a "Mr. Neverwas", in which a donation is linked up with a call for eugenic measures. The will can also be read as an open rejection of the Christian concept of charity:

> He laid down the principle with much emphasis, that none of the income of his property was to be spent on the support of the naturally feeble. It was intended, on the contrary, to help those who were strong by nature to multiply and to be well nourished. (Galton 2001a: 192)

Given the utopian quality of the text, it goes without saying that the goals of the state are shared unanimously by all the citizens who are

[7] The two texts are "Kantsaywhere" and "The Donoghues of Dunno Weir"; for a critical edition, see Galton 2001a and 2001b.

"extremely proud and jealous" of "the goodness of their stock". When it comes to pedigrees, the utopians prove to be experts. Instead of devoting themselves to "petty gossip", as the citizens of ordinary countries would do, their favourite topics in polite conversations are "family histories and the prospects of the coming generation" (Galton 2001a: 207). As they are driven by a strong collective ambition, their ultimate objective is the creation of a society whose members will have surpassed all the biological shortcomings of present humanity.[8]

Given that the 'race' is regarded as more important than the individual, it is interesting to see how the utopian society will deal with its 'failures'. The state, we are told, will try to make their lot "as pleasant as possible", provided that they live in celibacy and agree to work hard for the "common good". For this purpose, special labour camps have been designed (Galton 2001a: 195). It must be said, however, that the text is not fully consistent in this respect. In another passage, we are informed that those who fail to pass the "Poll Examination in Eugenics" are considered a threat to the community and are persuaded to emigrate. If they give their consent never to return, the state will pay for the cost of their deportation (Galton 2001a: 201). For those 'unfit' individuals who decide to stay, propagation is strictly prohibited since it is viewed as "a crime to the state". Several degrees of punishment await possible offenders, ranging from "social disapprobation" to excommunication by "boycott, deportation, and lifelong segregation" (Galton 2001a: 202).

The entrance examination at the College of Kantsaywhere consists of 'anthropometric', 'aesthetic', 'medical', and 'ancestral' investigations. Since the narrator acts as Galton's mouthpiece, it is hardly surprising that he passes the test. Even if he does not live up to the highest utopian standards, he turns in a "very fair performance" in his examination. At the very moment the narrator is ranked as "fit", the utopians change their behaviour towards him and begin to treat him like a fellow citizen (Galton 2001a: 206). Needless to say, Galton's eugenic community is a class society in which one class has the right to exclude the other from all benefits.

In his theoretical writings, Galton would concentrate on 'positive eugenics', i.e. measures to improve the human stock by carefully

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8 "They look confidently forward to a coming time when Kantsaywhere shall have evolved a superior race of men." (Galton 2001a: 195).

selecting highly talented individuals from distinguished families and encouraging them to propagate. Like many of his contemporaries he felt disturbed by the ongoing decline in the birth rate of the upper classes and viewed his programme as a means to oppose the so-called 'counter selection' which had been brought about by the unrestricted reproduction of so-called 'inferior types'. As the discussion of his utopian text has already shown, however, it is almost impossible to draw a clear line between positive and negative eugenics. The two should rather be regarded as two sides of the same coin.[9] Negative eugenics began with the idea of improving the stock, not by encouraging the 'superior' to propagate, but by preventing the propagation of the so-called 'inferior types'. In its mildest form, it demanded legislation which would exclude people with hereditary diseases from marrying; more drastic measures included sterilisation programmes for the 'unfit', either on a voluntary or on a compulsory basis. At the beginning of the century, negative eugenic measures were legalised in several U.S. states. The first of these laws was passed in Indiana in 1907; by the 1930s more than thirty other states had followed.[10]

The popularity that eugenics enjoyed at the end of the nineteenth century can only be understood against the cultural background in which it flourished. Although a direct connection is hardly traceable, the concept of positive eugenics corresponded to Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas of a "new aristocracy" and of the "superman" – ideas which were widely received also in Britain, among others by the

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9 On the distinction between 'positive' and 'negative' eugenics from a contemporary point of view, see Saleeby 1910: 2ff.

10 For a history of American eugenics, cf. Carlson 2001. While no eugenicist at the turn of the century would have called for a mass murder of 'undesirable' elements, the experience of the twentieth century shows that it only took a totalitarian regime to make this possible. The 'eugenic' programme of Nazi Germany began with the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring of June 1933, which led to the sterilisation of approximately 400,000 persons, and ended with the organised murder of at least 100,000 children and adults in the "T 4" programme between 1939 and 1941. Within the framework of the racist ideology of the Nazis, even the Holocaust was conceived as the carrying out of eugenic measures. On the history of eugenics in Germany, see Weindling 1989 and Weingart et al. 1992; on its connections to the Holocaust, see Klee 2004: 373ff.

playwright George Bernard Shaw.[11] These ideas again were compatible with the concept of heroism that had been formulated earlier in the century by Thomas Carlyle. In *Hero Worship* (1841), the Victorian writer had glorified the 'great men who shaped history'; in *Past and Present* (1843), he had presented the virtues of the medieval knight as a panacea for the social unrest of the nineteenth century.

Negative eugenics also corresponded to the spirit of the times. At the turn of the century, fears of cultural and physical decline were widespread. Max Nordau's voluminous book *Degeneration* (1892), in which the author criticised modernist art forms as decadent and compared them to other forms of physical or mental degeneracy, was translated into English in 1895 and was widely received.[12] Other authors complained that the high proliferation of the lower classes would eventually undermine the good breeding stock of the leading nations in Europe. As contemporary debates in the United States demonstrated, this could ultimately lead to fears that the peoples of non-European countries could be enticed to interbreed with their former masters, 'ruin' their racial stock and finally overrun the European nations.[13]

The way in which Francis Galton's ideas were received among British intellectuals is illustrated by the immediate responses to his lecture of 1904.[14] Participants in the discussion included, among others, Karl Pearson, director of the Eugenics Laboratory, biologist Walter F. R. Weldon, writer Benjamin Kidd, playwright George Bernard Shaw, and, last but not least, Herbert G. Wells. The contributions

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11 See also Carey 1992 on this point; for the British reception of Nietzsche and its connection to eugenics, cf. Stone 2002: 62ff.

12 The book had first appeared in Germany under the title *Entartung* and was dedicated to Cesare Lombroso, who had investigated inherited forms of criminal behaviour. Nordau was a Hungarian German of Jewish descent. His real name was Südfeld (meaning 'southern field'), which he changed into Nordau ('northern meadow'). It is highly ironic that Nordau, who would later become a leader of the Zionist movement along with Theodor Herzl, unwittingly helped to lay the basis for the Nazi propaganda against 'degenerate art' in the 1930s.

13 These views were expressed most radically in Madison Grant's book *The Passing of the Great Race*, which first appeared in 1917; see Grant 1924. In Imperial Germany fears of this kind were particularly widespread; cf. Gross 2000: 145ff.

14 See the printed text of this discussion in Galton 1904: 6ff.

show a variety of views. While Pearson praised his protégé's programme, others pointed out that the laws of inheritance had not been investigated sufficiently enough to take any concrete measures. Benjamin Kidd even went so far as to warn against the creation of 'lethal chambers for the 'unfit', thus anticipating the Nazi atrocities of the early 1940s.[15] A highly provocative comment came from George Bernard Shaw, who argued that Galton's "eugenic religion" (Shaw in Galton 1904: 21) could indeed be a means to save the present civilisation from degeneration and decay, but that it could succeed only if people dispensed with their traditional morals and were ready to couple with any mate coming from a good stock.[16] Even if Shaw's views did not contradict the logic which lay behind eugenics, they were so radical that they would have been rejected by almost all contemporary eugenicists, above all Galton himself.

As regards Wells' contribution to the discussion, it illustrates the changes his views had undergone since the publication of *Anticipations.* He now criticised Galton's programme for not taking into account the importance of the environment. The fact that the offspring of highly talented persons often proved to be extraordinarily intelligent was not only due to hereditary factors but could also be explained by the social privileges that members of this class generally enjoyed:

> The fact that the sons and nephews of a distinguished judge or great scientific man are themselves eminent judges or successful scientific men may after all, be far more due to a special knowledge of the channels of professional advancement than to any distinctive family gift. I must confess that much of Dr. Galton's classical work in this direction seems to me to be premature (Wells in Galton 1904: 10).

Wells also questioned the idea that criminals should be classified among the 'unfit'. Since some crimes required a high degree of intelligence, he argued, criminals could often be found among the "gifted" ones. It was therefore hardly determinable, which births could be regarded as "superior" at all (Wells in Galton 1904: 11). As far as negative eugenic measures were concerned, however, Wells was less scep-

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15 See Galton 1904: 13.

16 "What we need is freedom for people who have never seen each other before, and never intend to see one another again, to produce children under certain definite public conditions, without loss of honor." (Shaw in Galton 1904: 22).

tical. Although he did not call them 'eugenic', because he reserved this term for the positive measures suggested by Galton, he still regarded the "sterilization of failures" as an indirect means to "improve the human stock" (Wells in Galton 1904: 11).

In *Mankind in the Making* (1903), Wells had already expressed his views in greater detail. Here, he declared that he did not reject the idea of a selective breeding of human beings altogether. It was the 'quality of births', after all, which would decide the future of the nation. He expressed his doubts, however, that the scientific knowledge of the age was as yet sufficient to take any concrete measures. He confessed that he still believed that a manipulation of births was "the only and permanent way of mending the ills of the world", since "in that way man has risen from the beasts, and in that way men will rise to be over-men" (Wells 2005: 23); at present, however, it was by no means clear, which human traits were hereditary and which were not. In addition, positive attributes such as 'health', 'beauty', or 'ability', which were regularly cited by eugenicists, were ill-defined and only seemingly objective. He concluded that for many generations it would not be possible to take any selective breeding measures except "in the most marginal and tentative manner" (Wells 2005: 22f).

In order to understand Wells' viewpoint, it is helpful to look at the writings of his teacher T. H. Huxley.[17] Although Huxley is generally known as a fervent defender of the theory of evolution, it would be wrong to characterise him as a social Darwinist. In his *Evolution and Ethics* (1894), Huxley had rejected the claim that the 'struggle for survival' should be applied to the sphere of human relationships without any modification. In the course of evolution, he argued, man had protested against the merciless process of natural selection and had replaced it by ethical principles. It was man's conscience that had finally revolted against nature's indifference. In this way, man had emancipated himself from the "cosmic process" (Huxley 1894: 59).

Evolution and Ethics was written in opposition to a vulgarisation of the evolutionary theory as it appeared in the writings of contemporary social Darwinists. If these dubious followers of Darwin had been consistent in their approach, Huxley argued, they would also have rejected the use of medicines since these were also intended to

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17 On Huxley's impact on Wells' thought, see Partington 2003a: 27ff.

prolong the lives of those organisms that would otherwise perish (Huxley 1894: 36). He suggested that those who did not hesitate to call others 'unfit' should rather take a look at themselves in order to check if they did not, by chance, become the victims of their own reasoning:

> I sometimes wonder whether people, who talk so freely about extirpating the unfit, ever dispassionately consider their own history. Surely, one must be very 'fit', indeed, not to know of an occasion, or perhaps two, in one's life, when it would have been only too easy to qualify for a place among the 'unfit'. (Huxley 1894: 39)

Huxley's argument that man's knowledge was not sufficient to say with certainty who should be counted as 'fit' and who not, could easily be applied to Galton's eugenics. Thus, it is not unlikely that it was from here that Wells' criticism of Galton's ideas sprang.

3. "No Less Than a Planet": From *A Modern Utopia* (1905) to *Men Like Gods* (1923)

At the beginning of the new century, Wells published a number of writings in which he explored the future of mankind according to the method he had suggested in *The Discovery of the Future*. Two of these will be considered here. While his *A Modern Utopia* of 1905 was a semi-fictional text, halfway between a political essay and a fictional narrative, *Men Like Gods* (1923) presented an advanced society in a purely fictional form. Although they were written with an interval of nearly two decades between them, they both evince close links to the eugenics discussions of the early twentieth century.

In his *A Modern Utopia*, Wells dispensed with the pessimism of his earlier science fiction and envisioned a world state marked by social and technological progress. A first person narrator, simply called "the voice", acts as the author's mouthpiece. It is obvious that the book was also written in reaction to the end of the process of geographical expansion. Since Wells was well aware of the fact that the traditional utopian island had become obsolete, his vision comprised the entire globe. The "voice" explained:

> 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 […]. World State, therefore, it must be. (Wells 1994: 8f)

While the local setting had become less important, temporal aspects moved to the foreground. Wells argued that only that utopia deserved the epithet 'modern' which took into account the change of perspective brought about by the theory of evolution. If the traditional utopias had been static ones in that they presented ideal worlds which would never change, the "modern utopia" was to be "kinetic". This meant that it was to accept the never-ending process of evolution and the inherent mutability of all things:

> The Utopia of a modern dreamer must needs differ in one fundamental aspect from the Nowheres and Utopias men planned before Darwin quickened the thought of the world. Those were all perfect and static States, a balance of happiness won forever against the forces of unrest and disorder that inhere in things. [...] Change and development were dammed back by invincible dams forever. But the Modern Utopia must be not static but kinetic, must shape not as a permanent state but as a hopeful stage leading to a long ascent of stages. (Wells 1994: 5)

Thus, the Wellsian utopia is distinguished from its predecessors by its inherent dynamism. The utopian vision no longer comprises social harmony with a timeless quality, but it tries to take into account the transitory character of all phenomena. While the ideal societies of the past had sprung from a desire to overcome the process of history once and for all, the "modern utopia" was to take the dynamics of history as its starting point. The "voice" explained that this also included the insight that the struggle for existence could never be evaded completely. As permanent conflict was considered a natural law, a utopia like the one presented in William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1891) which presupposed that the whole race was "wise, tolerant, noble, perfect" was rejected (Wells 1994: 6).

Seen from a contemporary perspective, *A Modern Utopia* presents itself as a highly ambivalent text. While it appears truly 'modern' in its deconstruction of ethnic prejudices, it also suggests methods of 'social surgery' that present-day readers would hardly find acceptable. As regards the former, *A Modern Utopia* is explicit in its rejection of contemporary race anthropology. In a chapter entitled "Race in

Utopia", the narrator illustrates how fatal the maintaining of such prejudices could prove for the future of mankind. Reading them with the wisdom of hindsight, his warnings against the negative consequences of race prejudices appear highly prophetic. It is predicted that

> these new race prejudices become daily more formidable. They are shaping policies and modifying laws, and they will certainly be responsible for a large proportion of the wars, hardships, and cruelties the immediate future holds in store for our earth. (Wells 1994: 194)

The narrator criticises contemporary writers who misinterpreted the theory of evolution. While attempting to present their views as "scientific", they were in fact contributing to the spreading of a "race mania", the political functions of which were all too obvious. Working along the "lines of the popular" logic, the narrator argues, these "theories" were misused to justify massacres of indigenous peoples "as a painful but necessary part of the civilising process of the world" (Wells 1994: 195).

While contemporary race theories are thus rejected, eugenic measures are not entirely discarded. In a chapter entitled "Failure in a Modern Utopia", the narrator asks what a utopian state would do with those individuals who proved deficient or maladjusted. Among these he lists "congenital invalids", "idiots and madmen", "drunkards and men of vicious mind", "cruel and furtive souls", "stupid people" as well as "lumpish, unteachable and unimaginative people" (Wells 1994: 81). Following T. H. Huxley, Wells' narrator distinguishes between the 'way of Nature' and the rules of society. As to the former, 'failures' could expect but little mercy as they were usually "killed", "crushed" or "starved" (Wells 1994: 81); with regards to the latter, there existed possibilities to mitigate the natural process.

As the utopian state was supposed to be governed by ethical principles, it shunned the 'survival of the fittest' that social Darwinists regarded as a natural law. Man, according to Wells, represented the "unnatural animal, the rebel child of nature", who would "turn himself against the harsh and fitful hand that reared him" (Wells 1994: 81). Accordingly, a utopian state could not simply kill physically and intellectually weaker individuals but would make sure that such individuals were prevented from being born, i.e. by practising negative eugenics. "No longer will it be that failures must suffer and perish lest their

breed increase", the narrator explains, "but the breed of failure must not increase, lest they suffer and perish, and the race with them" (Wells 1994: 81).

When it comes to defining the group of individuals intended for such measures, however, the narrator is not very explicit. In a chapter which deals with the so-called "Samurai", a group of people that forms the political elite, the narrator offers a fourfold classification of citizens (Wells 1994: 156ff). While the "poietic" and "kinetic" classes form the backbone of the utopian society, the "dull" and the "base" are defined exclusively by negative traits. The former group comprises the so-called "imbeciles" or "feeble-minded", the latter includes criminals. Although candidates for negative eugenic measures would most likely come from the latter two groups, the narrator maintains that these are not defined by heredity and he is also eager to stress that his classification is merely provisional. *A Modern Utopia* thus reveals how cautious Wells had become in suggesting any measures that could violate humanitarian principles.

Even if the social programme of *A Modern Utopia* is moderate when compared to that of the *Anticipations*, some elements of negative eugenics are still retained. While the essay of 1901 had taken it for granted that in an ideal society 'inferior' people would be killed by opiates, the utopian narrator of 1905 shies away from such a solution. "There would be no killing, no lethal chambers", he states and explains that the world state would see to it that criminals were secluded from society. Obviously modelled on the penal colonies of the British Empire, notorious criminals, drunkards and drug addicts are sent to some remote islands where they can no longer disturb the social harmony of the utopian society. While the state presents itself as rather humane in rejecting the death penalty for murderers, however, it shows no mercy towards another group of human beings. As "deformed and monstrous and evilly diseased births" are not considered worthy of their lives, the utopian state is expected to kill them immediately after their being born (Wells 1994: 84).

If Wells began to distance himself more and more from the eugenic ideas he had expressed in his *Anticipations*, it would be some years before he rejected socio-biological views altogether. In his novel *Men Like Gods* (1923), these views are still apparent. When he characterised his novel as a "matured" utopia, he referred to the evolution-

ary state of his utopian citizens rather than to the aesthetic quality of the narrative. If the society presented in *A Modern Utopia* was run by an intellectual and moral elite called the "Samurai", who were expected to rule over all other citizens, in *Men Like Gods*, all citizens have turned into "Samurai" (Wells 1927: ix). What constitutes the utopian world state in this latter novel is the biological advancement of its inhabitants rather than any advanced social policy.

As is typical of most utopian narratives, the plot is kept fairly simple. While the protagonist, Mr Barnstaple, is driving to his office, he is suddenly drawn into a parallel universe where he finds himself together with a group of other terrestrials. It turns out that the inhabitants of another reality have been experimenting with space leaps. Although Barnstaple is overwhelmed by the beauty of the utopians and the peaceful character of their way of living, his companions do not share his enthusiasm at all. When the terrestrials unwittingly cause an epidemic among the utopians and are put in quarantine, they start a rebellion under the leadership of the social Darwinist Mr Catskill. Because of their advanced technology, the utopians are able to subdue the insurgents. Barnstaple, who has not taken part in the rebellion, stays with the utopians long enough to become acquainted with their way of life. In the end, however, this does not save him from being forced to return to his own reality.

At first glance, the utopian world of *Men Like Gods* seems to share the very qualities of the pastoral utopia Wells had rejected in his *A Modern Utopia*. Barnstaple learns that there are no destructive weeds or animals; predatory animals still exist but they have lost their aggressive behaviour towards men. As it soon turns out, however, this paradisiacal state is not a natural one but is the result of a long process of skilful manipulation. Everything considered undesirable has been eliminated by the utopians, from weeds and insects to bacteria and germs of all sorts. The narrator summarises:

> So soon as the new state of affairs was securely established in Utopia and the educational state working, the attention of the Utopian community had been given to the long-cherished idea of a systematic extermination of tiresome and mischievous species. [...] Many internal and external parasites of man and animals had [...] been got rid of completely. And further, there had been a great cleansing of the world from noxious insects, from weeds and vermin and hostile beasts. The mosquito had gone, the house-fly, the blow-fly, and indeed a great

> multitude of flies had gone; they had been driven out of life by campaigns involving an immense effort and extending over many generations. (Wells 1927: 92f)

Thus, it turns out that the utopian world is not a pastoral paradise at all. Only the negative side effects of modern technology have been successfully overcome. Aeroplanes are still in use but they do not make any noise. Equally, the utopians only superficially resemble Rousseau's children of nature. Although they usually wear no clothes, they enjoy everything an advanced civilisation has to offer. The narrator is eager to point out that they are experts in *savoir vivre*, serving their guest with exquisite teas, chicken, ham, pastry, Gruyère cheese and a light white wine (Wells 1927: 44). The social life of the utopians is described as peaceful. Delinquents, should any appear at all, are 'cured' instead of being punished. An official government does not exist; together with private property it was abolished long ago (Wells 1927: 62). A central bureau of information, however, guarantees that every step of a utopian citizen is carefully scrutinised (Wells 1927: 271f).

If the utopian world of *Men Like Gods* appears more exotic when compared to the one presented in *A Modern Utopia*, so do its inhabitants. As they have developed a telepathic communication device, verbal communication has become superfluous. It soon dawns on Mr Barnstaple that the utopian citizens represent the product of a long-standing eugenic programme. Nearly every utopian child, he learns, is born healthy. Those who fall short of the expected standard are allowed to live, but are prevented from producing any offspring:

> If the individual is indolent there is no great loss, there is plenty for all in Utopia, but then it will find no lovers, nor will it ever bear children, because no one in Utopia loves those who have neither energy nor distinction. There is much pride of the mate in Utopian love. (Wells 1927: 79)

In accordance with Wells' preference for negative eugenics, the utopian world is described as the outcome of an artificial selection that has been going on for centuries. The "dull" and the "base" characters, which had still been of some concern to the administrators of the "modern utopia", have vanished altogether. It turns out that the utopian world of *Men Like Gods* still resembles the one Wells had de-

picted in 1905, but this one is far more advanced. Since the utopians possess the necessary genetic knowledge, their eugenics programme proves successful. As the narrator makes clear, their biological status is the outcome of conscious artificial selection:

> For centuries now Utopian science has been able to discriminate among births, and nearly every Utopian alive would have ranked as an energetic creative spirit in former days. There are few dull and no really defective people in Utopia; the idle strains, the people of lethargic dispositions or weak imaginations, have mostly died out; the melancholic type has taken its dismissal and gone; spiteful and malignant characters are disappearing. The vast majority of Utopians are active, sanguine, inventive, receptive and good-tempered. (Wells 1927: 80)

A late echo of Huxley's distinction between the cosmic and the ethical process can be found in the antagonism that exists between Catskill and the utopians. To Catskill, the social Darwinist, the latter are living in a state of degeneration. When they fall ill because of the germs the terrestrials have imported, he feels that this supports his creed of a merciless struggle for survival. In a dispute between him and the utopian Urthred, the different attitudes become visible. While Catskill clings to his concept of the survival of the fittest, Urthred proves to be a true Huxleyan when he questions nature's wisdom. As he points out, it is not the task of the utopians to live naturally, but rather to work against nature's blind indifference:

> These Earthlings do not yet dare to see what our Mother Nature is. [...] They do not see that except for our eyes and wills, she is purposeless and blind. She is not awful, she is horrible. She takes no heed to our standards, nor to any standards of excellence. She made us by accident; all her children are bastards – undesired; she will cherish or expose them, pet or starve or torment without rhyme or reason. She does not heed, she does not care. (Wells 1927: 107)

This does not mean, of course, that biological criteria would not play any significant role in the utopian society. It is rather that in their attempts to overcome nature's indifference the utopians have put their social planning on a biological basis. As far as their population policy is concerned, they do not regard the human world to be any different from the animal world. After completing the cultivation of their flora and fauna, they have, in a smooth transition, begun to work on their

own species. It is in this context that the narrator explicitly mentions the idea of eugenics:

> And now man was weeding and cultivating his own strain... The Utopians told of eugenic beginnings, of a new and surer decision in the choice of parents, of an increasing certainty in the science of heredity; and as Mr. Barnstaple contrasted the firm clear beauty of face and limb that every Utopian displayed with the carelessly assembled features and bodily disproportions of his earthly associates, he realised that already, but with three thousand years or so of advantage, these Utopians were passing beyond man towards a nobler humanity. (Wells 1927: 95)

Although the exact eugenic measures of the utopians are never made plain in the narrative, there can be no mistake that they include both positive and negative ones. While Barnstaple finds himself surrounded by physically attractive creatures, he notes that "idiots, inferior types and cripples" have long since disappeared from the face of the utopian world (Wells 1927: 80).

Interestingly, it is a thirteen year old boy called "Crystal" who informs Barnstaple how, in a long and systematic process of extinction, the utopians have wiped out everything that appeared to them nasty and inferior. Within the context of the narrative, the boy is obviously introduced to demonstrate that the utopians have finally been able to overcome seemingly obsolete virtues such as compassion or pity. While these are unmasked as mere selfishness in disguise, the utopians prefer to worship a vitality principle that reminds the reader of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical views or of Henri Bergson's *élan vital*:

> In a world of fear, weakness, infection, darkness and confusion, pity, the act of charity, the alms and the refuge, the deed of stark devotion, might show indeed like sweet and gracious presences; but in this world of health and brave enterprises, pity betrayed itself a vicious desire. Crystal, Utopian youth, was as hard as his name. (Wells 1927: 289)

Crystal, who is as young as he is unsentimental, is most explicit when it comes to the process of biological cleansing that has been accomplished. "There had been a certain deliberate elimination of ugly, malignant, narrow, stupid and gloomy types during the past dozen centu-

ries or so [...]", he reports to Barnstaple without flinching (Wells 1927: 264).

In the light of what has been said, it seems consistent that the utopians also show little compassion for Barnstaple's dilemma. Although he admires the utopians, he has to recognise that he does not fit into their world. With their crystal-clear reasoning, the utopians are able to 'prove' to him that it is better for him to leave. Resembling Jonathan Swift's miserable protagonist, who was forced to leave behind his beloved horses in *Gulliver*'s *Travels* (1726), Wells' protagonist also finds himself ostracised from the land of his dreams. Caught in the logical web of his own making, he has to accept that the utopian world offers no place for an inferior type like him (Wells 1927: 296).

Despite such disappointments, the narrator is still careful to point out that the utopians are not in any way cruel to their human counterparts. In view of the utopians' method of dealing with 'harmful species', the more sensitive reader may feel a little disturbed, of course, to hear that they compare the earthlings to rats and parasites,[18] but the plot of the novel is arranged in such a way that the humans are always the ones to blame. Because of their inherited stupidity, their quarrels and religious beliefs, Barnstaple is told, humans represent a continuous danger of infection to the utopian society. To be saved from being wiped out completely, it is recommended that they take their leave and henceforth avoid any contact with the higher civilisation.

Men Like Gods reveals that in 1923 Wells had not yet abandoned his hopes for the biological improvement of the human race. Viewed against the background of his other utopian writings, *Men Like Gods* may even be said to contain the author's most explicit eugenic vision. Not only has his utopian society taken to heart George Bernard Shaw's call to abandon all middle-class concepts of matrimony, but it also enjoys the fruits of a long-standing process of artificial selection that extends to plants, animals and humans alike. At the same time, however, the eugenic programme of *Men Like Gods* is qualified by the fact that it is presented within a purely fictional framework. While *Anticipations* had taken the form of the straightforward essay, *A Modern Utopia* was designed as a semi-fictional

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18 Cf. for instance Uthred's remark: "It is true; there is something fierce and rat-like and dangerous about Earthly men." (Wells 1927: 111)

work or, as Wells' explained, a "shot-silk texture between philosophical discussion on the one hand and imaginative narrative on the other".[19] If the semi-fictional text *A Modern Utopia* had already been much more cautious in its suggestions of eugenic measures, *Men Like Gods* cannot in any way be regarded as a political programme. It was written at a time when the author's confidence in biology as a means of social improvement had already started to crumble.[20] Viewed in this light, it marks the turning point rather than the peak of Wells' thoughts regarding eugenics.

4. Conclusion

Men Like Gods was the last work in which Wells considered eugenics within a utopian context. If eugenic ideas are still traceable in his writings of the 1920s and 1930s, they do not betray any utopian quality. In *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* of 1932, he would reject positive eugenics altogether, even if he still held that negative eugenic measures might in some cases prove useful. In accordance with the contemporary legislation of several U.S. states, these included the sterilization of criminals and persons suffering from hereditable diseases (Wells 1932: 677ff). Similar views were expressed in *The Science of Life* (1930), a work which Wells wrote in collaboration with Julian Huxley and G. P. Wells. Eugenics was regarded as 'impracticable' because the knowledge of the hereditary process was still insufficient. This did not mean, however, that scientific knowledge could not advance in time. When some distant future of the human race is brought into view, the text shows an enthusiasm which still resembles Wells' euphoric visions of *The Discovery of the Future*:

> There may come a time when the species will have a definite reproductive policy, and will be working directly for the emergence and selection of certain recessives and the elimination of this or that dominant. [...] Once the eugenic phase is reached, humanity may increase very rapidly in skill, mental power and general vigour. (Wells et al. 1930: 879)

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19 This is the description Wells used in a later preface (1925: x).

20 Cf. Partington 2003b on Wells' later eugenic views.

However, some qualifications are in place here. First, it is not clear whether these passages were written by H. G. Wells himself or if they merely reflect the eugenic beliefs of one of his co-writers;[21] second, it has to be noted that these passages do not suggest any concrete eugenic programme but merely state the possibility that man might be able to create a feasible programme in the distant future. It appears that statements such as these demonstrate the crisis of eugenics rather than its success. As eugenics ceased to be considered as a valid method of social improvement, it was deferred to a remote future reality. Thus, it had more in common with science fiction than with real science.

As Wells' faith in the biological improvement of mankind dwindled, he increasingly placed his hopes in pedagogical efforts (Partington 2003b: 77ff). Such a shift is clearly traceable in *The Open Conspiracy* (1928). In this work, Wells would still emphasise man's power to work against the struggle for existence. Written in the wake of the Great War, the "Open Conspiracy" was meant to represent an "awakening of mankind from a nightmare of the struggle for existence and the inevitability of war" (Wells 1928: 152). The means to overcome nature's indifference, however, were no longer believed to be eugenics but the development of adequate "educational machinery" (Wells 1928: 138). Wells suggested special schools which should be designed as "laboratories". If their pupils were still regarded as a "social élite", they were not distinguished by any hereditary qualities (Wells 1928: 140). The "new humanity" that Wells now envisaged was characterised by its intellectual rather than its physical maturity. "Its thoughts", the author stated, "will be to our thoughts as the thoughts of a man to the troubled mental experimenting of a child" (Wells 1928: 152).

In summary, it can be said that if Wells never fully subscribed to the eugenic programme promoted by Galton and others, he nevertheless toyed with the idea for a certain period of time. Looking at his futurology from a present-day perspective, it becomes clear that the pioneering element of his work was not his Darwinian outlook but his belief that the various forms of nineteenth century nationalism had to

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[21] Julian Huxley would suggest eugenic measures, albeit on a voluntary basis, as late as 1953; cf. Huxley 1953: 151. On the question of Wells' authorship, cf. also Partington 2003b: 80.

be replaced by a principle of supranational responsibility in order to ensure that the end of the process of geographical expansion would not result in a global disaster. In the years following World War One, Wells became known as a promoter of world peace. Having been an early critic of the Treaty of Versailles, which in his opinion had not been fair to the defeated powers, he spoke on *The Common Sense of World Peace* before the German Reichstag in 1929. By 1940, when European democracies were on the retreat and totalitarianism on the rise, the one-time author of the "New Republic" had turned into a defender of human rights. Although his book *The New World Order* was not concerned with eugenics, it is interesting to note that he now rejected even negative eugenic methods. Wells explicitly demanded that "no man shall be subjected to any sort of mutilation or sterilisation except with his own deliberate consent, freely given" (Wells 1940: 143). In his doctoral dissertation of 1944, he went so far as to denounce Galton's ideas as "fascist" (Partington 2003b: 79), thus comparing the 'father of eugenics' with Britain's enemies, who in the spring of that year had started the so-called 'final solution', in which the 'lethal chamber' would play a crucial role.[22] With his human rights campaign, Wells left no doubts about his humanitarian outlook. It has been argued that the catalogue of human rights which he promoted in the 1940s may even have inspired the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights* of 1948 (Hamano 2001). While it would not be amiss to view the United Nations and its various organisations as a final realisation of the principle of global responsibility that Wells had advocated for so long, it is also clear that the roots of the United Nations are not to be found in the eugenic utopianism of the early twentieth century, but rather in the traumatic experiences which attempts to put such ideas into practice had caused.

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22 The "Wannsee conference", whose participants planned the murder of 11 million European Jews, was held in Berlin in January 1942. The gas chambers, which were put into operation in the spring of that year, were modelled on those used in the euthanasia programme "T 4" and thus had their roots in an extreme version of negative eugenics.

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Persistence of Obedience: Theological Space and Ritual Conversion in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Ralph Pordzik

Abstract: George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is generally regarded as a dystopian text engaging the challenge posed to the personal self by totalitarian politics. As opposed to that, this essay seeks to recast the text in the generic frame of the *conversion narrative* in which the transformation of an autonomous subject into a passive and ardent follower of a new faith is documented. It will be argued that for Orwell the re-admission to some kind of assimilative faith appears to represent a strong utopian element, one offering release from both individual conscience and social responsibility. Profoundly upset by the horrors of the twentieth century, Orwell in the 1940s was visibly beginning to deem the claims of personal judgement and humanist freedom as too heavy a burden for individual man.

Key names and concepts: Augustine – Catholic Church – Christianity – conversion narrative – empiricism – inward man – Jacques Lacan – Martin Luther – John H. Newman – George Orwell – St. Paul – Alan Sandison – the *Symbolic* and the *Imaginary*

1. 'Schemes of Grace': *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as Conversion Narrative

Nineteen Eighty-Four is commonly regarded as a novel devoid of any trace of communal or utopian spirit. For many readers it presents merely a bleak nightmare of a future, a no-exit disaster fiction written by a heavily traumatized left-wing intellectual stalled in a post-war defeatist attitude and without any further creative resources for ideological renewal left. The gist of many of these responses has been summed up, quite plausibly, in Alok Rai's statement that the "despair in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and its perverse intensification is, in a sense, Orwell's punishment of himself for having entertained [democratic Socialist] hopes at all" (Rai 1988: 145f).

The following essay seeks to place Orwell in a different context and to restore to the novel's texture its repressed utopian space by reading it along Lacanian lines – as a paradoxical text hinged on the registers of the *Symbolic* and the *Imaginary* as the only sites in discourse where the individual can enact and put to a test its narcissistic vision of itself as integral and whole (Lacan 1998: 279). On the surface of the narrated plot and its political message, Winston appears to be the "last man in Europe" (Alan Sandison), the heroic outsider bravely confronting the humiliating forces of despotism and party rule; but in reality Winston fears nothing more than his own individualism and personal responsibility towards others – his emotionally and sexually disastrous relationship with Julia demonstrates this point with admirable clarity! Winston seeks to escape the realm of communal and ethical responsibility in order to hand himself over to some kind of authoritative faith denouncing the individual's presence and commitment to life, experience, interaction and heterosexual ambition – in this almost complete self-effacement of the individual, I hold, lies the true, if only implicitly argued, utopian dimension of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Resolutely submitting its protagonist to the logic of spiritual truth and the figurative and existential spaces it commands, the narrative exhibits strong affinities with the doctrinal theology as developed by St. Paul in his epistles to the early Christian communities, even though the more obvious religious allusions all seem to have been cancelled from the "static and logical […] locked universe" (Rai 1988: 135) of political narrative in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

It is crucial to bear in mind that Winston has committed himself to a strict empiricism according to which his personal autonomy depends on a direct confrontation between the individual and the data of his sensual experience, between the autonomous self and objective reality. The strength this demands of him is immense, however, and – as I shall argue – the desire is strong to return (at whatever price) to that larger authority or faith from which, in the 'heresies' of empiricism and individualism, he has alienated himself. Unconsciously, Winston thus considers yielding to the Party's will as a welcome opportunity of re-inscription into the quasi-religious universe of the symbolic 'law' of the father – St. Paul's complex image of Christ as saviour or redemptive force, i.e. – and participation in the set standards of preor-

dained systemic solidarity.[1] The idea of law as unfolded here resembles, paradoxically, the much-debated concepts of 'faith' and 'grace' as developed in several of Paul's epistles to the early Christian communities of the Mediterranean in the 1st century CE.[2]

2. Prerogatives of Faith: The Baptising of Winston

Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. (Job 13:15)

For the average reader used to regard *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a novel about totalitarian rule and the consequences of political terror meted out by the state to its citizens the idea of *baptism* may at first seem too inadequate or unorthodox a concept to grasp any of the major sidelines of the writer's argument.[3] However, large parts of the novel are devoted to depicting in detail the sufferings of Winston as a painful yet essential process of intellectual transformation; Winston merely undergoes what he unconsciously wishes to undergo anyway – the losing of his grip on empirical reality and so on his individuality. With the plot slowly progressing and the dialogue between himself and O'Brien intensifying in terms of epistemological complexity (both are verbally locked in discussing imaginary cases that involve a high degree of casuistry), Winston's stubborn rejection of the Party system in Oceania increasingly appears to harden into a claustrophobic delusion or "neurotic hallucination" (Rai 1988: 136), a fixation propped up to appease his hurt narcissism – the system of Big Brother embodying, in all respects, the *ordre symbolique* as the only discursive mode granting the subject full recognition as a 'being-that-lacks', a subject afraid of its fundamental freedom and independence in the world and thus

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1 The demands this form of introspection can set on any individual are also alluded to by St. Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians where he foregrounds his own efforts while at the same time claiming for himself the intervention of the Almighty – all this rendered in a paradoxical fashion ever since present in the dogma of Christianity: "but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinth. 15:10). For further stimulating details of this issue, see Peters 1993, Stendhal 1963 and Ziesler 1990.

2 For a detailed account of Paul's influence on western thinking, see Hays 1989 and Maccoby 1986.

3 See, e.g., Young 1991.

desiring to be handed over to some kind of all-embracing "corporate care" (Sandison 1986: 168).[4] Winston is thus more or less *baptized* into understanding and believing the truth of doctrine as presented to him by antagonist and examiner O'Brien – a doctrine demanding of him unquestioning acceptance of its ultimate saving power *yet* also creating ample space for his continuous and eloquent self-projection.

What is crucial to understand is that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* stages this fundamental notion of symbolic disempowerment as the history of frustrated desire in individual development; the text, guiding its readers through a series of explorative stages in which Winston's many thwarted ambitions are laid out, documented and finally exposed as pointlessly vain, expresses a deeply felt wish to renounce individual aspiration, choice and assertiveness as forms of conceited and egotistical wish-fulfilment (a mode of desiring unambiguously located in Lacan's *imaginary* register) and to become instead part of a larger communal, de-personalising dogma or creed – an order of priorities recreating the internalised father-figure in the more abstract mode or register of the Symbolic: as a form of quasi-theological discourse concerned with witnessing *and* resolving the crisis arising from the post-war challenge of individualism and philosophical self-centredness.

Some remarks will have to be made in the following with respect to the seminal work of Alan Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984* (1986), in which some of the psychological implications of Orwell's most successful novel were thoroughly exposed for analysis for the first time. According to Sandison, the Catholic Church is the power which for Orwell represents the institution best suited to offer recompense for the decentring of the subject inaugurated with the Reformation and to renew the social pact between the individual and a larger communal identity (cf. Sandison 1986: 168f).[5] Thus envisaged, the Pauline Church as "spiritual Rock" (1 Corinth. 10:4) embodies the

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4 According to psychoanalytic discourse, this 'freedom' is restricted to our capacity for symbolization or language covering over "the metaphysical or ontological gap where an origin might have been" (Mellard 1991: 7).

5 The tendency to submissive resignation from received Protestant standards of self-confirmation in some English writers seems to have been a minor – if as yet largely unrecognized – cultural phenomenon of the late 1940s and early 50s; see, e.g., Litvack's analysis of Muriel Spark's conversion to Roman Catholicism and the impact this had on her writing (Litvack 1993).

internalised paternal image the text establishes as its major point of symbolical reference.

Alan Sandison has located this quest for identity and the religious conversion coming along with it in the remains of a doctrinal debate harking back to Luther's confrontation of the charges established against him by the theologian Johannes Eck (1486-1543) in fifteenth-century Germany (Sandison 1986: 1, 168, 182); I suggest, however, to look to the theology of St. Paul as the most impressive model for manifesting the power of the *Symbolic* as a code of paternal dominance in the text. Paul's conversion to Christianity is included in the Acts of the Apostles, a narrative confronting the persecutor of the Christians with the anger of God for the first time in the New Testament: "And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:5).[6] The story, with a few minor variations, is repeated twice more in the course of the 28 chapters of Acts, both times retold by Paul himself. There are quite a few striking parallels to Orwell's novel here some of which ask for careful elaboration, the most revealing being the fact of Winston increasingly defining himself in relation to his torturer and interrogator O'Brien in a fashion that calls to mind the self-styled apostle's expostulating with God and the Lord's impressive voice urging his "chosen vessel" (Acts 9:15) to go on, respectively:

> Don't worry, Winston; you are in my keeping. For seven years I have watched over you. Now the turning-point has come. I shall save you, I shall make you perfect. (Orwell 1990: 256)[7]

O'Brien offers Winston an image of himself as a man undergoing rapid doctrinal transformation in the service of a higher spiritual cause – a view strikingly parallel to St. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus ("And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee

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6 Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations refer to the Authorized King James Version of the *Bible* (ed. Carroll and Prickett 1997).

7 Attention must be drawn to the number symbolism inherent in this scene and its relation to the body of 'magical' numbers as identified in the New Testament, especially in the Revelation of St. John; it is without doubt important to note that the Ministry reveals its having kept Winston under observation for full *seven* years! (Cf. Rai 1988: 148)

to do", Acts 22:10). Winston once believed in his innate freedom and in the idea that he was made 'in God's image' in order to grow up a critical and self-sufficient individual, but the 'Fall' shattered that image and doomed man to the 'sin' of reason and the 'darkness' of worldly (empirical) common sense. The 'Fall', in this case, turns out to be Winston's proud and immodest faith in a pre-given and independent reality open to rational examination;[8] what precisely 'sin' means in the given context is made clear in a related passage:

> "I am taking trouble with you, Winston", [O'Brien] said, "because you are worth trouble. You know perfectly well what is the matter with you. You have known it for years, though you have fought against the knowledge. You are mentally deranged. You suffer from a defective memory. You are unable to remember real events, and you persuade yourself that you remember real events, and you persuade yourself that you remember other events which never happened. Fortunately it is curable. You have never cured yourself of it, because you did not choose to. There was a small effort of the will that you were not ready to make." (Orwell 1990: 258)

What the 'effort of the will' requires of Winston is nothing short of the renunciation of self and subjective prejudice *and* his willingness to follow his 'saviour' O'Brien as a compliant servant or disciple. (Not for nothing does the torturer's name tend to remind us of a character of vaguely Catholic or Irish descent;[9] Winston in turn represents the stereotype of the averagely gifted, typical English 'everyman' featuring prominently in national ethnography.) The whole dialogue presses its readers to acknowledge the resemblance between Winston's metamorphosis and Paul's intellectual contemplation of his conversion on the road to Damascus: "But before faith came, we were kept under the

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8 Observe the parallels to Gen. 3:7-11: "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; […] And [God] said, Who told thee that thou was naked?" What the encounter describes is, in other words, the fact of human curiosity and of the individual becoming aware of his or her potential for insight into the hidden apparatus of nature.

9 I am indebted to Alan Sandison for this instructive parallel (cf. Sandison 1986: 182). Having in mind the persistent Catholic subtext in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Sandison also argues, quite persuasively, that it is not "insignificant that the only other historical period admitted by the Party is the Middle Ages" (179). It is indeed true that, with the Party's weird forms of manipulation and "obscurantism", the reader is catapulted "back in the Middles ages" (180).

law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* into Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Gal. 3:23-24) In discourse after lengthy discourse Paul and O'Brien wax lyrical about how purity and rectitude are revealed in and through *faith* alone.[10] Highlighting *faith* allows in particular O'Brien to denigrate all individually inspired actions as against the system of Big Brother; generally accredited modes of activity such as rational thinking and circumspect political judgement thus metamorphose into mortal sins.

In the epistles of St. Paul, this self-abasing view of man goes hand in hand with an eschatological vision of virtue, wholeness and integrity: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). According to the Jewish theologian, everything depends on our ability to *see* and, seeing, to recognize our previous blindness: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I am known" (1 Corinth. 13: 12). (And it is only one of the many subtle ironies of the novel that the inherited Jewish *law* every truly inspired Christian is supposed to leave behind is associated with the received discourse of English common sense! It is Winston who assumes, quite misleadingly, to have "the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law", Rom. 2:20.) The important act is not repentance but *awakening* – this is why O'Brien never wants to hear about Winston's giving in to the Party's will out of sheer conformity, fear of further physical pain and torture or even pure opportunism. The important act is one of a deeply felt sea-change, a cardinally new faith entirely transforming life and personal vision. At this point, the symbolic parallels between Winston as fictional character and St. Paul as representative of a new creed or Christian order of faith come fully into view: the theological power of Paul's exposition or "symbolic world of belief" has never been in doubt (Carroll and Prickett 1997: 416), and centuries of Christianity have shown its ability to remain ethically relevant "almost from the moment he began to preach" (Josipovici 1988: 240ff).[11] It is not

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10 See particularly St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans; Rom. 2-8.

11 The uncontested doctrinal authority of St. Paul also accounts for Stephen Prickett's somehow feeling justified to call him the "Lenin of the early churches, transforming his own understanding of Jesus into a viable organization[.]" (Carroll and Prickett 1997: 415, "Notes to the New Testament")

for nothing that the consequences of this long-standing influence can be observed in a large body of spiritual writings dealing with the issues of confession and conversion from a highly personal and introspective standpoint, such as Augustine's *Confessions* (c. 400) and John H. Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (1864).[12]

Even more far-reaching are its implications for the concept of the individual as deployed in Orwell's novel. In the – given the dire circumstances of his imprisonment – 'foolhardy' defence of his ideas, Winston appears to take only the most unexceptional views on external reality, truth and empirical validity, transforming them into inward events as he goes along. This inwardness is recast in entirely different terms by his opponent O'Brien, however; the result is the opening up of a wholly new dimension of theological speculation, one in which the *opportunity* for pure, untrammelled faith becomes the dominant factor in the production of the space within which the 'community' interacts:

> Only the disciplined mind can see reality, Winston. You believe that reality is something objective, external, existing in its own right. You also believe that the nature of reality is self-evident. When you delude yourself into thinking that you see something, you assume that everyone else sees the same thing as you. But I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else. Not in the individual mind, which can make mistakes, and in any case soon perishes: only in the mind of the party, which is collective and immortal. Whatever the Party holds to be truth, is truth. It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party. (Orwell 1990: 261)

'Justified' by his final, hard-won faith in the Party and the intellectual and doctrinal authority it asserts over the individual, Winston can only make his peace with the social system through O'Brien, the authorized messenger of the 'New Church'. Everything rests in the confession of his absolute and unconditioned faith, his declaration that there is no reality verifiable by the senses: in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, even the factual history of the West along with its major events and developments is allegorized as a simulacrum and then internalized in order to reveal

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12 For further details, see Fredriksen 1986. A rather instructive reading of Augustine's *Confessions* in Lacanian terms has been offered by Goux 1965. The major points discussed here might also be applied, with some reservations, to James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1915).

a spiritual dimension. To thus deny objective reality or to allow for the violation of the natural laws is without doubt to pose as God or any other being of divine power!

What follows from this exposition is that if everything that ever took place in the realm of empirical facts is 'revealed' to have only a subjective dimension, then it becomes vitally important to give to these inward meanings some kind of quasi-objective status. This status is primarily (and paradoxically) achieved through mental torture: Like Saul of Tarsus turning into Paul, Winston is first pursued and then scourged and imprisoned; he is depicted as responding to O'Brien's diatribes and incursions and meticulously set in scene as fending off either the Party soldier's horrible threats or the persistent feeling of his own intellectual inferiority. Winston's martyrdom is thus displaced into the sphere of the objective and universal, acquiring meaning and purpose as the narrative goes along. It certainly would be difficult, given the whole lot of awful border experiences as depicted in the text, *not* to register the writer's implicit fondness for dwelling on the facts of the character's suffering, conversion and final 'purification' – purification through physical pain somehow being the only 'objective' proof of Winston's new-won faith in a higher truth or public discipline as provided by the Party!

This is also why the various stages of Winston's conversion take up so much narrative time: they help explain to the reader the dilemmas of personal reflection and rational self-examination; giving emphasis to Winston's impending future enlightenment, their real aim is all the time to renounce precisely this dimension of subjective understanding, to renounce the very idea of individual self-fulfilment and experiential complacency![13] Like St. Paul, Orwell seems to be intent on showing us that by cutting his protagonist off from his family and beloved (Julia), he seeks to cut him off experimentally from the culture and beliefs of his youth as well – and such a vision of oneness (in Christ?), however degrading and uprooting in itself, can indeed be regarded as sweet and soothing: "Because the carnal mind is enmity

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13 In his study on Orwell, Alan Sandison offers an excellent account clarifying how and why, in the twentieth century, the notion of the personal self or "autonomous individual" (Orwell) has come to be regarded as "susceptible to historical destruction" (Sandison 1986: 4f).

against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7).[14]

At the same time, there is, in the text, a treacherous insistence on morality as the only external guarantor of inner change reminding every watchful reader of the guiding principles of the gospel – but this is, of course, only the Party's perverted and self-legitimising morality of political performance! From the reader's point of view, Winston merely appears to complete a continuing series – and the series he chose is that which concerns the *prodigal son* returning to the father's house or, for that matter, to the paternal discourse of the symbolic order.[15] What is really developed is the story of the sinner who repents and is welcomed back, who – in an act of contrition – leaves off 'wallowing in the dirt with pigs' (possibly a reference to his sexual encounter with Julia) and returns home to be feasted by a loving father.

The personal dimension of this is not to be underestimated; there is a continuing thread of narrative in the novel connecting the problem of return and conversion to that of *personal guilt*. Winston is permanently conscious of being implicated in some kind of wrong or sense of culpability (cf. Hoevels 1996). *Nineteen Eighty-Four* frequently alludes to Winston's possible involvement in the disappearance of his family and relatives, e.g.:

> When his father disappeared, his mother did not show any surprise or any violent grief, but a sudden change came over her. She seemed to have become completely spiritless. It was evident even to Winston that she was waiting for something that she knew must happen. (Orwell 1990: 168)

A later scene connects Winston's sense of guilt to the biblical story of the prodigal son – a parable about forgiveness narrated only in Luke

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14 With respect to Julia, the validity of this point is best shown at the moment of Winston's betraying her in order to save his own life. It is also present in the ruthlessness he shows in view of her imminent torture and death. Women just do not seem to be interesting; and the sexual encounter between the two – at first highlighted as an act of political rebellion against the Party – is reduced, *en passant*, to an act of mere physical or 'carnal' passion.

15 Cf. Luke 15: 11-32. We may even ask ourselves if the idea of the prodigal son as subliminally presented here is connected to Orwell's never-relinquished faith in communism as a political and ethical ideal – displaced, perversely, upon the Party's iron will to govern and manipulate.

15:11-32 – in a more explicit fashion. According to the parable, the younger son demands his share of 'his' inheritance while his father is still alive and goes off to a distant country where he spends his substance "with riotous living" (15:13); eventually he has to take work as a swine herder – clearly a low point, as swine are not kosher in Judaic culture. The story's edifying message is also present in St. Paul's problematic dismissal of Jewish law and his de-centering of the Jews and of Judaic culture.[16] Orwell, with a different aim in mind, appears to draw on the parable when depicting Winston as immensely greedy and stealing other people's food in times of need:

> "Winston, Winston!" his mother called after him. "Come back! Give your sister back her chocolate!" He stopped, but he did not come back. His mother's anxious eyes were fixed on his face. Even now he was thinking about the thing, he did not know what it was that was on the point of happening. His sister, conscious of having been robbed of something, had set up a feeble wail. His mother drew her arm around the child and pressed its face against her breast. Something in the gesture told him that his sister was dying. He turned and fled down the stairs, with the chocolate growing sticky in his hand.
>
> He never saw his mother again. […] When he came back his mother had disappeared. This was already becoming normal at that time. Nothing was gone from the room except his mother and his sister. (Orwell 1990: 170)

The lesser act of stealing a piece of chocolate and the much larger one of implied personal betrayal are conjoined in a rigidly ethical fashion; personal guilt seems to take advantage of the protagonist's weakness to live up to his society's expectations and those of his former family circle. (It is only with his return to the inner circle of protection as embodied by the Party and O'Brien that Winston's sins can be finally and fully forgiven.) With the novel slowly progressing, the emotional and ethical problems are heaped up in such a way as to suggest their being implicated in a frightful *inward*-directed tragedy: the paradigm thus manifested in Winston's long martyrdom through suffering and persecution until the 'privilege' of final conversion is the paradigm of

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16 On the issue of Anti-Semitism as inherent in early Christianity and in the letters of Paul, see Gager 1983 and Carroll & Prickett 1997: 402 and 410f ("Notes to the New Testament"). It should be noted that the father's rejoicing in seeing his lost son appears to minister to the reader's repressed narcissistic feelings as well!

Christ himself who lived a life of absolute obedience – to his symbolic father – without any outward evidence that he was really doing so.

Orwell's creative fashioning of the topic appears to flesh out this particular aspect more than any other – and thus clearly owes much to Pauline notions of *faith* versus *law* as postulated in the epistles; as in the above example, there are no indisputable external signs assuring Winston of the validity of the one, *empirical* reality he is so fond of! All there ever is to be found throughout the novel's exhaustive treatment of matters of personal conscience is Winston's rebellious personal testimony as to the reality of the world he takes for granted; and what's more: the fact that this world (along with his testimony) is largely public and external also suggests that it will sooner or later become a terrible burden to Winston – who, as we have seen, exists for us most at precisely those moments when he seems to feel he is not entirely in charge, that there is always another who knows more than he does.[17]

It thus makes sense to locate *Nineteen Eighty-Four* not so much in the dystopian tradition but to call it a *negative spiritual (auto)biography* written in the tradition of St. Augustine and the Paul of the Roman epistles instead. That there is indeed a link between Orwell's grim vision of political perversion and autobiography as genre and, at a deeper level, between the Pauline vision of the "inward man" (Rom. 7:22) and the impulse towards self-projection and spiritual abandonment, is made obvious by the text's constant harping on the ideas of empiricism, rational comprehension and analytic examination as forms of 'sinning' – a misleading obsession with the charismatic gift of the individual spirit opposing acknowledged discourse and the given hierarchy of intellectual and cognitive values. In the final instance, it is thus Winston – a mere bystander – watching as "through a glass, darkly" (1 Corinth. 13:12); it is 'imperfect', commonsensical

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17 This authority is mainly transmitted through O'Brien and the Party; a further issue related to the problem of inwardness is thus that of transgressing the given body of laws. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, O'Brien consents to the launching of a political resistance group only in order to find out about hidden opponents of the system. As the reader quickly learns, the system works perfectly well, so that it all reminds one of St. Paul apostrophising the ancient *law* as a major agent in the process of the conversion of Gentiles. Paul writes: "Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). See Rom. 6-7 for further elaboration of this crucial point!

Winston who appears to us like a child in his perfidious and recalcitrant insistence on personal truth and insight.

What the reader is given to understand, on top of that, is that in order to become a 'real' individual under O'Brien's patient and orthodox guidance, Winston eventually will have to "put away childish things" (1 Corinth. 13:11) and open himself to a world of fundamental recompense in which the certain expectations of a 'resurrection' to a better life offer comfort to all those mourning the loss of faith in individual sovereignty and self-sufficiency. What the reader is presented with here is thus a dramatisation of inner change, not the description of a finished process or stage of development. The emphasis, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is always on suspense, on making and continuation: at no time does the text allow us to stand back and contemplate the narrated event as pure achievement. Conversion as narrative principle and main objective confers upon Orwell the right to create a dense, "paranoid" (Rai 1988: 133) structure of representation and necessitates such a structure; it is also, however, the final moment which provides both a beginning and a pattern linking that beginning with the challenges of the political present.[18]

3. The Pauline Drama as Repressed Utopian Fantasy

Nineteen Eighty-Four makes the reader become aware of the repressed yet always insistent presence of theological discourse in Orwell's work as a major mode of self-exploration and of connecting the Protestant impulse to introspection and autobiography with the notion of the utopian as literary mode. In making the reader follow Winston's degradation as a fully-fledged individual, the novel renders, quite paradoxically, the dystopian as utopian, the exclusivist and dictatorial Party system as ideal state, and O'Brien as caring and omniscient, god-like examiner granting his victim access to the world of his repressed desires *and* offering salvation at the same time; it subtly turns political disenfranchisement into cultural empowerment and thus cre-

[18] The last passages of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* belong to the most rigidly self-analytical pieces ever written by Orwell. Here he struggles to justify himself and to articulate his reflections on his experiences as a 20th-century intellectual (cf. Rai 1988: 145f). The issue of paternal authority is always around the corner, however (for further details, see Hoevels 1996 and Pordzik 2006).

ates a new 'utopia' for the spiritually tortured modern "inward man" (Romans 7: 22) who, after the horrors of the Second World War, is slowly beginning to deem the claims of his own conscience, of personal judgement and introspective morality, as too heavy a burden. Throughout much of the narrative, Winston makes his readers think of a character in a film trying to wake up and being unable to do so – he thus tends to remind them of the eternal father-archetype in Edmund Gosse's autobiography who, "although his mind dwelt so constantly on spiritual matters it was never betrayed into any suspension of the rational functions" (Gosse 1928: 322).

In the long run, however, Orwell's late-modern anti-hero, lost at first, eventually discovers his true desire in the self-effacement revealed to him by his spiritual mentor O'Brien, acknowledging defeat and assuming, in almost every question, a semi-divine standpoint; slowly trying to feel safe – or perversely 'free' – "in the house where there are many mansions" (Gosse 1928: 327).[19]

In a curiously warped fashion, the 'spiritual' bond connecting O'Brien and Winston thus appears to mirror that of the *Holy Trinity* – with O'Brien as Father or God, Winston as (prodigal) son, and the Party as Holy Spirit or representation of the one divine essence or substance governing and encompassing all the others. Even though it may seem inappropriate for some readers to regard the matter in these outspokenly doctrinal terms, the parallels are hard to deny and their primary aesthetic effects may appear even less parodic if seen in the light of the novel's overall narrative context. Like Winston who is considered to accept O'Brien's 'brave new world' of Party dominance with the conscious and full abandonment of his own soul and at a firmly set or 'inspired' moment of time, the reader is invited to take the narrative's "obsessive, hypnotic power, its claustral intensity" (Rai 1988: 133), first of all 'on faith' alone; regarding Winston's imprisonment in a language and meaning system not quite his own becomes a question of "modes of reading" (Frank Kermode) as ways of assenting to different narratives to the degree that we feel we can trust them. In the given case, it is most of all the experience of the main character's vulnerability which makes the reader experience Winston's body in his own and *as* his own. The mark of authenticity is on Winston from the very moment his interrogation begins; he opens up a world of intense

[19] Edmund Gosse's biographical *alter ego* quoting John 14:2.

inwardness, a world he describes and explores in passionate detail – but it is also one obtained at a high cost, as he condemns himself to sustaining his vision by nothing else than the constant reiteration of the drama of his own conversion. His new 'faith' is thus present to us in a mediated form only, mediated through a state of mind which it helps to produce but of which it is also, simultaneously, a rationalisation. To permit this encroachment of external persuasive power or 'superior intelligence' on one's private right to act on the evidence of one's senses and beliefs is, I feel, to take the first (and fatal) step to subservience to the totalitarian yet also, paradoxically, utopian fantasy of redemptive self-transfiguration:

> Alone – free – the human being is always defeated. […] But if he can make complete, utter submission, if he can escape from his identity, if he can merge himself in the Party so that he *is* the Party, then he is all-powerful and immortal. (Orwell 1990: 285)
>
> He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! […] But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother. (Orwell 1990: 311)

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CHAPTER II

HOMELY SPACES, INTIMATE BORDERS – UTOPIAS TO LIVE IN

‘And is not every Manor a Little Common Wealth?’ Nostalgia, Utopia and the Country House[1]

Nicole Pohl

Abstract: This article argues that the nostalgia of the country house in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English and Irish Literature is fundamentally utopian. Exploring the different and ambivalent manifestations of country house nostalgia of the period, the author argues that nostalgia and utopian desire are dialectially related.

Key names and concepts: country house poetry – Irish ‘Big House’ literature – nostalgia – utopia

In *The Story of Utopias*, Lewis Mumford puts forward that the country house ideal, as we find it represented in literature from Rabelais to Chekhov, is part of a body of “collective utopias” or “social myths” that have shaped our political imagination significantly. For Mumford, these “collective utopias” “tend to perpetuate and perfect” the existing social and economic order (Mumford 1963: 11, 193). In other words, as Mumford seems to suggest, collective utopias or social myths are ideological smokescreens that obscure the material conditions of the respective society with “our perpetual ‘will to believe’ ”. On the other hand – and Mumford is ambivalent here – social myths can “perfect that order” (Mumford 1963: 234). Thus, collective utopias can be a motivating force for social and political change.

Rather than reading the different literary manifestations of the country house ethos as simply ideological or mythical, I propose that country house literature is fundamentally public, a literature that is concerned with social transformation and change. To unravel the implications of my argument, Ben Jonson’s “To Penshurst” shall firstly serve as a special case study. This poem has produced a rich and predictably contentious account of the multifaceted relationship between

[1] I thank Marilyn Morris and Rebecca D’Monté for their help.

country house literature and historical reality. The readings oscillate between regarding "To Penshurst" as a conservative reaction to the complex social and political changes at the beginning of the seventeenth century and as ideologically implicated with mainstream culture. I however will argue that the country house ethos is positioned between utopia and ideology; its essence is nostalgic. The trans-ideological make-up of nostalgia is particularly apparent in Irish country house literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In my reading of Irish texts I will show that the nostalgic longing for the past is not necessarily escapist and regressive if the utopian desire longs for a past that has yet to occur (a variation on the Blochean 'Not-Yet'). As Bloch writes:

> *The true genesis is not at the beginning, but at the end,* and it [begins] only when society and existence become radical: that is, comprehend their own roots. […] Once [humanity] has […] comprehended [itself] and […] established [its] own domain in real democracy […] something arises in the world which all [have] glimpsed in childhood; a place and a state in which no one has yet been. And the name of this something is home. (Bloch 1995: 1375f)

The country house utopia comes out of a critical evaluation of the here and now and is instrumental in forging a collective past, future and national identity.

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In 1956 G. R. Hibbard published his article "The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century", where he catalogued a "homogenous body of poetry" in the seventeenth century, united by common ideals of simplicity, responsible use of wealth and property, good housekeeping and hospitality (Hibbard 1956: 159). Hibbard identifies Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" (1616), his "To Sir Robert Wroth" (1616), Thomas Carew's "To Saxham" (1640) and Marvell's "Upon Appleton House" (1681) as the first phase of this literary mode but acknowledges a continuation of the country house ethos into the eighteenth century in the poetry of Alexander Pope. Since Hibbard's article, literary scholars have rewritten the history and socio-political context of the country house poetry tradition and have expanded the

range of texts and its literary forms, finally acknowledging contributions by women poets such as Aemilia Lanyer, Katherine Austen, Countess of Winchelsea and Mary Leapor.[2] The poetic forms include verse epistles, elegies (Lanyer's "To Cooke-ham"), valedictions, and encomiastic epigrams such as Jonson's "To Penshurst" with clear roots in Martial, Horace, Statius and Virgil's *Georgics* to Pliny's *Epistle II, 6*. However, it is the early modern dissension between the country and the city/court, the change from a feudal to a monetary land ownership partially fuelled by Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, the emergence of "possessive individualism", accompanied by the introduction of the representational Palladian building styles for country houses, that determined the formation of this distinctive literary tradition.[3] In his article, Hibbard focuses on the symbolic function of the country house, and more specifically its architecture, as the centre of an organic, harmonious community. We recall Jonson's praise of Penshurst:

> Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show,
> Of touch, or marble; nor canst boast a row
> Of polished pillars, or a roof of gold:
> Thou has no lantern whereof tales are told,
> Or stair, or courts; but standst an ancient pile,
> And these grudged at, art reverenced the while[4]
>
> (ll. 1-6)

In this poem, Penshurst, the historically specific place, is blended with Penshurst, the mythologized social model.[5] By the time Jonson wrote

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2 See particularly Fowler 1994. Fowler rejects the identification of the poetry as "country-house" poetry and suggests the term "estate poetry" to include those poems and texts that do not specifically mention the architecture of the country house but are nevertheless promoting the values of the country house ethos (1). For a study of women's country house poems, see Pohl 2008.

3 I borrowed the term "possessive individualism" from C. B. Macpherson (Macpherson 1962).

4 Quoted in Fowler 1994: 53-62. Both Fowler and McClung have disputed Hibbard's reading that Palladian architecture as representational and opulent was in fact the object of criticism in poems such as "To Penshurst". See McClung 1977.

5 The Arcadian echoes in Jonson's poem go back to Renaissance Arcadianism that, as Adam Nicolson has recently shown in his case study of Wilton House, largely determined the design and management of country houses and estates. (Nicolson 2008)

the poem, Penshurst was more than a humble medieval Hall. In 1594, state rooms and the Long Gallery were added to the original structure and Jonson's contemporary, Robert Sidney, planned to turn Penshurst into a "prodigy house". Rathmell argues that Jonson perhaps warned Sidney not to become a proud owner of an "ambitious heap" (Rathmell 1971: 256ff).[6] This warning is also echoed in the hyperbolic *sponte sua* motif which reminds Sidney of his commitment to hospitality and generosity:

> The purpled pheasant, with the speckled side:
> The painted partridge lies in every field,
> And, for thy mess, is willing to be killed
>
> (ll. 28-30)

> Bright eels, that emulate them, and leap on land
> Before the fisher, or into his hand.
> Then hath thy orchard fruit, thy garden flowers,
> Fresh as the air, and new as are the hours
>
> (ll. 37-40)

Indeed, the negative "Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show" clearly undermines the traditional sycophantic flattery of epideictic poetry and allows for a more satiric reading of Jonson's epistle.[7]

The evolution from the archaic Old Hall to the Palladian country houses of the seventeenth century "suggests many metaphors and analogies: from communities to the individual, from anonymous to idiosyncratic design, from utility to display, from timelessness to 'modernity', and stylistically, from horizontal to vertical thrust" (McClung 1977: 90). This shift from the "organic" growth of a communal Hall to the individualistic act of commissioning private and representational buildings corresponds to the apparent decline of the "natural bond between lord and tenant", now replaced by a more mercantile relationship within the community that has developed since the sixteenth century. John Norden reminds the estate owner of his obligation to "God's glory, the King's service, the good of the Commonwealth" and elevates hospitality to "a worke of true virtue" (Norden

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6 Malcolm Kelsall indeed suggests that "Thou art not" "carries with it a sense of 'Thou shalt not', as if the house were a Biblical commandment reified." (Kelsall 1993: 35)

7 On this point, see Dubrow 1979: 161.

1979: n. p.). Both John Norden and Henry Wotton feel compelled to remind estate owners to adapt the fashionable Palladian architecture to this principle of hospitality and chivalry: "yet by the naturall *Hospitalitie* of *England*, the *Buttrie* must be more visible; and we neede […] a more spacious and luminous *Kitchin* …" (Wotton 1968: 71). The whole estate, comments Wotton, serves as a "Theatre of Hospitality", "the Seate of Selfe-fruition, the Comfortablest part of his [master's] own Life, […] Nay, to the *Possessor* thereof, an *Epitomie* of the whole World" (Wotton 1968: 82). Henry Vaughan's *The Golden Grove* (1608), too, links greediness, ambition and the loss of hospitality with ostentatious building projects: "for sooner shall we see a gentleman build a stately house than give alms and cherish the needy" (Vaughan 1608: n. p.). And James I reminds the nation:

> Let us in God's name leave these idle foreign toys, and keep the old fashion of England: For it want to be the honour and reputation of the English nobility and gentry, to live in the country and keep hospitality. (quoted in Rivers 1973: 6)

Charles I still felt obliged to remind the great lords of their obligation to hospitality and house-keeping under duress:

> *Whitehall 28 November 1627*
>
> The Kings most excellent Majestie, taking unto his royall consideration the present state of the times, together with the great decay of Hospitality & good house-keeping, which in former age was the honour of this nation, the too frequent resort, and ordinary residence of Lords spirituall and temporall, Knights and gentlemen of quality, unto cities and townes, especially into, or neare about the Cities of London and Westminster, and manifold inconveniences which ensue by the absence of so many persons of quality and authority from their countreys, whereby those parts are left destitute of both relief and government, hath thought fit hereby to renew the course formerly begun by his dear father of blessed memorie. (quoted in Nicolson 2008: 212)

But the critique of particular socio-economic relationships goes beyond the microcosm of the estate or country gentry. The country house became a receptacle of public memory and national identity, founded on the (by now endangered) notion of English chivalry and hospitality, in short, a stable social and political system. Palladianism, as a symbol for a growing mercantile economy and social changes, was seen as alien to English culture and tradition. Jonson's eulogy of

Penshurst that was built in the 'Albion' style of architecture with a great hall and some smaller estate buildings clustered around them was therefore also a celebration of a powerful, self-sufficient nation in the light of growing globalisation through trade (cf. Gent 1995). When Charles I repeated the above proclamation to his lords in the 1630s, the Tudor Wilton House was redesigned as a Palladian villa – "al Italiano" (Nicolson 2008: 212).

Such is the case for Jonson's Penshurst. However, it may be possible to read Jonson's poem less as an idealistic celebration of ancient English hospitality than an oversimplification of feudalism which ignores existing economic structures; as an expression of "the familiar hyperboles of the aristocracy and its attendants" (Williams 1993: 33). Already Hubert Languet queried the validity of this feudal nostalgia in his book *Against Tyranny* (1579):

> You speak of peers, notables and officials of the crown, while I see nothing but fading names and archaic costumes like the ones they wear in tragedies. I scarcely see any remnant of ancient authority and liberty […] let electors, palatines, peers, and the other notables not assume that they were created and ordained merely to appear at coronations and dress up in splendid uniforms of olden times, as though they were actors in an ancient masque, or as though they were staging a scene from King Arthur and the Knights of the Round table.

And he asks the pertinent question: "Just because someone has made you a shepherd for the sake of the flock, did he hand over that flock to be skinned at your pleasure?" (quoted in Nicolson 2008: 119f).

Modern critics have followed this train of thought. Mumford unveils the *idolum* of the country house as a social myth (read: ideology) based on privilege, acquisition, force and fraud (see Mumford 1963: 203). And in his study on the neo-pastoral, Raymond Williams highlights that Jonson's hyperbolic evocation of Virgil's *Georgics* – especially in the following passage – merely obscured the unequal economic relationship between tenants and lords:

> But all come in, the farmer, and the clown,
> And no one empty-handed, to salute
> Thy lord and lady, though they have no suit.
> Some bring a capon, some a rural cake,

> Some nuts, some apples; some that think they make
> The better cheeses, bring'em[8]
>
> (ll. 48-53)

Whilst Jonson's celebration of feudal values might, at first sight, have served as a critique of the emerging mercantile economy and capitalist agriculture, Williams suggests that Penshurst, Saxham and the other estates from the country house tradition were already part of the new economic and social order. Central to Williams' argument is his understanding of residual and emergent cultural practices: the country house poem is situated between the *residual* ideology of an organic feudal community and the *emergent*, seemingly more democratic, bourgeois ideology. However, the egalitarian possibility inherent in the latter would ultimately be erased by "the substitution of one form of domination for another: the mystified feudal order replaced by a mystified agrarian capitalist order, with just enough continuity, in titles and in symbols of authority, in successive compositions of a 'natural order', to confuse and control" (Williams 1993: 39). The naturalization of this organic order is based on the principle of "passive ownership" and "passive enjoyment"; there is, Mumford argues too, "no active communion between the people and their environment" (Mumford 1963: 202). The country house ethos in this reading is ideological.

Don Wayne and Kari Boyd McBride provide perhaps more nuanced readings of this ideological function of the country house myth at the beginning of the seventeenth century. They suggest that with the increasing commercialisation of the economy and the growing importance of trade and capital against land ownership and the increasing numbers of country houses that were given to the owners as gifts or grant-purchases by the Crown, country house poetry credited the 'new aristocracy' with authority and legitimacy (see Wayne 1984; McBride 2001). Anabel Patterson and Kathleen Biddick have developed further this argument of legitimizing power. Biddick particularly highlights the country estates' complicity in colonialism and conspicuous consumption (see Patterson 1987; Biddick 1999). Thus, the "pastoral moves" in the neo-pastoral of Renaissance and indeed modern litera-

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8 Fowler discounts this reading when he writes: "rent in kind would have been anachronistic in 1612, when commutation to financial payment had long been completed in Kent." (Fowler 1994: 11)

ture are, according to Biddick, ideological strategies to disavow England's imperial past (Biddick 1999: 67). Susan Stewart equally interprets Jonson's nostalgia for a feudal community as hostility to material history, a longing towards "a future-past", a past which only has ideological reality (Stewart 1984: 23). The idealised communities at Penshurst or Appleton House are perfected miniatures, timeless and tableau-like, "a diminutive and thereby manipulated version of experience, a version which is domesticated and protected from contamination" (Stewart 1984: 69). Stewart therefore relates the country house poem to a doll's house which displays and hypostatizes "the status of the interior world of the ascending and upper classes" (Stewart 1984: 62).[9] Ernst Bloch compares pastoral poetry to painted still lives

> in which a gluttonous social class embellished the limited life that those people had to lead who had no choice. Indeed, they themselves did not lead this life of milk and honey, nor were they decorated, or beribboned. (Bloch 1988: 287)

It seems hard to rescue the country house poem from this verdict. Isabel Rivers places Jonson's "To Penshurst" within the context of early seventeenth-century conflict between the country and the city and suggests, in a way similar to Wayne, that "Jonson is appealing to the feudal past but trying to provide an alternative pattern for the dangerous tendencies of the present" (Rivers 1973: 50).

The dialogic structure of the neo-pastoral in Jonson echoes the basic structures of utopia in its juxtaposition of the real and the ideal. The pastoral's yearning for containment forges an 'artful' harmony that reassures the individual in an immediate natural environment but at the same time alludes to the conflicts in the 'non-pastoral' world. Instead of merely harking back to the memory of a long-lost Golden Age, Jonson juxtaposes an idea of moral economy with the historical disturbances of war, feudal exploitation and the increasing split be-

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9 See Mumford, who also makes that comparison: "Such activities as remain in the Country House – the pursuit of game, for instance – rest upon imitating in play activities which once had a vital use or prepared for some vital function, as a child's playing with a doll is a preparation for motherhood" (Mumford 1963: 202). See also Reinhard Bentmann and Michael Müller who label the country house ideal as "negative utopia", an aristocratic utopia opposed to the true principles of "positive utopias": equality and civil liberties. (Bentmann and Müller 1992)

tween country and court. Ettin thus suggests that the estrangement in the pastoral is "based on a perceivable distance between the alleged and the implied" (Ettin 1984: 12). When critics state that the neo-pastoral literature was "of no importance politically" (Frye 1973: 40), they are contradicted by Sidney who very clearly identified the pastoral as a vehicle for social critique:

> It is then the Pastoral poem which is misliked? For perchance, where the hedge is lowest they will soonest leap over. Is the poor pipe disdained, which sometime out of Meliboeus' mouth can show the misery of people under hard lords or ravening soldiers? And again, by Tityrus, what blessedness is derived to them that lie lowest from the goodness of them that sit highest; sometimes, under the pretty tales of wolves and sheep, can include the whole considerations of wrongdoing and patience… (Sidney 1987: 122)

Pastoral's purpose, Puttenham states, is "to insinuate and glaunce at greater matters, and such as perchance had not been safe to have been disclosed in any other sort" (Puttenham 1970: 53). And Spenser, in his *Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh*, places *The Faerie Queene* (1590-96) in the tradition of Morean utopianism, depicting "a Commune welth such as it should be" (Spenser 1977: 737). The "secret meaning" of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, *The Faerie Queene*, or Sidney's *Arcadia* in terms of political controversies is both literal and allegorical. The *sponte sua* and *O fortunatos nimium* theme in seventeenth-century estate poetry and the idea of Albion as "Earth's rare paradise" speak of the persistence of the Golden Age motif in English literature (Joshua Sylvester, quoted in Fowler 1994: 3).

Alistair Duckworth expands this last point. Through "the logic of the metonym", writes Duckworth, "the country house stands for a critique of the individualistic approach to property and the consequential loss of genuine 'lordly virtues'" (Duckworth 1989: 306). Indeed, as the appeals of James I and Charles I suggest, the country house is not only a metonym for the virtues of the landlord, but stands, as a political microcosm, for the state and ultimately for the nation. But these descriptions of the country houses and gardens "exist and have meaning in relation to an intertextual field of available fragments that both constrain and enable fictional expression" (Duckworth 1989: 306). By calling upon mythological resonances such as the Golden Age, Arcadia and Albion as "a hortulan Eden" (Fowler 1994: 3), the estate be-

comes a mythical place "in which dwelling is the relationship with others, without denial or deprivation of one's own being, and of such a place as a model for human relationships on a larger social scale" (Wayne 1984: 173). This communal nostalgia reappears again in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century with the idea of the picturesque cottage as a signifier for a lost agrarian economy and community in the light of early Industrialisation and Imperialism.[10] Austin argues, and this argument is also useful for the country house ethos, that the cottage functioned as both a "*relic* of the nation's languishing rural economy" and "as an *emblem* of the nation's flourishing *commercial* interests" (Austin 2007: 153). The country house (and the cottage) operate as sites of a collective, national memory, torn between residual and emerging cultural and economic practices.

What is at stake here is the complex correlation between ideology and utopia, nostalgia and history. Raymond Williams himself points towards the dialectic connection between the latter paradigms. Both in his fiction and in his careful study of the neo-pastoral, does he acknowledge the utopian power of pastoral's nostalgia:

> The idea of the country is the idea of childhood: not only of local memories, or the ideally shared communal memory, but the feel of childhood: of delighted absorption in our own world, from which, eventually, in the course of growing up, we are distanced and separated, so that it and the world become things we observe. […] Great confusion is caused if the real childhood memory is projected, unqualified as history (Williams 1993: 297).[11]

Bloch's utopian evocation of home, Williams' nostalgic musings, the communal memory of community (vs. society), "the elms, the may, the white horse, in the field beyond the window where I am writing", conjure up an (imagined) past that is juxtaposed to modernisation, industrialisation and urbanisation but also to the alienation of feudal

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10 See Austin 2007: chap. 4. Austin reads the idea of the picturesque cottage in the light of the heritage industry where building styles of the nineteenth-century 'rural cottage' were nostalgic but not historical reconstructions of workers' cottages. The idealization of the simple life in the country side also filtered into the utopianism of Ruskin and Morris. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries saw a similar utopian nostalgia in New Urbanism.

11 Austin suggests that childhood is the second site for public/communal nostalgia (see chap. 3).

practices (Williams 1993: 3).[12] The distant form of the pastoral, argues Bloch, "reflects them [human beings] in an enthusiastic way of the most peculiar ecstasy, namely identity" (Bloch 1988: 292). Bloch's and Williams' evocation of childhood and longing for an unalienated existence, for a future-past, brings us to the essence of nostalgia.

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"I am an Arcadian, he is a Utopian."
W. H. Auden, "Vespers"

Nostalgia's etymological roots – the desire to return home (*nostos*) and the sensation of pain (*algos*) – point towards the physical and emotional yearning for an irrecoverable home, past or childhood, thus for a lost and desired space and/or time.[13] Diagnosed by the Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer in 1688 as a new epidemic amongst the Swiss soldiers fighting abroad, nostalgia was originally defined as "the sad mood originating from the desire for the return to one's native land" (Hofer 1934: 380f).[14] Thus, nostalgia was a patriotic affliction, a yearning for the "sacred geography" of the homeland with symptoms of melancholy (Eliade 1982: 30). It was also recorded in the diaries of explorers such as Joseph Banks who recorded on his *Endeavour* voyages that the sailors were suffering from homesickness, "the longing for home which the Physicians [...] esteem a disease under the name of Nostalgia." Twenty years later, Thomas Trotter was to characterise the symptoms of extreme physical distress and psychological disorientation as "scorbutic Nostalgia" (quoted in Lamb 2001: 123). The sufferers went so far as "to throw themselves into the sea, mistaking it for green fields or meadows" (Darwin 1794-96: 367). Cure was brought only by returning the exiled sufferers to their homelands.[15]

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12 See Georges Perec – "The Country Side", "Village Utopia" and "Nostalgic (and false) alternative" – for a wonderfully ironic evocation of nostalgia and utopia. (Perec 1999: 68ff)

13 For a more detailed and critical overview, see Boym 2001: part 1.

14 See Starobinski 1966; Boym 2001: part 1.

15 See also Coleridge's poem "Homesick" (1799).

But already Immanuel Kant observes that those afflicted people who so eagerly returned home were bound to be disappointed: "Later, when they visit these places, they find their anticipation dampened and even their homesickness cured. They think that everything has drastically changed, but it is that they cannot bring back their youth" (Kant 1978: 60). Kant thus records a paradigmatic shift from nostalgia as a longing for the homeland to a yearning for an irrecoverable point in the past: childhood. This Proustian *recherche du temps perdu* is "truly *Heimweh*": the returning to the mother's breast, to an unalienated childhood, to the Golden Age, to the "experience of community […] of family […] we imagine hidden in home – all the homes, where like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, we think we will find our lost home …" (Daniels 1985: 77).[16]

> Nostalgia emphasizes human incompleteness in its temporal dimension – the way in which our finitude is conditioned by temporality. It is the self as divided and split temporally which is lamented in nostalgia. It is both my historicity and historicity itself which are lamented. But if the nostalgic lives under this fate of an ever-increasing distance from the past, he also experiences a kind of recovery. In nostalgia, distant time is brought near. (Phillips 1985: 67)

This distant time is the past imagined, idealized and distorted through memory. The healing process for *Heimweh* thus could be, as Schiller remarked in his study of the case of Joseph Frédéric Grammont in 1780, a mere "enactment of memory", an evocation of the idealized past, the lost place and home (quoted in Austin 2007: 11). In a naval or military context, immediate return to the homeland was not always possible, so a cure for Grammont was to walk in the country side as a replacement for his own home and community. The pastoral functioned as a foil onto which Grammont's imagined homeland and past were projected. The '*demi-vrai*' of the pastoral became "a realm of wish fulfilment and ease" (Austin 2007: 10).[17] The memory enacted

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16 A Dutch source from 1718 identifies nostalgia in "youthful persons, who have been accustomed to their native country, and their mother's kitchen; such a one reflecting on the loss of a parent's table, the conversation of all his old friends and acquaintance, and the manners of his countrymen, …". "Of the Nostalgia, or Home-Ach" (1759: 51).

17 The '*demi-vrai*' is Fontenelle's description of the imaginary element in the pastoral, evocative of the Golden Age and Eden; see Austin 2007: 9f. See also Purney 1717: 32f.

here can be individual, part of the process of mourning for a lost childhood or home, the mother's breast or for "delighted absorption in our own world" and will be unearthed through psychoanalysis. "Differing from the unconscious of Freudian depth psychology and having, therefore, nothing to do with buried or forbidden memories (and, therefore, with repression and trauma), implicit memory is the psychic fabric of communal nostalgia" (Austin 2007: 85). If the nostalgic memory is crucial to the individual's identity, communal nostalgia is also instrumental in creating a collective/national identity and utopian blueprints.

Discussions of nostalgia are divided, especially of the latter kind. Some critics read nostalgia as "historical inversion", a distortion of the present through "nostalgia-tinted spectacles", as a weak evasion of "the work of mourning" (Bakhtin 1981: 147; Jameson 1991: 290; Ricoeur 1988: 206). The 'backward look', sceptics warn, will exile us from the present, turn us into lifeless pillars of salt in our attachment to the past. As the desired past (and a sense of home) never existed, the act of remembrance is illusion, fulfilment is never possible. This unreflected nostalgia conceals, as Williams suggests in his reading of "To Penshurst", "real social relations" and "a privileged class", loss of status, or turns, as Austin has shown, the lives of farmers and labourers into heritage industry. Rosaldo, Biddick and Bhabha argue that the longing for the true *Heim* is also an important pillar in imperialist ideology ("imperialist nostalgia"): "the *heimlich* pleasures of the hearth" are juxtaposed to the "*unheimlich* terror of the space or race of the Other" (Bhabha 1990: 2; see also Williams 1993: 66; Rosaldo 1989). The best cure against this nostalgic pathos is a "history lesson" (Jameson 1991: 156).[18]

But what kind of history is assumed here? It is conspicuous that nostalgia appears at the point of unsettling historical and economic changes, that is, the early modern move from feudalism to mercantile economy, eighteenth-century military and imperial ventures and, finally, nineteenth-century Imperialism and Industrialisation. Nostalgia is thus manifestly modern and "transideological" (Hutcheon 1998: passim). Criticisms of 'the backward look' as regressive, anti-modern,

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[18] The implication here is that nostalgia is an evasion of history, a process of forgetting. See Austin 2007 for a discussion about the relationship between memory and nostalgia.

escapist and unreflected assume that history is progress and perfectibility. The period between 1750 and 1800 is marked by a canon of conjectural and philosophical histories that are dominated by this paradigm. In this view, "individual societies did not regress from a golden age into a present state of decay" (Natali 2004: 3).[19] But there were also other hypotheses. Immanuel Kant identifies three paradigms of conjectural history; 'terroristic' history that focuses on the unrelenting decline in human history; 'eudaimonistic' or 'critical' conjectural history that is determined by continual progress and improvement towards a future state of utopian perfection, and finally the 'abderitic' history. "In the latter view, human history exhibits a tendency neither to decline nor to improve, but oscillates between the two, with progress and regress cancelling each other out" (Palmeri 2003: 235). Friedrich Nietzsche, too, unveiled three paradigms of history ('monumental', 'antiquarian' and 'critical') which he declared as fundamentally ideological. The discipline of history as 'science', according to Nietzsche, merely composes different ideologies of fall, progress and historical future (Nietzsche 1984). Whilst Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and later Marx disputed the concept of history as fall, Rousseau proposed distinct 'terroristic' histories in his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750) and his *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1754) that are "nostalgically attached to pre-modern or primitive cultures, in favour of which they reject modern society, and they write in order to be reconnected with an earlier age" (Palmeri 2003: 234). Implicit in the terroristic history of Rousseau is a clear cultural critique and a utopian vision of a different kind of progress.[20] Visions of Arcadia or the Golden Age, prevalent in the work of Rousseau, Ruskin and Morris but also in the country house literature discussed here, are not unreflected remembrances of things past but are longings for a past that has yet to occur. In his reading of Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch

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19 Natali provides a convincing and lucid argument of how critics who see nostalgia as regressive are caught up in the modern paradigm of history as progress.

20 Rousseau's work and different utopian schemes range from contractual blueprints (*Contrat Social*) to the nostalgic utopia of the simple life (*Discourses*) to simple anti-utopianism. Thus, Rousseau is quite representative of eighteenth-century utopian thought in its variety and paradoxical nature. See also Nandy (1995: 44-66) and Chakrabarty (2000) for a discussion of how the idea of history as secular, rational and progressive is linked to the imperial Western nation state.

opens up the possibility for a nostalgic recovery that "explodes the continuum of history" as described above, to become a messianic 'now-time' (*Jetztzeit*). This 'now-time' "frees all essentially related, utopian moments from before and after within the respective dawning of now-time and relays their directions." The past becomes a utopian future and a "time that has to be fulfilled" (Bloch 1988: 218).[21] This paradigm of nostalgia is particularly important for postcolonial and diasporic anticipations.

Nostalgia is thus "a twin of Utopia, as a marker for longing" and creativity (Huyssen 1995: 89).[22] In current work, nostalgia is no longer the programmatic analogue of an idealized and unreflected past. Boym, Strathern, Bal, Broome, and Hirsch and Spitzer carefully distinguish different manifestations of nostalgia according to its critical and utopian potential.[23] We have initially defined nostalgia as anti-modern and transideological, first diagnosed as part of the imperialist experience of soldiers and sailors, later identified as an anti-modern longing in the period of Victorian Industrialisation and early modernity. Recent studies have emerged post-1989 from former Eastern Block countries where experiences of drastic and sudden political and social changes have inspired different kinds of utopian longing.[24] "From this perspective, longing becomes an oscillation *between what is and what could be*. Longing is about savouring different possibilities, about swaying back and forth in reflection, yet never quite arriving" (Willinger 2007).

The anthropologist Marilyn Strathern has therefore divided the concept of nostalgia into "synthetic" and "substantive" forms accord-

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21 See also the discussion of the utopian function of myths in Benjamin's work by Smith (1988: 338-45).

22 Lerner highlights the creative aspect of nostalgic yearning: "All creation is really a recreation of a once loved, and once whole, but now lost and ruined object, a ruined internal world and self. […] The wish to create is rooted in the depressive position and the capacity to create depends on a successful working through it." (Lerner 1972: 56)

23 See Strathern 1995, Bal (1999: 72), Broome 2007, and Hirsch and Spitzer (2006: 79-96). See also the special issue of the *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 5 (2005) on Nostalgia.

24 See the online magazine *n/osztalgia*, a joint project of two magazines, *Plotki* (Berlin) and *Anthropolis* (Budapest), and the publication *n/osztalgia – ways of revisiting the socialist past* (2007).

ing to their relationship with history (Strathern 1995). Substantive nostalgia focuses on the 'now-time' through a critical understanding of the past; its transformative element lies in the questioning reflection of the past, whereas synthetic nostalgia expresses simple mourning for the loss of the idealized past, childhood and memory.[25] In her study on modernity and nostalgia, Boym continues this train of thought and distinguishes between "restorative" and "reflective" nostalgia (Boym 2001: 41, 49). Restorative nostalgia seeks a simple trans-historical reconstruction of the lost home/past/national identity and tradition. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, is defined by a critical meditation on history and the passage of time, and, as Boym argues, can be ironic and playful. In their study of memory and nostalgia in Ukrainian Jewish culture, Hirsch and Spitzer define further categories of nostalgia that preserve the element of longing and critical utopianism. Important for my argument is the possibility of "resistant nostalgia", defined by "postmemory" – that is, a mediated relation to – in Stefan Zweig's phrase – a lost "world of yesterday" (Hirsch and Spitzer 2006: 81).[26] In that sense, nostalgia can, as Mieke Bal has argued, "provide guidelines for a critical utopianism in the present, for a struggle towards a better future" (Bal 1999: 72).

It is thus that I argue that it is possible and necessary to include the country house ethos into the framework of utopianism. As a social myth, it does inspire readers "to work towards an understanding of what is necessary for human fulfilment, a broadening, deepening and raising of aspirations in terms quite different from those of their everyday life" (Levitas 1990: 122). Whilst Mumford, as we have seen above, is ambivalent in allowing the country house discourse to be transformative, Deleuze and Guattari are much clearer about the important link between group fantasies (social myths) and utopia: "If we must still speak of utopia in this sense […] it is most assuredly not as an ideal model, but as revolutionary action and passion" (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 62f). The nostalgia of the country house has the capacity to generate attentiveness to the socio-political status quo and the

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25 Strathern borrows the term 'synthetic' nostalgia from Roland Robertson 1992.

26 Hirsch and Spitzer further discuss the "ambivalent nostalgia" which reconciles traumatic and negative memory with nostalgic longing (a variation on Boym's reflective nostalgia) and close their discussion with the interesting category of "rootless nostalgia" – the "diasporic post-memory of children of exiles and refugees" (Hirsch and Spitzer 2006: 86).

yearning for a different kind of life and society. Country house nostalgia is situated between ideological compliance and critique: "Utopia brings its critical energies to bear on those very contradictions, breaking open that which is ideologically replete to make room for the work of building a radically different world" (Moylan 2000: 90).

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"Why do we like being Irish? Partly because
It gives us hold on the sentimental English
As members of a world that never was,
Baptised with fairy water[.]"

Louis MacNeice, *Autumn Journal*, XVI (1939)

In her essay "The Big House" Elizabeth Bowen reflects nostalgically on the role of the Big House in Irish social and political culture (Bowen 1950: 195-202). Written during the Second World War, the essay echoes the sentiment expressed in her novels *The Last September* (1929), *The Heat of the Day* (1942) and her family history *Bowen's Court* (1942) about the decline of the Irish country house as a symbol for social stability and tradition. Whilst Bowen is aware of the complex political iconography of the Big House in Irish history, she endorses its role in the light of the now familiar country house ethos:

> From the point of view of the outside Irish World, does the big house justify its existence? I believe it could do so now as never before. As I said, the idea from which these houses sprang was, before everything, a social one – but it could extend itself, and it must if the big house is to play an alive part in the alive Ireland of to-day. What is fine about the social idea is that it means the subjugation of the personal to the impersonal. (Bowen 1950: 199)

The "subjugation of the personal to the impersonal" stands for the idea of community that supersedes the individual and/or society. "As on a ship out at sea", Bowen writes, "there is a sense of community" (Bowen 1950: 198). W. B. Yeats has equally embraced and mythologized the Irish Big House in his poetry as part of the Celtic Literary Revival and in a period when Anglo-Irish country houses did not exist any-

more.[27] The Land Acts of the nineteenth century and the period post-1916 resulted in most of the houses being burnt down or left derelict. Bowen's and Yeats' 'backward' look borrowed heavily from the pastoral tradition to create an anti-modern Irish national identity. "Nostalgia", in this case, "was the dynamic that impelled the search for the future" (Kreilkamp 1989: 17; Deane 1997: 2).

What makes the Big House interesting is its ambiguous position in Ireland's difficult history as an icon for Anglo-Irish colonization and dominion and as a reminder of an Irish pre-modern and organic community that seemed to have existed before Cromwell and/or Strongbow. In many ways, Bowen's and Yeats' nostalgia for the Big House can be read as part of an "aesthetic colonization" process that glosses over the actual and extended colonization process of Ireland (Jameson 1991: 19). In mythologizing the systems of class and religious division in Ireland as "pious feudalism", the dominance of the English in Ireland is seemingly legitimized. However – and Kreilkamp has highlighted this in her study on the Irish Big House – the Anglo-Irish novelist did not necessarily share the mythologizing view of Yeats or Bowen. The myth of the Big House was effaced by self-scrutiny and censure on the part of the Anglo–Irish (Kreilkamp 1998:19).

On the other hand, we must remember that nostalgia is trans-ideological. Revisionist history uses the country house to reshape the colonizer into "Ireland's new dispossessed."[28] I want to put forward a different argument; the nostalgia for the Irish Big House functions as "a sociological phenomenon [for both the Irish and Anglo-Irish] that revolves around a longing for a lost culture or theoretically unrecoverable past" (Frawley 2005: 3). As the important contribution of Maria Edgeworth to Big House literature has been widely acknowledged and discussed by critics, I will, in the following, concentrate on lesser known poems and ballads and close with a brief discussion of Lady Morgan's country house nostalgia.[29]

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27 See W. B. Yeats, "Coole Park, 1929", "Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931" and "Meditations in Time of Civil War."

28 See also Boyce and O'Day 1996.

29 See Kirkpatrick 2000; Kowaleski-Wallace 1991; Miller 2000; Gallchoir 2001; Butler 1972.

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"That royal Cashel is bare of house and guest,
That Brian's turreted home is the otter's nest,
That the kings of the land have neither land nor crown
Has made me a beggar before you, Valentine Brown."

(Egan O'Rahilly, transl. by Frank O'Connor)

The history of Irish colonization and settlement is complex and intricate. It must suffice to focus on the history and cultural iconography of the Irish Big House in this context. It is also necessary to preface this analysis with a necessary terminological clarification. Irish society has been complex in its demographic structure; it is necessary to distinguish between "social function (birth, residence, etc. in Ireland) and ancestry (deriving from English planters, etc.)" (McCormack 1985: 47). In the period under investigation, this structure consisted of a) the old Irish Catholics; b) the Old English Catholics with a lineage dating back to the Anglo-Norman Invasion; c) the New English Protestants who were given property under Elizabeth I and James I; and finally d) the Cromwellian settlers, mainly soldiers, who were given land as reward for services rendered during the English Civil Wars. The term 'Protestant Ascendancy' was coined circa 1792 and initially used, as Edmund Burke wrote in a letter to Richard Burke, to describe "the old mastership. It is neither more nor less than the resolution of one set of people in Ireland to consider themselves as the sole citizens in the commonwealth …" (quoted in McCormack 1985: 78).

The label 'Anglo-Irish' again is ambiguous, a "forced marriage of two races, two islands" (O'Faoláin 1957: 147).[30] Julian Moynahan suggests that the Anglo-Irish became truly Irish after the Act of Union, and accordingly, Elizabeth Bowen trusted that "after three or four generations of life in Ireland" English families were "Irish in being, if not in interest" (Moynahan 1995: 3ff; Bowen 1942: 19). Molly Keane, herself a writer who takes a keen interest in the theme of the Irish Big House but adopts a different position, laconically highlights the conflict between the Irish and the Anglo-Irish: "The Anglo-Irish have said over and over again 'We are Irish' and the Irish have said 'You are not!'" (Keane 1984: xii). The phrases "the Big House"/"the Great House" are just as complex and mirror Ireland's colonial history. "The

[30] See also Deane 1997.

Great House", suggests Thomas Flanagan, "is English rather than Anglo-Irish; whatever its size or description, it was 'the castle' to the gentry and 'the big house' to English-speaking peasants" (Flanagan 1959: 190).

It follows thus that the Big House's "scale may not be confused with moral grandeur", but its appropriation by the Old English, the Irish and the Ascendancy indicates similar anxieties concerning the English country house regarding moral values and moral leadership (W. J. McCormack, quoted in Kreilkamp 1989: 8). In addition, the 'rightful' ownership, national allegiance and governance of Ireland are negotiated through the metonym of the Big House. The Irish country house ethos, burdened with a history of colonization and dominance, takes a critical stance right from its emergence into literature. As a reflective nostalgia, it acts as a conduit for a critical utopian future. This critical reflectiveness is apparent in the history of the Big House.

Whilst the Big House has often been read as a landmark of Protestant domination, Guy Felhmann has suggested that it already "has been part and parcel of Irish history since the middle of the twelfth century" (Felhmann 1991: 15). Historically, and certainly before Cromwell, the redistribution of land to the English carried connotations of improvement, taste and good housekeeping. The establishment of estates was seen as a necessary part of the civilizing of the Irish. Spenser's poem to his patron "The right honourable *Thomas* Earle of *Ormond* and *Ossory*" (1596) documents this 'brave undertaking':

> And in so faire a land, as may be redd,
> Not one Parnassus, nor one Helicone
> Left for sweet Muses to be harboured,
> But where thy self hast thy braue mansione[31]
>
> (Spenser 1977: 742)

Cromwell's settlement brought a very different population and ethos to Ireland, though: soldiers and adventurers who were given the land previously owned by Irish clans or Hibernian-Norman dynasties.

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[31] Rankin has argued that Ware's reprinting of this poem in his *Two Histories of Ireland* solidified the idea that "the regenerative possibilities which civilization holds for Ireland are located, then, in the home of the English Catholic lord who had embraced Protestantism". (Rankin 2005: 91)

> Each private man shall there be a Freeholder
> And Gentleman to boot, is ev'ry soldier.
>
> (Mercer 1675: 9)

Cromwell's invasion put into practice what James Harrington conceived or legitimized in his utopia of 1656:

> For the agrarian of Panopea, it allowing such proportions of so good land, men that conceive themselves straitened by this in Oceana, will begin there to let themselves forth, where every citizen will in time have his villa. And there is no question, but the improvement of that country by this means must be far greater than it has been in the best of former times. (Harrington 1774: 103)

After the Restoration, some land was returned to Catholic landowners. The conflicts that the two classes of landowners consequently had were not only about religion and nationalist allegiance but also about moral values. The Protestant settlement brought new concepts of land ownership, trade and credit into the country. It is thus that, in the eighteenth century, Cromwellian 'planters' and absentee landlords were seen as the lesser landowners, neglectful of their public duties towards the Irish and the land. These landlords were depicted by writers such as Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan as merely exploiting their Irish tenants and the land. So whilst Cromwell propagated that the current Royalist landowners "had not manifested constant good affection to the interest [...] of England", it was the restored Irish Catholic landowners and the enlightened Protestant Ascendancy who promoted the country house ethos of good housekeeping, social responsibility and community (quoted in Esson 1971: 161). "By the eighteenth century", argues Barnard, "the soldiers were linked with the traits of excess", whereas the other landowners attempted to avoid public display of wealth and status (Barnard 1999: 77).[32] The nostalgia for the

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[32] The landless Irish would then be moved out to the West; the choice was to go "to hell or to Connaught". A contemporary priest's utopian vision reflects the suffering of the Irish Catholics at the time:

> The Gaels are being wasted and deeply wounded
> Subjugated, slain, extirpated,
> By plague, by famine, by war, by persecution.
> Then shall Erin be freed from settlers.
> Then shall perish the English tongue.

organic community of the (Old English) Big House, brutally destroyed by Cromwell's settlements, is aptly expressed in Yeats' "The Curse of Cromwell" (1937):

> I came on a great house in the middle of the night,
> Its open lighted doorway and its windows all alight,
> And all my friends were there and made me welcome too;
> But I woke in an old ruin that the winds howled through;
> And when I pay attention I must out and walk
> Among the dogs and horses that understand my talk.
> *O what of that, O what of that,*
> *What is there left to say?*

The Irish contribution post-Cromwell to the estate poem is understandably elegiac.[33] The Gaelic song "Lament for Kilcash (*Cill Cháis*)" mourns, very much within the parameters of the country house ethos, the decline of the household of Margaret Butler, Viscountess Iveagh (before 1674-1744):

> Now what will we do for timber,
> with the last of the woods laid low?
> There's no talk of Kilcash or its household
> and its bell will be struck no more.
> That dwelling where lived the good lady
> most honored and joyous of women
> – earls made their way over wave there
> and the sweet mass once was said.
>
> (Kinsella 1989: 253f)

The initial lament for the loss of the forests during the Civil Wars is poetically linked to the death of Margaret Butler (before 1674-1744) of Kilcash who, together with Colonel Thomas Butler, sheltered Catholic clergy.[34]

> The Gaels in arms shall triumph
> Over the crafty, thieving false set of Calvin.
>
> (quoted in Walsh)

33 On Irish-language poetry and nostalgia of the period, see Dhiarmada 2007. Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770) and the earlier essay *The Revolution in Low Life* (1762) reflect this elegiac mood, projecting the decline of the Irish rural community onto the fictional English Auburn.

34 There were more Celtic songs lamenting the destruction of forests during the Wars. See, for instance, "Bonny Portmore".

Ducks' voices nor geese do I hear there,
nor the eagle's cry over the bay,
nor even the bees at their labour bringing honey and wax to us all.
No birdsong there, sweet and delightful,
as we watch the sun go down,
nor cuckoo on top of the branches
settling the world to rest.

The elegiac valediction continues to mark the absence of the 'good lady' as the complete decline of the once productive and fertile estate. In accordance with the now familiar country house poem, the metonym of the estate expresses nostalgia for a once organic and wholesome rural community destroyed firstly by invasion and war, then by death. Ultimately, the estate will be abandoned in favour of Kilkenny Castle in 1766. The poem closes with the utopian longing for recovery of this pastoral idyll and the reinstatement of Irish rule:

I call upon Mary and Jesus
to send her safe home again:
dances we'll have in long circles
and bon-fires and violin music;
that Kilcash, the townland of our fathers;
will rise handsome on high once more
and till doom – or the deluge – returns –
we'll see it no more laid low.

Another variation of the lament was written by Father John Lane and, translated by James Clarence Mangan, was a clear comment on the abandonment of Kilcash by Walter Butler as a seat for the Butler/Ormond family:

Oh sorrow the saddest and sorest,
Kilcash's attractions are fled –
Felled lie the high trees of its forest,
And its bells hang silent and dead.
There dwelt the fair lady, the vaunted
Who spread through the island her fame;
There the Mass and the vespers were chanted,
And thither the proud Earls came.[35]

[35] See Appendix XV in Blackall 1952. Lady Iveagh was previously celebrated in the tune 'Bantighearna Ibheach' or 'Bantiarna Ibheachadh', as the wife of the Jacobite Brian Maginnis, Viscount Iveagh.

Similar to the other version, the elegiac lament here is for the once glorious forests, the estate, but also for the hospitality shown to the Catholic nobility who could exercise their faith without prosecution. The pastoral valediction juxtaposes a Golden Age of Irish nobility and Catholic faith with the "ruin and black devastation" of the English conquest but does not revert back to the utopian vision of the return of Irish lords.

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In the period following the Cromwellian invasion, the Irish Big House integrated the ruins of Anglo-Norman houses or ruined abbeys but developed architecturally alongside the English Neo-Palladian fashion, with some few indigenous architects such as Sir Edward Lovett Pearce. The building wave started in 1720 with the largest number of estates erected in the period between 1780 and 1815, thus covering the brief period between parliamentary Independence, Act of Union and post-Union political consolidation. Eighteenth-century improvements of the Irish transport infrastructure and the development of Dublin, Limerick and Armagh encouraged English travellers who already preferred Home Tours to Grand Tours to visit Ireland from the 1750s onwards. Travel accounts by John Bush (1769) and Arthur Young (1780) recorded Irish landscape and estates through the lens of picturesque travellers. Glenn Hooper has argued that "Bush had explicitly identified a non-classical Irish landscape as preferable to the Palladian aesthetic" (Hooper 2005: 36).

> At CH is a house belonging to the Counsellor H-b-t [Herbert], in a situation by nature the most rurally elegant, romantic, and entertaining, that I ever yet found a house in either England or Ireland. […] I can also give you the testimony of the celebrated Bishop of Cloyne, who, in a kind of rapture with the natural beauties and grandeur of the Place, expressed himself, that *Lewis of France might build another palace of Versailles, but Nature only could produce a lake of Kilarny.* There is in truth, the most delightful and entertaining scenery on this peninsula [Muckross Peninsula] and in prospect from it, that imagination can paint, or the most romantic scenery can conceive. (Bush 1769: 142ff)

Whilst the elegiac praise of the prospect is part and parcel of eighteenth-century picturesque vocabulary, Tim Fulford highlights how through

> the prospect-view, the propertied classes were able to present their political dominance as confirmed by the natural scenery. The ability to distinguish and possess shared standards, independent of self-interest (standards of aesthetic value and taste) in agreement about beauty and sublimity of landscape seemed not only a mark of the viewer's gentlemanliness but a criterion for the exercise of legitimate social and political power. (Fulford 1996: 2f)

The fashion of Palladian architecture and picturesque landscape gardening, equally foreign to England or Ireland, reveals the cultural and political strategies of Imperialism, denied by Yeats or Bowen. "The Ascendancy built in order to convince themselves not only that they had arrived, but that they would remain" (Foster 1989: 194). Far from building an 'Irish Arcadia', Craig, Barnard, Clarkson, and Busteed have convincingly argued that despite their architectural style, the Irish country houses were actually built more humbly than their English counterparts.[36] Indeed, the greater Palladian projects by the Protestant Ascendancy were often condemned as excessive "prodigy houses" and in some cases led to the owners' bankruptcies (see Barnard 2004). Patrick Delany's "notorious improvements" at Delville, near Dublin, were satirized by contemporaries as vain and unnecessary:

> In short, in all your boasted seat,
> There's nothing but yourself that's Great.
>
> (Sheridan 1998: 165)

As the income of Irish Peers was generally smaller than that of their English counterparts, existing houses were modernized or smaller houses were built for family households. Colonel Newburgh's improvement at Ballyhaise is a good example of how taste and financial prudence could be combined:

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36 For the idea of country houses and parks rebuilding Arcadia, see Harris et al. 1973; Jackson-Stops 1992; Wheeler 1992; Busteed 2000; Barnard 1999 and 2004; Craig 1976; Clarkson 1999.

> It were also to be wished that even our gentlemen would in their country-seats imitate Colonel Newburgh, a great improver in the Co. of Cavan, who, as well as several others, does not only use stucco work, instead of wainscot, but has arched his fine dwelling-house, and all his large office-houses, story over story, and even all their roofs in the most beautiful manner without any timber. (Madden 1738: 25)

The Georgian house of Dundrum Castle, built in the 1730s, is celebrated by an unknown visitor in a poem written before 1750. Emulating the English country house poem "An Essay on Sir Robert Maude's fine Seat at Dundrum in Ireland", it also praises the balance between exquisite taste and managerial prudence, designed by a "Genius of the Place."[37] The abundant nature provides for the estate inhabitants less in a Jonsonian *sponte sua* manner than encouraged by labour:

> 'Tis here that their delicious Task the Bees
> Perform, and One, in Swarming Millions sees,
> Inform'd Troops, the busy Nation fly,
> Cling to the Budds, with Tubes inserted, try
> With more than Chymist's Art, t'extract with Toil,
> And on their golden wings bring home their luscious spoil.
> (ll. 33-39)

The orchards offer an abundance of food, "big with bending Fruit" (l. 55), and the walled garden bestows more exotic fruit such as the "ruddy Nectarine", "th'empurpled Plumb" or "lucious Figs" (ll. 65-70). The newly built house and park bear testimony to the good taste of the owner with prospects and vistas facing the Golden Vale (l. 89). The estate is a well-deserved retreat from "Court's flippery Pomp" and "the weary Labyrinth of State" (ll. 120-21); instead, Sir Robert Maude follows the principles of ancient Briton hospitality for everyone: "A Table daily elegantly spread, / Where Friends are welcome, and the Poor are fed" (ll. 125-26). The poem closes with a general celebration of the Anglo-Irish nobility whose improvements civilize the country and bring to it traditions of hospitality, friendship and chivalry:

> Whose Gentlemen their splendid Seats improve,
> Are social Bands of Amity and Love,
> To Strangers Civil, Hospitably Kind,

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37 BL. Eg 846.A.f.160 (British Library, London).

> Like their old Brothers-Britons still we find,
> How bless'd in all your Neighbouring Friends around,
> Where such a chore of Harmony is found.
>
> (ll. 147-52)

What the poet leaves out is the Irish heritage of Dundrum Castle. This was once the home of the Irish clan O'Dwyer who lost their properties in the Act of Settlement in 1662. The original Dundrum Castle was destroyed sometime afterwards. The estate passed into the hands of Robert Maude of the Cromwellian Army, and remained with his descendants for many generations. Sir Robert Maude, first Baronet of Dundrum, built the Georgian mansion on the grounds of the old Castle. The metonym of Dundrum Castle stands for conquest and colonialism; the restorative nostalgia of amity, love and harmony in the poem underpins the moral superiority of the Anglo-Irish landowners. Thus, the "pastoral moves" in "An Essay on Sir Robert Maude" are in part ideological strategies to obscure the Anglo-Irish imperial past (Biddick 1999: 67).

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Mervyn Busteed has argued that whilst "the concept of 'improvement' became inextricably lined with ideas on estate design and management" in Georgian England, "it was part of a broader school of what has been described as civic humanism with its roots in the Enlightenment" (Busteed 2002: 16). The emphasis was therefore on socio-economic and moral improvement, often expressed in ideas about improving the working conditions and the economic viability on the estate. Given the different origins of the Anglo-Irish (Old English and the Ascendancy), patriotic loyalties to Ireland were complex. As we have seen, some estate owners, like Patrick Delany and Sir Robert Maude, emulated Palladian fashion and English garden design, occasionally even to their financial detriment.

Sir James Caldwell and Richard Edgeworth are examples of Anglo-Irish estate owners who exercised their paternalistic duties and responsibilities towards the land and the Catholic tenantry in a patri-

otic way.[38] Both landlords saw it as their duty as Irish and as landowners to manage their estates in a responsible and prudent way. In an address to the Dublin Society, Caldwell wrote:

> It […] behoves every native of Ireland, who has her interest and his own honour at heart, who prefers the dignity, influence and independence of residing in the midst of his relations and countrymen, upon his paternal estate, to the obscurity and insignificance of squandering its revenue unknown if not despised, in another kingdom; to consider how these natural advantages of his country may be improved.[39]

Like Edgeworth later on, Caldwell also reclaimed bog and wasteland to intensify and extend farming and thus be able to provide for all the tenants. He saw the importance of the linen industry and adapted his estate accordingly. He offered low rents to his tenants, and in times of need, provided additional help and funds. He acted, according to Busteed, as a "patriotic Christian landlord", on principles of benevolence, hospitality and harmony (Busteed 2002: 31):

> The Lough that winds through islands
> under Turaw mountain green,
> And Castle Caldwell's stretching woods
> with tranquil bays between
>
> (Allingham 1922: 186)

Richard Lovell Edgeworth's improvements of Edgeworthstown House are documented in his memoirs and his daughter's notes (see Edgeworth 1844). Edgeworthstown House was originally built in 1672 as "a tolerable house, built according to the taste of the foregoing half century, when architecture had not been much studied in Ireland" (Edgeworth 1844: 213). When Richard Lovell Edgeworth moved his family to Ireland in 1773, he not only rebuilt the house but, more importantly, reformed the management of his estate. Scandalized by his tenants' poverty, interested in public education, and finally, concerned about the political future of Ireland (he famously voted against the Act of Union), Edgeworth's reforms were significant.[40] He reclaimed con-

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38 Both, interestingly, opposed the proposed union of the British/Irish Parliament (1769, 1801).

39 Sir James Caldwell to the Dublin Society, 1767: B3/21/11, Letter 2 (quoted in Busteed 2002: 26).

40 See his *Essays on Professional Education* (1809).

siderable tracts of bog and mountain land and so improved the value of his estate. He abolished the system of agents and drivers, so deplored by his daughter in *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and *The Absentee* (1812), to collect rent himself (see Edgeworth 1844: 265ff). He eliminated feudal debts and duties, rented out cottages to workers at a low rent and abolished duty work. He also published a report on the possible reclamation of some 34,500 acres of Irish bog to make more land agriculturally viable. Because he showed a paternalistic sense of justice and responsibility, fairness and chivalry, it was added to his character as a good landlord that he was a "real gentleman" (Edgeworth 1844: 274).

These two reformers clearly defined their responsibilities and duties in view of the traditional country house ethos. In this, as Busteed suggests, they were also "strongly reminiscent of the Irish Gaelic Chieftains who had been displaced at the start of the seventeenth century" in their quasi-feudal patronage of tenants and estate (Busteed 2002: 32). Lady Morgan's post-union "national tale" *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) appropriates the nostalgia for estate hospitality and patronage, culture and chivalry to create a distinct Irish nationality and history.

***

This race of men, tho' savage they may seem,
The country, too, with many a mountain rough,
Yet are they sweet to him who tires and tastes them.
(Fazio Delli Uberti, *Travels through Ireland in the 14th Century*)

Whilst Anglo-Irish country house literature either disavows the colonial complicity of the country ethos or, in the case of Maria Edgeworth, shows the difficulty of marrying the hybrid identities of the Anglo-Irish and the Irish in a gesture of reconciliation, Irish texts of the period are elegiac or visionary. Both poetic modes are nostalgic, forging a collective past, future and national identity for the lost Irish nation – the 'Not-Yet' of these texts projects an idealized history of Gaelic supremacy into the future. This restorative nostalgia is particularly apparent in the political *aisling*, a form of Irish visionary poetry (Dhiarmada 2007: 1) where

> the prophetic message foretold the return of the natural order: the rightful king on his throne, the native aristocracy restored to their ancestral lands, the Catholic Church re-established, the rehabilitation of the native intelligentsia. But the restoration of the rightful king was not a goal in itself, it was the mechanism by which more universal changes would be brought about and from which would flow the realisation of the millennial dream. […] In Irish political literature, as in other cultures, millennialism constituted the main structure of meaning through which the contemporary events were linked to an exalted image of an ideal world; it provided a set of images in which people could express both individual and collective needs. (O'Buchalla 1996: 109)

It is perhaps not surprising that this collective longing between what once (perhaps) was, what is and what will be can only be expressed in Irish:

> Duchas is a difficult word to explain in English but basically it means a connection, a feeling of attachment to a place, a tongue, a tradition, a belief that one belongs to a sustaining cultural and communal energy. […] [F]or me the duchas is not a flight into the past, rather a rejoining of the past, the present and the future. It is a quest, perhaps for an expanded present which flows backwards and forwards with one and the same movement. (Ó Searcaigh 2004: 232f)

Sydney Owenson's national tale, *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), expresses this desire for *duchas* in promoting quite forcefully and encyclopaedically a positive image of ancient Irish culture in contrast to English colonial culture. On the other hand, Owenson's tale is ambivalently nostalgic. The hope of a utopian future is dampened by the impossibility of a satisfactory reconciliation between the two nations. But the text successfully holds the conflict between traumatic memory of colonisation and nostalgic projection into a past-future.

In many ways, Owenson's celebration of Irish culture participates in the post-Union wave of antiquarian writings about Ireland. Thus the catalogue of ancient Irish achievements, ranging from literature, music, language and mythology to, importantly, government of land and people (all glossed with long footnotes and evidence), is a nostalgic 'folklore'. However, as Kirshenblatt-Gimlett argues, 'those who are concerned with demonstrating the possession of national [culture] […] cite this attribute as a mark of being civilized" (Kirshenblatt-Gimlett 1991: 422f). It is the protagonist and by proxy the British

reader who is to be convinced of the validity of a hegemonic Irish culture and civilization:

> But sent to a country against which I have a decided prejudice – which I suppose semi-barbarous, semi-civilized; has lost the strong and hardy features of savage life, without acquiring those graces which distinguish polished society – I shall neither participate in the poignant pleasure of awakened curiosity and acquired information, nor taste the least of those enjoyments which courted my acceptances in my native land. (Owenson 1999: 20)

Critics have suggested that Owenson was 'orientalizing' Ireland; the 'real' Ireland that Horatio encounters and that essentially is displayed like a museum to him mirrors English partiality for the picturesque and antiquarianism. Indeed, what is left of the Gaelic Chiefdom is a "cabinet of national antiquities, and national curiosities. In short, it is the receptacle of all [the] precious relics, […] the emporium of the antiquities of Inismore, which are arranged along its walls, and suspended from its pillars" (Owenson 1999: 64). But I agree with Natasha Tessone who highlights the contesting representation of Ireland and Irish history in *The Wild Irish Girl* (see Tessone 2002). Owenson, like Edgeworth, is not only concerned, if in different ways, with the representation of Irish culture and society, but more specifically with land ownership and management. Like Robert Edgeworth and Caldwell, she projects back to the rule of the Gaelic Chieftains to criticize Anglo-Irish absenteeism, the system of exploitative agents ("West-Indian planters") and sub-agents, the enslavement of the Catholic population, in short: the absence of true chivalry and nobility amongst the land-owning class (Owenson 1999: 34). The promotion of an idealised feudalism underlines the different motivations and allegiances of the landowners in Ireland: the Irish Chieftains were motivated by duty and responsibility towards the land and the tenantry, whereas the Anglo-Irish landlords are motivated by material gain; their estates are complicit in the colonial exploitation of Ireland. Owenson's celebration of the Prince and his estate borrows from the bardic poetry of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance where the "lord [is represented as] being married to his land and the land, under the right rule, [is] prospering" (Frawley 2005: 24). The political vision here is the return of this Gaelic rule and the reinstatement of true chivalrous values.

The true nobility of the Irish Prince ("not a drop of Strongbonean flowed in their Irish veins agrah!", Owenson 1999: 38), is expressed through the metonym of his lordly virtues, even in exile:

> This very curious apartment is still called the banqueting-hall – where
>
> ‘Stately the feast and high the cheer,
> Girt with many a valiant Peter,’
>
> was once celebrated in all the boundless extravagance and convivial spirit of ancient Irish hospitality. (Owenson 1999: 102)

"Notwithstanding the exile", continues Owenson, "[…] the Prince affects an air of grandeur, and opulence – he keeps a kind of open table in his servants' hall, where a crowd of labourers, dependents, and mendicants, are daily entertained, and it is evident his pride would receive a mortal stab, if he supposed that his guest, and that guest an Englishman, suspected the impoverished state of his circumstances" (Owenson 1999: 169). And her footnote explains further:

> The kitchen, or servants' hall, of an Irish country gentleman, is open to all whom distress may lead to its door. Professed and indolent mendicants take advantage of this indiscriminating hospitality, enter without ceremony, set themselves by the fire, and seldom (indeed never) depart with their demands unsatisfied, by the misapplied benevolence of an old Irish custom, which in many instances would be – more honoured in the breach than the observance. (Owenson 1999: 169, note 1)

Verses on the Present State of Ireland, By a Lady (1778) equally celebrates ancient Irish hospitality and honour even amongst enemies:

> It is said that formerly, in the contests between the old Irish and the English settlers, that when an Irish Chieftan got the better of his antagonist, and took his castle, that he often gave him back the possession of it, upon his promising never to shut his doors when he went to dinner. (Anon. 1778: 20)

The contrast set up in both texts is between paternalistic feudalism based on principles of ancient hospitality, honour and chivalry and a mercantile landownership motivated by despotism and self-interest. It seems that even Lord M-, the archetypal absentee landlord, has learnt from the exemplum of the Gaelic Prince when he instructs Horatio:

> Remember that you are not placed by despotism over a band of slaves, creatures of the soil, and as such to be considered; but by Providence, over a certain portion of men, who, in common with the rest of their nation, are the descendants of a brave, a free, and an enlightened people. […] Within the influence then of your own bounded circle pursue those means of promoting the welfare of the individuals consigned to your care and protection, which lies within the scope of all those in whose hands the destinies of their less fortunate brethren are placed. (Owenson 1999: 251)

However, at second sight, this is an ambivalent and problematic speech. Lord M- defends a different kind of paternalism than the Gaelic Prince and encourages his son on his marriage to be a true feudal lord to his "less fortunate brethren". The forced marriage between Horatio and Glorvina is symbolic of the Act of Union – union is possible but true reconciliation is not.

The nostalgia of the English country house ethos projected onto Anglo-Irish estates, the return to Irish Chieftains' "pious feudalism" in the political *aisling*, speaks of the transideological make-up of nostalgia. Frank O'Connor's words relate to both the Irish and Anglo-Irish when he says that "I am not sure that any country can afford to discard what I have called 'the backward look', but we in Ireland can afford it less than any other because without it we have nothing and are nothing […]" (O'Connor 1967: 230).

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Nostalgia is dialectical; it discredits the idea of linear historical progress with what Walter Benjamin called *now-time*; that very moment of the present in which we realise its synthesis with past aspirations and (utopian) dreams. Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* which epitomizes Benjamin's critique of progress turns his face toward the past to see the present and future more clearly. "This is how one pictures the angel of history", Benjamin writes. "His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future

to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress" (Benjamin 1969: 257f). For Benjamin, the storm is blowing *from* paradise towards an indeterminate future. However much the Angel of History is confounded by destruction and disaster, there is a (utopian) hope of *now-time* that remains shaped by our reflective memory of Paradise. In a radio broadcast of 1951, Elizabeth Bowen similarly defends the idea of nostalgia, not as a blind return to some idealized past but as a necessary element of literary imagination; "Ideally, shouldn't the book, story or poem constitute what has not yet been, what is new?" (Bowen 1951: 2). The Blochean 'Not-yet' is informed here again by the fusion of the past and a messianic present; "What has great art done but enclose that eternal 'now'"? (Bowen 1951: 7). Thus, we cannot deny the critical and utopian potential of nostalgia. My understanding of nostalgia as reflective longing and desire makes it possible to include the country house nostalgia into the framework of utopianism. It does inspire readers "to work towards an understanding of what is necessary for human fulfilment, a broadening, deepening and raising of aspirations in terms quite different from those of their everyday life" (Levitas 1990: 122). It is the capacity to generate attentiveness to the socio-political status quo and the yearning for a different kind of life and society that lie at the heart of the country house ethos.

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The Watchdogs of Eden: Chesterton and Buchan Look at the Present of the Future

Christoph Ehland

Abstract: Ebenezer Howard's idea of the garden city represents one of the most influential schemes in social utopianism that developed during the late-Victorian period. Despite the fact that in 1908 the first garden city was eventually established in rural Hertfordshire the literary scene largely ignored its existence and did not take part in the heated debates on the scheme at the time. G.K. Chesterton and John Buchan are among the very few writers who integrate the utopian space of the garden city into their literary worlds. This essay discusses the strategies by which writers of a pointedly conservative stance not only criticise and deconstruct the utopian space of the garden city but also set out to construct conservative counter-utopias.

Key names and concepts: anti-utopia – Bedford Park – John Buchan – G.K. Chesterton – Englishness – First World War – garden city – garden suburb – Ebenezer Howard – Letchworth Garden City – rural England – utopia – war literature

> A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias.
>
> Oscar Wilde, "The Soul of Man Under Socialism"

1. Introduction

English literature seems to have an affinity for both utopian and dystopian writing. Thomas More gave the world the term *utopia* along with his idea of an ideal community, and ever since British writers have been eager to take their readers to the places of alternative socie-

ties.[1] Despite what seems to be a general literary inclination to think along utopian lines – from the prophecy of a happier world in William Morris' *News from Nowhere* to the nightmarish prospect of a distant future and its human distortions in H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* – the word 'utopian' does not immediately spring to mind when thinking about the historical development of English society. The Romanian writer Émile M. Cioran once characterised the political system of England as follows:

> Rousseau war eine Geißel für Frankreich, wie Hegel für Deutschland. England dagegen, ebenso unempfänglich für Hysterie wie für Systeme, England hat sich mit der Mittelmäßigkeit abgefunden; seine 'Philosophie' hat den Wert der Wahrnehmung aufgestellt; seine Politik den des Geschäfts. Der Empirismus war seine Antwort auf die Hirngespinste des Kontinents; das Parlament seine Absage an die Utopie, an die heroische Pathologie. (Cioran 1980: 39)

Cioran understands England as a country governed by an anti-revolutionary and also anti-utopian spirit deeply ingrained in the inevitable pragmatism of a political system resulting from capitalist complacency. However, one should not be misled by the darker tones audible in Cioran's typically misanthropic cynicism; his analysis gives expression to a view of English society which is – in a more positive form – also present in the image of England as a country of tradition and continuity. The latter's ideological demarcation has been paradigmatically summarised by Edmund Burke in his famous reproach of the English for displaying sympathy towards the French Revolution:

> The people of England will not ape the fashions they have never tried, nor go back to those which they have found mischievous on trial. They look upon the legal hereditary succession of their crown as among their rights, not as among their wrongs; as a benefit, not as a grievance; as a security for their liberty, not as a badge of servitude. (Burke 1999: 26)

Of course, a defensive attitude to radical change is to be expected of such a stoic nation, immune to hysteria and revolution and inclined to

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[1] For a history of utopian thought and utopian schemes in Britain, see Chris Coates' book *Utopia Britannica: British Utopian Experiments 1325 to 1945*, vol. 1 (Coates 2001) and Gregory Claeys' study *Modern British Utopias 1700-1850* (Claeys 1997).

answer elusive continental idealism with cool-headed English common sense. There remains the question of the startling discrepancy between an obvious affinity for the literary utopia on the part of English writers and a socio-political mentality generally hostile to it. A solution to this apparent paradox is offered by Wolf Lepenies who observes in *Melancholie und Gesellschaft* that utopian thinking has its origin within a dialectical system of containment that characterises the situation of the intellectual in capitalist societies: in a culture propagating the *vita activa* over the *vita contemplativa*, the utopian vision is a compensatory and often escapist act by which the intellectual as a melancholy man is able not only to give expression to his tormented self in current society but also to flee from what is tormenting him.[2] Generally speaking, many literary utopias and dystopias which communicate their authors' urge for reform seem to function in this particular way: "Der Intellektuelle klagt über die Welt, und aus dieser Klage entsteht das utopische Denken, das eine bessere Welt entwirft und damit die Melancholie vertreiben soll." (Lepenies 1998: xxi)

With regard to this, one may be less surprised to find that in a country where social and constitutional change takes place in an evolutionary rather than in a revolutionary manner the idea of an alternative society has frequently been put forward by writers in their despair over the ideological status quo. There can be no doubt that the sheer stability of the English constitutional settlement in alliance with the anti-intellectual tendencies of a capitalist Protestantism has always fuelled this kind of escapism. If it is therefore true that, historically, England, unlike most continental European nations, is characterised by constitutional perseverance and that the traces of revolutionary thought have not impinged upon its political system, one must still draw attention to the fact that traces of utopian yearning have transgressed the limitations of a predominantly text-centred discourse and can be found in the material spaces throughout the country.

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[2] Lepenies writes: "Die Melancholie, die als Zeichen des inneren Aufruhrs und der drohenden Revolte gilt, gerät daher früh in Verdacht – und damit der Intellektuelle. Wenn er auf der einen Seite nicht das *sacrificium intellectus* begehen und sich der Welt anpassen und wenn er auf der anderen Seite nicht seine Existenz in der offenen Auflehnung riskieren will, muß der Intellektuelle sich eine andere, eine bessere Welt ausdenken und erträumen. So wird die Utopie geboren, jenes literarische Genre, das den Aufbruch Europas in die Moderne begleitet." (Lepenies 1998: xx)

With regard to the conservative stance observed above it may seem ironical that nineteenth-century industrialists in particular have employed architecture and town planning to transform the community – usually that of their workers – into an ideal place. The traces of their individual vision of a *futurescape* for their time can still be seen in brick and mortar in various parts of the British Isles. With varying degrees of social idealism such experimental schemes as Robert Owen's New Lanark, Titus Salt's Saltaire, Edward Akroyd's Akroydon, Lord Leverhulme's Port Sunlight or Edward Cadbury's Bournville bespeak the hope for a renewal of industrial society in alternative spaces.

The criticism can be made that these examples are misleading and reveal a conceptual misunderstanding of what a utopia represents. The question may arise whether these places really qualify as utopian spaces. Strictly speaking, anything that becomes reality ceases to be a utopia. It is an ontological impossibility that a non-place becomes a distinct place. In spite of this qualification, one may ask whether the sites listed above are not still characterised by the utopian spark that initially conceived them – irrespective of the question whether they attained their aims of social reform or not. As Hans Ulrich Seeber has put it, utopianism is always characterised as "wünschenswertes und angstvolles Vorausgreifen" (Pordzik and Seeber 2002: 7), that is, as a programmatic reaching beyond the calamities of the present. Therefore the search for the utopian element in the built environment of Britain's 'intentional communities' may still seem a rather too practical reading of utopian thought but, as will become clearer subsequently, this particular understanding of the concept is the necessary prerequisite of the argument in this essay. In an eloquent defence of the garden city against its critics Geoffrey Hamilton explains the essentially utopian nature of the scheme:

> It is not entirely novel, at least, in theory. From Plato's *Republic* to Cadbury's *Bournville*, from More's *Utopia* to Howard's *Garden City*, hardly a century has lacked its dreamer who pictured and longed for an ideal state or the perfect city of his loftiest desire. (Hamilton 1906: 48)

Since promoters and critics of the idea univocally emphasised the utopian essence of the scheme – only with different connotations in mind – it seems justifiable in what follows to use the term 'utopia' for those spatial applications of utopian principles where the creation of a par-

ticular space aims not only to improve social conditions but also to shape a better community.

The social issue, of course, was one of the pressing problems of the last decade of Victoria's reign. Many of the utopian futurescapes of the nineteenth century represent reactions to the metropolitan and industrial transformation Victorian Britain underwent. As the schemes listed above show, this period fostered the establishment of alternative spaces as an answer to the severe social and hygienic problems of urban agglomeration increasingly encountered by Britain's industrialised society.[3] The close link between the urban crisis and the utopian element has been highlighted by Raymond Williams. In *The Country and the City* he maintains that "[o]ut of the experience of the cities came an experience of the future" (Williams 1973: 272). Although not all of these schemes may embrace the principles of utopian socialism as wholeheartedly as Robert Owen's New Lanark, the majority of them still carry an innate utopian element. Among the types of utopia that were destined to transgress their utopian nature and be turned into reality is also the idea of the garden city.[4] The originator of this idea, Ebenezer Howard, was influenced by the philosophical thinking of Ralph Waldo Emerson and by Edward Bellamy's utopian romance *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888). In 1898 Howard published *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (republished in 1902 under the better known title *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*), setting out his concept of an ideal of new towns that combined urban functions with the rural scene.

Both as a concept and as an actual building scheme the garden city represents a link between the nineteenth century's search for the improvement of social conditions and the twentieth century's political hope of "a new collective consciousness" (Williams 1973: 272) in a new space.[5] Andrew Sanders lists the garden city and the garden sub-

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3 In his study of the town planning movement Gordon E. Cherry infers that "[c]ensus data at the end of the nineteenth century reveal starkly the severity of the housing problem nationally, particularly in the larger cities" (Cherry: 307) and points to the appalling sanitary conditions in the slums of the larger British cities.

4 Ebenezer Howard strategically emphasised the kinship of his scheme with Bournville and Port Sunlight (Howard 1904: 177, 188).

5 This particular aspect of Howard's scheme is concisely summarized by Geoffrey Hamilton: "The Garden City movement is at once a protest against the

urb among the most lasting contributions of Edwardian culture to architectural history, a contribution which not only "took Britain to the forefront of international design" but also "touched the lives of men and women of all classes" (Sanders 1994: 485). There can be no doubt about the utopian core of the idea of the garden city: campaigning for the establishment of the first garden city in Britain, Letchworth, Ebenezer Howard expresses his conviction that it would "make possible the organization of society on sound principles, – safeguarding at once the true interests of the community and of the individual" (Howard 1904: 177). In every detail Howard's experiment in town planning was conceived as a space for the betterment and the healing of society. In his writing he reacted to the situation he encountered in late-Victorian cities and described the deprivations of "the workhouse, the slum, or the overcrowded tenement", making mention of "the dulness [sic] and misery of millions of human lives, and of the low physique of vast numbers of our city dwellers" (171) which had their origin in these living conditions. Howard's was a social as much as a moral experiment since he firmly believed that the garden city not only catered better for the physical needs of society but also promoted "a step forward on the moral, the intellectual and, let us hope, also on the spiritual plane" (171).

Taking into account the allusion to a 'spiritual' or metaphysical element, it is not all that unexpected that Howard's campaign met with some scepticism. Howard's reassurance that his project was "entirely non-political and non-sectarian" (Howard 1904: 173) evidently did not calm his critics. The Scottish sociologist and biologist Patrick Geddes complains about the "diffuse and sermonising" (Geddes 1906: 50) style in which Howard's idea was popularised by his followers. An anonymous reviewer described Letchworth in 1911 with spiteful sarcasm as "this Mecca of the simple life and higher thought, this metropolis of cranks and faddists" (Anon. 1911: 416). Similarly disparaging words were used by the novelist Robert Barr who wrote, after a visit to Letchworth: "I remember what a dreary, unkempt, half-baked, never-finished wilderness of faddy houses Letchworth is, the so-called Garden City" (Barr 1908: 103).

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existing state of things and a sound attempt to substitute a more excellent method. Its supporters are engaged in an effort to create something better without going the whole weary round of everything worse. Herein lies the chief fascination of the experiment." (Hamilton 1906: 37)

Although from today's perspective the idea of the garden city must appear as feasible as it was successful in the long run, in the eyes of its contemporaries the utopian core of the concept looked suspicious. From a conservative standpoint the most compromising association of the scheme were its leanings towards socialism. In his books Howard had advocated a co-operative management of the garden city where the land would belong to the community. Despite the fact that in the case of Letchworth he had given in to a compromise regarding the question of property, which was to be based on traditional principles of estate management,[6] the association of the scheme with the co-operative movement and socialism had irrevocably been established. Some of the prejudiced hesitation is summarised by Thomas Adams, writing in 1901 in *The Speaker*:

> At first sight the scheme, as I have said, suggests the word 'Utopia' to the practical man. He is blinded first by the doubt that because the scheme has not yet been tried it must therefore be impracticable, and secondly by prejudice which associates all such proposals with socialistic failures. (Adams 1901: 721)

Adams's article is partly apologetic, partly clarifying what he sees as the benefits of the scheme and thereby urging its readers to overcome their reservations. Other hesitations resulted from the strong literary leanings of Howard's concept. Simon Pepper emphasises the extent to which Howard's practical considerations were inspired by literary utopias: "[e]ach component [of the Garden City] had its precedent in a tradition of utopian literature that extended back from William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, to the Renaissance, and beyond" (Pepper 1992: 101). Within Howard's scheme the relationship between the literary and the real is therefore particularly close.[7] Despite his concept

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6 Dennis Hardy maintains that these compromises mark "a downhill route from high idealism to official conformity" (Hardy 2000: 84). Howard describes the reasons for this compromise at some length in his article "Our First Garden City" but simultaneously expresses his belief that "the day will surely come when such a system [of co-operative management] will be adopted" (Howard 1904: 182). It is clearly amidst this mixture of realism and future hopes that the utopian spirit of Howard's project becomes most audible.

7 Simon Dentith writes about Ebenezer Howard's book *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*: "Howard's plan, as laid out in this strikingly successful piece of utopian propaganda, is a frank amalgam of various preceding schemes and vi-

having this literary ancestry, literature itself never really warmed to the garden city as a setting or as a spatial concept after the first example had been established. It may not be an accident that one of the very few schemes of urban planning that had started as nothing more than a utopian dream and eventually succeeded in being turned into a real space and a real community was more or less ignored by the literary scene of its time.[8] The garden city is indeed one of the surprising voids of modern literature – the more so for the widespread support its campaigners received from the representatives of the literary scene. The omission is all the more startling when one thinks of writers such as William Morris, H. G. Wells, Aldous Huxley or George Orwell, all representatives of those left-wing intellectuals of the early twentieth century who tried either by their utopian reveries or by their dystopian fantasies to urge for social reform. Symptomatic for a whole generation of left-wing authors is the Scottish writer Lewis Grassic Gibbon (James Leslie Mitchell) who even made his home in Welwyn Garden City – Ebenezer Howard's second foundation – in the late 1920s. Despite his personal preference for the place his novels ignore the possibility of the garden city as a setting or a literary topos. The protagonists of his so-called 'English novels' must either cope with the grim reality of Chatham (*Image and Superscription*) or dive into the polarising craze of jazz-age London (*Stained Radiance*). The same is true of his utopian science fiction novels *Gay Hunter* and *Three Go Back*, whose plots are set either in the distant territories of a primordial Golden Age or in a post-nuclear utopian world and simply have no room for the experiment started at Letchworth.

One should withstand the temptation to speculate about the reasons for this omission. However, beyond speculation there still is the innate logic of utopian space in its literary representation. To a certain extent the silence of the left-wing writers of the early twentieth century with regard to the Garden City may be explained by the logical conclusion that in utopia all utopian thought must end. The silent omission of Howard's scheme in the wider context of the literary

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sions; it emerges directly from the milieu of socialist argument and debate that Howard inhabited in the late nineteenth-century London." (Dentith 2000: 16)

8 The author of this essay has browsed a large number of novels from the first three decades of the twentieth century searching for representations of the Garden City or the Garden Suburb as a literary setting. Any advice where to find fictional texts that feature either of the two is more than welcome.

realm may thus indicate that the very existence of places like Letchworth or Welwyn threatens the libertarian essence of the utopian or dystopian fantasy in literature; a fantasy which must promote the denial of such an arrival in reality in favour of that sort of progression that Oscar Wilde defined as the never-ending realization of utopia (see Wilde 2004: 13). It is no coincidence that utopian writers have actively banned from their ideal worlds the melancholic disposition as the creative source of utopian thought.[9] In his introduction to a reprint of Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* Frederic J. Osborn explains that even the Fabian Society dismissed Howard's garden city project as simply "futile" (Osborn 1998: 11). George Orwell, who visited Letchworth in 1937 to attend the summer school of the I.L.P. (Independent Labour Party),[10] sustains this view in *The Road to Wigan Pier* in which he dismisses Letchworth and thus Howard's alternative space as the mere agglomeration of "fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, 'Nature Cure' quack, pacifist and feminist in England" (Orwell 1984: 152).

Strangely, however, the garden city is a setting that is adopted by conservative writers. G.K. Chesterton begins the hunt for a set of anarchistic conspirators in his novel *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908) in a fictitious garden suburb and John Buchan explores the space and community of a garden city at some length in his spy-novel *Mr Standfast* (1919). Without doubt, Chesterton and Buchan must seem unlikely names in the context of intentional communities and neither of these two authors may feature prominently on any list of representatives of utopian writing from the British Isles. They seem much more the agents of a conservative system of thought hostile to experiment and averse to change. If it is true that for the thrust towards utopia in British arts and literature the cultivation of a feeling of alienation by British intellectuals and artists has always been a significant catalyst, one encounters in Chesterton and Buchan two writers who operate from the centre of British society rather than the margins.

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9 Wolf Lepenies observes that "in Utopia herrscht ein rigoroses Melancholieverbot. […] Dieses Melancholieverbot findet sich bei Robert Burton ebenso wie bei Campanella, bei Morus wie in George Orwells Dystopie *1984*." (Lepenies 1998: xxi)

10 For a discussion of Orwell's opinion on the garden city, see Dentith 2000: 27ff.

Their value system is conservative or at least traditionalist and defines their perspective on the garden city and its community.

The irony clearly is that with the establishment of Letchworth Garden City in the first decade of the twentieth century a utopia, a non-place, had become reality. As these two writers respond in their writing to the fact of the presence of a future vision in a place like Letchworth, this real yet still utopian place begins to cast its shadow on their fictitious world.

2. Chesterton's Suburban Anarchists

There are good arguments against the inclusion of Chesterton's representation of the fictitious garden suburb of Saffron Park in this discussion. First, the place is not even a garden city proper. It is a garden suburb. Second, in direct comparison with John Buchan's treatment of the garden city theme in *Mr Standfast* Chesterton only mentions it briefly at the beginning and at the very end of his novel. It seems necessary to deal with both of these objections before entering upon the analysis. With regard to the precise nature of Chesterton's Saffron Park one can say that although Ebenezer Howard did not intend the garden city as simply a greener suburb, his contemporaries were apt to be less strict about the precise distinction and allowed the two to become confused. In fact, the place Chesterton alludes to, Bedford Park at Turnham Green in west London,[11] is often seen as a precursor of Letchworth Garden City in terms of its architecture and layout. Built from 1875 by the speculative developer Jonathan Carr, under the direction of the architect Richard Norman Shaw, the scheme, in its varied house designs and picturesque street patterns, was informed by the Aesthetic movement of the 1870s. By the 1880s the place aspired to become one of London's most fashionable addresses and soon attracted a community of artists and writers who moved to the suburb – a likely factor, as will become clear, for Chesterton's choice of place. With regard to the brief and somewhat marginal treatment of Saffron Park in the novel it seems that this marginality underlines rather than undermines the symbolic significance of the setting. The relative brev-

[11] For a detailed architectural discussion of Bedford Park, see H. Muthesius 2007: 132-39 and also Dixon and S. Muthesius 1993: 68-69.

ity of the description cannot be denied but in a text that only glances in passing at the rest of its settings it is still a comparatively detailed account. Chesterton highlights the significance of the garden suburb for his story by virtually positioning it outside the parentheses of the plot. The text constructs this frame before the plot accelerates and the settings become inevitably subordinated to the spatial dynamics of the action. Saffron Park marks the starting point from which the narrative teleology develops as well as its endpoint. This is further emphasised by the fact that the only real anarchist in the entire story comes from this very place. Thus set apart within the textual universe, it is, as it were, the fixed point in Chesterton's argument while at the same time it reveals the main trajectories of the conservative attack on utopian space. With regard to this it is clear that the choice of the initial setting for the novel is as remarkable as the description of the place itself:

> The suburb of Saffron Park lay on the sunset side of London, as red and ragged as a cloud of sunset. It was built of a bright brick throughout; its skyline was fantastic, and even its ground plan was wild. It had been the outburst of a speculative builder, faintly tinged with art, who called its architecture sometimes Elizabethan and sometimes Queen Anne, apparently under the impression that the two sovereigns were identical. It was described with some justice as an artistic colony, though it never in any definable way produced any art. But although its pretensions to be an intellectual centre were a little vague, its pretensions to be a pleasant place were quite indisputable. (Chesterton 2001: 7)

There is an unmistakeable air of ironic contempt in this opening passage of Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* and it is not difficult to spot the "down-to-English-earth Chesterton" (Sanders 1994: 490) somewhere in the midst of the subtle paradoxes and witty belittlements that characterise the implicit argument of this description. The tone of mockery in the passage is therefore all the more important: it reveals a place and a community that lives on pretensions rather than real achievements. Nonetheless, described as 'red and ragged', 'fantastic' and 'wild', the architecture of Saffron Park already acquires the air of a slightly scary 'outburst', a sudden and somewhat disturbing appearance on the horizon of Edwardian society. Although it is Chesterton's intention to demystify and deconstruct the suburban futurescape, its presentation strategically oscillates between derision

and fear. His efforts in maintaining suspense are regularly counterpoised by his style of presentation.

However, the only faint hint of art, the confusion in the architectural style, mocks the lack of knowledge not only of the proprietor but also of those who choose to live in such a stylistic crossbreed. The mockery is orchestrated by a tongue-in-cheek yet still audibly class-conscious recourse to the general misunderstanding of English traditions observable in the place. Although it is only hinted at, class seems to be an issue at stake here. Neither Chesterton nor Buchan – as will be seen subsequently – enters into any open discussion of the class system. On the contrary, social distinctions are presupposed and seen as self-evident. It goes almost without saying that the adversaries who crowd into the utopian community are invariably representatives of the lower classes, as passing remarks about 'cockney looks' etc. indicate. The general effect of this is a social stability at the base of their argument that represents a firm vantage point whence the flux of other aspects of life can be observed.

With regard to this one must point to the particularly close relationship between aesthetic and social discourses in this sort of criticism. Chesterton's treatment of the garden suburb shows a simultaneous attempt not only to conjure up general prejudices against the 'arty-farty' left-wingers who have taken up residence in this derisory suburb but also to project the stylistic criticism of the built environment as a moral judgment onto the group living there. Place and creed become synonymous or rather they reflect each other. Despite its being presented as a leafy suburban haven of tranquillity there is an excess of ironic disparagement felt in Chesterton's description of the place and its 'artistic colony'. For a writer who entertained a notion of his country as "based on a nostalgic, Cobbett-like, vision of a lost, happy, Catholic England of beef, frothy beer, and good cheer" (Sanders 1994: 490), the 'fantastic' he encounters in a place such as Saffron Park naturally means a provocation to the time-honoured values inherent in this notion of Englishness.

Chesterton himself called his story an "Anti-Anarchist romance" (Chesterton 2001: 193). The restless story of the hunting down of an anarchist organisation in Edwardian London derives part of its effect from playful references to the very real anxiety at the time about a possible anarchist overthrow of the existing order. During the

fin de siècle and the Edwardian period anarchism was becoming rather a public obsession. Newspapers reported frequently on the gloomy machinations of anarchist conspirators who operated not only in politically suspect countries like France or Germany but also on the English home front. Amidst the anxious search for the 'enemy within' the more conservative attitude towards the political spectrum left of the centre became increasingly overcast as the distinctions between socialism and anarchism became blurred, a situation that is particularly relevant with regard to the perception of utopian schemes such as the garden city. An anonymous author, for example, detected a "solidarity of feeling" (Anon. 1911: 338) between anarchists and socialists and warned the readers of the *Fortnightly Review* in 1911 that "the Anarchists are again in complete union with leading Socialists" (341). Geoffrey Langtoft, another contemporary writer, states that "[t]he Anarchists do the underground work, the Socialists the above-ground work, but it is one work." (Langtoft 1900: 548) What initially appears to be a reckoning with the anarchist philosophy of Bakunin and Kropotkin thus quickly becomes defamation of the Labour Party and its leaders, in fact, of democracy itself.[12] Scare-mongering obviously runs rampant when commentators see "the floods of socialism […] rising all around [them], threatening to sweep away the very foundations" (558) of society, and readily assume the 'suburban anarchist' to be the constant companion of the active dynamiter and an ally of foreign spies.[13]

It is this general atmosphere of anxious suspicion with its particular patterns of group identification and differentiation which Chesterton utilises for his story. Although he postulates "the exhilarating signs" (Chesterton 2001: 194) of the break-up of civilisation in his commentary to *The Man Who Was Thursday*, one should not be mis-

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12 Langtoft writes: "A nation wholly abandoned to the heady lawlessness of Democracy is stricken to its very vitals with a deadly and incurable malady. Such a nation is a spectacle over which the gods might well weep tears of pity. And such a spectacle is England to-day." (Langtoft 1900: 545) Part of the anxiety that finds expression in Langtoft's article must be seen as the direct result of the increasingly successful agitation of the Suffragette movement and the growing parliamentary consent to the principle of enfranchising women (see Cannon 1997: 793).

13 In this context Niall Ferguson describes the paranoid culture of the so-called spy-craze before the First World War (Ferguson 1999: 1-11).

taken and read his novel as a story of doom. On the contrary, the nightmare in which Chesterton dresses his argument allows him to construct an inverse logic: he himself states that it results in "a topsy-turvy tale about a man who fancied himself alone among enemies, and found that each of the enemies was in fact on his own side and in his own solitude" (194). The description reveals the cultural impotence of the place and its community which is hidden under a thin veneer of intellectual pretence, a deception which evidently only works if the artists are taken seriously.

To convey this soothing message, Chesterton assumes for himself a viewpoint external to that of the over-anxious establishment which feels endangered by social groups such as the artists in Saffron Park whose presence on the margins of society "at once tickled and terrified the nerves of a neurotic population" (Chesterton 2001: 9). To emphasise this fact, Chesterton relies, in his narrative construction of the place, on a strategy of dissociation from Saffron Park that helps him to pre-structure the reception of the spatial associations. The *ex*-clusive position of the setting in the construction of the novel is further heightened by the perspective from which it is presented. It is in fact the perspective of the outsider that directs the narrative focus in the passage:

> The stranger who looked for the first time at the quaint red houses could only think how very oddly shaped the people must be who could fit in to them. Nor when he met the people was he disappointed in this respect. The place was not only pleasant, but perfect, if once he could regard it not as a deception but rather as a dream. (Chesterton 2001: 7)

In his account of the suburban 'artistic colony', Chesterton evidently assembles the typical prejudices to be expected from a conservative writer in Edwardian England: there is a subtle sense of anti-intellectualism present in the accusation of the artistic inactivity and cultural impotence of the population of Saffron Park. The particular class of artists that lives in the suburb are shown to coquet with "the old cant of the lawlessness of art and the art of lawlessness" (8) and thus expose themselves as just an unimaginative copy of the decadents of the 1890s. The utopian community is seen as ensnarled in a lifeless imitation of outworn models of the past, a form of existence that borders, according to the sardonic remark of Chesterton's narrator, on a "written comedy" (8).

The same pattern of imitation can be observed in the aesthetics of Saffron Park. Its architectural style is only a simulacrum of patterns of Englishness, its picturesque appearance the result of a cheap imitation – misunderstood, misapplied and to be mistrusted. The utopian space is thereby virtually deprived of any cultural signifying status. It is a substitute masked as something real. If it is not what it pretends to be, what is it? Roger Webster observes of the representation of suburbia in literature that "[i]t occupies a space as much defined by what it is not as by what it is, constructed by differences and imitation rather than possessing innate and original features" (Webster 2000: 2). The result is the feeling of a decentred and depthless place: "a sterile zone, devoid of cultural and aesthetic value so that the very absence of signification becomes a haunting presence" (2). This feeling of the absence of the real dominates Chesterton's garden suburb. An air of callowness characterises the place which, as Chesterton's narrator sarcastically remarks, "had to be considered not so much as a workshop for artists, but as a frail but unfinished work of art" (8). The artists who have made their home in Saffron Park are represented as a socially (self-)alienated class of pseudo-intellectuals. This apparent 'otherness' is exemplified rather than explained. The effect is that sort of "attractive unreality" (8) that characterises the void of the decentred, marginal space of the garden suburb. The outside/inside differentiation in the text means that the narration assumes for itself a position from which the 'inside' of the utopian space is simultaneously exposed as the chief target of criticism and at the same time robbed of any defining feature. With regard to this it becomes clear that the atmosphere of "violent secrecy" (9) observed by the narrator depends not so much on the fact that it is a "red-haired revolutionary" who "seemed like a walking blasphemy" (9) who reigns over the suburb but on the haunting absence of any sustained qualities of the place. The 'pleasant perfection' of Saffron Park is the defining feature of the liminal space. The artists who live there are at their best harmless cranks – the danger is their identification with a space that does not function within stable dichotomies.

The concise sequence of spatial signification in *The Man Who Was Thursday* is the more remarkable because it establishes a semiotic system of space in the text which serves Chesterton's reckoning with what he has repeatedly called the heresies of pessimism and materialism in his age. In terms of its narrative realisation, however, this criti-

cism inevitably turns the utopian space of the garden suburb into a space of active 'othering'. It needs to be seen from without, against what Roger Webster calls "an 'other' zone" (Webster 2000: 2), not only to be attacked and defamed but to be made comprehensible in the first place. The other zone, that central place of sanity in Chesterton, is present only in the silent assumptions of the implied author. In John Buchan's *Mr Standfast* this silence is broken: the critical account of the utopian space gives way to the construction, visualisation and propagation of a counter-utopian ideal. Chesterton's nightmarish novel, however, exemplifies the two main lines of the attack on utopian space: the conservative writer imagines the textual universe as the site of an aesthetic battle in a social war.

3. Buchan's "The Village named Morality"[14]

In an excited review the publication of *Mr Standfast* not quite a year after the end of World War One is hailed as "as ingenious and thrilling a war story as any we have had" (Anon. 1919: 145). Written by someone who was still under the influence of the recent British victory over Germany, the novel seemed a most attractive adventure yarn:

> Here is breathlessness, here is ecstasy, high and proud adventuring, patriotism, comradeship, the outwitting of the arch outwitter, the breaking of a spy – a super-head-centre of German intrigue, all in the best and most rollicking kind of good form and zest. (Anon. 1919: 144)

Either written or at least conceived during the First World War, the first three of John Buchan's Richard Hannay spy-novels are outbursts of wartime sentiment and take their readers into a world of racy adventures all over the battlefields of Europe and the Middle East. *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, largely set in London and Scotland, brought Buchan his first success as a writer of spy-novels in 1915 and was quickly followed by the middle-eastern adventure of *Greenmantle* in 1916 and eventually by *Mr Standfast* in 1919. Despite this pedigree of war it would be rash to reduce these tales to the mere accumulation of propaganda full of anti-German agitation and deep-rooted xenophobia.

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14 Title of the second chapter of *Mr Standfast*.

Written largely under the general strain of the war, the novels make an attempt to do far more than simply entertain their readers or heap up evidence of German wickedness. With regard to *Mr Standfast* one must note that the novel itself is still part of the so-called spy-craze of the pre-war period: many of its plot elements and characterisations are taken straight from the arsenal of paranoid scaremongering that accumulated in the numerous spy-stories that had swamped the British bookmarket in the two decades before 1914. The author himself may dismiss the stories as mere "shockers" (Buchan 1928: ix) but in the end it is the stability of the spy-genre which allows these books to deal with more subtle issues than simply "outwitting the arch outwitter".

Sent as an undercover agent to the Garden City of Biggleswick, Buchan's protagonist Richard Hannay has an operational interest in the utopian community and its way of life. The provisional integration in the community he achieves for himself also defines the vantage point from which the place is seen and analysed. Hannay, who is also the narrator of the story, is thus firmly installed in the same inside/outside matrix as has been observed earlier in Chesterton's novel. Despite the fact that he moves in and through the garden city he remains an outsider, so that his presence in Biggleswick confirms the peripheral situation of the utopian space in the processes of signification. This programmatic marginality is already highlighted at the moment of his first coming to the place:

> But for the present I was in a backwater, no less than the Garden City of Biggleswick, where Mr. Cornelius Brand, a South African gentleman visiting England on holiday, lodged in a pair of rooms in the cottage of Mr. Tancred Jimson. The house – or 'home' as they preferred to name it at Biggleswick – was one of some two hundred others which ringed a pleasant Midland common. It was badly built and oddly furnished; the bed was too short, the windows did not fit, the doors did not stay shut; but it was as clean as soap and water and scrubbing could make it. (Buchan 1951: 37)

At first glance, the depiction of Biggleswick's built environment seems to echo the same aesthetic disapproval seen in Chesterton. In *The Man Who Was Thursday* the stability of the spatial argument derives mainly from the disparaging tone of the narration. It is not difficult to discern a similar approach in Buchan's first-person narrator: just as in Saffron Park, where the stranger had to wonder what kind of 'oddly shaped people' must live in the 'quaint red houses', Biggles-

wick's dwellings are also "badly built and oddly furnished" (37) and the people reside in places "so artistic that you broke your head whichever way you turned" (45). However, while in Chesterton's novel the pleasantness of the place seems a mere pretence, where it seems just too 'perfect' not to be suspect, the Midland common in Biggleswick is 'pleasant' without further qualification. Evidently Buchan's text applies an alternative set of differentiations in its assessment of the utopian space: if the pleasantness of Chesterton's suburb is subdued by the narrator's mocking tone and disparaging remarks Buchan's narrator is more willing to commit himself to the tranquillity of the garden city setting.

One of the obvious complications for the critical account of the garden city in *Mr Standfast* is that some of the aspects characterising the place coincide with traditional values of Englishness. In this regard a change of attitude towards the utopian space is necessary. This change can be seen in the following brief scene: "as I unpacked in my fresh little bedroom with the west wind blowing in at the window I considered that I had seen worse quarters" (38). Not only is the description of the room genuinely positive but the mood of the protagonist also seems to display the tranquillity of the holiday guest rather than the suspicious mistrust of the secret agent. The place is not barred from being pleasant and is therefore not perceived as an aberration per se. This observation is significant because it points to the fact that Buchan employs a different conception of the utopian space itself.

Chesterton's argument in *The Man Who Was Thursday* depends from the start upon a fundamental confrontation between the implied values of the narration and the dangerous amalgamation of anarchists in the garden suburb. The utopian space is bound to be the connotation of an insane creed and is therefore once and for all dismissed. This rigidity may be a functional necessity owed to the conciseness of the description but it still serves to cement the spatial distinctions in the text once they have been established. This radical dismissal of a place alongside its community can be explained by a look at Michel Foucault's concept of the 'darkened spaces'. Foucault points out that in the Gothic novel there is a sort of complicity between the fantastic darkened spaces and the villains (see Foucault 1980: 153f). With regard to the marginalised space of the garden suburb Chesterton seems to imply just such complicity when he speaks about "the whole insane village" (Chesterton 2001: 8).

Despite the fact that the main trajectories of the attack on the utopian space seem basically the same, Buchan's spatial system differs from that of Chesterton because his novel operates according to a different mind-set. Where Chesterton's impressionistic narrative of a fantastic nightmare can be radically dismissive, Buchan's realism is compelled to be missionary. Space in the world of Richard Hannay is not in complicity with the traitors. On the contrary, it is constantly dissociated from them. The spy-novel builds its fictitious world out of sequences of 'darkened spaces', hide-outs of secret societies, underground movements, traitors, conspirators, anarchists. Yet Buchan again and again places his protagonist against these darkened spaces which hide the enemies within. A fight is going on. In Buchan's novel the darkening of spaces, the territorial expansion of the villains, is resisted, whether in the Scottish Highlands, in the airspace above the western front in France or in the backwaters of rural England. Depicted as a physical strife, hunting down the arch-enemy with one's gun in one's hand, it is in fact a battle over signification. The image of the undercover agent who infiltrates and investigates suspicious spaces expresses this in a nutshell: Hannay's presence in Biggleswick sheds light on the convictions entertained by the inhabitants of the 'odd settlement' but it does not assume that place and creed are the same. The distinction between spatial and social signification is meaningful because it deeply influences the depiction of the garden city as a utopian space essentially devoid of its own profound signification status (see Webster 2000: 2). Although Biggleswick occupies a space it is not conceived as a territorial occupation but as an agglomeration of detestable or just silly cultural practices.

The narrative attention focuses on the social community and its misconceptions about reality. "[P]uffed up with spiritual pride" (Buchan 1951: 47), the community's ideal of a "simple life" (38) is exposed as mere escapism from reality. It is a dream without substance, a void, which the inhabitants of the garden city try to fill with numerous religious, quasi-religious and mystical convictions (see 50) as well as a deep sense of neurotic antagonism to the world outside Biggleswick. The anaemic nature of the spiritual community is mirrored by the physical deficiency and weakness of its members: men are typically "weedy looking" (40) and unpractical with "two left hands" (47), whereas girls are "half-witted" (46) and "rather badly dressed and inclining to untidy hair" (40) and their intellectual prophets just "tuber-

culous in mind and body" (46). In their general ineptitude and conceit the inhabitants may remind one more of the spoiled yet pitifully naïve Eloi in H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* than of an anarchistic threat. Hannay even admits: "I found it impossible to be angry with them for long, they were so babyishly innocent" (49). What lurks behind this is the conflict between the ideal world of the *vita activa* and a dystopian one subdued by the destructive spirit of the *vita contemplativa*.

The danger posed by this amalgam of queer characters in the community of the garden city is not that it is actively subversive as in Chesterton but that their utopian existence, like that of Wells' Eloi, is shown to be deceptive in its passivity: their idealist community has become a harbour for the dark plots of reckless conspirators. Having turned their back on the present calamities of war to live the dream of an idealist future they have become vulnerable because they have given themselves up to a form of life that is built on a void. It thus becomes clear that Hannay's agency is only partly defined by the plot – the hunting down of the conspirators – while another essential narrative function of his presence in the garden city is to wander back and forth between the space occupied by the utopian community and the surrounding countryside:

> In the afternoons I took my exercise in long tramps along the good dusty English roads. The country fell away from Biggleswick into a plain of wood and pasture-land, with its low hills on the horizon. The place was sown with villages, each with its green and pond and ancient church. Most, too, had inns, and there I had many a draught of ale, for the inn at Biggleswick was a reformed place which sold nothing but washy cider. (43f)

Hannay's outings recall the qualities of "the priceless heritage which is England" (43) and thus emphasise a set of traditional values of English society in direct contrast to those of the people of Biggleswick. The imagery, of course, is as unreal as the utopian community. In fact, one finds that the city/country dichotomy forms the backbone of Buchan's argument. Those living in Biggleswick are "modest folk, who sought for a coloured background to their prosaic city lives and found it in this odd settlement" (41). Their interest in the countryside, however, is decorative at its best and generally characterised by a fundamental misunderstanding of what rural England is about. Their fault is that they do not seem to be interested in their surroundings. Hannay

complains about this lack of interest: "If you talked to them about that divine countryside, you found they didn't give a rap for it and had never been a mile beyond the village." (46) They have lost connection with what is propagated in the novel as the cornerstones of a shared English identity.

Robert Crawford observes that Buchan's "best books seem imaginative sanctuaries, pacy escapes" (Crawford 2007: 526), and asserts that in Buchan "a vital sense of Arcadia persists" (527). It is this Arcadian element which connects a novel such as *Mr Standfast* with the wider context of war writing. Although Hannay's adventure breathes the air of a world 'worth fighting for', the novel unmistakably represents a coming to terms with a world in flux. It is part reckoning with and part meditation on Britain's hesitant yet inevitable move towards twentieth-century modernity.

For a conservative writer like Buchan the war experience did not represent the kind of liberating catalyst it meant for the modernist movement.[15] For him and his class it became the ultimate challenge to their accustomed ways of life. In "Home Thoughts from Abroad", a poem he composed in 1917 when still in the trenches in France, Buchan allows a Scottish soldier to express this anxiety about the transformation of life which might result from the war experience:

> *Aifter the war, says the papers, they'll no be content at hame,*
> *The lads that hae feucht wi' death twae 'ear i' the mud and the rain and the snaw;*
> *For aifter a sodger's life the shop will be unco tame;*
> *They'll ettle at fortune and freedom in the new lands far awa'.*
> No me!
> By God! No me!
>
> (Buchan 2006: 311)

Calling on God, the last two lines of the poem exhibit an almost religious sense of endurance. This outspoken will not to allow the war to change one's world is also present in *Mr Standfast*; here, the utopian space and its community turn into a territory for exemplifying a persistent sense of determination. Anxieties and fears are subdued in genre-typical bravado: whether a wimpish pacifist in a utopian com-

15 In this context Modris Eksteins explains: "Like all wars, the 1914 war, when it broke out, was seen as an opportunity for both change and confirmation." (Eksteins 2000: xv)

munity or the sinister spy of an alien power, each and every enemy is laid low and the danger on the English horizon made to vanish into thin air. Deep down in the structure of the plot, however, the anxieties about change remain.

With regard to this, the persistent evocation of the English countryside which Hannay explores from Biggleswick seems to be predominantly nostalgic, a yearning for an unspoiled, premodern rural haven. It is only when one realises that this image of the mind needs to be de-temporalised to allow it permanence, that is, needs to be taken out of history, that the essentially utopian core of it becomes clear. The idea of 'rural England' is a commemorative practice oriented towards the present; it is, as Jan Assmann has put it, a "kulturelle Mnemotechnik" which functions "konterpräsentisch" (Assmann 2000: 227). In this sense the idea of rural England, that emblem of the "divine countryside" (Buchan 1951: 46), is a heterochronic structure of memory: a utopian projection counterpoised to if not placed against the present and thus transcending it.[16]

For those 'harmless young shepherds in a soldier's coat' (cf. Blunden 2000: 191) in the killing fields of the First World War the evocation of a pastoral England was a mental dug-out, the most real of unreal dreams, their utopian retreat amidst the dying in the trenches. The image of rural England is an antidote that comes as soothing balm in their 'home thoughts from abroad'.[17] At the same time, however, it is an old and somewhat worn haven of the English imagination. De-

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16 With regard to the idea of rural England Raymond Williams observes that "[t]he structure of feeling within which this backward reference is to be understood is then not primarily a matter of historical explanation and analysis. What is really significant is this particular kind of reaction to the fact of change, and this has more real and more interesting social causes" (Williams 1973: 35). It is one of the astonishing phenomena of modernity that the more the rural experience of English society diminished along with the pressures of the industrial and commercial urbanisation the more did the country's collective consciousness have recourse to the imagery of rural England.

17 Paul Fussel writes in *The Great War and Modern Memory*: "Recourse to the pastoral is an English mode of both fully gauging the calamities of the Great War and imaginatively protecting oneself against them. Pastoral reference […] is a way of invoking a code to hint by antithesis at the indescribable; […]." (Fussel 2000: 235) Robert Browning's longing after a Chaucerian April in England in "Home-thoughts, From Abroad" is loosely taken up and Scoticised by John Buchan in his war poem of the same title.

spite the fact that it is more a fantasy than reality, it is and has been crucially relevant for the shaping of English identity. Of course, this is a story that has already been written[18] and does not need to be retold here. In Buchan's wartime fiction one finds the images of pastoral England revived as a reaction to the social changes a space such as the garden city represents.

During the interwar period with its extremely polarised social energies, when the sense of futility and exhaustion became more widespread, the 'W' of the war would eventually be capitalised. In Buchan's two sequels to *Mr Standfast*, written during the 1920s, his recourses to the images of an allegedly unspoiled and pastoral England increase with the distance from the War. By the mid-1920s, the domestic settlement which Buchan allows his hero to enjoy at the beginning of *The Three Hostages* is set in an Arcadian landscape.[19]

The dream of rural England is without doubt the most persistent myth of Englishness. It must seem almost a paradox that the conservative gaze deconstructs the utopian space of the garden city only to construct in its place a counter-utopia of Englishness.

4. Conclusion

Closer analysis of the representation of the garden city as a utopian space in the fiction written before and just after the First World War shows how conservative writers – implicitly or explicitly – decentre and marginalise its signifying status. Like watchdogs of Eden, Chesterton and Buchan guard the sanctuaries of the English imagination.

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18 See chapter VII "Arcadian Recourses" in Paul Fussel's 1975 book *The Great War and Modern Memory*.

19 The contrast between rural England and the world of spies and intrigue is a tempting one. At least Buchan's decision to allow his hero to retire into the rural haven of his house in the English countryside stirred the imagination of his readers. Louis J. McQuilland, who reviewed the fourth of Buchan's Hannay adventures, *The Three Hostages*, remarks: "It might have been thought by the compassionate that the war-beaten Hannay had done enough for honour; and Mr. Buchan was no doubt loath to drag him out of his handsome house, Fosse Manor […] where he was spending a halcyon time with her [his wife] and their son […]." (McQuilland 1924: 321)

Since both novelists represent the utopian space as seen from a contemporary perspective, they offer insights into the cultural processes of public opinion-making and societal self-assertion that characterise the period immediately before and after World War One. In this sense the representation of the garden city or the garden suburb by Chesterton and Buchan becomes not only a screen for the projection of social anxieties but a site of territorial conflict in which the material representation of a utopian dream is challenged and deconstructed by its critics. Their particular line of attack reveals not only the deep-rooted reflexes of British society towards the experimental and the utopian but also reaffirms the innate myths of Englishness as viable counter-utopias.

The two novels grant an insight into the process by which utopian spaces enter into a close interrelationship with their criticism. In this process, the counter-utopian is a spin-off of the deconstruction of the utopian space; that is, it is constructed against those forces which seem to threaten the complacency of a socio-economic settlement often nostalgically envisioned by conservative writers as "Old England" with a capital 'O'. This becomes particularly clear in Buchan's novel: whenever the pace of action allows its author to reflect on the connotations of his settings, one finds Buchan's idea of England to be a projection of artificial set pieces of Englishness rather than a tangible network of places. Since the plot of his spy-story links the spatial arrangements in the text, the aesthetic impression derived from the individual spatial vignettes enters into a system of interrelations and interconnections that counters every utopian threat with a counter-utopian answer. The conservative reaction to the garden city or garden suburb thus helps to sense the conflicts shaping the projected collective self of British society.

Utopias are first of all characterised by the cultural practices of the intentional communities which they accommodate. This analysis has aimed to examine the sets of differentiation and identification which the perception of these utopian spaces puts into operation. Seen from this particular perspective, the representation of the garden city discloses the utopian threat posed by this specific 'real' – or the real threat of the utopian – and makes explicit how this threat provokes and defines some crucial aspects of the conservative reaction to it. In their attempt to undermine and counterpoise what is seen as a utopian subversion, its critics digress into the construction and idealisation of

a reality that is at heart more utopian than the idea of the garden city itself. Therefore, what one can see in Buchan's spy-novel is a cross-fertilisation between the criticised traits of the utopian space and the counter-utopian efforts it provokes. It is clear that the counter-image itself would not qualify to be called 'utopian' if the discourse itself was either strictly dismissive or exclusively aesthetic. In Buchan's writing in particular, however, aesthetic discourse and social criticism are closely interlinked.

To say that in *Mr Standfast* a utopian reality is countered by a real utopia may admittedly be a paradox but it still expresses the issue in a nutshell. The irony clearly is – and here one might want to recall Lepenies' observation of the 'Utopieverbot' in utopian societies mentioned at the beginning – that the conservative writers may criticise, deconstruct and dismiss the utopian spaces of the garden city not primarily for their subversive effect on society but for the threat they pose to the essentially utopian core of the collective myths of Englishness propagated in their texts. Looked at from this angle, the narratives of Chesterton and Buchan reveal themselves as more intrinsically utopian than the spaces they attack. This, of course, may be all too playful and paradoxical a reading of the anti-utopian efforts one can observe in Chesterton and Buchan but how real, one may ask, has the idea of rural England ever been during the twentieth century?

To conclude, one may glance once more at Buchan. In the dedicatory epistle to *Greenmantle* he almost playfully calls upon his readers: "Let no man or woman call its events improbable. The war has driven that word from our vocabulary, and melodrama has become the prosiest realism." (Buchan 1927: v) In such a world the real passes for utopian and the utopian becomes the real.

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The Land that Time Forgot: Fictions of Antarctic Temporality

Elizabeth Leane

Abstract: Antarctica's unique spatiality – its isolation, its position on the 'bottom' of the world, its seemingly limitless icescape – produces a complex and contradictory temporality. The preserving power of ice, along with the unfamiliar diurnal rhythms of high latitudes, gives the sense that time progresses differently in the southernmost continent. Antarctica thus offers itself as an ideal location for speculative fiction dealing with strange temporal phenomena, including 'allochronic' fiction – novels in which different periods in history are juxtaposed – and 'cryonic' fiction, in which ice acts as a form of time machine, allowing a living being effectively to fast-forward into the future. With the advent of global warming, the Antarctic ice has taken on increased temporal significance: its layers of ice provide a record of past ages and hence a means of predicting the future, and its collapsing ice shelves ominously point towards catastrophes to come. Antarctica has become a literal futurescape, an idea that dystopian writers (and filmmakers) have seized upon. Focussing primarily on science fiction but also drawing on exploration narratives, this paper explores the way in which time and space are intertwined in textual representations of Antarctica.

Key names and concepts: allochronic fiction – Antarctica – chronotope – cryonic fiction – futurescape – 'lost world' romance – temporality

In 2005, the Australian firm Skin Doctors, makers of "cosmeceuticals", advertised a new product: a "cosmetic collagen alternative" called "Antarctilyne". "Skin Doctors' latest moisturiser sounds as if it's straight out of a science fiction novel", enthused *Who* magazine, "but this is for real. Characteristics of a bacterial strain from an Antarctic glacier have been adapted for the face cream" (Anon. 2005). The company's website explains that the active ingredient of Antarctilyne is a molecule discovered at the bottom of an Antarctic glacier. If this molecule has the resilience to withstand the hostile conditions of the South Polar continent, Skin Doctors reason, "just imagine what it could do for your skin!"

The power of this marketing campaign lies in its harnessing of a series of qualities associated with the Antarctic continent, and its synecdochal projection of them onto the "bacterial strain" (and hence the skin cream). The unique spatiality of the continent – its seemingly blank white spaces – suggests smooth, unblemished skin; and its clean, sterile, unearthly environment evokes the laboratory or the "science fiction novel", a suitable source for a high-tech anti-wrinkle solution. But it is not only notions of Antarctic space that give this advertisement its effectiveness; just as important is Antarctic *time*. Antarctilyne's main claim is that it 'freezes' the historical progress of events. This claim draws its strength from the preserving qualities of the ice in which the bacteria was found, but also from a more general sense of Antarctica as a place with its own distinct temporality, different from the rest of the world.

Who magazine is right to describe the discovery that led to Antarctilyne as science fictional. Nowhere is the sense of Antarctica as a continent of temporal anomalies more evident than in the imaginative narratives woven around it – narratives that regularly take the form of speculative fiction: utopias; fantastic voyages; gothic horrors; scientific romances; stories of lost worlds, hollow Earths and ancient buried beings. Critics have slowly begun to analyse the way in which Antarctic spatiality lends itself to certain genres and tropes (see e.g. Pyne 1986; Simpson-Housley 1992; Nelson 1997; Leane 2005a). But Antarctic temporality, as it is manifested in literature, has so far gone largely unexamined. This chapter explores the way in which time and space are intertwined in textual representations of Antarctica, concentrating primarily on speculative fiction, but also drawing at times from non-fiction exploration narratives.

Of the literary critical tools available to talk about the temporal associations of a place, the most prominent is Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "chronotope", explained in his *Dialogic Imagination*. Bakhtin coined the term, which literally means "time space", to talk about "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (1981: 84). He uses 'chronotope' in an abstract sense to refer to the way that time and space are linked within a genre, but also more concretely to describe a defined space within the world of the text that is connected with a specific temporality. Thus, Bakhtin argues that the castle in Gothic novels is "saturated through and through" with "the time of the historical past",

and the provincial town in nineteenth-century realist novels is a space linked with "cyclical, everyday time" (245-48). For Bakhtin, these chronotopes are "the organizing centres for the fundamental narrative events of the novel […] to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative" (250).

The concept of the chronotope neatly encapsulates the inseparability of the sense of time and place in Antarctic narratives. But the task of understanding the nature of this chronotope, relatively straightforward in the case of the Gothic castle, is messier when it comes to Antarctica, because the continent has multiple and contradictory relationships with time. Sometimes a concern with anomalous temporality can emerge in the narrative structure of Antarctic-based novels. For instance, one critic writing about H. P. Lovecraft's horror story *At the Mountains of Madness* emphasizes the unusual "treatment of time" in this text: "the major portion of the total elapsed time comes from the action of the first 35% of the text, and the remaining 65% of the text deals with the events of a mere sixteen hours – as if, in those brief but portentous hours, time itself has been as frozen as the polar wastes in which the final revelations come" (Burleson 1983: 166).

For the most part, however, those who write creatively about Antarctica are not much interested in the kinds of formal experiments with narrative time that characterize many modernist and postmodernist novels. The majority of Antarctic-based novels and short stories employ a traditional, realist, linear time scheme. Arguably this formal conservatism is itself a response to the temporal confusion of the continent: just as science fiction writers find it difficult to describe an experimental world through an experimental style, so Antarctica's temporalities can best be explored when other variables – such as the pace and direction of the narrative – remain constant and familiar.

Yet, even when Antarctic chronotopes are explored thematically rather than formally, these explorations often pull in contrary directions. Antarctica is a place that appears to offer direct access to the past, its ice acting as a kind of archive of previous ages; but it also points ominously towards future perils. It enables time to be stretched out, so that a day lasts several months, or to be compressed, so that a hundred years seems no more than a day. Antarctica acts as a time machine, in science as well as fiction and cosmetics advertisements;

little wonder that the Tardis has landed there twice.[1] To understand fully the role that the southernmost continent plays in the modern imagination, it is necessary to explore its strange relationship with time.

1. Diurnal Disturbances

Antarctic temporal strangeness reaches its zenith at the South Pole itself: a singularity (in the mathematical sense) within the systematized social temporality of time zones. Expeditioners at Scott-Amundsen base must arbitrarily select one of these zones, as they technically belong to none. They choose not, as might be imagined, the time zone of their home nation, but that of the largest U.S. Antarctic station, McMurdo, which in turn uses the local time of New Zealand, the operational base for U.S. flights to the continent. Consequently, and rather charmingly, the Scott-Amundsen expeditioners adopt daylight savings time when New Zealanders do, even though their days and nights are effectively six months long. At the South Pole, observes travel writer Barry Lopez, "the crush of meridians […] the absence of any event even approaching a sunset" makes "the issue of determining the hour only a vaguely foreboding curiosity" (1989: 43). And while all other places within Antarctica technically belong to a time zone, the diurnal disturbances that achieve their limit at the Pole are evident to varying degrees throughout the far southern latitudes.

Time is intimately linked to spatial location in a continent that is, in parts, as featureless as the ocean, and where the proximity of the Magnetic Pole makes compasses unreliable. Early explorers required accurate chronometers in order to navigate their sledging trips. Thus Scott, in the diary of his ill-fated polar journey, finds it "very annoying" to discover that his companion Birdie Bowers' watch has lost twenty-six minutes, and worries about how his party will relocate food depots if their time-keeping is not trustworthy (1973: 418). But even ignoring navigation issues, the absence of familiar patterns of night and day would have been confusing in a deep bodily sense for these

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[1] The Time Lord visits Antarctica in two different *Dr Who* television series, "The Seeds of Doom" (1976) and "The Tenth Planet" (1966). Both have also appeared as books, and a written sequel to the latter, *Iceberg*, by David Banks, was published in 1993.

(as for present-day) explorers. This is one reason why the regular upkeep of a diary is such a significant activity in the far south: in addition to its obvious functions of keeping a record of events and providing psychological release, it forms an important way of maintaining a sense of control over time. Likewise, irregular entries can indicate high anxiety and impending loss of control. So, in Scott's remarkably well-kept diary, the entry beginning "*Friday, March 16 or Saturday 17* – Lost track of dates ..." suggests that the end is not far. It is this same entry that describes Lawrence 'Titus' Oates' departure from the expedition tent and from history, with the famous words: "I'm just going outside and may be some time" (463-64). His exit line is justly known for its cool understatement, but in this context its vagueness is equally striking: where the demarcated time of the diary corresponds to a sense of control and survival, the indefiniteness of "some time" signals the relinquishing of this control and the embracing of death.

Just as the diary acted as a personal metronome for early Antarctic explorers, the celebration of anniversaries – birthdays, public holidays, significant dates in the expedition's progress – represented a kind of communal time-keeping. As the night grew longer, and the passage of time vaguer, these anniversaries proliferated. "The mania for celebration became so great", writes Douglas Mawson of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition, "that reference was frequently made to the almanac. During one featureless interval, the anniversary of the First Lighting of London by Gas was observed with extraordinary *éclat*" (1915: 146). The regular holding of Sunday services performed the same function, as did the production of an expedition 'newspaper', such as Scott's *South Polar Times* or Mawson's *Adelie Blizzard*. This organ traditionally released its first issue at the same time that the sun disappeared for the polar winter, and later issues followed as regularly as possible throughout the dark season. Men living together in cramped quarters had no literal need, of course, for news of their own activities; the high-latitude newspaper served other functions. Not only the regular appearance of its issues but the very concept of the newspaper provided a reassuring sense of stable temporality. Benedict Anderson has argued in a more general context that the emergence of the newspaper as a form was closely tied to the development of a sense of shared temporality within a community (1983: 30). Newspapers contain accounts of events joined only by "simple calendrical coincidence" (37); their readers are likewise linked by their simultane-

ous consumption of the material in the newspaper's pages. By producing their own newspaper, Heroic-Era explorers created an imaginary sense of temporal unity with the world beyond their Antarctic outposts.[2]

This preoccupation with time in a featureless environment also informs fictional inhabitations of Antarctica, such as Marie Darrieussecq's *White* (2003; English translation 2005). *White* is set in a fictional European station close to the South Pole, with the action taking place in the near future, about a hundred years after Scott's death. Its concern, however, is very much with the past: with Antarctica's past, and the traumatic pasts of the two main protagonists, radio communications expert Edmée Blanco and heating engineer Peter Tomson. The narrative begins with alternating descriptions of their separate journeys to Antarctica – journeys joined only by their temporal coincidence and their eventual intersection. Peter arrives first by aeroplane, and his time is then measured against Edmée's progress in an icebreaker: "Pete Tomson spends the rest of the day checking out the generator. Never mind about the word 'day', when the sun does not set. What is certain is that, at the same time, up, crack, *chchch*, Edmée Blanco is breaking the ice and advancing towards Pete Tomson" (35). This constant obsession with time and progress is tied to the unusual narrative voice – a communal voice composed of a chorus of ghosts. Spirits of individual explorers, and even their animals, drift in and out of focus, but most often these voices speak as an undifferentiated group. As ghosts, they are not constrained by time, and neither is their narrative: "if we want, we can view the film speeded up, forwards or backwards, in slow motion, the film of the approach, the film of the ice, the film of time solidifying here like ice. […] We can let ourselves be rocked in time to the frost: imagine the power to make the rigging turn white" (31). In the way of ghosts, they are tied to place – "the South Pole is our identity" (34) – and movement through time is their primary freedom. Their anomalous temporal existences are matched by Antarctica's.

For Pete and Edmée, the season at the station is a kind of time outside of time, a hiatus in their life narratives. As one reviewer remarks, "*White* is not so much a story as an ongoing situation", with

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[2] See Leane 2005b for a more detailed discussion of the role of newspapers on Antarctic expeditions.

the protagonists floating "in some spirit-filled Sartrian limbo" (Joughin 2005: 54). The ghosts correspondingly narrate their tale predominantly in the present tense. Near the South Pole, it seems, historical time ceases, and all events take place simultaneously, trapped in a kind of temporal gravity well:

> Peter Tomson's preoccupations are quite different from those of Robert Falcon Scott, one century earlier; but it's not hard to imagine that the same vortex of dead time unravels here every year (we rush in); that blatant hollows are formed in the progression of time (we rush in); and that only winners like Amundsen manage to extricate themselves from them, whipping onwards their dogs and their hours. (Darrieussecq 2005: 96)

Time takes on its own inertia and solidity here: it is a quicksand sucking on its victims, a polar whirlpool spinning them into its depths. To survive Antarctica is to take control of time, to shape it to your will rather than let it shape you. The protagonists attempt this as best as they can. Pete becomes increasingly quick at completing his technical tasks, to prepare for "feeling time slow down" (97). Edmée is bereft of all sense of location in time and in language: "It's as if even the simplest words are losing their meaning; as if 'this evening' refers to indefinite time, as if 'urgent' means 'later', as if a verb in the future describes a completed action" (120). She turns for solace to Scott's diary, only to read the entry describing the inexplicable loss of twenty-six minutes on Bowers' watch.

The sole escape for Pete and Edmée from this temporal quagmire is to find forward direction in acceptance of each other, rather than remaining constrained by the memories of their individual haunted pasts. Towards the end of novel, they drive a scooter out of the station at four in the morning, travelling fifteen kilometres to the Pole itself. Here they kiss: "History, of course, does not turn over in its cavern. Time only glances back over its shoulder, like an animal raising its snout for a moment from the carcass it is devouring. But it is enough for space to be able to dig out its slopes again ..." (130). At this point, they discover in the snow an old-fashioned watch, warm and ticking. While their own modern watches indicate they have been absent from the station for twenty-six minutes, the older watch – it is, of course, Bowers' watch – remains at four o'clock. On their return, they discover that in fact a half-day has passed, and it is now four in

the afternoon; Bowers' watch has already run down, and can no longer be located. These polar time-slips extend to Edmée's own bodily rhythms: she realises that in seventy-two days at the station, she has had her period only once (141). The obvious and correct conclusion – a pregnancy – is confused by the fact that her relationship with Pete began only towards the end of their stay, and the moment of conception, though vague, appears to occur during their trip home on an icebreaker. However, by this stage – the end of the novel – all temporal confusions have dissipated: the foetus is steadily growing, "[t]he blood circulates, the sea is smooth, the Earth spins, and at both poles all is calm and white" (145). The rhythms of everyday life resume as the ship sails northward, leaving behind the unearthly stasis of the Antarctic continent.

2. The Land that Time Forgot: Allochronic Fiction

Diurnal disturbances, temporal featurelessness and resulting anxieties are not, of course, confined to the far southern regions; they apply equally to the far north. But the different spatialities of the Arctic and Antarctic translate to different temporalities. The Arctic encompasses inhabited regions; an ocean surrounded by land; it is continuous with the landmasses of the northern hemisphere, and includes large parts of Canada, Russia and several European countries. Antarctica, by contrast, is a continent surrounded by a rough and extensive ocean: it is spatially separate. It is not only Antarctica's strange diurnal patterns that signal its temporal anomalousness, but its spatial isolation. This is true in the texts mentioned above, but even more so in a group of novels which use Antarctica to stage the juxtaposition of two or more periods in history: narratives that might be termed 'allochronic fiction'.

In fiction, and in everyday speech, time is often figured through spatial metaphor. Thus a process of development in time can be described as a journey, even though little actual spatial movement occurs. Conversely, the journey through space is often associated with movement in time. The more remote the destination from population centres and infrastructure, the more acute the sense of a time shift. This temporal distancing is not neutral, but carries political implications. The anthropological device of creating distance between observer and observed by positioning the latter in a different time – la-

belling a people 'prehistorical' or 'primitive' or 'primeval' – is well known. Johannes Fabian, in *Time and the Other*, uses the terms "denial of coevalness" and "allochronism" to describe this kind of chronological displacement (1983: 31). Allochronism is not geographically limited; as Fabian points out, Western societies denigrate particular aspects of their own cultures by labelling them in this way (30). However, this rhetorical device is particularly readily applied to regions or peoples that are spatially remote. An obvious case in point is the Australian Aborigines, consistently labelled as "stone age" by European colonisers (McGregor 1997: 33-48). To relegate a people to a past age is to refuse their capacity to change: whether they are doomed in Social Darwinist terms as destined for extinction or nostalgically romanticised, they are denied a future.

Antarctica, of course, is not a people but a continent; yet the effect of allochronism can be political in its case as well. Robin Burns, in her analysis of women's experiences in Antarctica, *Just Tell Them I Survived*, argues that in the late twentieth century, when women were increasingly expanding their presence in non-traditional fields, "Antarctica seemed caught in a time warp contingent on its 'special' status" (2001: vii). The sense of Antarctica as a place apart meant it could also be considered a time apart, and its communities could sustain views of gender roles outdated elsewhere.

This image of an Antarctic community caught in a time warp is one that was fostered by creative writers before the continent began to be explored. One of the most prominent genres within Antarctic fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the romance of the 'lost world'. This genre, Peter Nicholls observes, "belonged to a cartographically 'closed' world" (1995: 735): it flourished at a time when blank spaces on the map were fast disappearing, and Antarctica, along with the Arctic, the Himalayas, the Amazon basin and the Australian outback, was one of the few enclaves still predominantly unexplored. As Nicholls notes, the genre was "largely anachronistic […] from its beginning" (1995: 735): certainly in the case of Antarctica, writers continued to postulate unknown southern worlds inhabited by an array of unlikely creatures long after the continent's icy, hostile nature had been established. In nineteenth-century Antarctic lost-world narratives, a ring of ice hides a temperate or tropical interior (land or island-dotted sea) harbouring beings who seem to belong to an earlier stage in history – descendants of people who long

ago colonised the region and have remained isolated ever since. After the Pole had been reached, writers commonly replaced the hidden inhabitable land by less obviously unrealistic scenarios, such as caverns beneath the ice. In either case, the narrative inevitably centres on the intrusion into the lost polar civilization of contemporary protagonists, so that the far south becomes the site of different but co-existing temporalities.

Although there were a number of remote locations that leant themselves to lost-world narratives, Antarctica at the turn of the twentieth century was particularly suited to allochronic fictions. The discovery of an entirely uninhabited and undeveloped continent during a period of rapid industrialization and mechanization is appealingly incongruous, suggesting an apparent juxtaposition of the modern and the prehistoric. Antarctica, as Elena Glasberg has observed, is in this sense "a spatialized symbol of time, of the lateness of the hour" (2002: 100). In the early nineteenth century, when Australia – the other half of the erstwhile *terra australis incognita* – was the site of several growing colonies, no one had even glimpsed the Antarctic continent. By the end of the century, when the era of European imperialism had already reached its height, the first official landing on Antarctica had only just occurred. By the time Robert Scott and Roald Amundsen were laboriously making their way on foot and ski to the South Pole, the motor car, the aeroplane and the special theory of relativity had been invented. Mawson's Antarctic expedition of 1911-14 communicated with the outside world through telegraphy. The most remote of lands was explored when communications technologies were altering perceptions of distance, when the "time-space compression" characteristic of the modern era was already well in train (Dodds 1997: 47; Harvey 1989: 240). As Les Murray's poem "Antarctica" suggests, the continent is simultaneously the "[m]ost modern of the Great South Lands" and "prehuman" (1990: 83). Prior to satellite mapping and the establishment of numerous scientific stations, it provided the perfect 'lost world' in the midst of modernity.

In some narratives, the lost people discovered in Antarctica are culturally or technologically superior to the author's own society. The nineteenth century was the hey-day of Antarctic utopias (see Leane 2004), the continent providing the ultimate in empty, remote space on which to inscribe an alternative social vision. Examples include Frank Cowan's *Revi-Lona* (ca. 1880s), in which a sailor finds (and eventu-

ally destroys) a harmonious matriarchal society in the far south; Christopher Spotswood's *Voyage of Will Rogers to the South Pole* (1888), in which the Antarctic land of "Bencolo" is as praiseworthy as its name suggests; and George McIver's aptly titled *Neuroomia* (1894), which depicts a cultivated, orderly society centred around a stately South Polar city.

More often in 'lost world' fiction, however, the community discovered in the Antarctic interior is not enlightened but primitive, 'frozen' in the undeveloped state of its ancestors while the rest of humanity moved on. In many cases, the 'lost race' represents an earlier evolutionary stage and reflects post-Darwinian anxieties about racial hierarchies. The best-known examples are Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Land that Time Forgot* (1918) and its two sequels. Burroughs' novels are set in "Caspak", a far southern continent fringed by icebergs and inhabited by humanity's evolutionary ancestors, along with a variety of prehistoric creatures. Writing several years after Amundsen reached the South Pole, Burroughs invented an alternative Antarctica in order to relive myths of a tropical polar land when they were well past their used-by date. Similar stories followed. John Taine's *The Greatest Adventure* (1928) sees a scientist, his spirited daughter and their companions fend off dinosaurs in caverns beneath the Antarctic ice. In Edison Marshall's *Dian of the Lost Land* (1935), two scientists flying an aeroplane to a hidden region of Antarctic tundra are effectively "transported to the Glacial Age, to the wild glory of the Age of Mammals, where the splendid Cro-Magnon and the darkened Neanderthal fought their savage wars" (1966: 111). One of the men, realizing that the Cro-Magnons have "preserved something that will never come again on this earth", determines that he will in turn fight to "preserve these wonderful people" until society is ready to accept them without exploitation (80). He stays behind when his companion flies away, revelling in the chance to release the atavistic qualities within himself: "He was not the lawful child of civilization, but a throwback to the Stone Age. […] Adam, the youth, the primal man, had entered into his heritage" (148).

In a few cases, the time to which the lost race harks back is not a vague primeval era, but a specific period in history. One example is Eugene Bisbee's *Treasure of the Ice* (1898), in which ancient Greek culture is discovered flourishing in the Antarctic. Charles Stilson's *Polaris of the Snows* (1915) also features a people described as "an

offshoot of old Greece" (1965: 92), and Charles Dake's *A Strange Discovery* (1899) opts for descendents of ancient Rome. Most explicit about its juxtaposition of two historical periods is Edward Bouvé's *Centuries Apart* (1894); the second chapter is entitled "The Meeting of the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries". Set during the American civil war, *Centuries Apart* recounts the adventures of Captain Arthur Percy, from whose journal the narrative is purportedly constructed. Percy sails in a group of ships transporting Union soldiers from the east to the west coast of North America. Forced south by storms off Cape Horn, the ships are drawn through a channel in the ice by the warm current so ubiquitous in Antarctic fiction of this period. The soldiers find themselves in an open polar sea, where they encounter a "medieval" ship crewed by people wearing period dress and speaking an archaic English: "It was the Middle Ages over again, and the Americans gazed as if in a dream" (16). The Antarcticans are refugees from a much earlier civil war: they are the ancestors of English exiles who, disgruntled by the accession of Henry Tudor in 1485, embarked with a group of French people to form a new colony. Their Antarctic settlement is a literal replica of northern geography: "South England", an island "seeming somewhat like unto England" (45) is separated by a channel from "La Nouvelle France". Society, dress and customs in both countries have stalled in sixteenth-century mode. This is effectively a time-travel story, and its most obvious forebear is Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, published five years earlier. But where, in that tale, a bump on the head is required to send the Yankee into the past, in Bouvé's novel Antarctica functions as a time machine that makes the past simultaneous with the present.

Heroic-Era explorers themselves used the devices of speculative fiction to portray a temporally distanced Antarctica, although rather than bringing the past into the present, they tended to imagine the present as past. The in-house newspaper of Scott's two expeditions, the *South Polar Times*, published a series of six semi-fictional pieces in which the men satirized their own activities by reporting them in the form of archaic documents discovered by future societies. These have titles such as "Leaves from an Ancient Papyrus", "Hieroglyphic Record" and "Extracts from Some Antarctic Archives". One of Scott's men, Frank Debenham, explains that "The idea behind the Archives is that many centuries hence tourists might visit the scene of the expedition on Ross Island and might there dig up bricks with the story en-

graved or painted on them, just as archaeologists piece together the happenings of two thousand years ago in Egypt or Mesopotamia" (1952: 18). The articles are written in a mock-ancient tongue, designed to evoke the estrangement effect that Edwardian speech might produce in readers hundreds of years in the future. The 'ancient manuscript' device, with its imagined temporal shift, enabled the expeditioners to make fun of each other from a secure distance – an important thing when a group of men are living together in one hut for several years. But, on another level, it also allowed them to speculate, under the guise of humour, that their achievements would indeed have some meaning for posterity. The expedition represented itself to itself as a kind of time-capsule waiting for discovery by a future society.

Fictions of this kind can be classed as auto-allochronic – expeditioners deny their own coevalness, placing their present as the past of the outside world, and conversely representing the outside world as their future. This is not surprising, given the rudimentary way in which they were forced to live. Mawson considered his expeditioners, wintering in a snow-covered hut in 1913, "a case of history repeating itself – cave man and the great ice age" (1988: 195). They agreed: Morton Moyes, in an account of his experiences during Mawson's expedition, compares the Antarctic explorer to "a Neanderthal simian on some desperate migration to a land of firewood and hunting" (1964: 22). Equally relevant in this context was their spatial isolation. The extreme remoteness and inaccessibility of the Antarctic continent meant that early explorers were removed from all contact with the outside world for months or even years. Their members, on return to the north, were like time travellers emerging into an unknown future. The most famous case of this temporal dislocation comes from Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition, which had no outside contact from the time it left South Georgia in December 1914 to Shackleton's return there in May 1916. Having departed Britain the same week that war was declared, Shackleton expected the conflict to be finished by the time he returned. Greeting whalers at South Georgia after spending nearly eighteen months trapped in ice, he asked "… when was the war over?" and was informed, "The war is not over […] Millions are being killed. Europe is mad. The world is mad" (Shackleton 1999: 227). Even those intermittently in contact with the north, such as Mawson's men, who had the benefit of a temperamental wireless communications system, felt that returning to society would be tantamount to

travelling into the future. One anonymous contributor to the *Adelie Blizzard*, writing about the "Evolution of Women", conveys a "horrible premonition that the times have changed; that like Rip Van Winkle in his day, we shall after two years of hibernation, find ourselves confronted with a being far more terrible than a suffragette" (McLean 1913: 18). Both Scott's and Mawson's expeditioners wrote several fictional pieces which speculated about or satirized their likely reception on return to society. Writing fiction set in the future which posited their own present as past allowed these men to prepare psychologically for the changes that lay ahead.

3. Antarctic Cryonics

While in Antarctic allochronic fictions the continent's ice functions metaphorically, its preserving powers underscoring the apparent preservation of an earlier time period, in a number of other tales the Antarctic ice moves from being a metaphor to a literal device for decelerating or stopping the changes brought on by time. The most extreme, and most comical, fictional example of anomalous temporalities produced by icy conditions is the conceit of "frozen words", the literary history of which has been outlined by Edward M. Wilson and P. Rickard. The idea stretches back to Plutarch's *Moralia*, which relates a report "that in a certain city words congealed with the cold the moment they were spoken, and later, as they thawed out, people heard in the summer what they had said in the winter." This absurd idea is then explained as a metaphor for delayed understanding: philosophical ideas heard by men in their youth are comprehended only when they grow old (quoted in Wilson and Rickard 1956: 95). The concept of "frozen words" is employed by a number of later writers (some of whom relocate the generic "city" to the North Pole), most famously and extensively by François Rabelais in his *History of Gargantua and Pantagruel*. These writers elaborated on the original conceit and suggested further absurdities, such as "polar wars" which are "frequently waged six months before they have been declared", and protestations of love which are heard amid a later quarrel (Jean Paul, quoted in Wilson and Rickard 1956: 107). None of the examples listed by Wilson and Rickard are specific to Antarctica (all of their examples pre-date its discovery), but the general principle – that ice and the freezing

process result in temporal paradoxes – is one that is employed repeatedly in Antarctic fiction. Antarctica offers at least one example of actual cryonics: the midge *Belgica Antarctica*, in its larval stage, is able to freeze over winter and effectively 'come to life' again after it thaws out.[3] The category of Antarctic literature that might be termed 'cryonic fiction' extrapolates this idea to larger bodies – both human and monstrous.

Although the term 'cryonics' appeared only in the mid-1960s, the idea of prolonging a life through freezing has a longer history in literature. In time-travel fiction, preservation in ice is the most popular of a variety of suspended animation devices that can take the place of a time machine (others include the long sleep or hypnotic trance) (Stableford 1995b). The earliest example of cryonics in fiction can be found in an Antarctic-based novel, W. Clark Russell's *The Frozen Pirate*, published in 1887 (Stableford 1995a). The eponymous buccaneer is discovered on a ship that has been frozen in an iceberg for fifty years; when accidentally defrosted, he comes to life, unaware of the half-century that has passed. Russell's pirate is the first in a long line of fictional creatures – often unearthly, and usually hostile – discovered buried in ice on the underside of the world. Typical examples are the terrifying alien creatures that feature in Lovecraft's serialized novel *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936) and John W. Campbell's short story "Who Goes There?" (1938). Lovecraft was familiar with Antarctic preservation stories; he had read *The Frozen Pirate* as a boy (Miéville 2005: xviii). In his tale, Campbell's, and later imitations such as the *Dr Who* series "The Seeds of Doom", creatures defrosted in Antarctic ice devastate an expedition base and threaten the world at large. In each case, it is the ancient and alien nature of the frozen organism – its obvious difference from other life forms – that is the primary source of fear. As China Miéville observes in his introduction to Lovecraft's novel, the "preserving power of the cold" allows "our supposed atavistic and repressed anxieties to be put on ice, and the Antarctic becomes almost vulgarly overdetermined as a site for psychically anxious fiction" (2005: xvii).

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[3] There are other arthropods that are able to supercool, and thus avoid freezing at low temperature, but *Belgica Antarctica* is the only species that is able to tolerate actual freezing (Block 1984: 203).

A 'real life' counterpart for these nightmare creatures can be located: in 2002, New Zealand scientists found signs of anthrax bacteria in Scott's huts at Cape Evans, possibly carried there by the mules and ponies Scott brought with him and preserved by the ice ever since. The story reignited earlier speculations that anthrax might have caused the death of Evans on the polar journey (Chapman 2002; Falckh 1987). While later attempts to isolate anthrax spores in the samples failed and the hut was declared safe, the incident raised the spectre of what might happen if a strain of bacteria or virus eradicated from the rest of the world remained hibernating, awaiting release, in the Antarctic ice.

Yet perhaps more fearful, because more real, than the notion of a hostile organism hidden in the ice, are the preserved bodies of unlucky expedition members. The frozen body of the explorer forms a central part of the southern continent's most frequently repeated story, that of 'Scott of the Antarctic'. The five members of Scott's party all died during the return from the Pole in early 1912, and their bodies are still encased in Antarctic ice. Evans and Oates were the first casualties, and their remains were never located. Scott, Bowers and Wilson died later in their tent; they were discovered by Cherry-Garrard and others the following southern spring and buried *in situ*. Their bodies have remained encased in the ice ever since, inexorably making their way towards the coast, and presumably will one day leave the continent inside calved icebergs. The idea of these preserved explorers slowly completing their original journey north is an evocative one. Although the bodies of Scott and his companions were in bad shape when found by Cherry-Garrard's party (Wheeler 2002: 142), it is tempting to imagine the dead men lying, protected from decay by the cold, exactly as they might have looked in life. The image of the men as preserved sleepers is further bolstered by the often-noted links between Scott and the fictional character of Peter Pan, a boy who does not age. Peter Pan's creator, J. M. Barrie, was close friends with Scott and godfather to Scott's son Peter, who was named after Barrie's character. Barrie himself made the connection between Scott's body and eternal youth explicit in his 1922 address *Courage*:

> When I think of Scott I remember the strange Alpine story of the youth who fell down a glacier and was lost, and of how a scientific companion, one of several who accompanied him, all young, computed that the body would again appear at a certain date and place

> many years afterwards. When that time came round some of the survivors returned to the glacier to see if the prediction would be fulfilled; all old men now; and the body reappeared as young as on the day he left them. So Scott and his comrades emerge out of the white immensities always young. (s.d.: 32)

The obvious point of comparison in the context of Barrie's address is the courage of the young men lost in the war just past, and his use of the present tense in the final line of this passage emphasizes that the explorer, like the fallen youth of the war, is immortalized in memory. However, while the bodies of those young soldiers decayed like any other, Scott's figural preservation is heavily underscored by his literal one. Similarly, the common euphemism of death-as-sleep takes on a certain materiality when applied to bodies preserved by ice.

In this sense, Scott's legend parallels that of other sleeping – and hence time-travelling – heroes. Bud Foote, in an analysis of time-travel stories, observes that the device of "The Long Sleep" is "reserved for cultural heroes": "The mythic landscape of Europe is littered with Arthurs, Barbarossas, and Karageorges, all sleeping up in caves until their peoples shall have need of them". In the First World War, Foote notes, there was a widely circulated story of "the appearance of a band of King Arthur's knights at a crucial moment for the English forces on the Western front" (1991: 25). Scott slots readily into this pantheon of slumbering heroes: he too provided a motivating example for British troops (Jones 2003: 254-61); his party's deeds were often celebrated in the language of chivalry (Jones 2003: 239f; Girouard 1981: 2-4); and (along with Oates) he has come to symbolise the last gasp of a certain type of British masculinity: one characterized by courage, self-sacrifice, and gallantry.

Yet, while the myth of the sleeping hero is a conservative, comforting one, when literalized in an explorer's frozen corpse it takes on disquieting resonances. The uncanniness of Scott's preserved body is the central focus of Jane Yolen and Robert J. Harris' short story "Requiem Antarctica", published in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* (2000). In this story, the expedition surgeon Edward Atkinson reports on his death bed that when he entered the tent of Scott, Wilson and Bowers, he found a letter from Scott providing an unexpected piece of information: he is a vampire, and can only stop his bloodthirsty activities by freezing himself. Atkinson explains to his confessor:

> What haunts me most is this […] By his own testimony Scott cannot truly die. He merely sleeps beneath the Antarctic ice, his thirst dormant. But what climatic changes might occur in millennia yet to come? In some distant age, the polar ice melted, might he not rise again to haunt an unrecognizable world, to feed a thirst grown gigantic over a thousand frozen centuries? (Yolen and Harris 2000: 61)

The threat of rising sea levels and flooded cities is nothing in comparison to the spectre of the voracious undead explorer. This vampiric Scott merges into the horrific aliens of Campbell's and Lovecraft's tales rather than King Arthur: not the victorious triumph of the sleeping hero but the return of the repressed.

The repressed returns with some vengeance in an Antarctic science fiction thriller published around the same time as "Requiem Antarctica", Scott Browning's *Searchers.* Browning's narrative centres on the mysterious disappearance of a fictional Antarctic expedition of 1909 led by Robert Talon, who believed that the South Magnetic Pole held the secret of time travel. The frozen body of one of Talon's men is discovered by scientists near McMurdo station in the late twentieth century. This find provokes two antagonistic brothers to continue the search for the Antarctic time tunnel (now understood as a "worm hole"), only to discover that they were members of the original expedition. The fragmented childhood memories that torment them belong to the nineteenth century, and their true origins lie much further in the past:

> As if unlocked by the words themselves, the crude foundations, long-abandoned, buried under the silencing ice, became whole again in Jared's mind … he stared at the scene, knowing finally the truth of who he was. It's what had drawn him to Antarctica to seek the origins of man, digging for bones in the hard ice, never realizing it was his own origins he sought. This place in the shadow of the foothills, in ancient Antarctica, had been a refuge for his family. (Browning 2001: 246)

Before their adventures in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the reader learns, the time-travelling brothers belonged to a group of refugees from a dystopian future Earth who found shelter in prehistoric Antarctica. The brothers' Antarctic journey provokes colliding visions of past, present and future that eventually leave one dead and the other his reluctant killer. The latter demands that the time-tunnel be buried

along with his brother's body: "The world isn't ready for this place" (255).

Where in these cases an explorer's material body sets a story in train, for another contemporary science fiction writer, Brenda Clough, the absence of a body provides the central conceit. In her short story "May Be Some Time" and its sequel "Tiptoe, on a Fence Post", Clough explores a scenario in which Oates' parting phrase becomes literal truth rather than stylish understatement. Her narrative takes up Oates' story where it usually ends, with his famous exit from the tent. Following a brief initial period of suffering, he falls into a warm sleep, waking again "after some unknowable time" (Clough 2001: 12). To his consternation, he learns that he has been brought one hundred and thirty-three years into the future. His rescuers have chosen him as a guinea pig to test their time-travel technology. Oates is uniquely qualified for such a test, they explain: his otherwise certain death renders his irreversible removal to a future time morally justifiable. Thanks to Scott's diary, Oates' body can be accurately located in space and time, "on the 80th parallel on March 16th, 1912"; yet the fact that it was never found, and the sterile environment in which it lies, means that no alteration in events can be caused by its absence (Clough 2001: 15, 31). Safely in the future, Oates is able to read over the myriad accounts of the expedition and see his own legend, as well as Scott's, in the making. But Oates' trials are not over. Like Mawson's expeditioners fearing the "evolution of women", he is confronted with social changes that he finds disturbing and inexplicable: "Captain Titus Oates considered that time travel and Antarctic exploration were not dissimilar activities. In both, the traveler leaped out into the unknown, to master it or die" (Clough 2002: 198). Facing the future, the narrative implies, requires at least as much courage as facing the Antarctic elements.

4. The Ice Core: Time Future

Thinking about future time in Antarctica brings a new perspective to the cryonic power of ice. While the preservation of historic huts and artefacts is welcome, the preservation of other materials – rubbish tips, human waste, discarded weather balloons – is an environmental hazard. As Darrieussecq's character Pete Tomson observes, picking up a

cigarette butt, "It takes five hundred years for a filter to degrade in a reasonably humid climate, so you can imagine that it will be preserved for all eternity here" (2005: 24). But this of course presumes that the ice itself will be preserved for all eternity. Fictions which figure Antarctica as frozen in time refuse to acknowledge that the continent, like the rest of the world, is subject to change, and that humanity's own actions could be rapidly accelerating this change.

In this context, it is important to realise that the Antarctic ice, which in some narratives is a means of collapsing the distance between present and past, can also act as a way to materially represent the plodding years. In John Wyndham's collection of science fiction short stories, *The Seeds of Time*, an analogy is drawn between the freezing of the sea and the passage of time: "The present was represented by the leading edge of the ice, gradually building up and advancing. Behind it was the solid ice that represented the past: in front, the still fluid water represented the future" (1959: 128). If time could have a physical representation, ice, it seems, would come closest. Tipped sideways, so that the accumulation of ice is vertical rather than horizontal, Wyndham's analogy takes on scientific as well as poetic meaning. As paleoclimatologist Richard Alley explains in his aptly titled book *The Two Mile Time Machine: Ice Cores, Abrupt Climate Change, and Our Future*, glaciers and ice sheets contain chemicals that can be analysed to understand past climatic conditions; they become, in Alley's phrase, "icy archives". Like the rings of a tree trunk, but on a far greater scale, a vertical cross-section of Antarctica's kilometres of ice provides scientists with a systematic record of the events of past aeons. Millions of years are spatially represented in its layers. This massive volume of data is compressed by scientists into the more manageable form of ice cores – narrow cylinders of ice drilled up from the continent and stored in sections for analysis: "long tubes of raw, blue, deep-frozen time", to borrow a phrase from Darrieussecq's *White* (2005: 89). And while the ice core solidifies time past, it also reflects on what is to come, enabling scientists to contextualize current climate change and make more accurate predictions.

Thus, cryonics makes Antarctica a space about time future as well as time past: a literal futurescape. Global miner's canaries, its melting ice shelves foretell catastrophes ahead. The disaster film *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), the title of which evokes both urgency and indefiniteness, focuses on an ice-core researcher, paleoclimatolo-

gist Jack Hall. The movie opens with Hall and his colleagues drilling on the Larsen B ice shelf in the Antarctic Peninsula, which dramatically breaks off while they are at work. This confirms what Hall's ice-core data has been indicating – a new ice age – but his warnings come too late to reverse the trend of global warming and prevent catastrophe. Scott's expeditioners at the start of the twentieth century anticipated this kind of narrative: one creative piece in the *South Polar Times* – a science-fictional twist on the much-beloved "old manuscript" genre – warns of the dangers of ignoring signs of climate change. Entitled "Fragments of a Manuscript Found by the People of Sirius When They Visited the Earth During the Exploration of the Solar System" and written by the expedition meteorologist George Simpson, it records in retrospect the catastrophic downfall of humankind. The twentieth century, according to the manuscript's now-dead narrator, was characterized by "luxury and self-indulgence", low birth rates and an increasing emphasis on life-prolonging technologies (Simpson 1914: 76f). With the discovery of an elixir of life, the production of which required the low temperatures of Antarctica, McMurdo Sound (the location of Scott's base) became the "centre of the world" (77). Eventually, however, rising temperatures and melting ice sheets meant the elixir became unavailable. The humans of the future consulted the records of Scott's expedition, and learned that "The greatest authority, the Physiographer [Griffith Taylor] […] took for granted that ice age succeeded tropical age, and tropical age succeeded ice age". They realised, too late, that climate does not remain stable; the narrator's dying thoughts are of "the folly which neglected the teachings of the Scientists of the British Antarctic Expedition 1910-1912" (78). Like the other 'ancient manuscripts' in the *South Polar Times*, the article is comic and affectionately mocking, but if its dire climate predictions had little serious edge at the time, they appear considerably more sobering a hundred years later.

Antarctica, then, provides the first warning of impending disaster in dystopian visions of future ecological devastation; but it also frequently acts as a last refuge in these scenarios. In the Japanese film *Fukkatsu No Hi* (1980) – released in English as *Virus* – a biological weapon is accidentally unleashed on the world. The only survivors (aside from one British submarine) are the staff of Antarctic stations, due to their isolation and the fact that the virus cannot withstand cold temperatures. They converge on a single base with the aim of regener-

ating the human race. Kevin Brockmeier's novel *The Brief History of the Dead* (2006) presents a pared-down version of the same scenario: it focuses on the one remaining member of the human race – a woman working at a remote Antarctic station – left alive after a virus has struck. Tess Williams' *Map of Power* (1996) describes another post-apocalyptic future: an Earth in which nuclear fallout and global warming have driven survivors down to the far south, now warm enough to sustain a marginal, nomadic, tribal society. These visions of the continent as a place of final resort are not limited to novelists and film-makers. When, in 2006, Stephen Hawking suggested that humanity needed to colonise space in case the Earth were rendered uninhabitable, fellow cosmologist Alan Guth proposed the more straightforward solution of an underground hideout beneath Antarctica (O'Malley 2006). For climatologists, cosmologists and novelists alike, the weight of the future presses down the Antarctic continent like countless tonnes of ice.

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The texts discussed here are united in their representation of Antarctica as a place offering an alternative to everyday, socialised clock-time. This quality is central to its attraction as both a wilderness reserve and a tourist destination. But the form of Antarctica's alternative time-sense mutates along with the continent. Some Antarctic temporalities are closely tied to the preoccupation of a historical period, as in the lost-world narratives of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; others persist across a range of texts over hundreds of years. It is better, then, to speak of a cluster of related and intersecting Antarctic chronotopes than to demand that the continent tie together space and time in a consistent, singular manner. Ultimately, perhaps, the fascination of Antarctica lies in its contradictions: it is a place of compressed time and extended time; haunted by monsters from the past and threatened by its own prophesies of the future; ancient and primeval, but forever young, pristine and wrinkle-free.

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"The Tower of Babble"?[1] The Role and Function of Fictive Languages in Utopian and Dystopian Fiction

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Abstract: The problematic nexus of language, thought, and reality perception has been at the centre of speculation in utopian, dystopian, and science fiction from the beginning. Starting from a Judaeo-Christian background, early utopias speculated about the retrieval of the imaginary and idealized protolanguage, envisioning a perfect language everyone can understand. In contrast, modern science fiction (sf) novels foreground alien languages or modes of non-verbal communication and the inherent problems of translation. Novels using linguistics as a major plot device draw heavily on either the weak or the strong form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and its premise that speaking a different language precludes seeing another culture's reality. Examples dealt with in this essay are Jack Vance's dystopia *The Languages of Pao* (1958), Samuel R. Delany's sf novel *Babel-17* (1966), Ian Watson's sf novel *The Embedding* (1973), and especially Suzette Haden Elgin's transgressive utopian dystopian *Native Tongue* series (1984-1994).

Key names and concepts: Hélène Cixous – Samuel R. Delany – Suzette Haden Elgin – Julia Kristeva – Jacques Lacan – linguistics – Marge Piercy – Edward Sapir – Sapir-Whorf hypothesis – Joan Slonczewski – transgressive utopian dystopias – Jack Vance – Ian Watson

> "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."
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> Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* (1871)

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[1] One of the characters in Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* disrespectfully recalls the "Tower of Babble" (*NT* 215), Elgin's ironic allusion to the early utopian hunt for the perfect language. References to the three books of the trilogy are given in the text in parentheses with the following abbreviations: *Native Tongue* (*NT*), *The Judas Rose* (*JR*), and *Earthsong* (*ES*).

"Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make Thoughtcrime impossible because there will be no words in which to express it."

George Orwell, *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* (1949)

"I promise you, you can do magic with words […].
You can change the world with words."

Kate Wilhelm, *Juniper Time* (1979)

1. Language in Fictive Worlds: "The Tower of Babble"

Any act of communication, whether spoken or written, naturally depends on verbal or non-verbal language as a means of mediation, and it is thus hardly surprising that language in particular is a key element in the literature of the future. The problematic nexus of language, thought, action and reality perception has been at the centre of speculation within the genre of utopia, dystopia, and science fiction (sf) from the beginning. After all, the language of this genre immerses us in a doubly unfamiliar fictive and future world. The topic of language also has had a long tradition within postmodern and feminist theories, discourse analysis, and critical linguistics.[2]

As signified by the neologism 'utopia', linguistics has been a key means by which this genre expresses new emancipatory concepts and phenomena, gadgets,[3] and alternative future realities and places, and allows speculation about the construction of alien and human (artificial or fictional) languages, about the power of language in politics and psycholinguistics, and ultimately about future (and by implication the author's present) English.

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2 See, for example, Kress and Hodge 1979, and for a discussion of the intersection of language and thought in terms of the categories race, sex, and class, see Bolinger 1980, Eschholz, Rosa and Clark 1982, and Boltz and Seyler 1982. Linked to the structural turn in the late 1960s and 1970s, language and linguistics were briefly not only a major focus in sf, utopian, and dystopian literature but also an academic focus. See also Barnes 1975, Delany 1977, and Meyers 1980.

3 For a concise summary of how words invented by utopian/sf authors – for example, astronaut, robot, and spaceship – have entered mainstream language, see Bailey 1991: 221ff. Neologisms as well as versions of initially fictitious gadgets or sciences have entered real life, e.g. cyborgs, cyberspace, and Captain Kirk's misquoted catchphrase "Beam me up, Scotty".

In his cultural history of English, *Images of English: A Cultural History of the Language* (1991), Richard W. Bailey traces the English language's (colonial) aspirations towards becoming a world language and gives a brief survey of the idealized view of imaginary English in utopian literature.[4] Up to the eighteenth century, early utopias focused on the retrieval of the imaginary and idealized protolanguage erased in the biblical Babylonian confusion, envisioning that the different languages symbolically originating at the Tower of Babel coalesced into one language of linguistic excellence everyone can understand. With this Judaeo-Christian origin in the background, early notions of a *lingua franca* therefore privileged those languages then considered 'holy' – Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, which today we think of as classical languages. Looked at from this angle, language history is a long sad story of constant decline and deterioration. Thomas More's *Utopia*, first published in Latin in 1516, captures both these notions in that the utopian text is written in the "holy" *lingua franca* of his time *and* valorises a secular language (the isolated ideal islanders of Utopia use their *native* tongue which, again, seems similar to Greek).

This literary treatment of language and its (ab)use in meaningful discourse has been of particular interest in the twentieth century which witnessed the rise of the dystopian novel in response to the century's history of atrocities, propaganda, and totalitarianism.[5] As Meyers has rightly pointed out in his seminal study *Aliens and Linguistics: Language Study and Science Fiction* (1980), there is a long tradition in utopian fiction that, on the one hand, involves elements of an ideal language (eutopia) – a language that serves a perfected human communication – and, on the other hand, centres on the abuse of language (dystopia). For Meyers, texts conventionally considered as utopias – works such as B. F. Skinner's controversial *Walden Two* (1948) and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974, originally subtitled

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4 See Bailey 1991: 215-36.

5 Mainstream literature also occasionally explores linguistics and the potential of language as an appropriate tool for communication. In William Burroughs' *Nova Express* (1964), for instance, language evaporates into word dust; John Barth's *Giles Goat-boy* (1966) contemplates the irrelevance of language; and Kurt Vonnegut's *Galapagos* (1985) blatantly considers language and the concept of lying as the ultimate source of human evil and failure. In general, postmodern literature as such is highly critical of language and its inherent discourse of power.

'An Ambiguous Utopia')[6] – therefore verge on the dystopian because they suggest the control of language, even if this is initially for benign purposes (e. g. the perfection of communication).[7]

Most dystopian texts anticipate either the (mis)communication between humans or humans and aliens or a deliberate manipulation of language and thought. These texts warn us of the cataclysmic (self-) damage that can be caused by the absence of the recognition and acknowledgement of the multiplicity of language(s) and its discourses and the subsequent silencing of first the *other* and then the self. Because language and communication indeed seem to make us human, such a failure of understanding, the occurrence of unanimous miscommunication, dehumanises us and makes us monstrous, as Mary Shelley's monster in *Frankenstein* (1818) painfully experiences. While some authors of dystopian fiction foreground the dangers of manipulating language, others view both language itself and its rhetoric as essentially corrupt.

In many dystopian fictions the standardised state-obliging language reflects the future's totalitarian system. Manipulated language

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6 On Le Guin's Annares, the colonial settlers speak a language called Annaresti, which is designed to express equality and basically expresses anarchist thinking. For example, the Annaresti language has no word for possession.

7 Meyers' discomfort with the potentially dystopian content of utopias stems as much from the narrative alternation between utopian and dystopian strands in some utopias of the twentieth century as from the reader's varying interpretative readings of the same text as either a utopia or a dystopia. Kumar, for instance, uses *The Dispossessed* as an example of contemporary utopia as "fragmented, both in its form and in its audience" (1987: 420), since utopia can no longer address or even wish to provide a blueprint for everyone or for society at large. This juxtaposition of utopia and dystopia within the same text, as, for example, in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) or in Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* (1975), leads to the contemporary subgenre of what I have termed 'transgressive utopian dystopias' (cf. Mohr 2005). Contrary to several critics' claims that the belief in utopia has diminished since utopia's heyday in the second half of the 19th century and its temporary resurgence as feminist utopia in the 1970s, it is my belief that utopia is very much alive. It has reappeared in the disguise of novels initially set as dystopias, predominantly in the contemporary feminist dystopias of the past thirty years. These 'transgressive utopian dystopias' resist neat categorisations of utopia/dystopia; rather, they present utopian strategies as an integral part of the dystopian narrative. While the described dystopian societies described are riven by manifold dualisms, the suggested utopian impulses aim at their transgression.

allows the state to control the citizens' thinking. Certain words are declared taboo, the choice of words and expressions is reduced, atrocities or injustices are euphemistically renamed for propaganda purposes, and the totalitarian state uses numbers to render its citizens anonymous, erasing their names and thus their individuality. Moreover, anything expressed in writing – history in general – or any everyday verbal exchange is censored or standardised by the dystopian system. In classical dystopias language helps to level thought and emotions according to the totalitarian system's needs; individuality and intimacy are Public Enemy Number One.

David Sisk arguably identifies the use of a fictional language as "a generic structural element" of dystopia: "without its inclusion, a fiction cannot be considered a dystopia" (1997: 174). Sisk's assertion, however, remains hypothetical, as he fails to prove his point. Indubitably, many dystopian novels contain elements of a fictional language or neologisms – an example being George Orwell's classical dystopia *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) – but very few actually construct a fictional language or an entire communication system. A large number of dystopias simultaneously designate language as both a locus of oppression or thought control *and* of resistance. In her book *Linguistics and Languages in Science Fiction-Fantasy* (1971), Myra Barnes was among the first to identify this focus on language as the instrument of both thought control and of resistance, particularly in the paradigmatic dystopian classics, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921, English trans. 1924), and Ayn Rand's *Anthem* (1938). In Zamyatin's *We*, the mechanistic, formulaic language mirrors the mechanical dystopian society; Huxley focuses on the editing of history, the erasure of the cultural memories and archives; and Orwell's fictional language Newspeak is the Party's rigid instrument geared towards controlling people, inducing social conformity, eradicating any notion of difference, and eventually creating human automata. Similar to Delany's *Babel-17*, the future language of Rand's *Anthem* edits out any sense of subjectivity and individuality, as the personal pronoun, the unspeakable 'I', has been eliminated.

This instrumentalisation of language is also at the centre of contemporary dystopias, for instance, in Margaret Atwood's transgressive utopian dystopia *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). As Ildney Cavalcanti claims, however, in male classical dystopias "[l]inguistic control and

the enforcement of strict linguistic normativity symbolically stand in for other forms of social (ideological, political, institutional) control", whereas contemporary female dystopias foreground "the linguistic construction of gender domination by telling stories about language as an instrument of both (men's) domination and (women's) liberation" (2000: 152). Many female dystopias thus appear as literary versions of the long history of women's exclusion from official historiography and the effective silencing of women in public discourse. In female dystopias, for instance, women are excluded from the public sphere. Speech is prohibited to women or reduced to formulaic phrases. Alternatively, women are subjected to a supervised (private) speech, their access to reading and writing is limited (e.g. in *The Handmaid's Tale*), or, in an extreme version, they are literally silenced by having their tongues cut off (e.g. in Suzy McKee Charnas' *The Walk to the End of the World*).

While utopian and dystopian fiction explores from different angles how humans might speak and communicate in an imagined future and what role language might play in this, sf novels frequently foreground alien languages or modes of non-verbal communication and the inherent problems of translation. The best-known fictional alien language in sf is probably *Star Trek*'s Klingon, developed by the linguist Marc Orkrand.[8] With the series' focus on inter-alien communication and contact, it is perhaps not surprising that *Star Trek* also toys with such amusing spoofs as the Ferengi language, a sexually explicit language without taboos, or versions of contemporary sub-cultural language (no form of greetings, but a direct addressing of the interlocutor; focus on action). Matthew Farrell's (aka Stephen Leigh) in many ways flawed 'first' novel, the first contact story *Thunder Rift*

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8 Klingon is in fact a fully developed fictional language. The American linguist Marc Orkrand, a specialist in Native American languages, partly based Klingon on indigenous languages and phonetics. The inverse positioning of object – predicate – subject and Klingon's exotic sound derived from its phonetics and its construction as an agglutinated language are all used to defamiliarise the audience. Orkrand also developed the more rudimentary Vulcan language for *Star Trek*. Similar to Elgin's Láadan, Klingon has many practising speakers around the world. The Klingon Language Institute, founded in Pennsylvania in 1992, publishes the linguistic journal *HolQeD* and is involved in the project of translating Shakespeare's works into Klingon. See [http://www.kli.org]. A number of books and audiotapes deal with Klingon phrases and culture. See also Orkrand 1985.

(2001), again differentiates between various tones of language, such as the Language-of-Intimacy and the Language-of-Command. In *Thunder Rift* the alien culture of the linguistically gifted "Blues" uses a web of resonances for communication and privileges hearing/sound. Thus the Blues call themselves "The-Children-of-She-Who-Sang-the-World" in their own language, while the humans focus on what they see: blue-skinned bipeds.

2. The Utopian World According to the Word

Surprisingly few authors of utopias and dystopias have actually constructed a whole new language. As Carl Malmgren points out, "in a relatively few science fictions, an invented language becomes *the* narrative dominant, informing the plot, the themes, and the discourse of the fiction" (1993: 6). Most utopias instead offer, at most, glimpses of a perfected language according to the respective author's viewpoint. A number of utopias contain hints about new communication devices or a few neologisms, while in truth this simply adds an exotic spice to the imagined worlds. Yet other writers describe in rather plain English the invented future society or, like Russell Hobban in *Riddley Walker* (1980), write in a fictive English dialect of the future.

Among the novels using linguistics as a major plot device are Jack Vance's dystopia *The Languages of Pao* (1958), Samuel R. Delany's sf novel *Babel-17* (1966), Ian Watson's sf novel *The Embedding* (1973), and Suzette Haden Elgin's transgressive utopian dystopian *Native Tongue* series (1984-1994). All these novels draw heavily on either the weak or the strong form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, i.e., the deconstructionist theory of linguistic relativity – formulated in the 1930s by the US-American anthropological linguist Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf[9] – and its premise that speaking

[9] Sapir and Whorf never actually defined an exact formulation of the hypothesis. According to Sapir, language and thought influence one another – "language is [...] a prepared road" (Sapir 1921: 15; cf. also 12-17) – while Whorf's more narrow approach claims that words determine the concepts conceived: "We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language" (Whorf 1956: 213). Other linguists argue against the hypothesis that *ideas* are independent of language and rather shape language; Hudson reformulates Whorf: "We dissect the universe along lines laid down by nature and by our communicative and cognitive needs, rather than by our language" (1984: 105). And

a different language precludes seeing another culture's reality, or, in reverse, presupposes "that language does become a mechanism for social change" (Elgin 1987: 178). In George W. Grace's words, the correlation between language, thought, and culture determines "reality construction […] [as] the primary function of human language" (1987: 139). Indeed, language functions as a linguistic filter of what we perceive of reality, and as language organizes thought and speech, all verbal communication depends on our linguistic concepts and is limited by the available vocabulary and its contained cultural codes. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been much debated, and its strong forms of linguistic determinism (language constitutes reality) and linguistic relativism (each language encodes concepts differently and constructs its own worldview) have been rejected in favour of the notion that language plays a considerable *role* in the construction of reality and the predisposition of a person's worldview. Far from being neutral, the discourse of any language describes *one* encoded vision of a particular social reality.

Watson's *The Embedding* (1973) perhaps illustrates this concept most explicitly. The novel's key tenets are, as the title indicates, the syntactic theory with its linguistic concepts of centre-embedding and self-embedding. Watson merges Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar – here (mis)understood as truly *universal* – with the strong Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. The interstellar alien linguist and communicator culture of the Sp'thra, the proverbial 'Signal Traders', are language typologists who seek to "superimpos[e] all languages" (137) by using language machines and to "explor[e] the syntax of reality [...] to *get beyond* this reality" (137). As one of the crew members of the Sp'thra spaceship explains:

> "'Their-Reality', 'Our-Reality', 'Your-Reality'– the mind's concepts of reality based on the environment it has evolved in – all are slightly different. Yet all are a part of 'This-Reality' – the overall totality of the present universe –" [...]

Hockett argues that human history proves a constant struggle against limitations of language: "Speech habits were revised to accommodate those [cultural] changes. [...] The causality is in all probability from 'philosophy of life' to language, rather than vice versa" (1968: 132f). For a further discussion of the hypothesis, see Brown 1958: 229-63, Carroll 1964: chap. 7, Slobin 1971; for a historical grounding, see Penn 1972.

> "There are so many ways of seeing This-Reality, from so many viewpoints. It is these viewpoints that we trade for. You might say we trade in realities –" [...]
>
> "We mean to put all these different viewpoints together, to deduce the entire signature of This-Reality. From this knowledge we shall deduce the reality modes external to it – grasp the Other-Reality, communicate with it, control it!" (137)

Ultimately, the Sp'thra seek to totalize reality and in doing so resemble in frightful fashion Orwell's Party and their Newspeak.

In *The Languages of Pao* Jack Vance also showcases language as the shaper of reality and as a tool for social engineering. The inhabitants of the pastoral planet Pao are a docile non-competitive people without any career ambitions, ruled by the Panarch:

> The Paonese sentence did not so much describe an act as it presented a picture of a situation. There were no verbs, no adjectives; no formal word comparison such as *good*, *better*, *best*. The typical Paonese saw himself as a cork on a sea of a million waves, lofted, lowered, thrust aside by incomprehensible forces – if he thought of himself as a discrete personality at all. He held his ruler in awe, gave unquestioning obedience, for on Pao nothing must vary, nothing must change. (3)

Their language is contrasted with that of the inhabitants of the trading planet Mercantile who speak a radically different language and perceive the world accordingly:

> Each language is a special tool with a particular capability. It is more than a means of communication, it is a system of thought […] Think of a language as the contour of a watershed, stopping flow in certain directions, channelling it into others. Language controls the mechanism of your mind. When people speak different languages, their minds work differently and they act differently. (70)

To introduce ways of thinking and abilities Pao lacks, the linguist elite creates three new languages to mould socially isolated groups from infancy for the mentality necessary for specific occupations. 'Valiant' turns passive and obedient Paonese into warriors, 'Technicant' produces technicians, and 'Cogitant' churns out the scientists Pao lacks. With the changed languages, the formerly peaceful monarchy turns into a segregated capitalist society where everyone is a prisoner of his or her one-dimensional reality-cum-language. Simultaneously, the

Paonese linguists secretly create the language 'Pastiche' – an amalgam of Valiant, Technicant, Cogitant, and Paonese – and thus achieve a much greater flexibility of thinking and perceiving reality than officially desired. The ensuing upheavals can only be pacified when all Paonese learn Pastiche and thus acquire a greater linguistic variety and a more complex reality. Foreign or multiple language acquisition, Vance seems to suggest, allows the incorporation of different worldviews and therefore a more multidimensional outlook on reality.

Samuel R. Delany's *Babel-17* also focuses on the (ab)use of language as a weapon. He introduces a female protagonist, the highly gifted poet-heroine Rydra Wong (ambiguously a pun on 'right or wrong'), "[t]his age's voice" (4), who is called upon by the Alliance (earth and other planets) to crack a mysterious alien language, Babel-17, suspected of giving instructions for sabotaging earth's military industry. Wong, who intuitively cracks any cryptographics, has "total verbal recall" (9) and also a knack for "muscle-reading" (20), meaning that she can 'read', almost telepathically, her interlocutors' body language or muscular tensions and thus their thoughts, which she then articulates in her poetry.[10] In a way, she becomes a ventriloquist and truly "this age's voice". Simultaneously, she is an expert at communication, verbally and mentally reaching out to her interlocutor and encouraging him/her to open up and connect.

Initially, she is fascinated by Babel-17, because since "language *is* thought" (23) learning Babel-17 means that Wong can enter a whole new, seemingly higher reality: "most of its words carry more information about the things they refer to than any four, five languages I know put together – and in less space" (69). Words become "intrinsically meaningful units", allowing the "human mind to receive, process, and transmit with much greater speed and precision than does English" (Collings 1986: 64). Trying to decode the alien language, Wong moves *inside* the language and marvels at its complexity: "Thinking in Babel-17 was like suddenly seeing all the way down through water to the bottom of a well that a moment ago you'd thought was only a few

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10 As Malmgren convincingly maintains, Wong symbolically represents "the Imagination" (1993: 11) in her starship's bizarre crew which is composed of characters that personify various parts of a strangely assembled human being. As the artist is the only one who can get beyond Babel-17, it seems that Delany assigns the faculty of the imagination an exceptional function in language and the formation of thought patterns as well as in the perception of reality.

feet deep" (113). However, here words do indeed "define, fix, [and] identify" (115) reality; and as Wong comes under Babel-17's influence – which literally translates the word Alliance into "one-who-has-invaded" (215) – she unwittingly turns into a saboteur because thinking in Babel-17 diabolically "'programs' a self-contained schizoid personality into the mind of whoever learns it, reinforced by self-hypnosis" (215). Additionally, the very absence of an "I" in Babel-17 "precludes any self-critical process" (214), blotting out any symbolic process and therefore any sense of identity and turning the speaker into an automaton of this "impersonal language" (Weedman 1982: 41): "If there is no word for it, how do you think about it" (111)?

Wong almost gets lost in Babel-17; she can extract herself by recognising the differences between herself and the objects surrounding her:

> What's your name? she thought in a round warm blue room […] "My *name* is *Rydra*!" An individual, a thing apart from its environment, and apart from all things in that environment, an individual was a type of thing for which symbols were inadequate, and so names were invented. I am an invented. I am not a round warm blue room. I am someone in that room; I am — (111f)

Without the process of subjectivity, the speaker of Babel-17 cannot recognize the self and the other and acts beyond all morality. Only after Wong has teamed up with the ex-convict Butcher on a shadow ship (in a shadow reality), who has also mastered Babel-17 and functions as Wong's shadow self/other in the novel, can she become 'whole', "but what whole man is not of two minds on any matter of moment" (123). Only when in a libidinous archetypical *and* telepathic union[11] "the conscious and informing mind of the poet" meets physically (sexually) and mentally "the inarticulate and brute power of the unconscious" (Malmgren 1993: 13) – or, in Freudian terms, when ego and id are coupled – does Wong acquire the necessary ruthlessness to master Babel-17 completely and recognize its built-in destructive structures. At the same time, she finally acquires an original voice and no longer needs to channel others' experiences and ideas into her poetry. As Wong claims in the end: "I can pretty much talk my way out

[11] As Wong enters Butcher's mind, this is presented as a mental sexual act: "She had entered him in some bewildering reversed sexuality" (181).

of anything" (219), thus pointing towards language's manipulative as well as healing potential.

The novel concludes with Babel-17 being neutralized to Babel-18 through insertion of the missing pronouns. Babel-18 turns into "the best tool conceivable to build it toward truth" (218), a language corrected so that it now includes, apart from the missing personal elements, ambiguities and thus a happier and more integrative reality. Babel-18 will presumably help to bridge the miscommunication and silent gaps between isolated and alienated groups and individuals. Because Delany's artificial language "enforces meaning within the user's mind by identifying key words with key ideas" (Collings 1986: 64), it conflates meaning as signifier and signified are presented as intrinsically related. Without a linguistic sense of the other, however, the self becomes obliterated. Delany's warning seems to be that the inability to communicate with each other threatens to destroy the self along with the other. A perfected communication that does not erase but multiplies perceptions is then ultimately his utopian goal.

3. The Utopian World According to Her Word

Increasingly, women writers have explored gender-specific elements of language in utopian fiction. This exploration ranges from classical feminist strategies, such as renaming, feminine speech, and the re-appropriation of signs, to a reconstruction of existing language and the invention of a new language for women. However, the use of feminist linguistics does always involve an experimental narrative structure. For instance, in *Maerlande Chronicles* (1992) Elizabeth Vonarburg uses the feminine as her future language's basis, while Ursula K. Le Guin introduces gender-free neologisms such as 'ammar' in *The Left Hand of Darkness*.[12] In Joan Slonczewski's *A Door Into Ocean* (1986) the Shoran society is structured according to egalitarian principles,

[12] Le Guin, however, falls back into phallogocentrism. Le Guin has defended the consistent use of the generic pronoun 'he': "I call Gethenians [the fictional alien people] 'he,' because I utterly refuse to mangle English by inventing a pronoun for 'he/she.' 'He' is the generic pronoun […] in English" (1979: 168), a position for which she has been lambasted and that she revoked years later in an annotation to the same essay contained in the reprinted 1989 edition.

and the Sharers' lyrical language reflects the connectivity and spiritual union of the all-female inhabitants of the ocean moon Shora. The Shara language obliterates the subject/object differentiation as it conflates both. As for a speaker of Shara, there exists no difference between subject and object; all actions, for instance, are understood as reciprocal acts. Consequently, the Shara language consists of words of sharing, which not only emphasise the Sharers' incomprehension of ownership or possession, but rather express this unique worldview of a dissolved subject-object polarity. Spinel, a male visitor to their planet, struggles with the inherent two-way meaning of the Shara verbs:

> "What the devil is '*wordsharing*'? Does the word for 'speak' mean 'listen' just as well? If I said, 'Listen to me!' you might talk, instead." […]
>
> Spinel thought over the list of 'share-forms': learnsharing, worksharing, lovesharing. "Do you say 'hitsharing,' too? If I hit a rock with a chisel, does the rock hit me?" (36f)

In the utopian society of Mattapoisett set in the year 2137 in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Marge Piercy changes the gender-specific pronouns 'he/she' to 'per', derived from 'person', to highlight the failings of the (English) language used in the protagonist's dystopian society. Piercy uses the "egalitarian linguistics" (Foster 1983: 49) of Mattapoisett to indicate the intricate and asymmetrical power relations of language and class. The female visitor to utopia, a poor Chicana, grapples less with an understanding of neologisms than with the utopian language's reflection of social relations and the lack of a hierarchy. Conversely, the alternative dystopian future's jargon and euphemisms preclude any meaningful communication.

With the artificial *female* language called Láadan,[13] Elgin's *Native Tongue* trilogy introduces a novelty in so far as she combines "a

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13 Láadan means literally "the language of those who perceive" (Elgin 1994: 17). Elgin first came across the hypothesis "that existing human languages are not adequate to express the perceptions of women" (1987: 177) when reviewing Kramarae's book *Women and Men Speaking* (1981). The *Native Tongue* trilogy also features communication with aliens without actually giving examples of alien languages. While many first contact stories often feature elaborate scientific devices that simply translate, here the highly trained caste of linguists functions as translators.

representation of female experiences in a male-dominated culture with linguistics as a central speculative concept" (Bray 1986: 49)[14] and also presents readers and critics with a full-fledged real artificial language.[15] In the first two books of the series, Elgin thus proposes a slow linguistic subversion of the dystopian Terran dichotomy that posits men at the centre and marginalizes women to *dis*cover the biased cultural structures and inscriptions in the seemingly natural structures of language.[16] According to Elgin, a mental decolonisation process, a transgression of psychological boundaries, can be achieved with Láadan which threatens socio-cultural norms and codes expressed in phallogocentric language, and, consequently, undermines patriarchal discourse.[17]

Elgin's approach to the bias of language corresponds with what Julia Penelope has so aptly defined as a "patriarchal universe of discourse" and a "cultural model of reality" (1990: 36) or a "consensus reality" imposed by men that is accepted as an "accurate description" of reality, even if "its assumptions and predictions override contradic-

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14 For a discussion of the (in)consistencies of the linguistics, see Klarer 1993, esp. 98-104, Anderson for a thorough historical approach to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (1992, 1991), Armitt 1991, Fitting 1989, Bray 1986, and Shinn 1985. Penelope discusses Láadan from a lesbian perspective (1990, esp. 223ff). Murphy (1992) provides a selective bibliography on female languages within the genre.

15 Although Elgin has developed an artificial language for real use complete with a dictionary and grammar books, the novels give only very few examples of Láadan (morphemes, Encodings, passages of the King James Bible). This lack of actual Láadan words, however, is quite consistent with the content; after all, Láadan is initially a secret language.

16 In fact, Elgin embeds two utopian projects – aimed at the transgression of binary logic as the root of dystopia – in her dystopian trilogy: the counter-discursive Láadan and Audiosynthesis, a non-violent musical nourishing process.

17 The way patriarchal discourse categorizes cognition and its semantic mediation and vice versa, passing its subjective bias off as objective/scientific monolithic truth, intersects with Lyotard's concept of the *différend* and Derrida's *différance*. Lyotard argues that a speaker can be silenced, because the language both speakers use restricts what s/he perceives as *différend*, whereas Derrida locates *différance* in the very construction of language. By imposing their perceptions on language, the dominant speakers hence restrict any discourse. Láadan tackles this problem by adding the *différend* in terms of a new language discourse that addresses the concepts and idioms previously lacking, and by reconstructing language formation.

tory evidence" (1990: 37).[18] Language then does not describe all of reality; it distorts, limits, and partially (pre)determines our thoughts and, therefore, restricts our range of conceptual exploration. Unless we unlearn this static pre-cognition, we modify people and situations to meet our thought/reality model. For Elgin, who is predominantly concerned with this "inadequacy of words, seeking communication that comes from inside, that is not fooled by sensual perceptions, communication that goes beyond the lies" (Shinn 1985: 221), the closed system of human languages is therefore essentially paradoxical:

> [P]erhaps for any *language* there are certain perceptions that it cannot express because they would result in its self-destruction [...] you might hypothesize that the reason contemporary English does not express the perceptions of women is that [...] it would self-destruct" (Elgin 1987: 177).[19]

Elgin aligns women's use of language with dynamic growth, change, and life, whereas phallogocentric discourse is equated with stasis, destruction, and death. She advocates a slow displacement of exclusively masculine values by feminine ones and, consequently, an incorporation of feminine perception into masculine reality. Láadan does not replace and dominate all other languages and perceptions, but disrupts the status quo and *adds* to existing languages, eventually transforming

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18 Elgin takes an oppositional stance to Deborah Tannen's position in *You Just Don't Understand* (1990), where Tannen claims that gender-based language constitutes the root of gender difference. For Elgin, power-linked language is expressed in "two kinds of English", "dominant English" and "subordinate English", and "both sexes know both of those styles of language" (cf. Mohr 2000: 25). Nor does she support gender-specific writing in terms of a feminine or masculine style; for her, writing is *power*-linked. Rather, Elgin diagnoses a "metaphor split" (usage of same words but connoted with different meanings), "shifting scripts", and "difference in voice" (both behavioural expectations) as relevant factors for a communication breakdown between the sexes (cf. Elgin 1993).

19 This view coincides with the 'muted group theory' that, as Kramerae argues, applies when "[t]he language of a particular culture does not serve all its speakers equally. [...] Women (and members of other subordinate groups) are not as free [...] as men are to say what they wish [...] because the words and the norms [...] have been formulated by the dominant group, men" (1981: 1). Since Láadan has not been embraced by women at large in reality, Elgin has drawn the conclusion that "the muted group theory does not hold for English-speaking women" (1994: 18).

the cultural values and "produc[ing] a radically different world" (Kramarae 1987: 185) of shared multiple concepts and perceptions of reality.

In fact, the trilogy illustrates in how far the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis intersects with Homi Bhabha's postcolonial understanding of language theories, i.e. Bhabha's claim that the process of communication involves a gap between what is said and what is heard. Effectively, the women linguists practice postcolonial code-switching between Láadan (analogous to english) and the privileged masculine/colonial standard discourse of 'Panglish' (analogous to English), used for translating alien perceptions in the novels. Elgin, however, seeks not only the gaps within the master-discourse, but grounds the women linguists' oppositional discourse in a *new* language supposedly free of the bias of dominant languages.[20] According to Elgin, an inversion – the construction of a new language – will help to avoid the cultural codes embedded in standard discourse. Eventually, women too will experience the world according to words, *but in words created by women.*

Elgin takes the subversion one step further by showing a literal 'voyage in', and respectively a voyage "out into the void" (*NT* 254). To bridge gender segregation boys and girls alike are taught Láadan, and hence for both sexes the perception of reality and of one another will change. This is the prerequisite for a rejection of violence, colonisation, and imperial and sexually-biased attitudes. Here, as Mario Klarer notes (1993: 101f), the primacy of language acquisition during subject formation converges with Lacanian psychoanalysis and its adaptation for feminism by Julia Kristeva. Lacan places language acquisition within the patriarchal realm of the Symbolic Order, the Law of the Father, and categorizes the Imaginary Order as pre-Oedipal and ruled by the mother. In the Imaginary Order, the infant experiences a dyadic unity with the mother; upon the entry into the Symbolic Order this changes into the Oedipal shock of difference and disparity. Replacing Lacan's Imaginary Order with 'semiotic chora' (Greek for en-

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20 Feminists and linguists have extensively discussed the gender bias of the English language and the question whether women need to reform the existing language or even create a new one. For a good introduction to feminism and linguistics, see Spender 1980, Cameron 1985, 1990, Ehrlich 1995; from a lesbian angle, see Daly and Caputi 1987 and Penelope 1990.

closed space or womb), Kristeva argues for a coexistence of the semiotic and the symbolic without abolishing the initial dualism of the mother/father realm, and Klarer concludes that Láadan replaces the Symbolic Order of a patriarchal language and world. Yet, clearly, Elgin takes this a step further with the suggestion that these children – speaking Láadan *and* multiple other languages – will enter full subjectivity, since words and concepts (Encodings) derived from the semiotic chora, which make up the content difference of Láadan, *add* to the Symbolic Order. This double-voiced language acquisition transgresses the polarities of orders without abolishing them. Instead of losing the realm of the chora and entering the world as fragmented speaking subjects, the new language constructs new subjects supposedly moving fluidly between realms. Given the revision of the aforementioned theoretical standpoints of Lacan and Kristeva by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who have argued that "verbal signification arises […] from a confrontation with the lure and lore of the mother" (1985: 537) *before* the father breaks up the dyadic unity, Láadan might even be seen as an expression of the retrieved *materna lingua* existing alongside the *patrius sermo*.

Yet the pivotal question remains, where do oppositional ideas emanate from in this patriarchal society? Elgin suggests three major components. First, linguistic socialisation has trained the women linguists to probe (alien) languages for the very concepts they hold, and it has taught the women linguists to be sensitive to ideological traps codified by languages. Second, on a life-long daily basis the women linguists are confronted with *other*, alien cultural worldviews. After all, interpreting is a twofold process. On the one hand, interpretation "necessitates a significant understanding of one culture's set of structural principles in order to reconstruct another's through language" (Armitt 1991: 131). On the other hand, interpretation involves a fluctuation between one's own and the alien culture as well as a confrontation and questioning of cultural structures and modes in general. Thirdly, the women linguists live in large all-female communities. This separate physical and mental space allows female linguists to start a process of disengaging from internalised masculine thinking. As a result, they possess hybrid, dual consciousnesses and live hybridised lives, outwardly complying with the dominant language but also speaking the language of resistance. They access what Cixous has called the 'Realm of the Gift', the otherwise oppressed creative vision

of alternatives (cf. Cixous and Clement 1986). Temporarily outside of phallogocentrism, they perceive the gaps and 'lack' of the appropriating language of the masculine 'Realm of the Proper' with its barked commands and a grammar based on patriarchal ideology. Because "the only mechanism available to women for explaining this situation [that language lacks women's expressions] [...] was the very language that was inadequate" (Elgin 1987: 177), the women linguists construct Láadan to escape this paradox and fill these very gaps.

As an artificial language, Láadan is constructed to be easily pronounced and universally accessible for everyone,[21] in contrast to constructed languages that are defined as mostly restricted to private use or limited to a certain era.[22] On the other hand, Láadan shares the developmental characteristics of contact languages that eventually transmogrify from pidgin and creole into a native tongue (cf. *NT* 216f, 266f). Yet while pidgin takes phrases from and simplifies other languages, Láadan evolves with every new major or minor Encoding into a more differentiated language. Unlike real contact languages that have developed out of trading necessities, Láadan emerges from emotional and psychic necessity. In correlation to marginalised people of colour, women perceive a discrepancy between language and reality, yet unlike colonial subjects, women never had a language of their own.

As an auxiliary language Láadan constructs new linguistic and psychological modes of expression, stressing perceptual information and equalising the relation between speaker and listener. For Penelope, the most notable innovation of Láadan is that "inner sensory information becomes as important as outwardly obvious material phenomena if we have the words to describe it" (1990: 224). With a variety of required speech acts, repetition, evidence and state of consciousness morphemes, degree markers and suffixes that indicate the emotional quality and attitude towards what is said as well as the source of the information, Láadan as a consequential linguistic transla-

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21 To avoid dominance by pronunciation, Láadan is composed of eighteen sounds equally accessible to all speakers (cf. *NT* 160).

22 A constructed language is purposefully created by one or more persons either to link speakers of different languages (e.g. the international Esperanto created by L. L. Zamenhof in 1897), or to express concepts previously inexpressible (Gottfried Leibniz in the seventeenth century), or for fictional purposes (e.g. Tolkien's Middle Earth languages in *The Lord of the Rings*).

tion of feminist standpoint theory dethrones the privileged speaking subject. The sentence structure forces the speaker to mark the reliability of all utterances and her/his subjective standpoint, purpose, and emotive state; hence Láadan involves the listener on an emotional basis and draws positionality into the speech act. The artificial language's very structure transgresses the "subjective-objective divide between speaker and language, potentially a radical linguistic shift" (Florence 1990: 83).

Nevertheless, the given choice of morphemes might serve to disguise a standpoint. In addition, although parts of the Láadan vocabulary mirror a more differentiated perception of femininity – Penelope lists, for example, eleven variations on the word *love* – it leaves conceptual patriarchal structures intact: "[t]here are words for jesus of nazareth, penis, and testicle, but none for clitoris or Lesbian" (Penelope 1990: 227).

The dominant strata of reality expressed in language are lexicalised masculine concepts that blot out all other realities however diffusely sensed. Far from providing a blueprint of the world, language, in fact, "foregrounds those aspects of experience deemed significant by a culture and, simultaneously, backgrounds concepts for which it provides no labels" (Penelope 1990: 203). In effect, Láadan answers Luce Irigaray's question "How can women analyze their exploitation, inscribe their claims, within an order prescribed by the masculine?" (qtd. in Wiemer 1987: 163). Láadan adds experiences and realities otherwise excluded and inexpressible *without* denying those realities already conceptualised in other languages. If there are no words to express specific conditions, situations, emotions, and perceptions, they will remain "in the realm of the invisible, the unreal" (Penelope 1990: 236).

The Encodings, previously unlexicalised concepts, in fact originate in this non-verbal pre-conscious realm, and correspond with what Irigaray calls *le parler femme*, defined as spontaneous utterances resisting existing forms, figures, and concepts. By definition, Encodings give "a name for a chunk of the world that [...] has never been chosen for naming before in any human language" (*NT* 22). Major Encodings are "truly newborn to the universe of discourse", whereas minor Encodings add "related concepts" (*NT* 158). We get two examples of Encodings; one describes forms of behaviour: "[t]o refrain from asking,

with evil intentions" (*NT* 29); another (re)constructs a new body space:

> Now, there is a continuous surface of the body, a space that begins with the inside flesh of the fingers and continues over the palm of the hand and upon the inner side of the arm to the bend of the elbow [...] I will name that the 'athad' of the person [...] Where there was no athad before, there will always be one now [...] And I have made the athad appear . . . now it *exists*. (*NT* 242)

The Encodings are valuable both linguistically and also in terms of female historiography. The memorisation of the names of those "women of valor" who coined Encodings creates a consciousness of female history. In contradistinction to the written genealogy of the "begat" of the biblical OT that inscribes tradition, this oral secular genealogy of mothers and sisters celebrates innovation.

Elgin also includes religious language as another locus of potential subversion. The hybridised Láadan version of the "monumentally male King James Bible" (*JR* 174) pictorially re-inscribes a transgendered and transcultural divinity; thus the fifth verse from the Twenty-Third Psalm, "Thou anointest my head with oil",[23] reads in the Láadan version "Thou braidest my hair with Thine own hands" (*JR* 210). Such a feminine revelation of the original content deconstructs the masculinist exegesis and androcentric discourse of the Bible, especially of the OT. The authoritative biblical 'I' of God/Jesus is met with a colloquially talkative 'I' in *Native Tongue* that is then replaced by the communal 'we' of three female narrators (the Marys) in *The Judas Rose*. Clearly, Elgin equates masculine language acquisition with power and with dystopia, as opposed to feminine language acquisition as a means of liberating resistance, empowerment, and inclusion. Language is thus the primary locus of colonialist and patriarchal domination *and* of transgressive resistance.[24]

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23 Originally, this holy cultic deed elevated the anointed, usually a priest or prophet or the king of Israel, to be the inviolable sacral representative of God – Messiah is Hebrew for 'the Holy' or 'the anointed' – and was later turned into a useful patriarchal gesture of profane secular power.

24 In the last book *Earthsong*, Elgin, however, revises her earlier universalist assumption that Láadan is a language for *all* women. The women linguists admit that the "Láadan project failed" (*ES* 74), because their own interest in Láadan, in languages as such, was not necessarily shared by *all* women to the *same* extent. Contrary to Elgin's earlier stance that language is power and "the only

4. Conclusion

Language in utopian, dystopian, and sf literature has come a long way since the retrieval of the imaginary and idealized protolanguage in early utopias and the genre's commitment to the questioning of language as a tool of both oppression and liberation. Clearly, the shaping of utopia involves the (re)construction of language; the participation of language in the construction of past, present, and future reality; and language's various discursive disguises such as religion, history, myth, literacy, and orality. Over the last thirty years, women writers especially have changed the genre's focus in so far as they interrogate the inherent phallogocentrism of language and criticize the exclusion of women and women's experiences from language. For some female writers such as Margaret Atwood, the phallogocentric and restrictive use of language informs the sexist/racist meaning of signs which, however, polysemic, polyvalent signs and metaphorical or poetic language can disrupt. This approach perceives language as a heterogeneous process of constant permutations, where meaning is produced in relation to a specific context rather than through a fixed system of signs and signifiers. Others, like Elgin, view the structure of language as phallogocentric – a state that can only be changed by the creation of a language expressing the female perspective. By reminding us readers of the potentials and dangers of language looked at creatively, utopian and dystopian literature exposes the limits of our way of thinking. Even if the limits of language do not fully represent the limits of the world – to paraphrase Ludwig Wittgenstein – language and thinking are our filters, our means, to perceive the world. If language divides the world into different chunks, literature at its best aids us in perceiving alternative chunks, real or fictive, of various realities and in thinking beyond the confines of language.

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real high technology" with linguistics as the "property of the elite" (1992: 45), the body turns out to be a more common denominator: "Hunger is a powerful motivator" (*ES* 75).

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CHAPTER III

WORLDS BEYOND WORLDS – THE LIMITS OF GEOGRAPHICAL AND PERCEPTUAL SPACE

Rethinking Deterritorialization: Utopian and Apocalyptic Space in Recent American Fiction[1]

Martina Mittag

Abstract: The paper will focus on recent approaches to utopian narrative and its power to represent the utopian. Major shifts in utopian as well as apocalyptic thinking have been triggered by limited resources, global decentralization, and recent developments in literature, theory and media technologies; new representational strategies open up fresh views of the past and the future. What role does the utopian play in a context that has questioned its basic theoretical assumptions of time and space, subject and object? Conceived as process, productivity, *energeia* – as Jameson would, following Marin more than 20 years ago – utopian discourse seems averse to 'utopia' as a literary genre in the traditional sense. Based on the work of Thomas Pynchon, Marge Piercy, William Gibson and others, I will approach various reformulations of the utopian in recent American fiction, using the Deleuzian term 'deterritorialization' to refer to the nomadic transgression of textual, spatial and ontological boundaries.

Key names and concepts: Margaret Atwood – Italo Calvino – Jacques Derrida – deterritorialization – William Gibson – heterotopia – Ursula Le Guin – Marge Piercy – Thomas Pynchon – *Second Life* – utopia

What a cheat utopias are, no wonder people hate them. Engineer some fresh start, an island, a new continent, dispossess them, give them a planet sure! So they don't have to deal with our history. Ever since More they've been doing it: rupture, clean cut, fresh start.

Kim Stanley Robinson, *Pacific Edge*

I never did like smartass utopians. Always so much healthier and saner.… People who have the answers are boring.

Ursula Le Guin, *Always Coming Home*

[1] I would like to thank Tom Moylan and Mary B. Campbell for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper, Bettina Wahrig for many inspiring thoughts on utopia and Kurt Ozment for proof-reading.

1. Introduction

In the Orwell year 1984 Louis Marin published his book *Utopics: Spatial Play*, which contains an interesting chapter on "degenerate utopia", defined as ideology changed into the form of myth. Ironically, this is not a dystopia in the Orwellian sense, but a utopic space entirely co-opted by the dominant system of ideas and values: Disneyland.

Roughly twenty years later a comparable phenomenon – this time utterly immaterial, lacking *locus* – emerges with Secondlife.com, a virtual space which has long been foreshadowed in literature and film, which replicates the real world rather than opposing it, but insists on its alternative status in offering a playground, a resting place from the real. In providing a new (empty) space for humans to inhabit and colonize, *Second Life* would have been an ideal candidate for Utopics – except the emptiness proves illusionary: What we encounter there is the familiar world of bank customers, concert goers, child molesters, hackers – the economized space we know from everyday life. *Second Life* is not an ideal world as the utopian tradition would have it, but rather an extension of late capitalism[2] and a reformulation of one's own position within existing capitalist structures, realities shaped by Global Players in the mode of high-tech, democratic hyper-liberalism.

If *Second Life* offers an excellent example of how the real and the virtual, same and other, converge in new ways – and thus materializes what authors like Neal Stephenson or William Gibson had designed in their fiction as Metaverse or cyberspace – it also seems to affirm a re-territorialization of familiar structures in virtual reality as well as a neo-liberal end of history as famously propagated by Fukuyama in 1992.

Is this then the end of the utopian, the answer to limited resources, global decentralization and new modes of communication with its concomitant modes of perception? Whereto has the utopian (as opposed to utopia as ideal society) wandered off in an age that has become so suspicious of homogenous space, so aware of the affinity between utopia and apocalypse, and so pressed by increasingly practical rather than theoretical necessities? An age in which closed territo-

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2 See Hamann and Uehlecke 2007: 24.

ries abound once more and *access* as the magic word has replaced property as the key to Utopia (Rifkin 2000).

Keeping in mind the historical role of the United States as promoter and performer of both utopia and apocalypse, I shall, in the following, trace the reformulations of the utopian in recent American fiction and move toward a Calvinoesque stance where the utopian has changed its state from solid and stable to gaseous and dispersed, infecting the dystopian as much as it is infected by it. Less feasible, less confrontational – and more polluted, of course – it resists economization and survives as "scheme on the horizon", as Marin (1984) had it, or as "process, *energeia*, enunciation" (Jameson), negating the more traditional view of utopia as ideal society.[3]

Presupposing that utopian *energeia* is not separable from narrative form, the question will not be: what IS utopia, but: how can the utopian be written? How does the destabilizing of texts and (hi)stories in terms of multiplicity, intertextuality and intermediality produce utopianisms that turn against the stasis and uniformity of the utopias of perfection and reintegrate those monstrous Others of modernity that were outside the boundaries of traditional utopia, be they women, slaves, mutants, cyborgs, golems, and the like? Embedded in reconceptualizations of essentially modern territorial notions of history, identity, and text, these approaches offer alternatives to a linear progressivist utopian tradition as well as to the end of history often proclaimed by radical postmodern literature. A major shift in utopian as well as apocalyptic thinking, both in terms of recent media developments and fresh views of the past and the future, is reflected more or less explicitly in the writing of authors as different as Pynchon, DeLillo, Gibson, Atwood, Auster or Piercy and others. To approach these various reformulations of traditional categories, I will use the term "deterritorialization" as coined by Deleuze (1983) as a counterforce to the syntagmatic effects of what he calls the "territorial machine" coding political, economic and psychological flows and formations. I will widen this term to include the becoming-nomad of semantic, textual, epistemological or ontological categories, referring to the dissolution

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[3] Recent definitions of the utopian like Sargent's or Levitas' follow Jameson in that *energeia* is at the center rather than an ideal state. Sargent speaks of "social dreaming" (1994: 3), Levitas of "the desire for different (and better) ways of being" (1990: passim).

of boundaries of subject and object, body and mind, but also to the nomadic transgression of generic, media and textual boundaries. The example of Marge Piercy's *Body of Glass* will point to a post-utopian quality based on the affinity between hitherto separate spaces – historical, real, virtual, individual, and collective – and thus on alternative modes of conceptualizing and experiencing space. Constantly challenged by re-territorialization (as exemplified by Disneyland or *Second Life* or the multinational corporations in Piercy's scenario), the post-utopian I have in mind – as opposed to the post-utopian as a loss of utopia – is a reformulation of not just the utopian, but also of the apocalyptic genre, complicit with a zone of Derridean post-apocalypse or Calvinoesque dispersion.

2. Deterritorialization, or: the "map is not the thing mapped"

If we view modern categories of the subject, of identity, of textuality as territorial notions, as entities relying on fixed boundaries, these concepts have been questioned by the cultural, technological and sociopolitical developments of the last 40 years, whether in discussions of globalization, postmodernism or the worldwide web. While many efforts in the 60s were either obsessed with ends or with utopia as absolute Other from the real – and thus reproduced territorial notions in negating them – the focus has now shifted toward new modes of articulation that open up new fields of meaning. In terms of generic criteria, deterritorializations have become so obvious that there are hardly any "clean" categories left: subversions, hybridizations, or extensions of genre take place in science fiction and cyberpunk as much as in Gothic and horror fiction, in romance or the university novel. The same holds true for stylistic conventions: What seems to have been a turn towards a new realism in the 80s, as reflected in Julian Barnes' *Flaubert's Parrot* or Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy*, actually subverts realist conventions by articulating new and rather indeterminate modes of handling meaning.

At the same time, it can hardly be overlooked to what extent historical themes have moved into the center of literary activity; not as linear chain of events but as networks of meaning framing the present. If early postmodernism seemed to rely on radical breaks with both the past and the future, the comprehensive rewriting of history – from

John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969) to Susan Sontag's *The Volcano Lover* (1988), Marge Piercy's *City of Darkness, City of Light* (1997) or – in Britain – Antonia Byatt's *Possession* (1990), Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* and Barnes' *Flaubert's Parrot* (1990) – revolves around the recapturing of forgotten possibilities between and under the web of history as it came down to us. Linear time here becomes subject to those playful alterations reflected in the temporal relativity of Alan Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams* (1992); spatial concepts, taken for granted due to the representational power of maps, are denaturalized: the awareness that "the map is not the thing mapped" (E. T. Bell, quoted in Korzybski 1948: 34) is accompanied by fresh ways of telling stories and histories, thus not just questioning "the whole Western/analytic/'linear'/alienated shtick", as Pynchon called it,[4] but providing new readings and writings. The very process of producing meaning – utopian or not – has shifted towards the web-metaphoricity triggered by new media developments. Networks of meaning are reflected in intertextual ventures, decentering both author and text, while pointing at new configurations of in-between and hybrid zones. A beautiful example is Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1989), where the territories of author and reader, real and false, fact and fiction are undone, and meaning is multiplied without deleting the story. The novel turns into a network of novels, a hyper-novel that all but reflects the multiplicity of things to be narrated. Other narratives integrate elements from different media such as film, photography, or music, as in the merging of linguistic and musical structures in Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992), which evades a confrontational pose through a dialogized network drawn from the varying moods of a jazz song. The integration of the reader in the process of producing meaning within this dialogic web also works against post-modernist skepticism by shifting an infinite deferral of meaning towards constant creation.

Not entirely new, but newly situated in terms of media environments, textual deterritorialization decenters writing towards the kind of open text that proves in a lot of ways to be related to the best of modernism of Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, James Joyce and Marcel Proust. The web-metaphor can manifest itself as

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4 Pynchon in his 1969 letter to Thomas F. Hirsch, quoted in Seed 1988: 242.

both apocalyptic or utopian or remain outside those categories: In William Gaddis' *Carpenter's Gothic* (1987) a deterritorialized subject linked to the world through telecommunication cannot make sense of the world and life remains outside, while the sense of apocalypse in DeLillo's *White Nois*e (1986), triggered by the airborne toxic event, is at times warded off by the realization that "the world is full of abandoned meanings" (DeLillo 1987: 184). In *Flaubert's Parrot* (1990) further relocations might center on the idea that biography like history is "merely another literary genre: the past is autobiographical fiction pretending to be a parliamentary report" (Barnes 1990: 184). The web-metaphor might also focus on books the author hasn't written, but remains outside the binarism of the apocalyptic and the utopian. In Auster's "City of Glass" (1990, incl. in his *New York Trilogy*), a seventeenth-century author and his text are invented while the actual author oscillates between the embodiments of Quinn, William Wilson and Paul Auster. An all-pervasive sense of deterritorialization here seizes the very core of writing: words themselves, conceived of as "monads that never change", are seen in their nomadic force that motivates utopianism. Further transgressions of boundaries in recent literature comprise those of gender or race, as in the writing of the Chicana lesbian Gloria Anzaldúa: she might serve as a prime example of a cultural nomadism transgressing the boundaries of politics and fiction, theory and poetry to depict an ambiguous and wandering mestiza-consciousness.[5] On a more psychological level, the boundaries between the real and a phantasmatic unconscious are questioned in writings such as Joyce Carol Oates' "The Doll" (cf. Oates 1995), a chilling account of anti-utopian meaning warded off through conventional categories of reason, 'reality' and class, while at the same time derealizing those categories. In terms of media technologies, Kathy Acker and William Gibson exemplify how traditional binaries of body vs. machine, material vs. immaterial, give way to the play with those cyborg-like entities that have come to pervade science fiction from *Blade Runner* and *Star Trek* to *Johnny Mnemonic* and *Lawn Mower Man*.

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5 See the both cultural and geographical deterritorializations in her book *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

If, with these major deterritorializations in mind, we reflect on new trends in utopian writing since the 1960s, it is obvious that indeed major shifts have taken place. The either/or version of early postmodernism that seemed to inform the 60s break with the past and its resulting binarism of utter exhaustion or utter liberation, the absurd or the polymorphous perverse,[6] fixed territories or free play, has been dampened down to produce a far wider playground for utopianism.

3. Schemes on the Horizon: Spatial Play or Cooptation?

Wo die utopischen Oasen austrocknen, breitet
sich eine Wüste von Banalität und Ratlosigkeit aus.

Jürgen Habermas

In contrast to the clear spatial and temporal boundaries that informed conventional utopian narrative, fiction since the late 60s has approached difference – and boundaries in general – in new ways. In terms of spatial play, Thomas Pynchon's narratives of the 60s and early 70s, in spite of their apocalyptic drive, suggest a break with the past in that traditional territories of meaning have come to be questioned within new communicational structures – as Oedipa Maas' reflections in *The Crying of Lot 49* testify:

> For it was now like walking among matrices of a great digital computer, the zeroes and ones twinned above, hanging like balanced mobiles right and left, ahead, thick, maybe endless. Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth. (125)

Pynchon's later novel *Mason and Dixon* (1998) goes a step further and participates in the historical turn of the late 80s and 90s, undoing modern mappings of word and world by going back to the site of their production, where alternative meanings were still present, undisturbed by later readings of history. The strong focus on mapping, utopian or

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6 In the 60s Leslie Fiedler noted that there was maybe nothing contradictory in that: "where there is orgasm, there is limitation and exhaustion", as he put it (1964: 161).

dystopian, mapping as utopia[7] or mapping as business,[8] reflects some of the current obsession with space, but extends to the mapping of meaning. By denaturalizing categories that are actually the result of a specific historical era with its own specific interests, Pynchon reminds us of the link between textscapes and landscapes. Both are subject to different readings and manipulations, religious, cabbalistic, political or economic. Even if the major thrust of the novel is towards the finite world of mathesis and analysis, a pluralization of meaning is implicit in the fabulist approach to history, where fact and fiction merge. The utopian drive lies here in the revealing of forgotten possibilities, thereby disarticulating the spatial and temporal perspectives modernity was based on and uncovering the indefinite insights that are inherent in stories like the one of Vaucanson's duck – a cyborg-creature that assumes a life of her own in the middle of a mechanist world view and reflects Pynchon's central concern, the denaturalizing of history:

> History is tir'd, or coerc'd, only in Interests that must ever prove base. She is too innocent, to be left within the reach of anyone in Power, – who need but touch her and all her Credit is in the instant vanished, as if it had never been. She needs rather to be tended lovingly and honorably by fabulists and counterfeiters, Ballad-Mongers and Cranks of ev'ry Radius, Masters of Disguise to provide her the Costume, Toilette and Bearing, and Speech nimble enough to keep her beyond the Desires, or even the Curiosity, of Government. (350)

If history – and in analogy: the unified story – is endlessly displaced, it is not, as some postmodernists would have it, a conglomerate of lo-

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7 "He must, if one day call'd upon, produce an overhead view of a World that never was, in truth-like detail, one he'd begun in silence to contrive, – a Map entirely within his mind, of a World he could escape to, if he had to. If he had to, he would enter it entirely but never get lost, for he would have this Map, and in it, spread below, would lie ev'rything, – Mountain of Glass, Sea of Sand, miraculous Springs, Volcanoes, Sacred Cities, mile-deep Chasm, Serpent's Cave, endless Prairie ... another Chapbook-Fancy with each Deviation and Dip of the Needle." (Pynchon 1998: 242)

8 "Philosophick Work, to proceed at all smartly, wouldn't you agree, requires a controll'd working-space. Charter'd Companies are the ideal Agents to provide that, be it the Shore Sumatran or Levantine, or wherever globally, what matter? – Control of the Company Perimeter is ever implicit." – "In any case, ... both Pennsylvania and Maryland are Charter'd Companies as well, if it comes to that. Charter'd Companies may indeed be the form the World has now increasingly begun to take." (Pynchon 1998: 252)

cal meanings denying a universal framework. We rather have to deal with local manifestations, disguises – trying to make sense, however indefinite. The utopianist uncovering of possible meanings in history corresponds to deterritorializations in a more literal sense, to the denaturalizing of America. Basic to Pynchon's enterprise is a technique that might be paraphrased with his term of *lamination*, as a multiplicatory effect that applies to baking as well as to steel-making, gold-beating and printing (cf. Pynchon 1998: 389f).

Whereas Pynchon here is obviously only indirectly concerned with the future, his fabulist approach to history is shared by other authors of the nineties, whose concerns are clearly more futuristic. If utopia as a literary genre has lost its vitality, utopianism is present precisely where the borders of the genre as well as those between past and future dissolve and rewritings of both reach beyond the traditional binarism of utopia/dystopia. Thus, Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* can be read as a post-apocalyptic tale about a more than realistic scenario of right-wing fundamentalism and seventeenth-century Puritanism, which, however, draws utopian energies from the telling of past memories. This sense of history becomes the more significant in a society trying to obliterate its past by brainwashing its citizens and destroying its own written records and computers. Here, as in other more affirmative narratives, it is the subversive use of technology, the revealing of hidden possibilities, that leads to hope – and to storytelling, however fragmentary. With all the horrors of Gilead, Atwood's tale is characteristic of the unsettling of the static dualism of utopia/dystopia, as the language of feminist utopia here provides the material for constructing a powerful patriarchal system that oppresses women on a far larger scale than ever before. It is through the open-endedness and the self-reflexivity of the text that Atwood resists purely dystopian categories, thus providing the framework for new ways of thinking the utopian as well as the apocalyptic.[9] Within the non-

[9] See also Jenny Wolmark's discussion of Atwood, which concludes: "As a critical dystopia, *The Handmaid's Tale* is not concerned to portray the inevitability and awfulness of a future in which patriarchy has become fully totalitarian. Instead, the kind of extrapolation used in the novel alerts us to the necessity to rethink the forms which contemporary gender relations take. The metaphor of the narrative as a series of reconstructions indicates the provisionality of those relations, not their permanence." (1994: 107) On gender, utopia and postmodernity, see Barr 1999.

confrontational outlook there cannot be any glorious liberation; the utopian moment is not to finish the story or ultimately define a new identity, but the overcoming of the *différend* in Lyotard's sense, as that which doesn't speak; it's the breaking out of silence of unheard voices in an oppressive system, the hint of love in hell.

In similar terms, this is true of Paul Auster's bleak vision in *In the Country of Last Things* (1987), which depicts a society after the catastrophe, where bodies turn into resources and the 'post-human' denotes the disappearance of human values altogether. But even here there are zones of the livable breaking through the apocalyptic vision: the love relationship between Sam and Anna Blume, the unexpected discovery of the past, of the Jewish library, the expectation of a child, the memory of a better world, as a basis for living the future. The post-nuclear setting in Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), made clear through occasional references to the obliteration of the reader's familiar surroundings (like the "ruins in the radioactive core of old Bonn", 120), equally does not depict a purely utopian or dystopian world. Instead, it presents somewhat livable areas – at least for the social group that his protagonist stands for – within what seems a totalitarian world ruled by multinational corporations, where power has become invisible in the shape of data banks and Orwellian control systems. Bodies are subject to cyborgization, displacing the categories of real and virtual. Re-definitions or re-metaphorizations may lead, similar to Kathy Acker's *Empire of the Senseless* (1988), to a changed balance between the utopian and the dystopian, when a dreaded machine-identity is aestheticized against traditional images of the natural body. Likewise, Marge Piercy's *He, She, and It* (1991), Doris Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974) and Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974) share a concept of local utopia, of livable zones within an otherwise often bleak or even absurd universe. In all of these authors, the moment of deterritorialization works against the representation of a unified reality or an idealized space. They collapse the boundaries between dream-world and reality, utopia and dystopia, by redefining one through the other in their constant search for the livable. Long before the Berlin Wall came down, Le Guin's hero nomadizes between two worlds which both aspire to their own utopian ideas, capitalist or socialist – and in the process deconstructs the sharp dividing line separating their realities.

Where conventional utopia and apocalypse are complicit in their desire for a better world – in this world or beyond – post-apocalypse seems to converge with post-utopia, the difference being one of tone or focus.[10] A good example might be Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, where no final solution is presented, where circular structures imply the move from chaos towards new order and where the negentropic force of writing counterbalances the entropic factual reality. Signs of apocalypse, like the UFO-invasion of Disney World, or the ghost of Elvis walking around Graceland, are revealed as media effects to a similar extent as the characters themselves. As in CNN-versions of the Gulf-War, the subject has become part of the "public stuff of media disaster" (DeLillo 1986: 146). Given all the televised presence, the novel is largely concerned with the invisible, the unheard, the secret of subjects, technology and death, which no rational response can make sense of, which speaks in waves and radiation, networks and circuits rather than in representable positions and oppositions. It is no coincidence that a radically new approach to the act of naming is as central to DeLillo's novel as to Auster's or Pynchon's. If *White Noise* represents an open dystopia, Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* points *to* an open utopia and thus to a shift in both utopian and apocalyptic thinking, one that emphasizes process and the livable, displacing the static binarism of communist and capitalist systems. Livability in the sense of not closing off possibilities, as going beyond the binary economy of 'same' and 'other', is at the core of this kind of utopianism, coined by a late postmodern consciousness which Nealon characterizes as follows: "Living on in the postmodern is living beyond […] the oppositions or hierarchies that have allowed and validated the horrors of the twentieth century" (Nealon 1993: 83).

Against Lessing's and Le Guin's concerns, which locate utopian qualities in the gaps between determinate ideological or psychological territories, Marge Piercy's is a utopian account informed by a deterritorialized history as part of a renewed search for common ground. In its concern for new media environments, Piercy's *He, She,*

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10 Thus, Freese's account of the postapocalyptic is close to what I have in mind, even though his example, Bernard Malamud's *God's Grace,* might not be very convincing: "*God's Grace*", he says, "is no traditional apocalyptic novel which climaxes in the evocation of doom, but a post-apocalyptic tale which examines what would come after the cataclysm, a story that begins with the very end and tries to sound out the possibility of a new beginning." (Freese 1997: 51)

and It participates in the tradition of cyberpunk and science fiction without sharing the bleak visions promoted by its main proponents both on a narrative as on a phenomenal level. William Gibson's highly popular high-tech cyberworld of *Neuromancer* is adopted in Piercy's novel, but invested with the comprehensive utopian energies that it lacks in Gibson's text. Whereas he remains in the realm of media technologies and their concomitant redefinitions of body, mind and reality, Piercy draws on the dystopian tradition of *Brave New World* as well as on earlier media revolutions and Jewish mysticism, producing a highly intertextual narrative of multiple writings that break through apocalyptic linearity by relating temporal and spatial zones on the basis of affinity. History is thus neither denied nor depicted as linear progression of events; instead, historical continuity is established through the affinity of characters and events. Interwoven in the main narrative of a post-apocalyptic world in 2053 is a parallel plot, situated in the Jewish ghetto of Prague around 1600. Narrated by Malkah – the main protagonist – as part of her personal history, historical 'fact' as part of the great master narratives is turned into local narrative, reaching out for more universal significance for its characters as well as for the reader. If author, knowledge and history are thus refigured in terms of localized, nomadic concepts, so is the organization of difference in general: rather than participating in a unified – Marxist, feminist, Jewish, or artistic – vision, Piercy's novel constantly works from margin to center, turning exile into reality, and pressing towards an economy of difference that opens up a new potential for meaning by constantly resetting boundaries.

The world in 2053 is like Gibson's universe devastated by war, environmental disaster, plagues and famines. The "privileged" classes live in cities governed by large multi-national corporations and protected by glass domes. The masses inhabit the Glop, a violent, dirty, and crime-ridden megalopolis, the equivalent of Gibson's "sprawl", spreading from what once was Boston to what once was Atlanta. Outside the centers of power and poverty, there are free towns that have to defend their status against the omnipresent power of the 'multis' but carry utopian hope within this Orwellian landscape. One such free town is Tikva (= hope) where the protagonists of the novel live: Malkah, the story-teller who works with virtual defense systems in the town's Base; Shira, her grand-daughter, who returns to Tikva after having worked for the giant corporation of Y-S; Avram who after

various unsuccessful attempts has constructed the cyborg Yod, which is further improved on by Malkah and Shira. Between Yod and Shira a relationship develops which reformulates the difference between human and machine in ways reminiscent of Donna Haraway's "Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1985). As an artificial creation Yod corresponds to Joseph, the Golem of the Prague plot, through whom the distinction between creator and artifice is further problematized within a different media environment. Yod, as a product of the binary logic of computers, and Joseph, as a product of cabbalistic magic, share a common origin in language in its performative rather than referential quality. As such they add to and supplement Piercy's redefinition of the author-text relationship, where the performing narrative voice wanders, fabulates, nomadizes between narrative spaces, playing with Huxley, Gibson and the Cabbala alike, rather than constructing a unitary textual and phenomenal space. Malkah's fictionalization of fact, her account of the Golem-story is not legitimized from an objective narrative point of view but grounded in the principle of affinity: like Judah Loew she is convinced of being a bad parent, like the Rabbi she is trying to protect a niche of survival, like him she creates "fictions and monsters" (Piercy 1991: 34).

If both Yod and Joseph are designed to protect the marginal habitation of the protagonists against the center of power and as such share a deeply masculinist purpose, they are also transformed through the reprogramming of Shira and Chava respectively, who teach them human qualities to the extent that difference itself becomes questionable. If being is performance, as both Heidegger and Derrida would emphasize, the utopian quality of an extended present is widened here to include the artifact and ultimately the text itself. The dissolution of traditional concepts of difference, in the beginning still pervasive in Shira's naive world view, encompasses the dualisms of spirit and matter, self and other, male and female. The textual practice of conventional utopia is thus questioned in a similar way, as semantic territories multiply through re-metaphorization and hybridization, made concrete in the Bakhtinian heteroglossia of the Glop whose inhabitants speak their own "patois, language rich and gamy with constantly changing slang" (Piercy 1991: 308). The play with traditional catego-

ries of identity and difference only serves the destruction of monadic subject positions in favor of nomadic ones.[11]

Deterritorialization further affects basic categories of matter and spirit: Malkah, the magician and creator of chimeras, who hides a "real" virtual reality behind a "false" one, strongly resists the opposition between embodied matter and immaterial space.[12] Other than the cyberpunk tradition of Gibson, where the autonomization of artificial intelligence marks the end of humanity[13] and narrative strategies remain conventional, Piercy's destabilization of boundaries transcends those categories and celebrates the emergence of new meaning, however evanescent and temporary. In the narrative web, cyberspace loses its threatening autonomy and merges with cabbalistic planes, reconnecting the radically new within a larger view of history. As in Le Guin, polysemous meaning is produced through analogies, correspondences, and affinities and is supported by the historical tale of the Golem, told via email.

The utopianism of *He, She, and It* thus turns against organicist ideals and perfect paradise as they have shaped Marxism as well as psychoanalysis and eco-feminism and tends towards a cyborg-perspective of "partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity" (Haraway 1985: 67) within a technological *polis*, where the modern division between public and private has simply become irrelevant. In the vein of Haraway's theoretical formulations, Piercy's protagonists fight for local rather than universal purposes; in a similar way, they appropriate the tools of a dominant culture, the very tools that effected their exclusion: writing, computer language, and technology. As such they stand against the loss of responsibility, which in Gibson's tale is brought about through the subject's loss of autonomy – as Molly's wondering statement: "I guess it's just the way I'm wired" (Gibson 1995: 37)

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11 Thus, Yod's identity, e.g., continually in flux and corresponding to a constant reprogramming, remains open-ended, even if his initial blue-print is overdeterminate both in terms of gender and his non-humanness: "Avram made him male – entirely so. Avram thought that was the ideal: pure reason, pure logic, pure violence." (Piercy 1991: 192)

12 Her attack in the Base shows clearly the physical effects of virtual activity: "The mind could be forced into a catatonic loop. A program could be launched that froze the ability to breathe. The brain could be simply shocked to death like an electrocuted rat." (Piercy 1991: 194)

13 On the essentially dystopian effect of cyberpunk, see, e.g., Ross 1991.

makes clear. They also stand for a complex interplay between the human and the technological – in contrast to Gibson's technological view of nature, triggered by a one-sided exchange of metaphor, as in the familiar opening sentence: "The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel" (Gibson 1995: 9). Against the fragmented images of cyberpunk, bodies are reconstituted, not as ideal bodies and signifiers of 'nature', but under the very sign of hybridity and multiplicity brought about by technological change. And in contrast to cyberpunk, there remains a utopian vision *after* the apocalypse has taken place: utopia not as a distant place in the future or a no-place but as a space which is as related to the present of the novel as to the reader's present. If Piercy's universe seems like a – at times fearfully realistic – extension of our own political and social realities today, utopianism is possible exactly in the same vein: as extension of a present aware of its history, not as teleological vision or apocalyptic pattern but as an open-ended enterprise manifesting itself in livable zones or, to speak with Jürgen Habermas, as utopian oases.

4. The Utopian as Post-utopia

> Heute ist die Utopie, die ich suche, gasförmig; es ist eine pulverisierte, teilchenhaft schwebende Utopie.
>
> Italo Calvino, *Kybernetik und Gespenster*

If 'utopia' in the traditional sense is inextricably intertwined with a teleological frame of thought and the enclosed territory of the book, recent fiction tends to exceed the genre by pointing to a utopian potential through deterritorializing narrative as well as spatial and temporal concepts, while at the same time engaging in a renewed search for common ground. The awareness of boundaries that nourished the idea of an ideal 'no-place' outside reality (or beyond history) has turned into a questioning of these very boundaries. The evolutionary theories which informed not just narrative patterns but the very distinction between modernism and postmodernism itself have given way to a deconstructive potential that counters utopia as a genre in its very core. Utopianism in our time seems to go along with different ways of experiencing space and time – including the divide between modernity and postmodernity – with the impact of new media and with a testing of

traditional boundaries between hitherto stable territories. Not entirely new but newly situated in terms of media environment and interaction, textual deterritorialization in its various forms decenters writing towards the kind of open text that modernism experimented with in a far more enclosed aesthetical sphere. Where early postmodernism was still 'modern' in its gesture of radical rupture, late postmodernism picks up traces of both only to re-employ them in a wider network of meaning. The texts discussed here exemplify in very different ways how the postmodern revolt against closure and its concern with the processual merge with an awareness of continuity – intersubjective, intertextual, historical. Linking up with the reader's reality, utopia is transformed from a compensatory or at least separate place of perfection into a fuzzy-logic experience of worlds to be imagined. Narrative strategies, by playing with multiple forms of closure, might, as in Pynchon, simulate a multidimensionality that runs counter to the very entropic processes described in the text[14] or they might, as in Piercy, open up meaning through family resemblances that create livable zones within a dystopian context and thus maintain an economy of difference (and desire) that keeps the utopian alive. This is far beyond the 60s divide between arcadia and technophilia, its 'prisonhouse of language' that either provoked a Beckettian sense of the absurd or an extra-linguistic celebration of what's other to the text, whether in Burrough's or Mailer's visionary worlds of drugs and sex or the body-oriented experiments of performance theater.[15] In contrast to this, new fabulist approaches provide a concept of story-telling as a means for miracle, as a constant search for new codes and new vocabularies. If utopia as a genre furthermore merges with science fiction, cyberpunk, dystopia or media theory, the semiotic at large is situated anew, blurring the boundaries between *soma* and *sema* with a new focus on the materiality of the word bearing the traces of non-western story-telling. Reconfigurations of genre are mirrored in those of the somatic; the cyborg-figure so familiar in postmodern culture emerges in the text as cyborg (see Mittag 2000b) which turns its compensatory and sealed existence into an open "narrative engine."[16] New reciprocal relation-

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14 On Thomas Pynchon, see Gabriele Schwab 1987.

15 See my article "Paradise Now or Apokalypse Now" (Mittag 2000a).

16 The term was created by Michael Wutz; see Tabbi and Wutz 1996: 450.

ships with other media forms[17] culminate in the endless textuality of the hypernovel, as Calvino might perceive it, produced by a Warhol-like author as machine, subject to constant interpretation and reinterpretation, moving from sense to senses, from aesthetics to aesthesis (Calvino 1984: 7-26).

Central to utopianism in an affirmative sense, then, is a search for new collective modes as well as a moment anticipating the livable rooted in narrative space itself – an anticipation which does not work through negation, but rather finds affirmative zones through dissolving internalized perspectives, rewriting and redefining present, past and future realities. Historical continuity as spatial continuity, not as an essentialist, but as a deconstructive project, serves as the basis for unfolding utopian *energeia*, the unrepresentable 'trunk' that functions as the material for reinscriptions. As Pynchon and Piercy in particular have made clear, deterritorialization in this sense points to history as multiple venture, to a *reactivation* of historical moments of decision, not leading to the permanent undecidabilities of Baudrillard's nightmares,[18] but – on the contrary – to decision-making which remains aware of compromise and contingency.[19]

Moving away from the ruptures of early postmodernism, utopian narratives draw on modernist conceptions of time like Henri Bergson's or William James', or on what Bloch perceived to be a

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17 See Luhmann's dictum that through the advent of new media forms a different ecology is formed based on new reciprocal relationships (Luhmann 1985). On the transformation of the literary text in new media contexts, see, e.g., Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer 1995, Hayles 1984, and Paulson 1988.

18 "All the great humanist criteria of value, all the values of a civilization of moral, aesthetic, and practical judgment, vanish in our system of images and signs." (Baudrillard 1988: 128)

19 Cf. Laclau's comments on Derrida, which would unhinge Baudrillard's view: "Undecidability should be literally taken as that condition from which no course of action necessarily follows. This means that we should not make it the necessary source of any concrete decision in the ethical or political sphere. In a first movement deconstruction extends undecidability […] to deeper and larger areas of social relations. The role of deconstruction is, from that perspective, to reactivate the moment of decision that underlies any sedimented set of social relations. The political and ethical significance of this first movement is that, by enlarging the area of structural undecidability, it also enlarges the area of responsibility – that is of the decision." (Laclau 1996: 78)

"forward dawning" or "Not Yet" (Bloch 1986: passim).[20] As active anticipation, translated into textual praxis, they interact with other texts and times, while being conscious of different media environments. Rather than defining a future world, this kind of utopianism could be described as anticipation of different modes of existence within representation, where utopian thought opens space, voicing the (im)possible,[21] while remaining aware of its profound complicity with the "Real". Unlike the closed nihilisms or optimisms of the period from the 60s to the 80s, this is easily compatible with a poststructuralist variant insisting on engagement, critical function and creative potential.

Following the potential of an endless process of (re)conceptualization, a discursive space is created where utopian desire remains possible as continuous formulation of an anticipatory moment in the present. In this respect, Derrida's re-evaluation of difference can be linked to the new sensibility towards the unheard, the *différend*[22] in Lyotard's sense, the ex-centric in Linda Hutcheon's terms (1988) or the "alterity" proposed by Levinas (1961) as prior to the self and to be approached with wonder. If Derrida provides a utopian model without utopia, "a certain emancipatory promise" or "a waiting without horizon of expectation" (Derrida 1994: 89, 168), it is an attempt to live utopian hope without metaphysical determination, without the ordering of history into determinate narrative patterns.[23]

This becomes feasible within an engagé version of deconstruction. In the face of the general drift towards the fragmentary effects of a pluralism of identity politics and interested aesthetics, the renewed interest in the struggle over common ground has become obvious since the early 90s, whether manifest in the realist turn of narrative style, the rewriting of history, or collective identities in terms of gend-

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20 On Bloch, see Daniel and Moylan 1997.

21 Cf. Derrida's frequent allusion to the '(im)possible' and Bourdieu's allusion to Bloch as the thinker of the 'possible', "der aufgrund seiner Witterung für die objektive Tendenz ein 'Real-Mögliches' psychisch vorausnimmt." (Bourdieu 1998: 45)

22 Understood as the "inability to articulate one's cause in the same idiom or language." (Lyotard 1993: 9)

23 And thus reminds us of Adorno's "Sein, sonst nichts, ohne alle weitere Bestimmung und Erfüllung." (Adorno 1985: 208)

er or race. The euphoric embrace of postmodernist clichés of 'anything goes' were averse to this tendency, as they leave little room for those collective values which have come to represent a new necessity within the universalized – and heavily economized – structures of media culture. What is at stake here is also the repositioning of the local and the global, the individual and the collective – or, in Jameson's terms, the totalizing and totalization.[24] As a utopian praxis, this could save utopia from its modern entanglements in narrative, hermeneutic and spatial terms of *telos* and origin, and at the same time point toward a (post)postmodernist world characterized by extreme aversion to totalizing explanations. While the resistance to formulations of the "universal" seems to conflict with the necessary collective dimension of the utopian, a mode of 'as if' pervades approaches like Piercy's within changing coalitions, taking Marxism, feminism etc. as an "empty signifier" (Laclau 1996: passim) whose affirmative content derives from the interplay of the particularities involved. There will thus be no stable feminist, Marxist utopia; but through the opening of semantic systems, particular texts, images, or subjects resume more universal significance in and through the interaction with others. Utopia here moves away from mere theory: with the acute threats of climatic change and environmental disaster that our real spaces are facing at the moment, utopian thought tends to be less theoretical, aware of the fact that some of the realities we took for granted in the last century might well turn into utopias themselves.

Central to this remains the production of meaning – and the reading of it. As Teresa de Lauretis has pointed out with respect to science fiction, utopian energy only realizes itself when translated into language, reorganizing semantic space (1980: 170).[25] The semantization and aestheticization of utopian *Sein* poses a problem within a

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24 Whereas totalizing would refer to an act of interpretation which remains dynamic and processual, totalization points at closed systems of meaning. A totalizing approach, which with Jameson (1991) of course is applied to the cultural logic of late capitalism from a Marxist point of view, remains an option for an academia faced with the fact that the impulse towards totalization has moved into the area of reproductive and information technology, shaping material and virtual structures that give birth to future meaning.

25 "The science fictional construction of a possible world […] entails a conceptual reorganization of semantic space and therefore of material and social relations, and makes for an expanded cognitive horizon, an epic vision of our present social reality." (De Lauretis 1980: 170)

postmodern frame of mind that came to be governed by the mega-metaphor of a *digitalis universalis*, succeeding the logic of *mathesis universalis*. If utopianism is based on the faith that escape from the 'prisonhouse of language' is possible indeed, this implies that we must escape the interior logic of our tools of communication which tend to obscure this very logic. Against the emptiness of signifiers that in Jameson's account are coupled with the "disappearance of a sense of history" (Jameson 1991: 125), history seems to have its comeback to save meaning: history, not as linear chain of events, but as other(s) to be approached instead of appropriated, allows us to step outside the logic of our own linguistic and semantic systems, of our discourses of knowledge, of science, and of bodies. This is where Derrida tells us to think of an "other historicity", of "another opening of event-ness as historicity that permitted one not to renounce, but on the contrary to open access to an affirmative thinking of the messianic and emancipatory promise as promise: as promise and not as onto-theological or teleo-eschatological programme or design" (Derrida 1994: 74f). Translated into the spatial dimensions discussed here, this links up with what Marin's concept of utopia as "scheme on the horizon" and his utopian praxis of the "empty space" hinted at: "To live utopia means constructing the representation which will speak its impossibility and simultaneously indicate it as that which it excludes. It is the empty space bordering and framing representation. This is the space of blessedness in representation, the permanent instant of happiness, all in one moment loss, limit and the neutral" (Marin 1984: xxvi). What is implied here is a deterritorialized version of space itself: utopia can only be utopian as an other spatiality, a spatiality defined by its links to other spatialities, past and present, real and virtual, here and there – the other of any (territorialized) space in the modern sense.

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Space Construction as Cultural Practice: Reading William Gibson's *Neuromancer* with Respect to Postmodern Concepts of Space

Doreen Hartmann

Abstract: In *Neuromancer* (1984), William Gibson elaborated a principal model of cyberspace and thus has contributed to the formation, establishment, and acceptance of the cultural concept of the electronic, virtual space. This essay will shed light on how Michel Foucault's *heterotopology* and Michel de Certeau's *spatial practices* can serve as models for an analysis of the peculiar aesthetic construction of Gibson's superimposing spatial concept. The fictitious worlds of *Neuromancer* raise questions of identity, authenticity, and the possible functionality of the depicted places/spaces. In dealing with these issues, the essay positions illusion and compensation alongside movement as pillars of the novel.

Key names and concepts: Michel de Certeau – cyberpunk – cyberspace – dataspace – everyday practices – Michel Foucault – William Gibson – heterotopology – Matrix – *Neuromancer* – popular culture – postmodernism – spatial practices – spatial stories – spatial trajectories – urban space – virtual space

1. Introduction

It is generally accepted in the human sciences that space is not an inert, pre-existing given but a set of culturally influenced and historically changeable spatial relations.[1] Hence, altered structures of society and new ways of perception have changed spatial concepts. And more recent developments in science and technology – for instance the invention of the telephone, a space- and time-transcending medium – have influenced human cognition. Changes in man's spatial and temporal conception do not primarily come along with the digital era, but

[1] Not the first, but certainly an outstanding example of research in the field is Henri Léfèbvre's *The Production of Space* (Léfèbvre 1974/1991). Additionally, see Dünne (2004).

the growth of electronic space in the last third of the twentieth century – such as the emergence of video games or the proliferation of the internet – has challenged the categories of space and time.

When William Gibson wrote *Neuromancer*, everyday real life was undergoing a radical transformation. The pervasiveness of media in the postmodern world shifted man's ways of perception and led to the absence of a binding world view. Human beings struggled with acknowledging the changes resulting from intellectual and technological innovations. Certainly, the emergence of numerous theories of space around this time must be seen as a response to these phenomena. However, it is a moot question whether these theories can help to establish understanding and if they can reach large parts of society at all. Artistic formats (literature, film, video games, etc.) may offer more valuable insights in this respect. Our conceptions of the world and of literary texts influence each other to a certain degree: apart from representing the fears and anxieties arising from the present crisis in space-time-conception, literature may also provide a starting point for dealing creatively with such cultural phenomena. The aesthetic exploration of cultural upheavals in science fiction literature, e.g., can be substituted for academic research addressing issues of space and culture without needing to provide all-embracing explanations (see Featherstone and Burrows 1995b: 8). "Science fiction constructs a *space of accommodation*[,] [...] [where] the shock of the new is aestheticized and examined" (Bukatman 1993: 10).[2]

Since *Neuromancer* was written at a time when electronic, virtual space was still nascent, the urban environment it depicts played a central role for the reader in learning to cope with the upheavals described above and – based on that – in gradually accepting Gibson's concept of the matrix, the cyberspace: "[a] consensual hallucination[,] [...] [a] graphic representation of data [...]. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the non-space of the mind, clusters and constellations of data" (Gibson 1984: 51). This research essay will thus not make use of recent theories of virtual space but will rather investigate the applicability of postmodern space concepts to the novel – more precisely those put forward in Michel Foucault's "Of Other Spaces" (1967/1986) and Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Every-*

[2] See also Caviola 1991, who points out how postmodernist literature can serve readers as a means of orientation in their electronically permeated world.

day Life (1980/1984). Their theories do not deal with issues of cyberspace, but with matters of urban space, which also govern Gibson's fictitious worlds: the ubiquity of information and communication technologies and the plethora of images, problems of identity and authenticity as well as the role of movement and speed for the formation of urban structures.

It is on account of the interaction of Gibson's own reality with the fictitious urban space in his novel as well as the dependency of the novel's urban environment on the depiction of the electronic dataspace that *Neuromancer* and thus the concept of cyberspace has gained such widespread acceptance. A thorough analysis will therefore have to take into account the interdependence of the dataspace and the fictitious real-world spaces, as well as the peculiar aesthetic characteristics of Gibson's fictitious spaces. After all, *Neuromancer* is not only the result of the previously mentioned upheavals, but also the origin of another one, since Gibson's principal model of cyberspace has contributed to the formation, establishment and acceptance of the cultural concept of virtual space.

2. The 'Real World' as Starting Point

In the 1980s, postmodern approaches marked many domains of cultural life such as art, architecture, fashion, or popular culture. Generally speaking, postmodern literature does not only not give priority to the content of a fictional narrative, but even refuses its linearity. It is often related to the author's and reader's material world and even seeks to integrate the reader's interpretative activity in order to concretise the depicted fictional universe (see Müller 2001: 449f). But this is not to say that the physical space provides a solid basis for either author or reader. On the contrary, "this shared notion of the terrestrial sphere has crumbled" (Caviola 1991: 4). In eroding consolidated notions of what the world *is*, postmodern novels often establish temporary and fragmentary models of knowledge (see Mayer 2001: 522) and "question received notions of orientation" (Caviola 1991: 1). As a (dystopic) sub-genre of postmodern[3] science fiction literature,

[3] It was none other than Fredric Jameson who established a close relation between cyberpunk literature and postmodernism in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*: "This is the place to regret the absence

cyberpunk novels like *Neuromancer*[4] comprise most of these disruptions and instabilities. The challenge to established notions of space and time are inscribed in the Gibsonian spaces as leaps between and overlappings of spaces. A postmodern reading of the novel thus has to "take into account the *interaction* of various literary spatialities", more precisely the "interaction between the fictional universe, the typographical 'image' on the page, and the reader's/writer's physical spaces" (Caviola 1991: 4f).[5]

In what follows, the discussion will focus on how postmodernity changed received notions of space. It can be taken for granted that one main effect was that literature had already started to deal with cyberspace before it became an important topic in society. Hence, the discourse on the subject of virtual, electronic space endeavoured to make comprehensible what was immaterial. Gibson could accomplish this only by using his impressions of the 'real world' as sources of inspiration. For, although postmodernism has challenged traditional assumptions of reality and identity, these impressions still present a collective basis for the description of cyberspace on the part of the author as well as for its decoding on the part of the reader.

2.1. Escape from Everyday Life

Although literary exaggeration is a popular stylistic device to accentuate referential meanings, the unreal scenarios of science fiction novels are often misleadingly assumed to be based on the Fantastic alone (see Kneale 1999: 208). Gibson's ironic diction – another stylistic device of postmodern writing – has repeatedly been misunderstood, even though it reveals the tension between real-world structures and their

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from this book of a chapter on cyberpunk, [...] the supreme literary expression if not of postmodernism, then of late capitalism itself" (Jameson 1991: 419).

4 Although the term 'cyberpunk' had already been used by Bruce Bethke in his 1980 short story of the same title, it was Gibson's use of the term in a novel that really established the term.

5 Unfortunately, the scope of this essay does not allow for a consideration of the structure and typography of the novel, although an analysis of such a spatial reading experience would be highly illuminative. A promising starting-point has been offered by Karin Wenz in her formative study *Raum, Raumsprache und Sprachräume* (1997).

fictitious transformation in admirable clarity. "The gap between the worlds of cyberpunk and of the reader may not be very wide, [...] utopian or dystopian fiction draws its strength from its movement between the known and the unknown" (Kitchin and Kneale 2002b: 10). The reader feels comfortable in Gibson's world as it evokes familiar images: "Friday night in Ninsei. He passed yakitori stands and massage parlor, a franchised coffee shop called Beautiful Girl, the electronic thunder of an arcade" (Gibson 1984: 10). On the basis of these urban depictions, Gibson creates the unknown cyberspace. He does not contrive a dystopic future, but rather deals with the present social, cultural, economic and political conditions of his environment. Into the glittering, affluent high-tech cities linked to ideas of liberty, boundless mobility, wealth, and power erupts the frightening view of poverty, wretchedness, and unemployment in the slums, comprising feelings of human uprootedness and alienation (see Dodge and Kitchin 2001: 196f). This dual spatiality is a central topic of Gibson's novel, where such ambivalences structure society, organise cities, and generate a need for 'other spaces'. In *Neuromancer*, the cyberspace is such an alternative space. And since arcologies,[6] theme parks, and malls already obeyed the pattern of neutralising space and time and of negating the outside world by enclosing it within their own halls, cyberspace merely appeared to be a recent transformation of this concept (see Bukatman 1993: 121ff and Rötzer 1998: 213).

If one considers science fiction worlds as a refuge, it is necessary to differentiate between two points of view: first, the novel's origins lie in Gibson's own sense of reality. The author uses the process of writing as a means of escape from his everyday life circumstances, insofar as he actively creates another space as a way out. Gibson once described the attraction science fiction literature has always had for him: "One of the liberating effects of SF [...] was precisely its ability to tune me in to all sorts of strange data and make me realize that I wasn't as totally isolated in perceiving the world as being monstrous and crazy" (McCaffery 1991b: 276). The second aspect is the escape into the matrix as experienced by the protagonist. Travelling through

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[6] See Gibson 1984: 6 and 39. A portmanteau word of 'architecture' and 'ecology' going back to the work of architect Paolo Soleri. In the face of overpopulation and sprawling urbanisation accompanied by ecological destruction, he developed a design principle for environmentally sound habitats, self-contained cities of high population density enclosed in a single building.

the unconventional vastness of the virtual space counterbalances the oppressive narrowness of the "coffin hotels" (Gibson 1984: 5) and the cruelty on the streets of Tokyo and the Sprawl. The significance of the matrix space is reflected in its colour code. While the matrix is depicted as a shiny and colourful ("pink structure", "emerald arches"; Gibson 1984: 168, 204), bright place ("lines of light", "lattices of light"; Gibson 1984: 51, 115) structured by distinct shapes ("simple cube of white light"; Gibson 1984: 115), the real-world cities are characterised by a dull drabness: "Beyond the neon shudder of Ninsei, the sky was that mean shade of gray. The air had gotten worse; it seemed to have teeth tonight, and half the crowd wore filtration masks" (Gibson 1984: 15). Gibson uses the word "gray" more than forty times as a means of describing subjects, places, or situations of the urban environment. Depicting its well-organised, regular electronic beauty ("bright lattices of logic"; Gibson 1984: 5), Gibson credits the dataspace with a much more aesthetically appealing architecture than the inordinate sprawling space which hems in its inhabitants ("the overheated darkness of a coffin"; Gibson 1984: 9) and is permanently on the verge of being suffocated by the "drifting shoals of waste" (Gibson 1984: 39; for a similar example see 72). The Chiba City arcades fulfil a similar purpose as the matrix: the video games provide the possibility "to escape for an alternative environment without the daily pressure of life in 'the real world'" (Bukatman 1993: 200). The player's burden of everyday life and the sense of being abandoned can disappear while playing.

Just like Gibson and his characters, then, the readers can escape into an alternative space by projecting themselves into the novel, which provides a basis in search of new schemes of identity and reality. According to Caviola, this is

> the specific postmodernist *presentation* of space, involving the author's and reader's role. [...] The reader is both aware of the artificiality of the fictional world and yet half-immersed in it through identification. Caught in this double-bind, he is admitted into a secret communion with the author who created this world. (Caviola 1991: 3)

2.2. References to Phenomena of Popular Culture

Gibson's fictitious worlds are cluttered with media. Being asked how much influence other media than literature had on his novel, Gibson once responded:

> Probably more than fiction. [...] I've been influenced by Lou Reed, for instance, as much as I've been by any 'fiction' writer. I was going to use a quote from an old Velvet Underground song – "Watch out for worlds behind you" (from 'Sunday Morning') – as an epigraph for *Neuromancer*. (McCaffery 1991b: 265)

Neuromancer is a collage of medial references: there is the constant stream of "dub"-music, "a sensuous mosaic cooked from vast libraries of digitalized pop" (Gibson 1984: 104); some places are filled with television- and computer monitors, books, and magazines and thus appear like museums or archives and even the protagonists themselves look like they were generated from the media: "It was like the culmination of a life-time's observation of martial arts tapes […]. For a few seconds […] she was every bad-ass hero, Sony Mao in the old Shaw videos, Mickey Chiba, the whole lineage back to Lee and Eastwood" (Gibson 1984: 213). For Csicsery-Ronay, cyberpunk in itself is a way of writing heavily influenced by popular culture: "[A] literature competing and allied with video games, MTV and new wave rock" (Csicsery-Ronay 1991: 183).

Gibson, for example, was guided by the *Film Noir* and images of *Heavy Metal* magazines.[7] In the introduction to the *Graphic Novel* of *Neuromancer*, he writes: "So it's entirely fair to say, and I've said it before, that the way *Neuromancer*-the-novel 'looks' was influenced in large part by some of the artwork I saw in *Heavy Metal*" (Gibson 1989b: 5). In quite a similar fashion, the depiction of the matrix space in *Neuromancer* seems to have been influenced by Lisberger's film *TRON* (1982). The film *Blade Runner* (1982) also left a mark on Gibson. On the occasion of *Blade Runner*'s tenth anniversary, he remarked:

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7 English title of the French science fiction and horror comic magazine *Métal Hurlant*.

> About ten minutes into *Blade Runner*, I reeled out of the theater in complete despair over its visual brilliance and its similarity to the 'look' of Neuromancer, my [then] largely unwritten first novel. Not only had I been beaten to the semiotic punch, but this damned movie looked better than the images in my head! (Loud 1992)

In addition to these sources of inspiration for the fictitious living environment of the cyberpunks, the virtuality of the materials, and the architecture of the corporate arcologies, the peculiar depiction of the virtual matrix space in *Neuromancer* at least has two further sources: Lisberger's film *TRON* (1982) and video games: "'The Matrix has its roots in primitive arcade games', [...] 'in early graphics programs'" (Gibson 1984: 51). In an interview, the author explained that he found great inspiration in gaming youngsters.

> I was walking down Granville Street [...] and I looked into one of the video arcades. I could see in the physical intensity of their postures how *rapt* the kids inside were. It was like one of those closed systems out of a Pynchon novel: a feedback loop with photons coming off the screens into the kid's eyes, neurons moving through their bodies, and electrons moving through the video game. These kids clearly *believed* in the space games projected. Everyone I know who works with computers seems to develop a belief that there's some kind of *actual space* behind the screen, someplace you can't see but you know is there. (McCaffery 1991b: 272)

It was mainly the presence of space in this setting which left a permanent impression on Gibson. The heyday of cyberpunk literature and the proliferation of video games[8] took place simultaneously. Without wanting to claim that one emanated from the other, we can see that both truly share aesthetic concepts such as the presentation of space. However, by asserting this dependency Gibson minimizes how much he himself anticipated. The major settings in *Neuromancer* are the "rich fields of data" (Gibson 1984: 5). Since these sites can be compared neither to the virtual spaces of video games nor to data networks such as the internet, Gibson depicts a perfectly new idea,[9] which was

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8 Although video games had existed before, they only became popular in the early 1980s due to technical developments and graphical enhancements.

9 The visual idea of the abstract dataspace was established principally by the depictions in Gibson's novel. To give just a few examples that show how relevant Gibson's concept of cyberspace still is: nearly all theories broaching the issue of cyberspace refer to Gibson as a source of inspiration. His influ-

labelled *Gibsonian cyberspace* by Featherstone and Burrows (1995b: 6). It is, above all, the interlacing of disparate spatial concepts[10] that characterises Gibson's novel.

This becomes especially clear when spaces interfere with each other. Shortly after Commodore launched the C64 at the end of 1982 – one of the first affordable home computers – computers and screens became ubiquitous. The already existing mass of images and sounds increased and technology became more dominant in "the postmodern city whose arteries circulate information" (Hollinger 1991: 205). In *Neuromancer*, protagonist Case falls victim to this plethora of images. Rambling through the streets of Tokyo, he becomes aware of how technology and the physical urban space interfere with each other. For Case, wandering around feels like

> a run in the matrix. [...] it was possible to see Ninsei as a field of data[:] [...] you could throw yourself into a high-speed drift and skid, totally engaged but set apart from it all, and all around you the dance of biz, information interacting, data made flesh in the mazes of the black market… (Gibson 1984: 116)

It must be attributed to the interplay of physical space and cyberspace that Gibson can paint such a vivid picture in his novel: "Urban space and cyberspace become reciprocal metaphors – each enables an understanding and negotiation of the other" (Bukatman 1993: 145).

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ence on approaches to both research in cyberspace and practical implementations of electronic spaces in cartography is irrefutable (see Tomas 1992: 46). The young science of cybergeography partly finds answers and modes of representation in Gibson's space concept (see Dodge and Kitchin 2001: 185); and the influence of *Neuromancer* on the Wachowski brothers is highly visible in their film *The Matrix* (1999).

10 Certainly the diverse spatialities in *Neuromancer* have to be distinguished analytically. For instance the space in video games is Euclidean and three-dimensional (projected onto the two dimensions of the screen), whereas the Internet (in today's sense of the word) is not.

3. Fictitious Spaces and Spatial Concepts
3.1. The Interplay of Spaces

Although important features distinguish the physical world from cyberspace, these are not autonomous but mutually dependent.[11] Virtual space is based upon the artificially created urban space insofar as cities anticipate structures of the dataspace: According to Florian Rötzer, cities are "in Stein gebildete[r] Cyberspace" (Rötzer 1998: 210). Similarly, Gibson continuously suggests this connection, for instance when he characterises the matrix as "landscape simulation" (Gibson 1984: 51), compares a pattern to "microcircuits, *or* a city map" (Gibson 1984: 9; emphasis added), or depicts cyberspace with the help of images taken from urban life: "the horizonless fields of the Tessier-Ashpool cores, an endless neon cityscape […]. The Kuang program dived past the gleaming spires of a dozen identical towers of data, each one a blue neon replica of the Manhattan skyscraper." (Gibson 1984: 256f)

In *Neuromancer*, Gibson combines the depiction of at least two ontologically different spaces: the physical space – appearing futuristic due to its technical innovations – and the electronic space of the matrix. The cyberspace as described in the novel refers to both the protagonist's physical world and, most notably, to the author's sense of reality inasmuch as Gibson incorporates his impressions of the 'real world' into the novel. The author makes use of the materiality of urban space in order to deal with the immateriality of the matrix, of which he tries to give his readers a visual idea. Gibson thus manages to represent the abstract concept of cyberspace, which otherwise would threaten to exceed the reader's imagination. His depictions of virtual and urban space invite the utilisation of established space theories in order to analyse spatiality in *Neuromancer*.

Michel Foucault's and Michel de Certeau's thoughts on space as presented below are part of a new, postmodern space concept, which stems from the notion that political, social, and cultural conditions have enormously changed; for this reason, both consider space as socially produced. Investigating to what extent they can be fruitful

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11 These dependencies have been sufficiently discussed. For further reading, see Dodge and Kitchin 2001, Rötzer 1998, and Geyh 2001.

for an analysis of the Gibsonian spaces appears to be very promising, insofar as they all originate from similar sources.

3.2. Fictitious Heterotopias

In the spring of 1967, Michel Foucault gave a lecture in Paris entitled "Des Espaces Autres" ("Of Other Spaces"). He discussed patterns of analysing space that transcend the mere description of the physical facts of places and called this new discipline 'heterotopology'. Foucault's basic assumption for his preoccupation with space is that

> [t]he present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. (Foucault 1986: 22)

Hence, the predominant model of our time is the network; the world is defined by "relations of proximity" (Foucault 1986: 23). Obviously, this non-linear network structure puts Foucault's concept close to Gibson's matrix space, as he writes: "The site is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements; formally, we can describe these relations as series, trees, or grids" (Foucault 1986: 23).

Foucault examines certain sites "that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (Foucault 1986: 24). He divides these ambivalent spaces into 'utopias', which are "sites with no real place", sites that "present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces" (Foucault 1986: 24). As a contrast, Foucault establishes the concept of 'heterotopias', which he describes as

> real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all

> places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. (Foucault 1986: 24)

Exemplarily, Foucault mentions hospitals, retirement homes, cemeteries, gardens, museums, libraries, and theatres. Thus, heterotopias are often institutions with restricted access and spatially demarcated places in society. Opposed to the disorderliness of the (postmodern) environment, heterotopias are subjected to well-defined rules. Adams' description of the cyberspace as "geschlossenes System projizierten Raums" (Adams 1996: 192) suggests a consideration of it as a heterotopia.

Intuitively, one might think of cyberspace as a utopia situated in one's imagination only. But in *Neuromancer*, Gibson maps out a completely different concept of such futuristic, immaterial spaces as having a severe impact on the protagonists. Their influence on the material world makes the novel's non-physical places appear to be 'real places' or heterotopic sites. When the protagonist Case jacks into the matrix – that is, strapping an electrode interface across his forehead in order to enter the matrix –, he bodily experiences the cyberspace, although his physical body remains in the 'real world'. Pulling the trodes off his head after a trip through the matrix, he is "drenched with sweat" (Gibson 1984: 65) and, being connected to Molly's sensorium via an unedited 'simstim' unit (a machine to simulate stimuli; it enables a person to see through another one's eyes and feel his/her feelings), he suffers her pain: "Case hit the Sim-Stim switch. And flipped into the agony of broken bone" (Gibson 1984: 64). Gibson does not explain how the emotion transfer takes place, but even if Case only imagines the pain, at least the sweat is an undeniable physical experience and reveals the "nonspace of the mind" (Gibson 1984: 51) as being real. And, as mentioned above, if one regards the Gibsonian cyberspace as a complement to reality based upon physical space, this furthermore puts it in relation to the concept of heterotopia.

In the following, three of the six principles that Foucault names in order to describe heterotopias will be illustrated by adducing examples from *Neuromancer*. The overall aim is to find out to what extent Gibson's spaces can be regarded as heterotopias. One of these principles is that heterotopias unite contrasts: "The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault 1986: 25). Moreover, heteroto-

pias are imbued with a sense of time that differs from our ordinary temporal conception, for they "are most often linked to slices in time – which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies" (Foucault 1986: 26). These differences do not simply arise in the matrix; five hours in cyberspace correspond to five hours in the 'real world'. The peculiar sense of time of the matrix becomes manifest when the artificial intelligence (AI) Wintermute outflanks Case, so that the latter makes mistakes when jacking in or out and finally suffers brain death. When Wintermute wants to take Case for a 'ride' to the Villa Straylight, the AI argues against Case's doubts: "You aren't missing anything, back there. An hour here'll only take you a couple of seconds" (Gibson 1984: 169). After several pages of description of their exploration of the TA-Clan domicile, Dixie explains: "You were braindead again, five seconds" (Gibson 1984: 175; for a similar example, see 236). Referring to museums or libraries, Foucault exemplifies the "heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time" as those

> in which time never stops building up and topping its own summit [...]. [...] [It is the idea] of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times[,] [...] a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place [...]. (Foucault 1986: 26)

Thus, Gibson's depiction of the Villa Straylight seems to be a heterotopia par excellence: an "accumulation of time" (Foucault 1986: 26). Its rooms are filled with artefacts from diverse, former epochs that do not match:

> The low, vaulted hallway was lined with dozens of museum cases, archaic-looking glass-fronted boxes made of brown wood. They looked awkward there, [...] as though they'd been brought in and set up in a line for some forgotten purpose. (Gibson 1984: 176)
>
> He wondered vaguely if Tessier-Ashpool had selected each piece of Straylight individually, or if they'd purchased it in bulk from some vast European equivalent of Metro Holografix. (Gibson 1984: 232)

If the composition of the showcases was "the expression of an individual choice" (Foucault 1986: 26), the Villa can only be considered a

collection of seventeenth century objects. However, insofar as it once answered a purpose that in the course of time was merely forgotten, the Villa can be read as a heterotopic place. The impression of incoherency given by the various accumulated objects is even intensified by the fact that Freeside and the Villa are artificially constructed places without any historical background. The integration of so many epochs seems like an effort to charge these sites with history. Another one of Foucault's principles has to do with transit:

> Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory [...] or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures. (Foucault 1986: 26)

Neuromancer's most frequent form of transit is Case's entering the matrix: "He settled the black terry sweatband across his forehead, careful not to disturb the flat Sendai dermatrodes. [...] Found the ridged face of the power stud" (Gibson 1984: 52). A meticulous ritual in the beginning, 'jacking in' more and more turns into a routine throughout the novel. Likewise, the Finn's dwelling emerges as a heterotopic site accessible only through special rites. When Molly and Case visit the Finn, Molly has to perform a set of gestures in front of his door in order to get it open: "The door was a sheet of corrugated roofing. In front of it, Molly's hands flowed through an intricate sequence of jive that he couldn't follow. [...] The door swung inward and she led him into the smell of dust" (Gibson 1984: 47f).

Linked to these transits, Foucault writes (1986: 26), are heterotopias "that seem to be pure and simple openings, but that generally hide curious exclusions", and he refers to the odd functionality of the American motels where "illicit sex is both absolutely sheltered and absolutely hidden, kept isolated without however being allowed out in the open" (Foucault 1986: 27). Obviously, the one-sidedness of simstim contains such an ambiguity as well. Even though he is intimately connected to Molly's sensorium, Case cannot overcome the distance between himself and her: "For a few frightened seconds he fought helplessly to control her body. Then he willed himself into passivity, became the passenger behind her eyes. [...] But the link was one-way.

He had no way to reply" (Gibson 1984: 56). He is, thus, simultaneously admitted and excluded.

According to Foucault, even though their role may change during the history of mankind, heterotopias always serve either as an illusion or as a compensation with regard to given social structures.

> Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory [...]. Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation [...] (Foucault 1986: 27).

It has already been explained how the alternate (cyber)space functions as a refuge for the protagonist. Cyberspace is based on a "well arranged" grid. It compensates the disorder of everyday life as the "colorless void" (Gibson 1984: 5) offers a perfect site for the projection of the participants' fantasies. Apart from that, Gibson's spaces also cause illusions in many ways: they disguise themselves in order to appear as something they are not; they adopt another identity in order to conceal their fictitiousness. Klepper refers to the Sprawl as well as to cyberspace when he states: "Beide Realitäten verdecken etwas, beide decken etwas auf. Das Zwischenland der Cyberspace-Romane ist in sich gedoppelt, weil die Welt, die es fingiert, selbst zunehmend fingiert ist" (Klepper 2002: 79).

3.3. Movement as Spatial Practice

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau traces "everyday practices" (de Certeau 1984: xii), ways of operating, such as speaking, writing, reading, or travelling, which all, to some degree, comprise movement. In order to characterise these practices as a means of the social construction of space, de Certeau introduces the terms *strategy* and *tactic*: the former relates to *places* and 'strong' institutions, the latter is connected with *space* and 'weak' individuals. In the following discussion, these terms will be explained step by step, in order to examine systematically the extent to which de Certeau's conceptual construct is applicable to the spaces in *Neuromancer*.

De Certeau defines a place (*lieu*) as

> the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (*place*). The law of the "proper" rules in the place: the elements taken into consideration are beside one another, each situated in its own proper and distinct location, a location it defines. A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability. (De Certeau 1984: 117)

Thus, a place consists of a rigid structure. However, a place is always interrelated to the outside world, as it serves as a basis for all practices and the individual's relation to his/her environment. No matter how stable its inner structure may be, a place is nevertheless vulnerable. The significance of a place is by no means static, but to a large extent determined by the way it is used. Gibson presents the structure of the cities and the cyberspace in *Neuromancer* as being maintained by such places – for instance, Wintermute's power and complexity materialise as a "simple cube of white light" (Gibson 1984: 115) – but above all, the protagonist's movement is reflected in the fictitious space of action and shapes it. The Artificial Intelligence's place gains in importance whenever Case is within reach. According to de Certeau, it is not until places are vitalized by their user's movement that space can emerge.

> A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensembles of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it [...]. In contradistinction to the place, it has thus none of the univocity or stability of a "proper." (De Certeau 1984: 117)

Thus, space is defined in contrast to place: permanent mutability is opposed to a geometrical shape, movement is opposed to a fixed condition. However, space cannot exist without places. It is bound to materiality: the specific places and the user's movement through them. Movement connects place and space. As de Certeau puts it: "In short, *space is a practiced place*. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers" (1984: 117). Places are the material used by the inhabitants to create space. The

space of action in *Neuromancer* evolves from a steady to and fro movement. Armitage's team is constantly travelling; the action switches from Tokyo's Chiba City to BAMA, Paris, Istanbul, Freeside and simultaneously to cyberspace and back.

In his discussion of questions concerning narration, de Certeau states: "Stories [...] traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories" (1984: 115). Astonishingly, he argues that stories traverse *places* as well as *spaces*. At first sight, it seems as if he uses these terms synonymously and has suspended their previously specified dependency. This discrepancy disappears when one regards de Certeau's remarks first from the position of the author and then from that of the reader. At first, writing creates a place or rather traverse sites and (consecutively) strings them together in the text. Once the text is written, it is the reader's turn to pace out the sentences and form his/her notion of spatiality based on the presented places. In de Certeau's words: "an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs" (1984: 117).

In *Neuromancer*, the urban structures of the metropolises as well as the matrix grid are conceptualised as spaces of action, be they the Ninsei in Chiba City or the visual representation of objects in the matrix. This is due to the fact that the matrix is in itself a blank space: "the infinite neuroelectronic void of the matrix" (Gibson 1984: 115). Reading the textual descriptions of how the protagonists experience places, the reader can bodily perceive their spatial journeys. Putting together these impressions, he receives a picture of the whole. Touching on the importance of movement in these spaces, James Kneale refers to Brosseau, who calls this method of writing "'kinetic description'" (quoted in Kneale 1999: 209). The mere depiction of sites is thus diminished in favour of the multilayered representation of spatial action: "cyberspace is too fantastic a space to be comprehensively detailed and thickened in the style associated with realistic fiction" (quoted in Kneale 1999: 209). Jacked into the matrix, Case explores space by pacing out different itineraries in the network. Gibson does not describe places and objects separately; he literally navigates the readers along the route in order to give them an idea of the space of action. De Certeau says that "[e]very story is a travel story – a spatial practice" (1984: 115). Insofar as the detailed descriptions in *Neuro-*

mancer make the reader fathom space and thus "produc[e] geographies of action" (de Certeau 1984: 116), they can be understood as "spatial stories" (de Certeau 1984: 115) that "organize walks. They make the journey, before or during the time the feet perform it" (de Certeau 1984: 116).

What de Certeau calls 'strategies' is reserved for the 'strong' of society, as only they are in possession of the necessary places. Since they rely on their material property, the 'strong' try to shield themselves from intrusions from the outside world. Strategic action perpetually aims to set up conglomerates of power; the importance of a place thus results from its being invested with power (see de Certeau 1984: xix). In *Neuromancer*, the big concern Sense/Net resembles such a powerful institution and its "intrusion countermeasures electronics" (ICE) (Gibson 1984: 28) represent its precaution against hackers like Case.

De Certeau's 'tactics' are based on this fixed order of the places as "clever tricks of the 'weak' within the order established by the 'strong'" (de Certeau 1984: 40). He identifies the tactic as

> a calculus which cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The "proper" is as victory of space [sic][12] over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing". (De Certeau 1984: xix)

De Certeau's tactics offer an appropriate model for describing the cyberspace cowboy's actions in the unsecured corporate networks (see Bukatman 1993: 210-13). It is exactly this kind of action that is responsible for the conception of space which *Neuromancer* conveys. Case takes advantage of the controlled territory belonging to powerful corporations when he, for example, risks accessing the Sense/Net data network in order to collect information. "A thief, he'd worked for

[12] The French original of de Certeau's text here says "lieu" (= place), which indeed makes more sense.

other, wealthier thieves, employers who provided the exotic software required to penetrate the bright walls of corporate systems, opening windows into rich fields of data" (Gibson 1984: 5). His cyberspace trips mostly last just a few seconds: "on the wing", he collects the relevant data before swiftly leaving "the other's place". Case makes use of the deficiencies of the system being attacked, which allows him to subvert the laws of that system "from within" (de Certeau 1984: 32). "Ice patterns formed and reformed on the screen as he probed for gaps, skirted the most obvious traps, and mapped the route he'd take through Sense/Net's ice" (Gibson 1984: 59). When Case enters the networks of the 'strong', power relations between the involved parties change. The shapes representing Case's teammates ("[t]he module's central screen displayed a fixed red square that represented the Straylight dock. Garvey was a larger square, green"; Gibson 1984: 222) transform under his tactical manoeuvres into another spatial arrangement: "He tapped a final sequence into the module and grabbed the worn pink handholds on either side of the navigation board. Case saw the green square shrink a final few millimeters to overlap the red square" (Gibson 1984: 223).

Tactics or – in particular – movements understood as action in space "give their shape to spaces. They weave places together" (de Certeau 1984: 97). Gibson's 'Sprawl' as well as the matrix are embodiments of such a 'weaving together': they are based on places but become what they are at large only through the user's movements. The movement of the city's inhabitants and of the actors in the matrix in *Neuromancer* structures space as something fluid. Through their movements, they appropriate the topographical material and thus transform place into space (see de Certeau 1984: 97f). Night City thus becomes a "playground" (Gibson 1984: 11) only because its inhabitants vitalize it.

> Night City was like a deranged experiment in social Darwinism, designed by a bored researcher who kept one thumb permanently on the fast-forward button. Stop hustling and you sank without a trace, but move a little too swiftly and you'd break the fragile surface tension of the black market. (Gibson 1984: 7)

Action and movement on the streets refresh and transform the spatial order:

> The walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else. And if on the one hand he actualizes only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order (he goes only here and not there), on the other hand he increases the number of possibilities (for example, by creating shortcuts and detours). (De Certeau 1984: 98)

Thus, the selection of itineraries and frequent movement around these places determines their degree of significance. Cyberspace in *Neuromancer* is a spatial structure formed by such a practice of interlinkage and appropriation of different places. The matrix is unfolded primarily by the protagonist's navigation through it. It is on account of this process of selection that space itself remains manageable and vivid action is possible at all.

The connection between de Certeau's remarks on walking in the city and Gibson's matrix space is reflected in the association of large city structures with data networks in current scholarly debates. Cities are characterized by a hierarchy of places: "zentrale [sind] von peripheren Bereichen zuverlässig und intuitiv zu unterscheiden […]. Das System also lebt von einer Hierarchisierung des topologischen Materials" (Winkler 1994: 233). These processes – "Verdrängungsprozesse", as Hartmut Winkler calls them (1994: 233) – are the result of the user's movement. In our new mediatised metropolises, like Gibson's BAMA, this hierarchy of places becomes apparent in their particular circulation of data:

> Program a map to display frequency of data exchange, every thousand megabytes a single pixel on a very large screen. Manhattan and Atlanta burn solid white. Then they start to pulse, the rate of traffic threatening to overload your simulation. Your map is about to go nova. Cool it down. Up your scale. Each pixel a million megabytes. At a hundred million megabytes per second, you begin to make out certain blocks in midtown Manhattan, outlines of hundred-year-old industrial parks ringing the old core of Atlanta... (Gibson 1984: 43).

Places of the highest frequency provide useful means of orientation from which new centres of power may emerge. Gibson describes these central points mostly as simple geometrical shapes in fundamental colours: "Call up a graphics display that grossly simplifies the exchange of data in the L-5 archipelago. One segment clicks in as red solid, a massive rectangle dominating your screen" (Gibson 1984: 101). Cyberspace presents itself as a "Konstruktion aus Bewegung

und Information" (Adams 1996: 199). Thus, space does not emerge from within itself, but it is shaped by spatial practices, by the user's dealing with the conditions of a fixed order. The assumed stability of places is effectively destroyed by the fluidity of the user's trajectories. It is precisely his emphasis on the significance of movement as an element that constitutes space that makes de Certeau's concept relevant for the issue this paper addresses.

4. Conclusion

In contrast to what was assumed at the outset, Gibson not only presents two spatialities – the physical space and the electronic dataspace – but a multitude of superimposing spatial concepts which all have a peculiar aesthetic composition. The physical world and the virtual space can be subdivided into different kinds of spaces, not all of which can be clearly assigned to either of these two. On the level of the material world, there are the fictional urban spaces (Tokyo, BAMA, Paris, Istanbul) and the outer space (Freeside, Villa Straylight, Rue Jules Verne) which are physical insofar as the bodies of the protagonists are really situated within these spaces. However, defining the urban space as physical becomes problematic, for instance, when one thinks about the impact the AI has on the 'real world' – these exceptions are but another indication of Gibson's superimposing spatial structures.

The electronic or virtual space comprises not only the matrix but is also related to the experiences of undergoing simstim and being braindead. Here, connections with the physical space exist as well, but all these virtual spaces are characterised by the absence of the protagonist's body. The different spatial concepts are thus blurred in the novel but have to be distinguished for analytical purposes.

No matter whether Gibson depicts the urban space or the virtual world: all spaces in *Neuromancer* are opened up by means of *movement*. Walking and travelling are but two of de Certeau's everyday practices that create space. In *Neuromancer*, the space of action emerges from the protagonists' constant switching between diverse spatialities – movement thus plays a central role. This constant movement as well as the superimposing of the different spatialities entails the blurring of boundaries. Thus, the reader cannot always clearly

say if the depicted scenario is part of the 'real world' or simply an illusion. In order to make a decision on this point – if it is possible at all – the peculiar role of the body would need to be further discussed.

The Villa Straylight can be regarded as a heterotopic site as defined by Michel Foucault insofar as its in fact faceless rooms are filled with old artefacts that accumulate time and thus let the Villa look like a traditional place. Its identity seems artificial and its history bought. It is merely an *illusion*, a simulation "that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" (Foucault 1986: 27). Originating from the need to have a last anchor in an ever-changing world, Straylight can also be seen as a heterotopia of *compensation* whose "role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled" (Foucault 1986: 27).

One can assume that in the near future such models will gain more and more relevance, since 'actual' places are increasingly characterised by a loss of identity and history.[13] On the other hand, it is this very lack of authenticity that many "cyberspace cowboys" appreciate while navigating in the matrix. For Case, and for all those affected by the power relations between the 'weak' and the 'strong' as outlined by de Certeau, cyberspace can offer compensation for the troubles of everyday life and grant freedom of action in a way the 'real world' cannot. It was probably this general need for a "counter-site" (Foucault 1986: 24) which helped establish Gibson's model of the cyberspace as a heterotopic site. As an "effectively enacted utopia" (Foucault 1986: 24), Gibson's spaces countervail the pressures of modern life – no matter if he writes about the urban transit spaces or 'other spaces' like Freeside or the matrix.

The coexistence of the spatialities described above is represented in the novel's structure, through a constant interlacing of fictional layers, and in its content, through the blurring of the boundaries of those layers. The interlacing itself adds up to a circular motion: based on his real-world environment, Gibson first develops the fictional urban space, which becomes the basis of all the virtual spaces. Finally, the mechanisms of illusion connected with these spaces refer

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13 In this context, Augé's concept of the *non-place* might also have been fruitful for an analysis of *Neuromancer*'s spaces. Unfortunately, this cannot be discussed within the limits of this essay. For further reading, see Augé 1995.

us back to the real world. As a circle has no beginning and no end, this structure prompts the question as to what ‘reality’ actually is.

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Peripheral Cosmopolitans: Caribbeanness as Transnational Utopia?

Saskia Schabio

Abstract: If the genre's inaugurating moment was the nation state as a singularly modern formation, utopia has recently turned transnational. The epistemology of cartographic space figures prominently in those recent emanations of the utopian spirit. Exile, migration and the diaspora are identified with the figuration of something new that is coming into being and that displaces the cartographic domination of physical space. Yet space may have become an overdiscussed critical topos. In some instances the privilege of space as a conceptual metaphor may sponsor an unhelpful confluence of celebratory or dystopian descriptions of (inevitable and naturalized) global interconnectivity, political analysis and the formulation of ethical and aesthetic positions. In order to dynamize what some critics describe as a tendency towards ossification, I feel it is necessary to retain a generic and historical perspective. Caribbeanness, I will argue, presents a particularly pervasive case in point. The concept has come to some prominence in recent times, not least as a sponsor of the booming field of Black Atlantic studies, while embeddedness in debates of French anti-colonial struggle, above all pan-Africanism and Martinician independence, is virtually eroded. Read consequently through the lens of utopian thinking, Caribbeanness does not justify the present almost mandatory relegation of the utopian imagination to a transnational topography. Instead, the case may indeed be taken to highlight the perseverance of the Orwellian moment in recent figurations of social and political space.

Key names and concepts: Theodor Adorno – Black Atlantic – Walter Benjamin – Homi Bhabha – Ernst Bloch – Caribbeanness – concrete utopia – cosmopolitanism and transnationalism – creolization – Frantz Fanon – Paul Gilroy – Edouard Glissant – Wilson Harris – imaginary community – rhizomatic thought – Derek Walcott

1. Utopia and the Spatialization of History

What, then, is the relation between utopia and the representation of space? It is an original one, Phillip Wegner suggests in *Utopia, the Nation and the Spatial Histories of Modernity*. The "narrative utopia", he argues, "plays a crucial role in the constitution of the nation-state as an original spatial, social, and cultural form" (Wegner 2002: xvi).

Catalyzed by the experience of the "estranging deterritorialization of late feudal culture" (Wegner 2002: 25f), the brilliance of More's inaugurating piece lies in registering the tension between universalizing tendencies and "particularization", between the production of a "homogenous empty space" (i.e. "capital", "the money form", "the juridico-political subject") (Wegner 2002: xxii) on the one hand and the formation of "particular shapes and boundaries" on the other (Wegner 2002: xvi), characteristic not only of the emergent narrative genre, but of modernity itself. It is in this tension between modernity's universalizing and particularizing tendencies that the nation-state as a "radically new and deeply spatialized kind of political, social, and cultural formation" emerged (Wegner 2002: xxii).[1]

In a time experienced by many as an era of unprecedented globalization – to some a substantial shift, if not a radical break with modernity's spatial practices – utopia has turned transnational. Liberal philosophy has, with some verve, advanced cosmopolitanism as a unifying vision of a better global future in the last two decades. Yet, critics observe, such readings of culture all too easily lend themselves to the homogenizing tendencies of a (residual) liberal humanist tradition that ultimately affirms neo-imperialist tendencies.[2] However, one also notices the relegation of the utopian spirit to the transnational in influential leftist and postcolonial positions,[3] as if it was to supplement propositions of a firm universalist perspective necessary to the formulation of both utopian and cosmopolitan ideals. The epistemology of (cartographic) space and its 'beyond' figure prominently in those recent emanations of the utopian spirit, thus substantiating Wegner's claim about the deep relationship between utopia and space. Exile, migration and the diaspora are identified with the figuration of something new, something that is incomplete and coming into being, a moving beyond or displacement of the cartographic (Cartesian) domi-

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1 Wegner (2001: xxii) expands Louis Marin's influential thesis of utopia as resisting reduction to any particular historical and geographic space (see Marin 1984).

2 In the space available it is impossible to survey this debate and the numerous attempts to refine and modify notions of cosmopolitanism that recent critiques engendered; e.g. Benhabib 2006. For one of the most thorough critiques of the new cosmopolitanism, see Brennan 1997.

3 See e.g. Hardt and Negri 2000, Gilroy 1993 and Hall 1993. For an entirely disenchanted view of utopia, see Wallerstein 1998.

nation of physical space. To the optimistically minded, the spatial concept of global interconnectivity allegorizes descriptions of an unprecedented flow of capital and communication as almost inevitably sponsoring new cognitive mappings and conceptual alternatives. If the globalized world is a product of the geographical patterns of European imperialism (Said 1993), the hope of the present focus on space is to envisage the coeval relationships between different global sites and to cancel the inscription of the world's space in a geography of development and underdevelopment that followed the colonial rationale of administration (see Harvey 1989 and Parry 2004: 114). Following Soja's "spatial critique of historicism" (Soja 1996: 164), transnational perspectives have become the repository of a counter-history to the dystopian development of Western modernity.

However, as I wish to argue in the following discussion, if this conceptual move is reminiscent of the Benjaminian critique of nineteenth-century ideologies of progress, ironically, history, in the guise of the inevitability of capitalist globalization, seems to have taken precedence over politics, so that the transnational, as both ethos and method, has come almost exclusively to occupy the horizon of non-identity that constitutes utopian thinking. Operating on the assumption of an inevitable increase of structural uniformity in modernized societies, some critics argue, the privilege of space as a conceptual metaphor may underwrite the interpretation global interconnectivity presently receives as a hitherto unprecedented and inevitable historical formation and affirm, rather than challenge, convergence theories of modernity. What is lost on the way is the historical evolution and situatedness of distinct sites of anti-colonial struggles with national independence as an indispensable prerequisite to an alternative future.

Caribbeanness, a concept developed in the 1980s by the Martinician writer and critic Edouard Glissant from notions of 'créolité',[4] is a pervasive case in point. The title of this paper, "Peripheral Cosmopolitans",[5] reflects the idea that the particular Caribbean historical

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4 In the English version of Glissant's *Discours antillais* the term *antillanité* has been translated as "Caribbeanness" (Glissant 1989: 261; translator's note).

5 'Cosmopolitanism' and 'transnation' have quite different, if oscillating connotations. While the former is often perceived as an elitist concept, associated with people who "can afford to experiment" (Hannerz 1996: 106), the term "transnational" extends to notions of "transnational cultures, and the networks and institutions which provide their social frameworks" (Hannerz 1996: 6).

and geographical situation, with its extensive mixing of cultures, has produced an alternative cosmopolitanism capable of evading the pitfalls of a Western homogenizing perspective. At the same time it evokes charges of elitism and of an uncritical emulation of financial and economic transnationalism which recent appraisals of (liberal) cosmopolitanism have received.[6] Caribbeanness has come to some prominence in recent times, not least as a sponsor of the booming field of (Anglophone) transnational studies, while embeddedness in debates of (French) anti-colonial struggle, above all pan-Africanism and Martinician independence, is virtually eroded. However, if one looks more closely at the post-war origins of the concept, one may find that Caribbeanness does not necessarily preclude a consideration of the beneficial effects of the nation as a unifying focus and enables, much as Fanon's better known thoughts on national culture, a reconsideration of the sustained role of the independent nation as the utopian trajectory of social desire.

Part of the problem, as far as I can see, lies with the conjunction of a hermetic and static space and the nation that, pace dystopian perspectives on twentieth-century European history, occludes more positive and dynamic imaginings of the nation and has sponsored some influential critical *topoi*. These rely on the spatialized perception of the universal and the particular in terms of the local and the global, geography and history, a perspective which either leads to a hypostasis of the 'beyond' or, at times, the (exclusive) relegation of resistance to the particular and the different in some strands of postcolonial studies. Hence, the particular geographical layout of the Caribbean with its dispersed islands has come to allegorize the way in which the cultural and linguistic heterogeneity of the Caribbean is cited against the prolonged political and cultural predominance of French statism as the "annihilation of fake universality, of monolinguism, and of purity" (Bernabé et al. 1993: 28).

'Space' may have become an overdiscussed *topos* (as if indeed affirming the propensity of thought to spatialize into schemes and extended metaphors suggested by the rhetorical origins of the term). In

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The tension between these two terms throws into relief the problem of describing present forms of global interconnectivity.

6 See Wardle 2000 as an example of studies which seek to challenge the opposition between nativism and an assimilative cosmopolitanism.

order to situate some of the *topoi* prevalent in current perceptions of global interconnectivity and question what some critics describe as a tendency towards ossification,[7] I feel that it is helpful to retain a generic and historical perspective, as the present volume proposes.

It is my contention that the amalgamation of utopia and the transnational may be partly due to the antinomy between utopian and anti-/or dystopian visions within the Western utopian tradition,[8] a claim substantiated by Ralph Pordzik's seminal comparative study of Anglophone postcolonial utopian fiction. Across a wide range of different locales, postcolonial literature offers analyses of what the influential Guyanese writer and critic Wilson Harris termed "Orwellian nemesis" in reference to the paradigmatic significance of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). As Pordzik demonstrates,[9]

> [the] preoccupation of many writers with the forms and functions of the utopian mode in a postcolonial context has resulted in a wide range of literary responses both to established utopian patterns, which operate coercively in the implementation of a homogeneous system of surveillance and perfection, and to their dystopian counter-images, which figure as templates of a blocked imagination incapable of forging new modes of interaction and creativity out of the nightmare of manipulation and conformity. (Pordzik 2001: 170)

In similar ways, I propose to read 'Caribbeanness' as a considered response to the Western utopian tradition, its ambivalences and its potentialities. Although not sui generis 'utopian', the evolution of the concept displays a deep awareness of the "constant movement" between "universalization" and "particularization" in terms of the "re- and deterritorialization of social desire". This Wegner describes as a

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7 See among others Lippuner and Lossau (2004: 48) for a critique of the amalgamation of physical space and social space which depoliticizes the contingencies of social realities. See also Bachmann-Medick 2006, who observes a weakening of evolutionist perspectives in favour of spatial ones.

8 This is in keeping with Klaus-Peter Müller's findings that Caribbean writers (e.g. Walcott and Harris) question the antinomy between purely utopian and dystopian visions (2002: 248, 255).

9 Pordzik traces the paradigmatic significance of Wilson Harris' critique of "Orwellian nemesis" (Harris 1983: xv) as the epitome of a "claustrophobic imagination" which engenders the latter's notion of the "cross-cultural" imagination (Pordzik 2002: 7). Taking this cue, I set out to explore the extent to which this perspective may be extended to alternative views of the nation.

constitutive moment of utopian narrative from its early modern beginnings and contemplates, in particular ways, the shift in spatial practices that led to the formation of the modern nation state (Wegner 2002: xxii; see above). In the case of Caribbeanness this particular awareness may have been catalyzed by the synchronicity of post-war independence movements on the one hand, and dystopian views of the (Western) nation-state in the post-war era on the other.[10] I hope to show that a reconsideration of these inflections may serve not only to question dystopian visions of the nation, but also to refocus some of the quasi-utopian investments in the transnation that animate the theorization of the present moment of global interconnectivity.

2. Utopia as Transnation

Let me begin by turning to a classic example from the early nineties: Homi Bhabha's key postcolonial study *The Location of Culture* starts out with a reflection on the "realm of the *beyond*" as the "trope of our times" ("BORDER LIVES: THE ART OF THE PRESENT").[11] This is also a meditation on the *fin de siècle* as the moment of writing, a *moment of transit*, which interprets a distinct mode of temporal perception in the spatial terms of the *beyond*, a moment, that is, "where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha 1994: 1). Such "crossing", Bhabha's rhetoric – the finality of the infinitive construction – insinuates, occurs (almost) purposefully, as if following a hidden utopian agenda. "Disorientation", that "disturbance of direction" he observes in the 'beyond', is captured, and,

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10 The postcolonial inflections of Utopia hence remind us that space discourses have their own complex story to tell from within the different force-fields of European imperial history. Although a supporter of Indian independence and a fierce critic of nationalism, Orwell, in his defense of patriotism, actually revives the myth of the English nation and ultimately arrives at an elitist and aestheticist "reassertion of Englishness", a position which "equates the national liberation struggles on the horizon with a broader tendency of political fanaticism and dishonesty, and an accompanying corruption of literary taste" (Brennan 1997: 144). See Brennan (1997: 142f) for a further exploration of Orwell's ambivalences.

11 See Bhabha 1994: 1. I have no space to explore the significance of the Heideggerian references invoked in the epigraph which frames his undertaking.

one should add, compensated for, analogous to the spatial (synchronous) and temporal (diachronic) dimension of the structuralist model. In so postulating he is able to temporalize the spatially conceived notion of (homogeneous) 'contemporaneity' and inscribe into it a perspective of lack, that is, a perspective that is 'utopian' in as much as it registers what is missing (Bhabha 1994: 4). In other words, the disorientation he observes holds out the promise of a release from the ideologies of its moment, in apprehension of some radically other future which is only to be captured in terms of discontinuities, inequalities, and the peripheral. 'Utopia' does not appear in the index of Bhabha's influential book, but, I should like to suggest, Bhabha's rhetoric here performs precisely the manoeuvres of utopian narratives. Its "deepest vocation", as Fredric Jameson has it, is "to bring home, in local and determinate ways, and with a fullness of concrete detail, our constitutional inability to imagine utopia itself, and this, not owing to any individual failure of imagination but as the result of the systemic, cultural, and ideological closure of which we are all in one way or another prisoners" (Jameson 1984: 247). Bhabha writes:

> The imaginary of spatial distance – to live somehow beyond the border of our times – throws into relief the temporal, social differences that interrupt our collusive sense of cultural contemporaneity. The present can no longer be simply envisaged as a break or a bonding with the past and the future, no longer a synchronic presence: our proximate self-presence, our public image, comes to be revealed for its discontinuities, its inequalities, its minorities. Unlike the dead hand of history that tells the beads of sequential time like a rosary, seeking to establish serial, causal connections, we are now confronted with what Walter Benjamin describes as the blasting of a monadic moment from the homogenous course of history, "establishing a conception of the present as the 'time of the now'". (Bhabha 1994: 4)

As Bhabha's quotation expressly invokes Benjamin's "messianic" holes in time (from his "Theses on the Philosophy of History"), he situates his own approach within the practices of materialist historiography. This is a perspective Benjamin sets off against the historicist positivism of the 19th century and its belief in 'progress'.[12]

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[12] One would need to look more closely at the connection to lines of thought proffered by the Frankfurt School tradition but already instilled by Walter Benjamin. On the continuities of Benjaminian thought in Frankfurt School aesthetic theory, see Nägele 1990 and Bahri 2003: 258.

Bhabha hence casts postcolonial migration ("the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees") in terms of that real, that is, revolutionary state of emergency and inscribes what he calls the "new internationalism" into Walter Benjamin's history of the oppressed: "It is", Bhabha writes, "in this sense that the boundary becomes the place from which *something begins its presencing* in a movement not dissimilar to the ambulant, ambivalent articulation of the beyond that I have drawn out" (Bhabha 1994: 5). Calling into question empty homogeneous time, that is, cancelling the evolutionary perspective on modernity as progress, the formation of globalization he describes is then interpreted as following the constructive principle Benjamin suggests in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History":

> A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. (Benjamin 1968: 261)

If this ultimately involves an identification of the historian with the revolutionary classes, this for Bhabha is now undertaken by the migrating "new international". Writing from the experience of Serbian nationalism, *The Location of Culture* calls on the "international intellectual community to meditate on the unequal, asymmetrical worlds that exist elsewhere" and extols the "migrant's double vision" to whom may now belong "the truest eye" (with reference to Rushdie; Bhabha 1994: 5). It is, in other words, also the attempt to position the intellectual (cosmopolitan) writer as much as the critic side by side with the oppressed classes in this quasi-utopian project where the transnational comes to occupy the place of both aesthetics and ethics.

What does this leave us with? The utopian, I wish to suggest, has emanated as submerged discourse in this transfiguration of the "international" into a "new international" that effectively elides differences between the cosmopolitan traveller and the victim of forced migration: in other words, criticism takes on the voice of the utopian, which, from Bhabha's contemporary experience of (Serbian) state brutality, dislocates the nation-state as the space of utopia's imaginary

community.[13] While gesturing towards the material and the empirical, the somewhat pathetically invoked description of transnational movements ("The testimony of my examples represents a radical revision in the concept of human community itself") ultimately correlates with an aesthetic concept of disruption and disjunction. This, however, as has been noted, following the language model, does not necessarily correlate with real life disjunctions and social conflict (Parry 2004: 55-74) and is, as also has been noted, not necessarily counter-hegemonic.[14]

This is certainly a rather truncated reading of Bhabha's complex project, and I do not want to rehearse engagements with his argument that have already been proffered with sufficient critical scrutiny. My intention was merely to retrace how the 'beyond' comes to supplement the tension between art and society – the formal and the thematic rendition of the utopian spirit – in ways that, to me, seem to be exemplary. The 'transnation' is invoked as if to evade the epistemological impasse Jameson described as a common feature of twentieth-century narrative utopias and that prompted the culturalist conclusions at which some strands of Critical Theory arrived (if not the relegation of the utopian to the negativity of art alone). And it has come to exonerate criticism from the task of engaging with the impasse of taking a universalist position when imagining a global future.

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13 I adopt Wegner's modulation of Benedict Anderson's concept of the "imagined" nature of the modern nation-state's community. Wegner argues that there "has been a continuous exchange of energies between the imaginary communities of the narrative utopia and the imagined communities of the nation-state, the former providing one of the first spaces for working out the particular shapes and boundaries of the latter." (Wegner 2001: xvi)

14 Bhabha does not entirely exclude the nation-state, but envisages national cultures from the perspective of disenfranchised minorities (see Bhabha 1990). Yet see Parry (2004: 71) for a critique of the predominance of the transnational paradigm that Bhabha's theory engendered and Khan for a recent case study of how the experience of transnationalism may instill the desire to "seek to recapture a lost sense of belonging by underlining cultural and political connections to the nation of origin." (Khan 2005: 40)

3. 'Utopia Station', Bloch, and the Creolization of the World

I now briefly turn my attention to the recent 'Utopia Station' exhibition which was set up in 2004 in Munich (but premised at the Venice Biennale of Art in 2003). Renowned artists and, in particular, renowned cultural analysts such as Edouard Glissant and Stuart Hall participated in this.[15] The project was announced as a deliberate return to utopian thinking after a phase of disillusionment. In their explanatory statement the curators designate their take-off-point as a debate between Theodor W. Adorno and Ernst Bloch in 1964, invoking the former's famous verdict about the end of utopia. Utopia, Adorno stated, had degenerated into the mere fulfillment of needs structured by the capitalist present. To an imagination colonized by consumer capitalism, utopia cannot transcend the present, yet insinuates a longing for the new (Adorno 1997: 252). As if in affirmation of Bloch's somewhat more optimistic counter-position,[16] the station as a physical and conceptual space alike seeks to reinstate the dialectic relation between the material and the aesthetic which acquires utopian dimension, in as much as it foreshadows emergent aspects of a radically other future where the desires structured by capitalism are displaced by the hope that only concrete utopia engenders:

> But what is its [art's] place? The discussion of this question has been opened again by Jacques Rancière, in his book *Le partage du sensible*, which in French has the advantage of having a partition and a sharing occupy the same word. What is sectioned off and exchanged? It is more than an idea. Rancière takes his departure from Plato, pointedly, in order to remind us of the inevitable relation between the arts and the rest of social activity, the inevitable relations, it should be said, that together distribute value and give hierarchy, that govern, that both materially and conceptually establish their politics. This theatre of relations wraps itself around visions of worlds, each of them islands, each of them forms, but all of them concrete realities replete with matter and force. This is a philosophical understanding of aesthetic activity; it extends materialist aesthetics into the conditions of our

15 See [http://www.kunstaspekte.de/index.php?tid=4217&action=termin].

16 Again, for the purposes of this paper, it is not possible to fully draw out the implications. But moving from Adorno and Bloch to Rancière's (re-)distribution of the "sensible" the curators expressly place themselves within a tradition of Marxism that highly values the transformative potential of the aesthetic dimension.

> present; it is a book to bring to a Station. As we have. But, once released, a book too leaves its island. [...]
>
> Think of the Station as a field of starting points, many starting points being brought and offered by many different people. Some will bring objects now, others later.[17]

My point is that by suggesting dis-location and unsystematic, unforeseeable relations associated with travel, migration or exile, the particular spatial outline of 'Utopia Station' responds to the dilemma of representing utopia as an inconceivable horizon ("Utopia Station produces images, even as it does not start with one"). While the 'station' may involve the metrical and mathematical spaces of the administered world, with its teleologies and destinations, where the rationale of 'form' (measurement) is imposed on matter, the emphasis on 'passages', on the nomadic and transient, on continuous variation and free action, constantly changing orientation, resists any cartographic bent of mind and is endowed with a utopian dimension.[18] As described, the participants almost come to figure as Deleuze's and Guattari's nomads whose "primary determination" is to "occupy and hold smooth space", where "materials signal forces and serve as symptoms for them", a concept the curators do not invoke (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 410, 528). Instead, they expand on their alternative spatial concept in a reference to Edouard Glissant:

> Edouard Glissant came. He spoke of the desire for the perfect shape, he spoke his language of landscapes. Only by passing through the inextricable of the world, he told us, can we save our imaginaire. In that passing there would come the tremblement, the tremor being fundamental to the passage.

This is an extremely condensed presentation of Glissant's political and poetic oeuvre (the distinction is difficult to sustain in all instances) replete with a whole geographic and historical palimpsest developed on Caribbeanness over a span of more than fifty years. "Passage" almost inevitably invokes what has come to be known as the trauma of the *middle passage*, and more broadly, the complex patterns of (forced) migration the Caribbean islands show. It is the trauma of a 'history' of

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17 [http://www.e-flux.com/projects/utopia/about.html].

18 The station is an open and overdetermined concept. It generates an excess of possible 'determinations'.

violent dislocation and enslavement which Glissant rewrites in his notion of Caribbeanness (understood in the following as Glissant's particular inflection of creolization). There it becomes the source, the blueprint of a truly "cross-cultural imagination": "We are the roots of a cross-cultural relationship", Glissant wrote in *Caribbean Discourse*, "[s]ubmarine roots: that is floating free, not fixed in one position, but extending in all directions in our world through its network of branches" (Glissant 1989: 66f). This history of oppression does not figure in the curators' explanatory statement but is wholly immersed in their ambition of eclectically presenting recent emanations of the utopian spirit. To my knowledge Glissant makes no explicit reference to the utopian genre in his theoretical work and his fictional writing does not, to my mind, affiliate, at least not ostentatiously, with this particular generic tradition. The way Glissant is presented, however, suggests a strong connection to Bloch (which the curators do not spell out) in as much as his notion of the *imaginaire* hinges on an epistemological impasse, that by dint of its existential negativity enables "passage". It is the negativity of the real that inhibits the closing in of the present, and the 'sub-limity' of abysmal suffering that instigates, as Glissant has it in his later *Poetics of Relation*, "[not] just a specific knowledge, appetite, suffering, and delight of one particular people, not only that, but knowledge of the Whole, greater from having been at the abyss and freeing knowledge of Relation within the Whole" (Glissant 1997: 8). If for Bloch "concrete utopia stands on the horizon of every reality; real possibility surrounds the open dialectical tendencies and latencies to the very last" (Bloch 1986: 223), it can only be apprehended in "disruptive traces", without reducing the dialectical complexity of the historical process. In much the same way as for Bloch *concrete* utopia embraces the "complexity of systems found in the chaos theory" (Wegner 2002: 21), for Glissant 'Relation' attains such power. Glissant introduces 'Relation' to stem the force of standardization, what he calls the "danger of being bogged down, diluted, or 'arrested' in undifferentiated conglomerations" (Glissant 1997: 142). This perspective is important because it complicates notions of the different and the particular as the quasi-utopian expression of specific local desires and politics. A mere dedication to difference is ineffective because these categories ultimately reproduce notions of "rooted" identity and, if sponsoring relativism, remain caught in a system of binaries and hierarchies: "Acknowledging differences does not

compel one to be involved in the dialectics of their totality" (Glissant 1997: 17).

Taking the curators' cue, one may then consider Caribbeanness as emerging from an impasse, which parallels Bloch's engagement with the problematic relation between utopia and (capitalist) modernity and that for Glissant incites the need to transcend "specific knowledge, appetite, suffering, and delight of one particular people" (see above). It is at this point that Glissant embraces the rhizome as the possibility of a non-relational understanding of difference (that is the radically singular), which, along the way, the Caribbean comes to epitomize.[19] For Glissant the Caribbean exemplifies the cross-fertilization of different languages and collision of cultures that the accelerated globalization of communication enabled and that resists the rationality of exchange value (Glissant 1997: 89). As such, Caribbeanness suggests, in the Blochian sense, a genuinely utopian process "wherein change in any one element will have dramatic and unpredictable consequences for the whole" (on Bloch, see Wegner 2002: 21). Its unpredictable results belie any convergence theory of modernity as 'embodied' utopia (to be associated in Blochian terms with the fulfillment of "specific needs"). It is at this point that we seem inevitably to arrive at an exclusively trans-national conclusion where the particular cultural sphere, the struggle for Martinician independence in the context of which Glissant first developed his concept, is no longer of avail. As such, however, Caribbeanness may be easily absorbed by a metropolitan rhetoric of the transnational as the now worn-out and exhausted harbinger of that longing for the 'new' which in one way or another infuses contemporary evocations of global interconnectivity.

4. The Caribbean and the Black Atlantic

The 2004 Black Atlantic exhibition held in the Berlin House of Cultures introduced Edouard Glissant along with Paul Gilroy as "the most prominent" proponent of Black Atlanticism. Gilroy in his foreword to the exhibition catalogue invokes the concept of diaspora as an alternative to the metaphysics of space and nation. This rereading of geography paves the way for an alternative genealogy of (a largely dysto-

[19] For an analysis of Glissant's notion of singularity, see Hallward 2001: 66ff.

pian) Western modernity. Diasporic dislocation turns the problem of identity or origin, that is, the system of racialized hierarchies and essences formative of the nation-state system, into potentiality and power, enabling the transformation of a traumatic history epitomized in the middle passage and slavery. The "multidimensional and transcultural space" of the Atlantic Ocean is invoked as a "negative continent", hence endowed with an ou-topian aura sponsoring a new methodology which, as the curators have it, "makes it possible to trace lines of social, historical and cultural connection between the Americas, Africa and Western Europe".[20] While the project acknowledges the need to "bring ideals of the transnational into contact with particular historical sites to trigger [quasi-utopian] counter-memories and acknowledge the suppression of colonial history in the genealogies of modernity", according to the curators, "Black Atlantic refers not to a clearly defined region or specific period", but to "movement and networking" rather than "particular sites". However, the evolving methodological tool is far from neutral or truly 'trans-', or even 'supranational', as Laura Chrisman and others have demonstrated. In as much as Gilroy's inaugurating study emerges from the Anglo-American tradition of Black transnational movements, such a perspective may amount to an "uncritical emulation of Black America" (Chrisman 2006: 29; Diawara 1998: 117).[21]

Caribbeanness seems to present a case in point. While its influence on Black Atlantic studies seems to be acknowledged by implication – following suit in the catalogue is a text by Edouard Glissant, whom Gilroy also invokes in an epigraph to his introduction "Black Atlantic" – what is lost is the careful exploration of the significance of space and place in Glissant's thinking on national self-liberation, which, as I will argue below, needs to be considered as a reply to *French* statism. As a result the immersion of Caribbeanness into Black Atlantic Studies is (almost) blind to the more positive, or even utopian, role the independent nation has received in anti-colonial struggle and Caribbean liberation theory. This, however, means to neglect at-

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20 [http://archiv.hkw.de/en/programm/programm2004/blackatlantic/c_index.html].

21 Hallward emphasizes a radical break between *Caribbean Discourse* and *The Poetics of Relation* while I stress continuities. Yet this is not to deny a strong tendency towards the "newly global post-national reconciliation" and the risk of affirming "dispossession" (Hallward 2001: 120).

tempts to sever utopia's imaginary community from unhelpfully rigid dystopian views of the nation and to overlook the particularly critical inflection utopian desire has received in Caribbean writing.

5. Caribbean Inflections of Utopian Desire

The Caribbean faces the predicament of the 'non-place' in two ways. On the one hand it grapples with its relegation to 'non-history': the "claustrophobic" view (Harris 1983: xv) that "nothing could ever be built among these rotting shacks, barefooted backyards and moulting shingles" (Walcott 1970: 4). On the other hand there is the urge to annul colonial utopias of the *locus amoenus*, that is, the tradition of the Paradise Islands, an impasse Glissant diagnoses when he tellingly lists the "lure of the Caribbean" ("the outer edge of space and time") among other items in the form of a "litany" as one of the "facts of our quest for identity" (Glissant 1989: 231). The Caribbean and utopia hence share the idea that any *eu-topos* needs to be an *ou-topos* – has to inaugurate locales by challenging the terms advanced from European history.

This was also true when attempting to imagine the independent nation. Glissant contributed to this revisionary project in ways comparable to his fellow-Martinician Frantz Fanon, whose thoughts on national culture and independence are, however, much more familiar to the Anglophone world than Glissant's. It is important to bear in mind that Martinique has never become independent, but was granted the status of a *département outre mer* in 1946. Both thinkers were involved in the island's struggle for independence, yet reluctant to ground independence on the blind adherence to a generalizing universal, be it anchored in an African past, or the ethnocentric nation state. At a point where disenchantment with the course of European modernity had prompted Critical Theory to embrace the negativity of art to evade the paradoxes of a utopian desire caught within the inhibiting conditions of the present, both engaged with this epistemological impasse in terms of an alternative figuration of social space which did not exclude the independent nation. Let me briefly glance at Fanon's chapter "On National Culture" as the better known example and then turn to Glissant to point out parallels:

> The colonial world is a world cut in two [...] The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms one is superfluous. The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. [...] The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. (Fanon 1963: 38f)

Against the claustrophobic view of the "colonial world as a world cut in two", Fanon's strategy is to locate cultural newness in the native town. In so doing he can render it the space of a new concept of the nation involving a poetic and communal "seeking out of new patterns, that is to say national patterns" (Fanon 1963: 240f). "Let there be no mistake about it", Fanon writes, "it is to this zone of occult instability where the people dwell that we must come" (Fanon 1963: 226).[22] For Fanon it is in precisely such "abject spaces that a colonial culture comes to 'modernize'" itself (Baucom 2006: 67; Fanon 1963: 240). 'Modernization' here takes on a utopian meaning quite different from liberal humanism's monological view of modernity, "which expects a common modernity as the universal future of global history and so holds out modernity to the un- or under-developed world as no more than a distant promise, a not-yet-crossed horizon" (Baucom 2006: 70). Fanon understood that to wrench utopian desire from colonial structures must involve the radical re- and deterritorialization of social desire.

Glissant engages in a similar way with the colonial figuration of utopian space. Like Fanon, Glissant critiques metropolitan inflections of utopian desire when he states the need to transcend "the intellectual pretensions dominated by the learned elite". Instead Caribbeanness needs to be grounded in "collective affirmation, supported by the activism of the people" (Glissant 1989: 222). Hence, the search for a "Caribbean identity" which would find expression in a "federation" is held inseparable from the aim of each separate community coming

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22 Fanon develops a view discussed broadly within the West Indian debate on social realism, most memorably so perhaps by C. L. R. James, who insists on the portrayal of the "hidden resources" and the vivid life of "the hedged-in people of the yard" which is set against the standardization of social desire in the ascending middle-classes. (Ramchand 1971: 12, 13, 14f)

into its own. The hesitancy of submitting a "political program, no matter how radical", in the face of choosing a Caribbean identity, Glissant reads as the "hidden desire to be restrained by the limits imposed by nonhistory, by a more or less shameful alignment with (metropolitan) values" (Glissant 1989: 223).

It is against the background of the divergent policies of the different Caribbean nation states within the force field of international relations that the unifying geography of the Caribbean assumes the 'pedagogic' function of utopia as the open space of a cultural newness that resists the standardization of social desire.[23] Glissant invokes the "distant, uncertain emergence of the Caribbean [which] is nonetheless capable of carrying forward our people to self-renewal and of providing them with renewed ambition" (Glissant 1989: 223f). As suggested above, Caribbeanness, much like Pan-Africanism, and unlike "Atlantis", the "oldest dream in Western culture" (Glissant 1989: 224), must evade escapism, which can only be a detour from independence: "One is not Martinican because of wanting to be Caribbean. Rather, one is really Caribbean because of wanting to become Martinician" (Glissant 1989: 224). The alleged, if (potentially) transient, political and cultural trajectory in his early writings as much as in the later *Caribbean Discourse*, is the independent nation. This is perhaps most poignantly staged in his fictional work *La Lézarde* (*The Ripening*).

The book, written in 1958 at the time when Glissant formed the Front Antillo-Guyanais together with Paul Niger, centres on four young students engaged in nation-building in the post-war era (Hallward 2001: 81f). All along, their success hinges on a new mode of relating to Caribbean geography. "'This is the place' said Thaël. 'And we discovered it. We can say we have made it ours. Yesterday, it had the blood of our forefathers, today it has our voice'" (Glissant 1985: 185). Attention to topographical particulars enables transcendence of the very terms of the colonial enterprise ("discovered"). Such a view depends on consciousness of the phenomenology of 'place' which will also acknowledge the particularities of different mindsets: and yet Glissant endorses neither particularism, nor the nostalgia of a mystical ecology, a concept he critiques with reference to Pétain (Glissant 1997: 147), but convergence of "these various communities" as "elec-

[23] On the material, pedagogical, and political effects of utopian narratives, see Balibar 1991.

torate", as nation. Neither is there the (North-American) modernist antinomy between cosmopolitan detachment from locality and the focus on the local. If cosmopolitan, this perspective is inextricably tied to the great hopes of establishing "the tender ideal of brotherly love, so long repressed and futile" (Glissant 1985: 146). Relating anew to landscape hinges on an altogether novel way of relating to time and space. "I think I have always known you [...] you were always there":[24] Only then will things fall into place, will human relate to human in a language not laced with empire and the attendant logic of progress and consumption. Note how Glissant wrenches the world-making nature of vision coming into its own from its (Adamic) eschatological frame ("You make mistakes, but they are your mistakes, you correct them"):

> [a]nd you begin to emerge from the confusion, you begin to see things in their proper places, you see the sea, the houses, the sands, the vegetables, you begin to sort things out, each in its place and each one's place in relation to the other. [...] You learn the power and the significance of words. You first stumble among the words, but each time you get up. You make mistakes, but they are your mistakes, you correct them. [...] We knew little to begin with, but we soon learnt to use our eyes. And finally we managed to become fully aware and to name our world (Glissant 1985: 185).[25]

Glissant's style seeks the poetic 'figuration' of an immediate rather than a mediated relation to nature that would endorse the (romantic) ambition of healing the rift between nature and human, perception and projection. Operating at the boundary between the visible and the invisible, trees figure the unknown and unknowable, positing that irreducible self-identity of the physical and experiential particular that transcends the arbitrariness of the letter and belies the alienating worldview of cartographic abstraction.[26] The emergence of the new nation can only be imagined in terms of this utopian process.

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24 See Glissant (1989: 108) on the function of landscape as a way of "retrieving the people's collective memory".

25 On the coherence between territory and narrative structure, see Hallward 2001: 84.

26 The desire for such a moment also pervades Wilson Harris' writing on landscape: "The landscape possessed a life, because, the landscape, for me, is like an open book, and the alphabet with which one worked was all around me.

Looking towards Glissant's more recent work, national independence seems to figure less prominently. And yet his now strongly Deleuzian understanding of the spatial does, as far as I can see, neither exclude the nation state as an immediate political telos nor renounce the project of Martinician independence. What this entails is revealed in his fully fledged redefinition of the "city" in terms of the 'rhizome', operating on the assumption that "each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (Glissant 1997: 11): "A city represents a region in the Nation, and a nation in the world system, but it comes back to its particular roots when it accepts the special nature of an 'Other'" (Glissant 1997b). What Glissant grapples with is territorialism that grounds itself on "identity" as the "sacred mystery of the root" and as such prolongs dependency: "whenever it proves hard to define or impossible to maintain, [it] leads inexorably to the refuges of generalization provided by the universal as value" (Glissant 1997: 141f). Therefore "instances of independence" need to be "defined as closely as possible":

> Gradually premonitions of the interdependence at work in the world today have replaced the ideologies of national independence that drove the struggles for decolonization. But the absolute presupposition of this interdependence is that instances of independence will be defined as closely as possible and acutally won or sustained. Because it is only beneficial to all (it only stops being a pretext or ruse) at the point at which it governs the distancings that are determinant (Glissant 1997: 143).

As this paragraph's presentation of global interconnectivity moves from a dystopian view ("premonition") to a more positive vision ("absolute presupposition of this interdependence [...] no longer a pretext or ruse"), it circumscribes again the problem of utopia in the face of the present global "speeding up of relationships" (Glissant 1997: 141) in ways that recall the Blochian parallels pointed out earlier. The standardization of social desires is apparent in the obstructive influence of French statism ("the French technocratic elites"), which comes from "having to consume the world without participating in it, without even the least idea of it" (Glissant 1997: 145).

[...] Is there a language akin to music threaded into space and time which is prior to human discourse?" (Harris 1999: 40-46; qtd. in Müller 2002: 247).

In particular in the case of Martinician culture, which, having no "solid rootstock in any sacred territory or filiation", is "fragile in the extreme", such are the forces of "masked colonization" (Glissant 1997: 144) that it will be difficult to muster up political resistance. "This, indeed, is a case in which specificity is a strict requirement and must be defined as closely as possible" (Glissant 1997: 144). However, merely "[p]ronouncing one's specificity is not enough if one is to escape the lethal, indistinct confusion of assimilations; this specificity still has to be put into action before consenting to any outcome" (Glissant 1997: 147). And it is in this context that, again, Glissant ponders the "need for poor countries to exercise self-sufficiency that is economically and physically sustaining. Such as the definition of how forms of independence are experienced or hoped for" (Glissant 1997: 148). Again, with an eye on Martinique, Glissant asserts: "Here, as elsewhere, one must figure out [...] how much we should push for invention and a new sensibility in association with 'national' products".

But how is one to stem the force of the "planetary evolution toward standardization of consumer products" (Glissant 1997: 149)? As suggested earlier, Glissant's is a stridently poetic world view: the "world's poetic force (its energy) kept alive within us, fastens itself by fleeting, delicate shivers, onto the rambling prescience of poetry in the depths of our being" (Glissant 1997: 159). While hindered by the "active violence in reality" it is "everpresent", it will not "dry up", as if to interrupt that consumer logic of the 'new' that animates the speed of globalization: "It will be a long time before we finally recognize it as the newness of the world not setting itself up as anything new" (Glissant 1997: 160). The "expression of this force" is "Relation" (Glissant 1997: 160). Relation thrives on traditional utopian narratives in that creolization is accelerated by the collision of cultures prompted by the new communication technologies.[27] The verve of Glissant's 'defense' of poetry bespeaks with an almost Shelleyan enthusiasm an aesthetic position (which, again, would deserve much more careful exploration, both in relation to romanticist and modernist aesthetics). Captured in the broadest terms, as far as I can see, Relation is invoked as countering the shrinking autonomy of art. The hope is to unsettle that deaden-

[27] This affirms Pordzik's description of postcolonial utopias which "reconceptualize technology as a staging ground or contact zone for intercultural action." (Pordzik 2006: 186)

ing standardization of taste Glissant observes as an effect of enduring colonization: "To oppose the disturbing affective standardization of peoples, whose affect has been diverted by the processes and products of international exchange, either consented to or imposed, it is necessary to renew the visions and aesthetics of relating to the earth" (Glissant 1997: 148). We see this poetic relation to space emerge from an impasse which recalls Bloch's engagement with the problematic relation between utopia and the standardization of desire in capitalist modernity.[28] Yet if so, Glissant's Deleuzian concept of Relation may be taken to punctuate the difficulties of postcolonial approaches which answer that impasse by referring to relational difference and particularity as the expression of specific local desires and politics, arriving at the "transcendence of relations with or between specific individuals" (Hallward 2001: 67). Having said that, and by the same token, this impasse also prompts us to readdress the problematic issue of Caribbeanness as a "singular figuration" that, "like any singular configuration", implies a "univocity beyond mere integration" and hinders "its own interruption" (Hallward 2001: 332).[29]

As an aesthetic experiment – it is, after all, a *poetics* of relation he envisages – Glissant's writing leaves us with the problem of how to judge culturalist approaches, as any culturalist approach to the problem of utopia begs the question of the pedagogic effects of utopia, and the need to distinguish between its aesthetic and political dimensions. And yet, if the reception of 'Caribbeanness' prompts us to caution against confusing the modes of celebratory or dystopian mainstream descriptions of inevitable and naturalized global interconnectivity, political analysis and the formulation of ethical and aesthetic positions, this is not entirely to dismiss transnational perspectives as a useful methodological tool. It is, however, to critique a (now almost prescriptive) symbolic topography, which is not an equivalent to political action, and that might sponsor unhelpfully dogmatic positions.

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28 See Müller (2002: 257) on potential parallels between Caribbean notions of survival and Bloch's principle of hope.

29 At stake is some form of 'universalist' claim – glimpses perhaps of what Wilson Harris also seeks in his aesthetic experiments – "a shared anatomy that has its roots in all creatures and in everything" (Harris 1999: 44; quoted in Müller 2002: 248) and that may only be poetically perceived.

6. Conclusion

Glissant's work, I have been suggesting, may be taken as an example of the critical inflection utopian desire has received in Caribbean writing. Although not ostensibly or sui generis utopian, inflections of utopian thinking inform Caribbean aesthetic experiments which in places invite comparisons to Critical Theory. At times such a perspective may seem like forcing Glissant's complex work into too restricted a focus. There is an obvious friction between concepts emerging from historical and geographical origins as diverse as Critical Theory and Caribbean liberation theory. If so, this mirrors a tendency to be found in some strands of postcolonial studies and prompts us to pause over the conceptual transfer of culturally charged paradigms.[30] At the same time the affinity may be taken to reveal the impact of the Orwellian moment on present figurations of political and social space: for the nation-state's Orwellian crisis may be taken not only to register paradigmatically dystopian apprehensions of modernity, but instead actually to foreshadow the prevalence of the "antinomies of a homogenous global mass-media and commodity culture and the violent particularisms of the new nationalisms emergent in the post cold war era up to the present date" (Wegner 2002: xxv, xxvi). These are not at all irrelevant, it seems, to recent apprehensions of the transnation.

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30 See Weigel who insists on the historical origin of space-discourses so that they may not evolve into "neutral tools" (2002: 151). She argues that we need to retain the differences between Anglo-American Cultural Theory and European Culture Studies.

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“Utopian and Cynical Elements”: Chaplin, Cinema, and Weimar Critical Theory

Antonis Balasopoulos

Abstract: This essay seeks to challenge the postwar marginalization of Charlie Chaplin’s films within the canon of film theory by arguing for their crucial significance as complex meditations on the precariousness of utopian desire. I suggest, first, that Chaplin’s corpus was vital in the gestation of the ambivalent approach to mass culture that characterized Weimar Critical Theory; secondly, that the juncture between Chaplin and Weimar thought owed much to a shared tendency to view the utopian potential of modernity as something that rebounds from within the very forces of capitalist reification; and lastly, that in both Chaplin and Weimar thought, the volatile interplay between reification and utopia is exponentially complicated by being processed through the relay of affective cynicism and its own ambivalent functions. These three premises are explored through the demonstration of the close interdependence between the theory of reification and the conception of the modernity of the cinematic gaze; the examination of the role of Chaplin’s affective and gestural milieu in creating possibilities of utopian fulfillment out of the re-presentation of reification; and the anatomy of the theoretical problems introduced by the ambivalent hermeneutic and political function of cynicism/kynicism as both anti-utopian and anti-reifying strategy. I conclude with a reading of Chaplin’s *The Kid* (1921) as a paradigmatic instance of Chaplin’s function as the exponent of an abyssal dialectic wherein the conflicting forces of utopia/reification and cynicism/kynicism are kept in permanent suspension, “at a standstill.”

Key names and concepts: Theodor Adorno – aesthetics and politics – avant-garde – Walter Benjamin – Charlie Chaplin – cynicism – Siegfried Kracauer – modernity – reification – utopia – Weimar Germany

There may be no more dramatic illustration of the rift that divides us from the cultural moment of high modernity than the drastic devaluation of the artist who dominated the critical and popular milieu of the period between the outbreak of the First World War and the advent of the Second. Chaplin, “the national hero of the world” in the enthusiastic words of Weimar critic Hans Siemsen, the actor, producer and di-

rector who was to shape both the aesthetics of the Parisian avant-garde in the teens and twenties and the Critical Theory of the German left and liberal intelligentsia in the thirties, has been all but incidental to the inquiries of cultural and film studies theory in the second half of the twentieth century.[1] Falling prey, it would seem, to the very zest with which he had been singled out as the towering figure of the new art of the cinema before the war, Chaplin's cult status as harbinger of the promise of modernity had faded by the time *Monsieur Verdoux* was released in 1947.

Chaplin's highly visible yet ultimately elusive political status in the years before 1940 did little to help his rapid decline in critical status.[2] Badly damaged by the HUAC-orchestrated Cold War offensive in the United States, Chaplin's political image was ironically equally compromised in the circles of the postwar European left, largely due to its own disillusion with the optimistic appraisal of the emerging *milieu* of technologically mediated mass entertainment. The French long sixties, after all, trace one of their foundational moments in the agitationist disruption of the Paris premier of Chaplin's *Limelight* in 1952, an event that led to the formation of Guy Debord's Lettrist International, and, a few years later, of the Situationist movement. In the eyes of the Situationists, the Switzerland-residing, politically neutralized Chaplin of the postwar years was no longer thinkable as a manifesto hero as he had been for their avant-garde predecessors in the thirties;[3] he was rather a manifesto villain, "a fascist insect" (Berna et al. 1952: n. p.), "marked with infamy in the eyes of all those who had believed in the subversive nature of his work and who had accorded him all their affection, as to no other great artist" (Bédouin

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1 Siemsen, as quoted in Hake 1990: 88. The generally adulatory response to Chaplin in the Parisian literary avant-garde is discussed in Abel 1976: 84-109.

2 In a 1931 review of Chaplin, Kracauer contended that "Chaplin succeeds in asserting himself in a realm beyond the political" (1997: 118). On the ideological ambiguities informing the German reception of Chaplin's off-screen and on-screen persona, see Hake 1990: 93-97, 101f, 106f. For a discussion of similar ambiguities emerging during Chaplin's last years in the US (1947-1952), see Wranovics 2005: 14f, 54, 126f.

3 In 1927, the Surrealist Group published its passionate defense of Chaplin from charges of sexual immorality, "Hands off Love" (2000: 173-80).

2000: 181).[4] Like virtually everyone else in European left and liberal culture between the wars, including his numerous admirers in avant-garde circles, Chaplin seemed unable to fill his own, larger-than-life shoes. The image of a mass culture messiah who could single-handedly reeducate collective affect and perception in a progressive political direction now appeared utopian in the worst sense, the product of the starry-eyed political naiveté of a generation that had been duped by charismatic vanguardism and swept away by its catastrophic incarnation in Fascism. Even from the standpoint of a more traditionally aesthetic criticism, Chaplin's earlier critical association with what was most vital in the milieu of cinematic modernity seemed like so much misguided enthusiasm, a signal failure to perceive the fact that his work actually lagged behind the formal complexity, cinematic reflexivity, or technical virtuosity of contemporaries like D.W. Griffith, Sergei Eisenstein, or, closer to Chaplin's own comic milieu, Buster Keaton.[5]

Yet there is something unreflectively tautological about Chaplin's postwar critical devaluation. For the dismissal of the significance of Chaplin's work involves an amnesic elision of the political and aesthetic configuration which critically defined this significance in the first place: more than any other artist of the period, "Chaplin" was a sign, a name for the tense and volatile embodiment, within the *same* cultural text, of vanguardist iconoclasm and mass cultural appeal, critical demystification and visceral pleasure, post-human transmogrification and humanist affirmation, the anticipation of a transformed future and the affirmation of survival in what *is*. Watching his early films today is a profoundly instructive lesson in the historical ineluctability of our distance from such a horizon of interpretation. What appears 'timeless' in the figure of the Tramp is ironically never quite identical to what it signaled in the cultural moment that Chaplin

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4 For a brief discussion of the broader context of the Lettrist sabotage of Chaplin's premiere in Paris, see Marcus 1990: 340ff.

5 Though many of Chaplin's prewar critics were conscious of the comparative aesthetic technical simplicity of his work, they tended to read its implications in a more positive manner than their postwar counterparts; among these are reviews and responses by Delluc (1988: 138), Balázs (2006: 53), Arnheim (1996: 313f), and, in his retrospective evaluations, Adorno (2001b: 94 and 2001c: 180). On the aesthetic devaluation of Chaplin in postwar Europe and the more recent efforts to revitalize interest in his work, see Macnab 2003.

helped shape. Something is missing: namely, the dialectical entanglement of the laughter and pathos inspired by this figure with the critical awareness of the forces that made defeat and catastrophe a *real*, economically and politically resonant, dimension of daily life. No subsequent era can be said to have walked the tightrope that dominated the aesthetic and political horizon of Europe between the late teens and the late thirties, not least because the postwar normalization of liberal capitalist parliamentarianism and the contamination of all prospects of dialogue between mass entertainment and mass political self-definition by the specter of Fascism have foreclosed hermeneutic possibilities that once seemed not merely open but of compelling significance for the study of film.

But it may also be said that it is precisely because of its dogged resistance to a 'revisionist' accommodation to contemporary critical sensibilities that Chaplin's work retains a measure of theoretical productivity for us. For in its apparent recalcitrance to late modern critical paradigms (semiotics, structuralism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, deconstruction), it forces upon us the task of reconstructing the import for its intelligibility of the volatile and now hardly imaginable terrain wherein the utopian desire for a radical, culturally engineered transformation of social existence is situated in high modernity. The profound resonance of Chaplin's cinematic work on its European contemporaries, I would like to argue, is inconceivable outside the parameters of its articulation of an experience dominated by the relentless shift of positions between utopian desire, capitalist reification and affective cynicism, one which signals less a dialectical relation proper than the turning of dialectic itself into an abyssal, vertiginous structure, its putting *en abyme*.[6] The volatile threshold that opens between utopia, reification, and cynicism therefore constitutes both a vital aspect of the evolution of Chaplin's comic vision and a crucial constituent of his original reception; if, as Miriam Hansen remarks, what was radically new and different in twentieth-century modernity was "the liberatory appeal of the 'modern' for a mass public", it is also the case that Chaplin's function within this configuration was to both assert the "appeal of a utopian humanity" and its "impossibility", the hope that the world could be different and the knowledge that it is not.[7] The col-

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6 On the notion of an abyssal dialectic, see Hansen 1999: 311f.

7 See Hansen 1997: 365, 374.

lapse, in films like the brutally cynical *Monsieur Verdoux* (1947) and the politically incoherent *A King in New York* (1957), of the tension that held utopianism and its reifying and cynical inversions in balance in Chaplin's work attests to the intractable difficulties such dialectical indecision faced in the wake of the catastrophic lessons of war and the Holocaust. Yet, in furnishing the grounds for a thoroughgoing investigation of the possibilities and limits of utopian transformation under the rule of capitalist everyday life, the dialogue between a specific filmic corpus and the project of modern cultural critique remains vital to materialist and politically oriented criticism in the present. It is some of the important fragments of this dialogue that I would like to excavate here.

Between Reification and Utopia: The Cinematic Gaze

It is well known that reification, the cognitive symptom of the global triumph of commodity culture in the age of modern industrial capitalism, receives its foundational cultural exposition in Georg Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (1920). Yet it needs also be said that what constitutes the significance of this work for the Weimar theorization of the culture of modernity is not its offer of some sort of portable definition of the concept. For Lukács, indulgence in "petrified factuality" – the illusory transmutation of interlaced historical and social processes into isolated, thing-like facts (1990: 184) – insinuates itself in the very desire to define such a thing as reification in the first place. Since "the nature of history is precisely that every definition degenerates into an illusion" (186), confronting the fundamental implications of the concept requires an active labor of reassembly, a thought that would trace its concrete and thus necessarily diverse manifestations within a series of apparently discrete realms.

The initial context in which Lukács witnesses the emergence of reification as a "necessary, immediate reality" (197) of consciousness under capitalist relations of production is production itself, a realm whose rationalization bestows upon human labor and its products a "phantom objectivity" (83) that detaches them from the experience and consciousness of the social subject. This unassailably "objective" status, Lukács observes, reinforces the fracturing of the formerly unified processes of work and life, the fragmentation of which, in turn,

furnishes the groundwork for the seemingly neutral belief that these now partial elements ought to be rationally and independently calibrated and re-organized.

It is not adequate, however, to view Lukácsian reification as a cognitive development that governs the fragmenting perception of the subject's activities and surroundings without also realizing that it effectively constitutes the subject itself as a separable and separate category: science and post-classical philosophy, the two epistemological-ideological realms whose development Lukács examines, are indebted to precisely this effect of a division between subject and object. In turn, they reproduce this division by isolating a field of "objective" data from their underlying social reality or by postulating the autonomy of subjective consciousness from a world it now simply observes (cf. 103-31).

Observation, "the contemplative stance" (89), indeed something like a specular reorganization of a now fully objectified zone of experience, appear here as the *par excellence* signs of reification, for vision is implicitly viewed as the sense that most 'immediately' corresponds to the topology of the subject-object split. In Susan Buck-Morss' terms, an older, synaesthetic apprehension of experience is replaced by one wherein bodily and cognitive experience are split, so that "an uncanny sense of self-alienation" dominates the organization of perception itself (1992: 31). "In terms of his consciousness," Lukács notes, the bourgeois individual is "a *perceiving subject* confronting the overwhelming objective necessities imposed by society of which only minute fragments can be comprehended," even if "in reality" it is his *own* conscious activity "that is to be found in the object-side of the process" (165; emphasis added). Inevitably, capitalism splits the subject "into an [object-like] element of the movement of commodities and (an objective and impotent) *observer* of that movement" (166; emphasis added).

The implications of such remarks for a theorization of the structural function of cinema as the cultural dominant of high modernity were both manifold and complex. From a heuristically materialist standpoint, cinema offered itself up as the emblematic instance of the impact of reification both at the level of the economic structure and that of the cultural superstructure: "film rehearses in the realm of reception what the conveyor belt imposes upon human beings in the

realm of production", in Miriam Hansen's succinct synopsis of that position (1987: 184). On the one hand, cinema was a component of capitalist industry, one so thoroughly dominated by the organizational models of Fordist production as to be structurally indistinguishable from its non-artistic counterparts.[8] On the other hand, the mental and cognitive position engendered by the recording and projection apparatuses echoed what Lukács described as the simultaneously "impotent" and "objective" situation of the alienated producer-*cum*-"observer." The phenomena of the "autonomization of sight, of the new ideology of the image" and of the "objective fragmentation of the outside word, or of the objects of perception" appear as "rigorously identical", since the transformation of the world into images implied "the reunification of data which were originally chaotic or fragmentary" (Jameson 1981: 232f). Given the fact that the reduction of the world into a repertoire of deracinated pictures redoubles as reduction of the subject to a mere "point of view", it is not surprising that film, that "hegemonic formal expression of late capitalist society" (Jameson 1981: 160), was also to be viewed as the ultimate phenomenological expression of reified sensibility, the most crystalline articulation of the subject-object split.

With few exceptions, French and German film criticism between the wars testifies to the significance of Lukács' analysis, even if it evades its grounding in a moralistic denunciation of reification juxtaposed to the orthoscopic vision of proletarian class consciousness.[9] In France, essays like Aragon's "On Décor" (1918), Cocteau's "Carte Blanche" (1919), Epstein's "The Senses" and "Magnification" (1921), Léger's "*La Roue*" (1922) and "Painting and Cinema" (1925), Artaud's "Cinema and Reality" (1927) and Pagnol's "The Talkie" (1930) tend to describe the essence of the cinematic in terms of its sensitivity to the world of alienated things, its penchant for breaking down the visual field, its affinity to the partial, the dislocated, the fragmented.[10] Weimar film criticism retains this emphasis while attempting to elaborate further on the interface between the phenomenological conscious-

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8 From the perspective of the entrepreneurs who brought it into the world, Fondane remarked in 1930, film was no different than "the automobile or the airplane" (1988: 50).

9 For a critical reference to the limits of Lukács' normative and moralistic approach to reification, see Jameson 1981: 63, 227, 234.

10 See Abel 1988, vol. 1: 166, 172f, 235, 242, 272ff, 412; and 1988, vol. 2: 57.

ness specific to the cinematic mode and the mode of production specific to capitalism. In "Photography" (1927), an essay of crucial import for his later understanding of film,[11] Siegfried Kracauer suggested that the photographic capture of the world was "a secretion of the capitalist mode of production" (1995: 61) that assembled in effigy the remnants of a nature that had become "alienated in meaning." The world confronting the camera had, socio-economically speaking, already put on "a photographic face" (59); having "disintegrated into its elements", it offered itself to consciousness "to deal with as it pleases" (62). As for film itself, Kracauer would later argue that it carried the principle of photographic fragmentation further, since "the construction of film from shots of minute phases of movement favors […] the tendency toward decomposing given wholes" (1960: 50).

The modernity of the new medium was thus unambiguously related to its far greater responsiveness to the structures of feeling engendered by reification; in the terms of Benjamin's famous "The Work of Art in the Era of its Technological Reproducibility", film juxtaposed to older arts like painting the image of a "piecemeal", "manifold" and provisionally "assembled" world that had come to replace the "total image" offered by the technologically unmediated arts of yesteryear (2002: 116).

Arguing that cinema engenders a profoundly materialistic species of perception,[12] one for which "physical reality" becomes astutely visible and perceptible precisely to the extent that it dissolves into the fragmented multiplicity of estranged and orphaned matter, Chaplin's European contemporaries paid considerable attention to the series of ways through which cinematic practice could be said to re-present the process of reification: first, through highlighting the isolation of material details from their heretofore 'natural' context, now submitted to uncanny re-vision through magnification, slow and accelerated mo-

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11 See Schlüpmann 1987: 102.

12 This insight spans the gamut between Artaud's visionary proclamation that "[c]inema exalts matter and reveals it to us in its profound spirituality" (1988: 412) and Benjamin's more politically inflected suggestion that film, as "the first artistic medium which is able to show how matter plays havoc with human beings", constitutes "an excellent means of materialist exposition" (2003: 277).

tion, or separation from the familiarizing rituals of everyday life;[13] secondly, through the destruction of the organic unity of the actor's body, which, broken down by a multiplicity of camera angles and the discontinuities of editing, now became "a fragment of the matter of the world", an "object among objects" (Kracauer 1960: 45, 97);[14] and lastly, through the corresponding segmentation of the cinema actor's relation to the film, given that from the actor's own perspective, the aesthetic image of the whole is as elusive as its social counterpart is for the factory or office workers who filled the cinema houses in search of distraction.

Yet, in re-presenting the reification of the human sensorium, film could simultaneously be grasped as the medium best equipped to engender an emancipated political consciousness: thanks to its "fracturing, alienating techniques", it was less the blind mirror of "a given world" than a Gnostic eye that for the first time made this world visible, available for scrutiny to the "sensoria of a spectating collective" (Hansen 1999: 339). A utopian counterforce to reification thus begins to assert itself in the conceptualization of cinematic modernity through the prism of Brechtian *Verfremdung*; in presenting us with the fractured images of a detotalized world, cinema was said to make conscious our estrangement from it and, in so doing, allow for an at least minimal form of cognitive emancipation from our experience under the capitalist mode of production. French surrealist critics and filmmakers had already begun theorizing the cinematic experience in related terms after World War I, when they credited cinema, particularly its American products, with the ability to stage "a revolution against things as we ordinarily see them" (Abel 1976: 109). "The cinematographic revolution", Léger remarked in "La Roue", "*is to make us see everything that has merely been noticed*" (1988: 273).

Weimar Critical Theory, on the other hand, was able to explore such flashes of utopian insight with greater theoretical rigor and sys-

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13 See Benjamin 1999e: 510ff; 2002c: 103, 117; Kracauer 1960: 46-58.

14 Kracauer quotes the first of these two phrases from Delluc. The argument is largely prefigured in "The Mass Ornament", where Kracauer dwells upon the corporeal phenomenology of the Taylorite regime of modern dancing troupes like the Tiller girls (1995: 83f). Benjamin discusses the import of film on the image of the actor's body along similar lines in the 1939 version of his Artwork essay (2003: 259ff).

tematicity. At some distance from Lukács' economically centered analysis of reification, Kracauer suggested that science and technology had paradoxically both disengaged the material dimension from the organic experience of the world as totality and deprived this dimension of qualitative concreteness, thus veiling physical reality from subjective consciousness (1960: 298ff). The utopian task of film therefore was the redemption of reality from "its state of virtual nonexistence", its emancipation from the traditional aesthetic insistence on wholeness that ideologically perpetuated "the continued existence of beliefs which 'cover' physical reality in both senses of the word" (1960: 300f). Benjamin's Artwork essay similarly (if in more overtly political tones) credited cinema with the ability to confront the working classes with the illusory nature of any notion of "immediate reality" given the rationalization and technological mediation of experience under capitalism (2002c: 113). Since, as Adorno was to put it in "On the Fetish Character of Music" (1938), the sense of immediacy or intimacy under such conditions came to signal nothing but the redoubled, ideological triumph of reification itself (2001a: 42), it was precisely in the exposure to the "second nature" of technology that a transformative political relationship to the present could be expected to take hold. Benjamin's attempt to theorize the aesthetico-political function of cinema registered this counter-factually hopeful response with particular poetic force:

> film furthers insight into the necessities governing our lives by its use of close-ups, by its accentuation of hidden details in familiar objects, and by its exploration of commonplace milieux through the ingenious guidance of the camera; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of a vast and unsuspected field of action. Our bars and city streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories seemed to close relentlessly around us. Then came film and exploded this prison-world with the dynamite of the split second, so that now we can set off calmly on journeys of adventure among its far-flung debris (2003: 265).[15]

Though Benjamin's image of a technologically mediated "demiurgical eye" that "explodes the prevailing world into rubble" (Koch 1994:

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15 Kracauer echoes this famous formulation in his *Theory of Film* (1960: 48), though he also resists the blend of Marxism and messianism that so marked Benjamin's own vision.

210) is heavily tinted by the language of revolutionary messianism, the impact of the emphasis on estrangement as a means of resistance to the capitalist rationalization of subject and world remained primarily aesthetic. Like surrealism, whose fantastic assemblies of the exploded detritus of a reified world forged startling forms of uncanny connection to aspects of everyday experience that were threatening to disappear into sheer abstraction, cinema was understood as a means of inducing states of disorientation and shock that in fact worked as means of countering the affective atrophy and impoverishment of individual and collective experience.[16] In a world that has been thoroughly reorganized by considerations "of calculation, measurement, profit, and the like", Jameson has aptly remarked, "the very activity of sense perception" has nowhere left to go; the result is an "unused surplus capacity" toward which distracted spectatorship must be taken to provide something like a "Utopian compensation", a means of restoring to mass urban experience a qualitative, libidinally charged core (1981: 229, 236).

This is the import of the constellation of "innervation" and the mimetic principle that is so central to Benjamin's "techno-utopian" (Hansen 1999: 313) vision of cinema: whereas mimetic defense, in its reflex attempt to parry modern shock, has led to an anaesthetic state that effectively "cheats" the masses out of experience (Buck-Morss 1992: 18), "innervation" is read as capable of mobilizing the "utopian excess" (Hansen 1999: 321) of stimulus-triggered sensation in the interest or recapturing "traces of social experience in the ostensibly dead world of things" (Hansen 1999: 339). Re-presented, the reified image of the world obtains a utopian surplus of aesthetic and affective intensity which, in overwhelming and breaking down the anaesthetizing defenses of the subject paradoxically suspends its separation from the object, restoring, at a collective level, the active mimetic possibilities of play.[17]

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16 See, indicatively, Benjamin 1986: 181f, 189f, 192; Hansen 1987: 192, 218f; and Foster 1995: 157-91.

17 On Benjamin's complex weaving together of the mimetic impulse to both the transformative dynamics of play and to "the second nature" of technological mediation, see (in the chronological order of their composition) 1999b: 101; 1999c: 120; 1999e: 519; 1999f: 694-98; 1999g: 720; 2002c: 107, 126; and 2002d: 134f.

Affect and the Politics of the Cinematic Body

It is within this broader theoretical context that the parameters of Chaplin's comic persona were appraised by his European contemporaries. For one, this made the slapstick convention of portraying a comically antagonistic relationship between the human body, natural forces, and the banal objects of everyday life hermeneutically resonant in a historically specific sense. In certain ways, capitalism, as Kracauer was to remark in "The Mass Ornament" (1927), had rationalized "not too much but rather too little" (1995: 81); because its class-bound *Ratio* "flees from reason and takes refuge in the abstract, uncontrolled nature proliferates under the guise of rational expression" – all the more intractable for having withstood the socio-historical liquidation of premodern irrationalities by Enlightenment thought (1995: 83f). Slapstick comedy was accordingly viewed as a genre that dramatized the subject's violent confrontation with a world cluttered with malicious and incomprehensibly self-willed objects, things like the emblematically modern and fitfully self-starting Model T or the recalcitrant fold-up chair that loom large in the urban adventures of Chaplin's *A Day's Pleasure* (1919).

Projected on the hallucinatory space of the screen, Louis Aragon observed, "objects that were a few moments ago sticks of furniture or books of cloakroom tickets are transformed to the point where they take on menacing or enigmatic meanings" (1988: 166); relentlessly exposed to a world that had been reduced to "décor", Chaplin's Tramp shed ludic light on the zone where normative relations between subject and object were submitted to constant disturbance. This principle of an ontological game of musical chairs, the young Aragon would contend, is what shapes Chaplin's comic vision, haunting it "to such an extent that by an inversion of values each inanimate object becomes a living thing for him, each human person a dummy whose starting-handle must be found" (167). Chaplin's comedy was in this respect another name for the re-presentation of "the imbrication of the mechanical and the living" (Hansen 1997: 373), one capable of making the reciprocally damaging relations of subject and object the target of collective laughter.

Such laughter appeared to Chaplin's Weimar contemporaries as the instance of a thoroughly historical, rather than spontaneous or un-

mediated, species of affect: it was a response that was only one step removed from the psychic abjection to which it gave dialectical expression and which it apotropaically kept in abeyance. In his study on *Hypnotic Neurosis* (1881), Paul Louis Ladame had spoken of pre-cinematic mass entertainment as a form that exploited "major neuroses" for their "comic character", imbuing the comic element itself with a "frightening and mysterious atmosphere" (Gordon 2001: 541). Benjamin's "Reply to Oscar Schmitz" (1928) would similarly observe that the laughter slapstick provokes "hovers over an abyss of horror" (1999: 17). It was not despite but because of its entanglement with such horror that the laughter Chaplin inspired could constitute, in Benjamin's famous phrase, "the most international and most revolutionary affect of the masses" (1996: 311). Providing a form of "innervation" capable of nurturing the subject's politically progressive rather than pathologically regressive potential, Chaplin's figure could afford the spectating collective a measure of free play that allowed it to *work through* the crippling effects of technological rationalization:

> If one considers the dangerous tensions which technology and its consequences have engendered in the masses at large – tendencies which at critical stages take on a psychotic character – one also has to recognize that this same technologization has created the possibility of psychic immunization […] Collective laughter is one such preemptive and healing outbreak of mass psychosis. […] American slapstick comedies and Disney films trigger a therapeutic release of unconscious energies. […] This is the context in which Chaplin takes on historical significance (Benjamin 2002c: 118).[18]

The ability of Chaplin's persona to inspire an affective response that oscillated between the registers of abject surrender to reification and its apotropaic deflection or overcoming depended on filmic embodiment, the literal inscription of what one might call a "catastrophic

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18 Adorno is well known for his condemnation of mass laughter as the opposite of liberation, "a disease that has attacked happiness and is drawing it into its worthless totality" (1996: 141). Interestingly, however, his response to the laughter engendered by Chaplin's comedies was far more compatible with Benjamin's own approach; his brief portrait of Chaplin closes with the remark that it is precisely because of the "proximity" of the laughter Chaplin inspires "to cruelty" that cruelty finds "its legitimation and its element of the salvational" (1996: 60f).

Utopia" upon the filmic image of the Tramp's body.[19] Chaplin's socio-historical relevance, an awkward matter to decide on the grounds of his films' plot themes or of the explicit class identity of his persona (which was to be quite uncertain and involve a singular combination of petit-bourgeois, *lumpenproletariat* and déclassé aristocratic elements), was above all a matter of an implicit, indeed literally silent, discourse on and of the body, its uses, its violations, its automatisms and dispositions. Its first parameter was an emphasis on corporeal fragmentation and compartmentalization, the disarticulation of organic unities and boundaries and their reaggregation in new configurations – a sort of corporeal analogue to filmic montage which, as Eisenstein would note, provided Chaplin's technically 'naïve' films with their paradoxical modernity.[20] In the neurological conception of bodies that spanned the discourses of mass entertainment, media sensationalism, psychiatry, neurology and sociology from the late nineteenth century onwards, a symptomatology centered on mechanicism and automatism linked representations of the hysterical, neurasthenic or somnambulistic body to images of the overworked, self-alienated body of labor.[21]

The famously jerky logistics of Chaplin's gestural repertoire were accordingly interpreted as lying on interface between the registers of pathological dysfunction and mechanized labor. While an early Keystone film like *Cruel, Cruel Love* (1914) foregrounded Charlie's grimacing, contorted and hysterical body, the famous "Charlot" sequences of Fernand Léger's *Charlot présente le ballet mécanique* (1924) visualized him as a machinic ensemble that could be assembled and disassembled at will (fig. 1 and 2). And while Jean Epstein's "Magnification" (1921) saw Chaplin's Tramp as an "overwrought

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19 Buci-Gluckmann's "Catastrophic Utopia" involves the co-presence of messianic violence against the beautiful appearances that constitute illusion and of the affirmative faith in redemptive transformation; it is, in her own words, "the destructive tendency toward appearance and false totality" (1986: 221) – shared, in many ways, by Kracauer's, Benjamin's and Adorno's otherwise distinct approaches to the phenomenology of the modern.

20 See Gunning 2005: n. p.

21 On this broader discursive conjuncture, see Singer 1995: 72-99; Gordon 2001: 515-49; McCarren 1995: 748-74; McCabe 2001: 429-52; and Rabinbach 1992, esp. chapters 4 and 6.

Fig. 1. Charlie in hysterics. Still shot from *Cruel, Cruel Love*

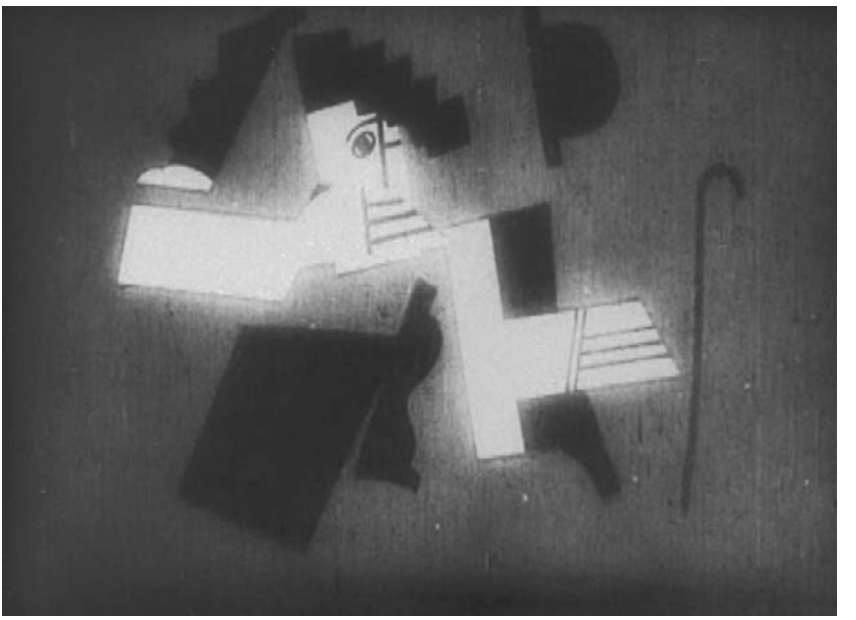

Fig. 2. Still shot from *Ballet Mécanique*

Fig. 3. Film print from *Modern Times*
Chaplin Photographs © Roy Export Company Establishment

hero" whose "reflex actions" announced the advent of "photogenic neurasthenia" (238), Walter Benjamin's fragment on "The Dialectical Structure of Film" suggested that Chaplin's "unique significance" lay in the fact that he dissected "the expressive movements of human beings into a series of minute innervations", effectively applying "the law of the cinematic image sequence to human motorial functions" (2002b: 94). Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), released a year after the composition of this fragment, gave Benjamin's remarks quite a literal resonance (fig. 3).[22]

In submitting itself to both Taylorite segmentation and hysterical automatism, however, Chaplin's body allowed itself expression through a "malleable mechanics" (McCabe 2001: 448) that also carried the promise of a "plastic ontology" (Gunning 2005: n. p.) – a capacity for transformation and mutation that could paradoxically be conceived as both post- or anti-human and as rebelliously humanizing.

[22] For an interesting reading of the sequence of Charlie gliding through the cogs as reflexive allegory of the cinematic mode of production itself, see Netto 2003: 365-72.

In either case, bodily transformation and transformability signaled a signifying excess, the refusal on the part of the body to submit to a regime of productive efficiency and economic rationalization. "Rather than exclusively the sign of oppression", Tom Gunning observes, Chaplin's mechanical, repetitive and rhythmic movements "violated a certain understanding of the human body and thereby seemed to some viewers in the teens and twenties to open up new realms of acrobatic expression and even physical liberation" (2005: n. p.).

Freed from the limits of the bounded corporeal image, the Tramp's body took up the features of the mechanical or inorganic world in gags that saw him turn into a water faucet (in *A Film Johnnie*), a hybrid human-mechanical ensemble (in *Behind the Screen*; fig. 4), or a pair of disembodied hands taking command of another man's actions (in *A Dog's Life*). As physical and immediate dramatizations of bio-mechanical mutation, such comical gags exceeded the status of simple allegories of technological dehumanization, while also bypassing the retrogressive appeal to the fiction of an organic and coherent self. Transformability, rather, was restored to the utopian function of conveying a relationship to the world that reverted to the felicitous confusion of subject and object, of animate and inanimate entities, in the ludic experience of childhood: "Children's play is everywhere permeated by mimetic modes of behavior", Benjamin remarked in 1933; "its mode is by no means limited to what one person can imitate in another. The child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher, but also a windmill and a train." (1999g: 720)[23]

[23] Importantly, Benjamin would suggest that the child's ability to transform the world in play contains a valuable and educable political component: "[w]hat characterizes every child's gesture is that creative innervation is exactly proportioned to receptive innervation. The development of these gestures […] is the task of the different workshops [of a Proletarian Children's Theater]" (1999d: 204). Eisenstein, by contrast, associates Chaplin's child-like disposition toward the world with politically impotent regression, especially when looked at from the viewpoint of the demands of a revolutionary proletarian consciousness (1959: 167-97).

Fig. 4. Charlie oils his arm as if it were another mechanical lever. Still shot from *Behind the Screen*

An "existence that would be free of the burden of being-one's self": this is how Adorno, retrospectively revisiting his relation to Chaplin, defined the "utopia" of "incessant and spontaneous change" that Chaplin's corporeal mutations allegedly embodied (1996: 60). It was a prospect that a certain kind of negative utopianism dominating German critical thinking between the wars could grasp as humanizing precisely in its rejection of the all-too-human. Kracauer's "Chaplin's Triumph" (1931) would accordingly argue that what the universally recognizable figure of the Tramp ultimately represents is "nothing", the nothing of a subject in abeyance, hardly distinguishable from dumb matter: a bare life that forces itself "through pores and cracks and settles, like dust off the street." And yet, Kracauer continues, what remains behind once the falsely universal attributes of a privileged class subject are shed off like so many cocoons or winter skins, is the "person as such, or rather […] the person as he/she is to be realized" (1997: 117-18). That Kracauer stops short of any attempt to name the social or political conditions capable of bringing about such realization is an indication of the political lassitude that dogged the vision of the Weimar left, compelling it to see in Chaplin's chameleonic abili-

ties something like an allegory for the anticipation of a revolutionary transformation whose form remained permanently irreducible to practical political programs and politically orthodox terms.[24]

The Cynical Relay

What prevents the conflict between reification and utopia from reaching dialectical resolution is a phenomenon we might normally be tempted to view as contaminated by temperamental and contingent factors to an extent that makes it analytically useless: cynicism. But cynicism, as Peter Sloterdijk shows, was not an indifferently private or apolitical affair for Weimar culture. It was, on the contrary, the "culturally dominating" factor of Weimar intellectual life to such an extent that the latter can be considered "cynically disposed like scarcely any previous culture" (1987: 389, 4). Unsurprisingly, the cynical relay presents a number of complications to the configuration outlined above – complications that turn out to be central both to the Weimar reception of Chaplin's work and to its own theoretical preoccupations. Most directly, because the diagnosis of cynicism effectively reverses the hermeneutic direction I have previously traced: instead of moving from an inventory of the impact of reification on cultural production to the hopeful appraisal of utopian counterforces, the cynical relay turns conceptual traffic in the opposite direction, from apparently utopian epiphenomena to profoundly reifying underlying structures. In this sense, cynicism strikes at the heart of the utopian impulse, making it appear as a ruse whose ideological functionality is augmented precisely by its capacity to placate and neutralize collective demands for affectivity, relation, pleasure, or fulfillment. Though it is most prominently Adorno who develops a draconically vigilant critique of all that promises utopian transcendence, including, emphatically, the products of the mass culture industry itself, Benjamin and Kracauer's work is also at times prone to submit the affirmative content of mass culture to corrosive scrutiny.

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24 For a critical discussion of the political debilitation of German Marxism in the Weimar years, see Anderson 1979: 32ff, 49-55, 75f; and Sloterdijk 1987: 424-30.

This is the thrust behind Benjamin's "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (1935), wherein the sensorial barrage of the world exhibitions is interpreted as a means of manipulation at the service of global commodification, and where the resulting effect of sensory and mental distraction is read as anything but politically progressive or enabling: "the entertainment industry makes this [distraction] easier by elevating the person to the level of the commodity. He surrenders to its manipulations while enjoying his alienation from himself and others", Benjamin notes in the "Paris" essay.[25] It is in this context that he speaks of a split, *within* the corpus of Grandville's venomous caricatures of Parisian life, between "utopian and cynical elements" (2002a: 35). This split must be taken to correspond to the content of the capitalist phantasmagoria itself, its twin status as both vehicles of utopian promise and of cynical, manipulative intent; yet it is also explicitly viewed as the property of a work that critically comments upon that split as an aspect of the social situation. The relationship between the cynical and the utopian, in other words, appears both in the self-representations of the socio-economic structure and in their critical dismantling from 'the outside.' Grandville's sketches mimic, with satirical exaggeration, what they wish to expose: "Under Grandville's pencil, the whole of nature is transformed into specialties. He presents them in the *same* spirit in which the advertisement […] begins to present its articles" (2002a: 35; emphasis added).

Yet such mimetic replication once again appears to introduce a crucial difference into the picture: if on the plane of the socioeconomic organisation of industrial capitalism the "utopian" is what is betrayed by the cynical manipulations of commodity culture, on the plane of Grandville's artistic project it is precisely the cynical unveiling of such manipulations that sustains the spirit of emancipatory critique. The oscillation between reifying and utopian possibilities becomes exponentially compounded by the tendency of the cynical relay at once to enforce the commodification of utopian impulses within the

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25 Kracauer similarly wavers between the highly affirmative treatment of "The Cult of Distraction" and the bitter, cynical appraisals of (gendered) spectatorial naiveté in "Little Shopgirls go to the Movies" and "Film 1928" (all in Kracauer 1995). On Kracauer's increasingly more pessimistic attitude toward the utopian potential of mass culture, see Hansen 1997: 379, 383; and Petro 1987: 136f; for a contrastive account which suggests that Kracauer's thought moved from skepticism toward utopianism, see Gualtieri 2007: 86ff.

realm of social reality *and* to destroy the false appearances that sustain it through the activity of critical thought. Cynicism as *at once* the bane of utopian possibility and the weapon against its counterfeiting, the instrument of manipulation and of demystification, the calling card of a reified and reifying consciousness no less than the harbinger of the effective foregrounding of the grisly state of affairs that prevents genuine change: this, truly, is "dialectics at a standstill."[26]

But this means that the "split within the cynical phenomenon itself", which "pits the cynical reason of domination and self-domination against the kynic revolt of self-assertion and self-realization" (Huyssen 1987: xvii), becomes both structurally inevitable and hermeneutically problematic. Peter Sloterdijk's distinction between cynicism and kynicism, the "cynical-defensive consciousness of the old bearers of power and the utopian-offensive consciousness of the new bearers" (1987: xxvii) resolves the problem of politically mapping Weimar thought at the cost of opening itself up to second-order confusions and deformations almost in the same breath: "in the great hall of cynical knowledge", Sloterdijk wryly observes, the "extremes" of plebeian, embodied, satirical and subversive kynicism and of the calculative cynicism of power "meet" (4). The catastrophic utopianism of Dada, for instance, involves a mingling of both "cynical" and "kynical" aspects into a "scintillating complex that evades simple evaluations and uncomplicated emotional responses" (394f). But a similar ambiguity haunts the project of Weimar Critical Theory as well; for as Sloterdijk shows, the internal division of utopian and reifying dimensions within the cynical phenomenon insinuates itself in the very objective of "ideology critique", whose utopian pursuit of emancipation remains paradoxically dependent on ethically reifying discursive strategies:

> Every struggle leads necessarily to a reciprocal reification of subjects. Because enlightenment cannot give up its claim of imposing better insights against a self-obstructing consciousness, it must basically 'operate' *behind* the opponent's consciousness. […] The radical reifica-

[26] I am evoking Benjamin's oft-quoted statement from the "Paris" expose of 1935: "Ambiguity is the appearance of the dialectic in images, the law of dialectics at a standstill" (2002a: 40). For an analysis of Benjamin's notion of the dialectical image in conjunction with slapstick comedy, see McCall 2002: 74-94.

> tion of the opponent is … characteristic of Marxian theory. […] It is here that a second offshoot of modern cynicism grows. […] [Yet] Marxism, in its origins, at least maintained an ambivalence between reifying and emancipative perspectives (Sloterdijk 1987: 15, 20).

It should not come as a surprise, then, that in developing a sustained engagement with the treacherously slippery terrain limned by reification, cynicism, kynicism and utopia (a modal conflict that is already anticipated, in a certain sense, in the generic interpenetration of utopia and satire),[27] Chaplin's work does not merely justify its prominent place among the intelligentsia of the Weimar left; it also, as it were, furnishes a meta-commentary on the very ambivalences the body of this criticism reveals, mirroring its fluctuating modalities of cruel desublimation and utopian warmth, profound disillusion and the commitment to social change, ironic distance and lyrical intensity.

The Dialectic at a Standstill

Take, for instance, the apparently autonomous sequence that unfolds near the end of Chaplin's highly successful *The Kid* (1921): exhausted and frustrated by the vain search for his missing adoptee, Charlie falls asleep on the steps of his squalid tenement building. The intertitle "Dreamland" framing the beginning of the sequence introduces an abrupt transformation of the Tramp's environs: garlands of white flowers have improbably transformed Charlie's proletarian courtyard into a somewhat makeshift vision of heaven, and soon enough the missing child descends the stairs dressed in angelic garb, though visibly still wearing his old, tattered clothes underneath. The happiness of the reunion is soon capped with a grotesque apparition: an angelically transformed, flying dog is shown gracefully descending on the scene (fig. 5).

Puzzling as it might initially appear, this ephemeral visual moment is significant on a number of levels. Though it seems to come from nowhere, the angelic dog has quite a specific origin. Three years before the release of *The Kid*, Chaplin released *A Dog's Life*. As its title suggests, the earlier film focused on the cruelly subhuman living

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[27] See Elliott 1963: 317-34.

conditions of the Tramp and on the bond he develops with the animal world when he befriends a similarly outcast dog. The visual orchestration of the two films reinforces their intertextual connection through a number of meticulously constructed matching shots: while *The Kid* shows a puzzled Charlie holding the abandoned infant as he sits pondering his prospects on the pavement, *A Dog's Life* depicts him gently holding his adopted dog while sitting by the stairs of a similar tenement street; the famous shot of the Kid peering mischievously behind a wall is almost identical to that featuring Charlie's dog in the earlier film (fig. 6 and 7); a policeman (played by the same actor in both films) is shown staring suspiciously at Charlie's unlikely partners in petty crime in both films; Charlie bumps his elbow onto a cop while attempting to avenge an insult by throwing a brick in *A Dog's Life*, just as the Kid does while preparing to throw a stone at a neighborhood window. And finally, the closing sequence of *A Dog's Life* features a felicitously gentrified Charlie and his sweetheart staring down at a baby cot which contains not a newborn baby like that featured in *The Kid* but Charlie's pet dog. *The Kid*'s seraphic canine thus preserves the textual trace of the earlier film. But in doing so, it helps Chaplin link intertextual interfaces to interspecies ones: Charlie's own social reduction to bare, animal life on the one hand,[28] the uncomfortable parallels between foundling and beast on the other.

[28] Among the well-known gags of *A Dog's Life* is one which features Charlie sporting a quivering dog's tail as a result of his effort to smuggle his dog in a bar unnoticed by the proprietors. On "bare life", see Agamben 1998.

Fig. 5. Still shot from *The Kid*
Chaplin Photographs © Roy Export Company Establishment

Fig. 6. Still shot from *The Kid*
Chaplin Photographs © Roy Export Company Establishment

Fig. 7. Still shot from *A Dog's Life*
Chaplin Photographs © Roy Export Company Establishment

Animalities, Sloterdijk remarks, "are for the kynic a part of his way of presenting himself, as well as a form of argumentation" (1987: 105). But what silent point does the dog help the film make? To the extent that it functions as a means of deflating the sentimental idealizations hiding the lived actuality of proletarian dehumanization from view, it serves as an appropriately embodied pun for the oppositional energies of kynicism, that "pantomimic materialism" which pits "practical embodiment" against "the swindle of idealistic abstractions and the schizoid staleness of a thinking limited to the head" (Sloterdijk 1987: 103, 102). A dog in wings: this may well be the most apt allegory of utopian kynicism, a threshold thought[29] that insists on preserving the embodied reality utopian fantasy would forget, yet also dares dream up reconciliation between a dogged insistence on immanence and a redemptive vision of transcendence. Doesn't the seraphic Kid, too, after all, oscillate between the bathetic image of angelic innocence and

[29] Interestingly, Charlie's daydream begins and ends at the spatial threshold of the stairs, between, as it were, the privacy of the home and the publicity of the street. For a recent philosophical discussion of the redemptive or utopian dimensions of the human/animal threshold, see Agamben 2004: 1-12, 81f, 89f.

the canny, cheeky one that insists on registering only a street urchin in awkward costume? From a dog's-eye view, heaven is a partial, permanently conflicted affair, and "dreamland" contains the organs of its own historical awakening.

Yet hardly has this all-too-precarious balance between redemptive vision and its kynical de-idealization established itself than it is turned in the opposite direction: when the Tramp queries the Kid on where he obtained the wings, the latter takes him to a neighborhood store and the intertitle casts Charlie's angelic transformation in the grotesquely materialist terms of "shopping". The sequence hence moves from a kynical discourse on abject poverty to the cynical reification of the very scenography of wish-fulfilment, retrospectively exposing the latter's proximity to consumerist banality. Challenging Kracauer's assumption that it is intended as merely a playful digression from real-life action (1960: 86), "Dreamland" is then deeply concerned with the dialectical interpenetration of utopian fantasy and "real life", private and public experience, the utopian dynamic of kynical embodiment no less than the cynical deformation of utopian desire. But such interpenetration comes at an increasingly dear cost to utopian content, which begins to dissolve into ever greater doses of cynicism: Charlie, whose reaction to his new-found wings involves scratching at them with his leg like a dog, winds up chased by a winged version of the very cop who has haunted his waking life, and is eventually shot in front of his door, where the dream sequence began. The image of the cop, his badge fully visible, reaching into his pocket for his gun, marks a certain crescendo of cynical spleen (fig. 8): when the "as if" of fantasy degenerates into mere prop and the coercive principle of social law and order brutally asserts itself, the conceit of reality-defying wish fulfilment is struck no less lethally than Charlie himself.

Fig. 8. Still shot from *The Kid*
Chaplin Photographs © Roy Export Company Establishment

The film, however, does not end before giving another turn of the screw to the constant inversions and mutations to which "Dreamland" subjects the questions of utopian fantasy and of its sundry negations and betrayals. Startled, the Tramp discovers he is being woken up by the very cop who had appeared to shoot him. The cop, inexplicably angelic for all his current lack of wings, fondly asks Charlie to follow him, leading him to the home where a true reunion with the Kid becomes possible amidst general levity and jubilation. Trite as it may otherwise seem, the ending is highly effective in putting the entire structural framework of the "Dreamland" sequence *en abyme*: if the dramatization of a utopian daydream ended up with the demonstration of the cynical triumph of a commodified and violent social reality, the depiction of that social reality ends up reabsorbed into what appears as utopian day-dream. It is a testimony of the force of this abyssal chiasmus that one finds it impossible to decide whether what Chaplin leaves us with is redemptive kynicism or hellish cynicism – the persistence of a utopian impulse that learns to survive the knowledge of its own vulnerability or, on the contrary, the image of its utter trivialization and betrayal.

Released a year after the outbreak of the Second World War, *The Great Dictator* would draw the curtain on the period and on the major creative phase of Chaplin's career with a vertiginous escalation of the political implications of such abyssal dialectics. Charlie, posing as the Jewish barber posing as the Fascist Dictator, would close his first talking film by using his voice to defend a utopian humanism (fig. 9) that both impotently wished away Fascism's political nightmare and appeared as the latter's fiendishly cynical joke, a cruel parody of the Weimar left's redemptive dreams.[30]

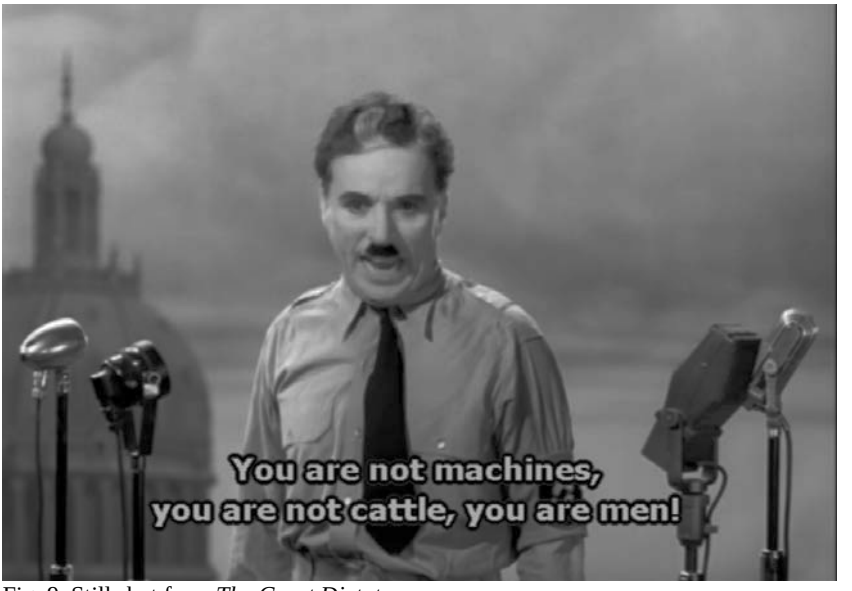

Fig. 9. Still shot from *The Great Dictator*
Chaplin Photographs © Roy Export Company Establishment

[30] In a moment of uncanny prescience, Benjamin wrote that "every inch of Chaplin can become the Führer" (1999h: 792) in 1934, six years before the release of Chaplin's film.

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