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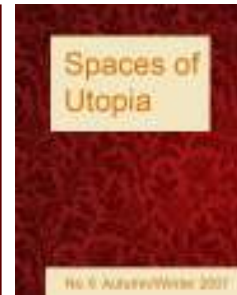
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Notes on the Future:

Envisionment of Future Dilemmas within Society as Recorded in Edward Bellamy's Stories and Personal Notebooks

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When Arthur E. Morgan (1878-1975), noted biographer of Edward Bellamy, the famous author of *Equality* (1897), the sequel of *Looking Backward* (1888), was twenty years old, he personally questioned Bellamy to learn if he "consider[ed] the social state pictured in *Equality* the end of human progress" (Morgan 1944: 420). Bellamy's quick, and somewhat "impatient" response was "it is only the beginning. When we get there we shall find a whole infinity beyond" (Morgan 1944: 420).¹ It is this concept of a "whole infinity beyond" that kept Bellamy's stories and notebooks threaded with thoughts of possibilities for the future.

The focus of my paper is based on the conjectures offered by Bellamy in his short stories and unpublished notebooks, especially his "Plot Notebooks", regarding the connectivity between mankind and earth which encompassed Bellamy's notion of a "whole infinity beyond". Since Bellamy was a sickly individual, he spent time convalescing, often in a state of depression (Morgan 1944: 41). He recorded his thoughts regarding man's place in the cosmos as well as the effect of cataclysmic events related to mankind. His speculations are impressively accurate.

From 1875 to 1889, Bellamy published twenty-three known short stories in some of the best magazines of his day, including *Scribner's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Harper's Monthly*. Although his name is associated today with the internationally famous Utopian novel *Looking Backward* and with its successful sequel *Equality*, “Bellamy was recognized by the readers and by the editors of his own epoch as the writer of highly imaginative, psychological, and speculative short stories and novels” (Bowman 1958: 43).² I find it interesting that even though Bellamy had a promising future in short story writing, he stopped doing so because he felt that his calling was to focus on correcting “the evils and faults of our social state” (Bellamy, “Autobiographical Fragment”) and improving society to reach his “clear hope of better things” (Bellamy, “Printed Letters”). It is evident when reading his notebooks that he indeed “had much work laid out” for future stories (Bowman 1958: 44). A letter written to him in 1889 by Sylvester Baxter, the editor of the *Boston Herald* suggests that “those who understand [your stories] will understand you; those who do not will enjoy them as ‘brilliantly imaginative,’ and not be disposed to impeach your common sense”.

Perhaps Bellamy had dual concerns; first, that there were not too many readers of his short stories and other novels who actually understood their relationship to his later Utopian works of *Looking Backward* and *Equality*; second; he was perhaps concerned that his public image as a science fiction writer would sully his goal to be a serious writer of social reform. In his Hawaiian Islands Notebook Bellamy wrote:

Equality is the one thing which God will not have and of which he refused to furnish one single example in the whole realm of nature. No two leaves are alike, etc. Every thing is superior to all others in some thing, inferior in others, equal in none.
(Bellamy, "Unpublished Notebook": 15)

Taking this philosophical premise, Bellamy spun into his work *The Constitution: The New Republic*, the statement that "[n]ature tends to inequality, that after men have been made social equals, nothing but laws will prevent one getting more than another" (Bellamy, "Unpublished Notebook" No. 7: 16-17). In the same pages of this notebook, Bellamy also wrote: "All able-bodied citizens shall be led to a fixed term of industrious service, women as well as men, but the condition of the service being as much lighter for women as may seen justified by their lesser strength" (*ibidem*). The idea of the weaker female does not come into consideration for army enlistment in the United States. Perhaps the weakness witnessed in females during Bellamy's time was more directly related to their constrictive clothing, such as corsets inhibiting proper breathing, rather than women's inherent physical weakness.

It seems that his concept of equality for working women reflects his earlier observation of nature's inequality; however, in a fantasy story idea, Bellamy proposes an attempt to create more equality in couple relationships based on individual temperaments. In this story idea, badges are worn to not only indicate the wearer's own temperament – yellow for "bilious", green for "sanguine and all the melancholic", white for "lymphatic" –, but the other edges of the badge indicate the appropriate "permitted" individuals whose temperaments are approved through community laws. Even though Bellamy viewed this method as a means to provide "entire freedom given as to selection of lovers", the result is still government control

of interpersonal relationships. Such governmental controls might be considered insightful when analyzing arranged marriages and also the imposition placed on women's reproduction in some countries (Bellamy, "Unpublished Plots" #1: 35-36).

Those people who are immersed in their personal selves, existing unconcerned about that which will help them become a viable part of humanity, created a dilemma for Bellamy. He used his early writing as a bridge to enable readers to embrace his philosophy of man's relationship to the universal spirit in nature. His first novel, *Six to One: A Nantucket Idyl*, is based on his voyage to Hawaii in 1877. The characters utilize mystical communion with nature, as embodied in the sea, to reveal his philosophy which develops the self-less man, termed the "impersonal man" by Bellamy (Bellamy, "Unpublished Notebook": 1). The main character, Edgerton, a convalescent newspaper editor, is pursued by six women, identified as "girls" in the novel. Since Bellamy was somewhat infirm, the story is quite reflective of his own life. Also since Bellamy loved the sea, it is logical that he uses the natural force of the sea as a means to explain his theories of "the cultivation of the impersonal side of our natures" where the "apotheosis of humanity" is to be found (Morgan 1944: 34, 46). He parallels the story of females pursuing a male to the "aspiration ever since Adam and Eve ate the apple in the hope of being as gods" (Bellamy 1878: 55).

Even though the theme of the novel is a serious one, Bellamy has Addie, one of the characters, actually relating to the sea as if it had power over her choices. It is this "mystical passion" that enabled Addie to find release from self and personal thoughts. She was elevated out of the personal sphere as was

Edgerton; however, it was this same “mystical passion” that worried Bellamy that his philosophy of impersonalization would not be taken seriously because his story dealt with individuals communing with the sea as if it were animate. Ironically, the notion of suppressing personal desires reflects something akin to Buddhism even though Bellamy tried to approach his theories by excluding the religion with which he grew up.³ Being raised in the religious home of a Baptist minister, with his mother espousing a different religion of a Calvinist, Bellamy saw the “impossibility of harmonious conclusions” in religion (Bellamy, “Unpublished Plots #1”; Morgan 1944: 67). His later “Eliot Carson” notebook referenced a “deliverance for a serf of civilization through equality” that might have been a forethought of the United Nations, created to serve as a melting pot of ideologies-

In another fiction piece, this one a short story “To Whom This May Come”,⁴ Bellamy again embraces the sea as a medium of epiphany. The narrator of the story is shipwrecked, and washed by the sea to an island in the Pacific inhabited by the mind-Readers – people who no longer rely upon oral communication of their ideas. Mind-reading affords the inhabitants many qualities that Bellamy deemed important, such as complete justice, for everything can be seen against its background, thus avoiding misjudgements of characters and incidents. Satisfying friendships were achieved through complete understanding and sympathy. Satisfactory communication of ideas abounded since thoughts are totally disclosed as they cannot be in oral communication. “Rapturous love” can be achieved since it includes mental sympathy and understanding added to physical passion (Bellamy 1990: 45).

Another aspect of Bellamy's well-conceived mind-reading islanders is what he terms "generosity of judgment", which allows for all to recognize their own and others' frailties (*idem*, 47). He also connected the concept of generosity of judgment with "complete self- knowledge" for each sees himself as others see him. The mind-reading island people have no hatred, envy or uncharitableness. Bellamy viewed the attributes of the mind-readers as positive qualities to be sought by humankind (Bellamy, "Autobiographical Fragment"). In modern times clairvoyants are used in some United States' police precincts to locate lost individuals or at times bodies buried and abandoned by criminals.

While mind-readers presented positive possibilities, memory was viewed as a danger since memory evoked the past and the guilt associated with it. Bellamy used his novel, *Dr. Heidenhoff's Process*, to illustrate the "tender conscience" of the characters Henry Bayley and Madeline Brand who live unhappy lives. Since they can find no comfort in religion, they attempt to discover a method which will salvage doomed souls such as theirs. Dr. Heidenhoff finds a lobotomy-like operation or a shock treatment which blacks out the memories of such people and permits them to face life, devoid of memories so that they can continue to grow and expand. Even though this may sound like a bazaar idea, medical doctors use electro-shock treatments to help some individuals suffering from acute depression, to in effect erase the bad memories that led to their condition. Bellamy's theory is that people would not obliterate their tendencies to be bad, but they would remain at a constant level rather than going "from bad to worse" (Bellamy 1969: 68). Bellamy viewed memory as the principle of moral degeneracy and thought that

remembered sin is the most utterly diabolical influence in the universe (Bowman 1958: 56). The cliché that “History repeats itself” would be obliterated if Bellamy’s proposal to abandon memory would be employed. If one cannot remember history, no one would be aware of the repetitiveness of behaviour.

Bellamy also predicted interaction with the planet Mars. For Bellamy, the Martians are known through a clairvoyant who “knows of people [on Mars] who have no memory” but have knowledge of their future corresponding to us. In his notebook, Bellamy begins each of his story ideas with various premises. For Dr. Heidenhoff, Bellamy began “Let the hero be a man from planet Mars materialized at a séance with his knowledge of the future” (Bellamy, “Unpublished Plots #1”: 120). Bellamy also included notes regarding the idea that the future “can be studied” and use “of horoscopes detected” as means of knowing the future if Martian “teaches” its real purpose (*idem*, 122). Another important premise is that the “future is mentioned becoming the front and center” can help avoid “too much interest in the past” (*idem*, 123). Present-day scientists dedicate their lives to seeking evidence of life on other planets. The struggle to prove that we are not alone was evident in Bellamy’s conjectures as well.

Bellamy’s theories seem to perceive the concept of theoretical modelling which uses future predictions to impact present choices. In an oblique approach to the concept of “history repeating itself”, Bellamy wrote in one premise that “the past is not hidden from the Martian, but owing to the fact that he has foreseen the future and lived in it before and while it is the present” (*idem*, 124). If we are destined to continue to repeat our human errors, by Bellamy suggesting a Martian who does

not live in the past, this is a theory to enable mankind to make forward progress without the onus of behavioural regression such as wars, poverty, and selfishness.

In his second Plot notebook, Bellamy spoke of Martians communicating through a “teleops” which enables Martians to see us (Bellamy, “Unpublished Plots #2”: 142). He definitely had the right idea, but his speculation on an appropriate name was not quite accurate. He did speak of a telephone which had been invented in 1876, with the patent filed in the United States by Edinburgh, Scotland born, Alexander Graham Bell. Bellamy’s envisionment of the future was amazingly accurate. Today, a cell phone has exactly the satellite capabilities he postulated as well as the ability to see the party to whom one is speaking; however, we have yet to reach a communication level with possible extra terrestrials. Perhaps if Apple Computer geniuses continue to develop sophisticated products such as the i-phone, introduced on June 29, 2007, we may indeed be able to communicate with whatever extra planetary species may exist in the universe.

Bellamy mused on “communication in other worlds” other than “physical resemblance to ours” with a way of “stellar and electrical” “card-bar” used to “talk” in a “place” to “call for reactions” (Bellamy, “Unpublished Plots #1”: 136, 126). From this idea he moves to a setting “on [the] deck of a yacht bound for Vineyard Sound” so that the occupants of the yacht are able to communicate with ‘possibly’ man from Mars” using water as a medium (*idem*, 126). It is interesting that many of the actual early space launches in Russia and the USA involved oceans for retrieval. Also Bellamy’s concept of “stellar and electrical” is not a far step away from the

idea of space satellites used to enable communication with astronauts in outer space.

In another scientifically oriented story, Bellamy mused further on “communication in other worlds” with individuals other than those with a “physical resemblance to ours” (*idem*, 136). Certainly Hollywood film producers in the USA as well as those film producers in Japan have cashed in on this conjecture. The interesting feature of Bellamy’s musings led him to the idea that the means of communication would be “stellar and electrical” using a “card-bar” to “talk” in a special place (*ibidem*). All of this sounds remarkably like he was foreseeing the concept of satellite phones and Internet cafés.

In his notes for a story idea entitled “At Pinney’s Ranch”, Bellamy conceived of the idea of a “friend in San Francisco [who would] be able to communicate with friend in New York. Each has a little electric tablet with a signal, which gives alarm when the friend is thinking of him and take down message automatically if friend is asleep” (Bellamy, “Unpublished Notebook”). This amazingly foresees the pager as well as the answering machine. In addition to the notion of these two electronic gadgets, it also implies the use of wireless communication which was successfully tested ship to shore in 1898, the year Bellamy died.

Even though many of Bellamy’s ideas envisioned electronic devices and technology, the use of natural resources did not escape him. He had a story idea in which cavemen “stored heat of dead summer” so that the heat could be used by nineteenth-century man. This seems directly related to fossil fuels upon which societies are still dependent. He also suggested using hurricane power which he

foresaw being used “in ten years” (Bellamy, “Unpublished Plots #2”: 1, 5-6). While wind power has been used in Europe for hundreds of years, and more recently in the United States, being able to harness the power of a hurricane would indeed be a scientific breakthrough.

When Bellamy was eighteen years old and travelling with his aunt and uncle Packer, he wrote that “discussion during the evening focused on finding a remedy for poverty which led to a further discuss about poor health” (Bellamy, “Unpublished Notebook”: 81). He thought of various “plants or animals which may have mysterious remedies” but “through ignorance are plowed under” (*ibidem*). An article in a 1992 *Science Magazine*, “Chemical Prospecting: Hope for Vanishing Ecosystems?”, discusses exactly what Bellamy foresaw. The scientific research was done under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, an agency not unlike that which Bellamy also pondered. The goal of the research of the scientific team was to seek cures from diverse tropical forests in Costa Rica for AIDS, Alzheimer’s disease, or high blood pressure (Ray 1992: 1142-1143).⁵

Bellamy speculated about animal potentiality as well. For example, he had notes in “Notebook C”, rather than his Plot notebooks, regarding “talking to a horse that was at first considered defective, and later in the story, taught as a college course” (Bellamy, “Unpublished Notebook”: 3-4). Today there is an entire profession dedicated to animal psychology replete with college educated individuals whose professional goal is to help animals relieve depression or anxiety

and other human frailties posited upon animals and treated through the same conversational therapies utilized with depressed or anxious humans.

In one of Bellamy's handwritten Plot notebooks, he created a community set in another world where badges indicate the class of each societal segment: Crielians wear yellow; white is for those who are in the work force as "well-aholics", those workers who feel better working harder (Bellamy, "Unpublished Plots #1": 114). Even though Bellamy's *Looking Backward* suggested shorter work-weeks, this story focuses on longer working hours, similar to the twenty-first century concept of gaining more personal reward for never being away from one's work through the intervention of the Internet and personal computers. It is also interesting that in the second plot notebook, a note was made to include "no holidays in the year 2000" for his utopian novel *Looking Backward* (Bellamy, "Unpublished Plots #2": 36). Perhaps he felt that the Protestant work ethic, in which he was so sternly raised, was already jeopardized with his notion of working less days per week. Also, he missed the jargon used today, a "workaholic",⁶ to identify a person who works more hours than is normally identified as an average forty-hour work week, rather than a well-aholic. It is interesting that he chose a form of the word alcohol to indicate an addiction to work, much like an addiction to alcohol. It wasn't until seventy years later that the "workaholic" became part of the modern lexicon.

Following the theme of alcohol consumption, in a story idea titled "Take Off on Prohibition", Bellamy suggested that the community should "distribute coffee and tea cards" so that people will find more interest in drinking these beverages

with “lots of honey” (Bellamy, “Unpublished Plots #1”: 117). This idea sounds like two ideas embraced in the twenty-first century: one, the notion of using credit cards as a means of commerce, and two, the idea of having coffee/tea cards in large franchises such as Starbucks Coffee. The major difference is that in Bellamy’s socialistic society, the coffee/ tea cards were provided by the government, rather than purchased by the individual. Also, since it was suggested that Bellamy liked to drink,⁷ perhaps he was seeking a means to break his own addiction and also help others do the same.

Even though his second plot notebook was incomplete, written sporadically with failing handwriting on various pages, some notes reveal his prescience even as his health was failing. For example, he predicted “a time [line?]⁸ of electric cars” (Bellamy, “Unpublished Plots #2”: 48). Since many of the notes in the notebooks are not dated, a range of time between 1871 and 1881 is posited to Bellamy’s handwritten notebooks. This places his postulations regarding electric cars in a parallel time frame with Charles Bush from Cleveland, Ohio in the United States, who invented a dynamo and an arc lamp lighting system in 1879 (cf. *Closed Circuit Newsletter* [2007]) and Thomas Alva Edison from New Jersey in the United States who invented the electric light bulb, precursor of today’s modern incandescent bulb. By 1880, electricity was being hailed as a modern marvel that would revolutionize households and industry nationwide. Optimists envisioned increased demand for electricity; however, it was men of vision such as Edward Bellamy who predicted more creative uses. Today, as the world seeks alternative fuels for

transportation vehicles, electric cars may be one of the more efficient systems if smaller storage batteries with larger charge capacities could be developed.

As a man of vision, Edward Bellamy was highly respected and gained world-wide notoriety from his postulations in his novel, *Looking Backward*. Even though his main goal was to enlighten the public to embrace his vision of a more equitable society, his means of reaching that goal was firmly bound with conjectures of immense importance. The preconditions he presented such as “Let the hero be from planet Mars”, enabled him to consider modes of communication, transportation and interaction of which other men had not yet dreamed (Bellamy, “Unpublished Plots #1”: 120). His connectivity between mankind and earth’s place in the universe encompassed Bellamy’s notion of a “whole infinity beyond”. Sadly, like other amazingly talented creative individuals whose lives were foreshortened due to illness, Bellamy did not have enough time to witness some of his insightful ideas come to fruition.

Notes

¹ Arthur E. Morgan began writing books after his retirement from the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1940. He kept extensive notebooks when he was a young man, with recorded impressions and direct quotes of his talks with Bellamy.

² I examined Edward Bellamy's handwritten notebooks at Houghton Library, Harvard University; however, I have included Sylvia Bowman's citation since she wrote this in her book prior to my viewing Bellamy's notebooks.

³ Bellamy experienced great turmoil in religious choices since his father was a Baptist minister and his mother was a staunch Calvinist. He worked on formulating his own religion or lack, thereof, and in doing so seemed to gravitate toward the sense of enlightenment seen in Buddhism.

⁴ This was one of fourteen stories to appear as part of *The Blindman's World and Other Stories* (1889). It was reprinted in *Apparitions of Things to Come: Bellamy's Tales of Mystery & Imagination* (1990), edited by Franklin Rosemont.

⁵ The substance is found in coumarin compounds where calanolides, a novel HIV –inhibitory class of coumarin derivatives from the tropical rainforest tree, *Calophyllum Lanigeum* can be found. The pharmaceutical companies are sponsoring the research (Gustofson 1993: 36).

⁶ The term “workaholic” was first coined by W. E. Oates, a pastor, in “On Being a Workaholic” (published in *Pastoral Psychology*, vol. 19, 1968), and refers to a person who neglects his family, withdraws from social life, and loses interest in sex.

⁷ Cf. Interview with Stephen R. Jendrysik, President of the Edward Bellamy National Homestead, Chicopee, MA. 11 June 2007. Jendrysik had close contact with Marion Bellamy Earnshaw until she died in 1992. It is curious that in an entire chapter dedicated to “The Personality of Edward Bellamy” in Arthur Morgan's biography, Bellamy's proclivity for drinking was not mentioned in any testimonial about him in Morgan's biography (Morgan 1944).

⁸ In Widdicombe and Preiser's *Revisiting the Legacy of Edward Bellamy (1850-1998), American Author and Social Reformer: Uncollected and Unpublished Writings Scholarly Perspectives for a New Millennium*, this is identified as “A line of electric cars between this and Adam” in his Plots for Stories #2: 1, 5-6; however, when I viewed his notebooks at Harvard's Houghton Library, it said “time” rather than “line”.

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Utopian Designs:

The Owenite Communities

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There is an inherent fascination for utopians in imagined communities, those might-have-been from history, more so if they came near reality.¹ Such were a number of communities proposed and in several cases built by Robert Owen and his followers during the early nineteenth century.² Taking the factory community of New Lanark as his model, Owen, seeking to solve the post-Napoleonic war crisis in Britain and other parts of Europe, was by 1817 proposing planned communities whose inhabitants would find refuge from prevailing poverty and unemployment.³

In this paper we examine the development of the designs of Owenite communities beginning by addressing the question of how far New Lanark could be regarded as a proto-type. Secondly, we look at how Owen's ideas developed and how the Village Plans came about. Since both were linked closely to social regeneration a third concern is the influence of Owen's most significant socio-economic statement, the *Report to the County of Lanark*, and the subsequent proposals for what became known as the Motherwell Scheme, a community project near Glasgow. Fourthly, we find significant links in design (and personnel) to the Orbiston Community, the only *ab initio* community of its

period. Fifth, as Owen's proposals became more refined he recruited a young architect, Stedman Whitwell, who by 1824-25 was producing designs reflecting the grandiose ambitions of his patron for New Harmony. Finally, we review subsequent developments in Owenite communities reflecting on whether or not New Lanark was an appropriate model after all.

New Lanark – the Model?

Despite the rapid spread of industrialization and the development in Britain and other countries of new communities to house workers, few were on the scale of New Lanark. Established in 1785 by David Dale, a prominent Scottish industrialist, it quickly absorbed a population of over 2,000, the majority employed in the adjacent cotton mills. Dale proved to be a model employer and New Lanark, built in the classical, if functional, architecture of the period, attracted considerable interest nationally and internationally. Beyond employment, the Dale regime provided housing, education and welfare, not uniquely for factory communities, but of a high order by contemporary standards. There was also a strong sense of community, perhaps even citizenship, fostered by strong discipline, religion and education. How far the last, education, was at the core of Dale's community is hard to determine, but there can be little doubt it played a role even before Owen made it a central component of his plans for New Lanark. All of this was well known and Dale's community was visited and inspected by many enlightened elites and reformers. Owen's reforms after his arrival at New Lanark in 1800 are well enough known and need not detain us overmuch here, though the community initiatives, as

opposed to those in the workplace, are significant relative to future community provision.

Housing was improved and extended to accommodate a growing population. There were also a number of environmental initiatives, mainly related to health and hygiene: better water supply, street cleaning, waste, illegal sale of liquor and closure of retail outlets selling inferior or adulterated provisions at inflated prices. In this connection he established a community store to supply quality goods at fair prices, the profits being diverted to education. Improved education was certainly a key objective, dating from his early management of the community: the “Institute for the Formation of Character”, as he named it, was built in the centre of the village and finally completed in 1816. Another new building, originally conceived as a community kitchen and dining room, extended the education facilities by providing a school and other communal facilities.

In layout and design New Lanark, though lacking the symmetry of numerous grid-planned villages built throughout Britain and Ireland during the age of “improvement”, had much to commend it. The valley of the Clyde where the community nestled was an awkward site, but clever use was made of the location by wide streets which set the buildings far enough apart to allow maximum sunlight to reach the lower floors even in the northern winter. While resort was made to traditional Scottish tenement style, the worker’s housing was in classical if functional style, also evident in the factory buildings.⁴

Was the design and architecture of New Lanark a template for early designs? Looking at the perspective of communities drawn up to accompany Owen’s early propaganda, it seems highly likely that an anonymous artist had

access not only to Owen's proposals but also to images of New Lanark dating from Dale's regime, which were by then widely known from travelogues and other publications. It is possible that John Winning, who produced a series of prints for Owen showing the village and mills in their spectacular setting, was the artist.

We might also note that although New Lanark was primarily a factory village it was located in a rich agricultural area and consequently had its own farm which supplied the community. There is some evidence that factory children sometimes worked in the fields, especially at harvest time. Other interesting features of the village which emphasised this duality of urban-rural life were the allotments and gardens attached to many of the dwellings, duly noted by Owen as a means of aiding greater self-sufficiency.⁵

Owen's Village Plans

Even if Owen had only obliquely hinted at the village plan in the essays on *A New View of Society*, by the time these were in wider circulation and subsequently published in book form in 1816 his ideas about model communities were becoming more clearly defined. The original scheme of 1817 in *Relief for the Poor* suggested an optimum population of around 1,200 persons, half that of New Lanark at its peak. The plan drew quite specifically on arrangements at New Lanark and the key ideas about social organization set out in his essays. But unlike New Lanark the physical appearance of the proposed villages had a symmetry and style that more resembled military barracks built round squares located in plots of between 1.000 and 1.500 acres, which with careful husbandry would result in self-sufficiency. However, the new

communities might combine agriculture and industry, rather like planned villages of the period built where landowners had moved population from their estates or developed mines or industries. The population, according to Owen, would be educated and employed according to abilities and skills, and the scheme was to run at a potential profit once the capital cost of construction had been recovered, an arrangement that has its resonance today in public-private partnerships. While this sounded much like a workhouse, indeed resembling the later Dutch agricultural colonies, this was not Owen's intention.⁶

The major influences, apart from Owen's personal knowledge of factory or agricultural villages, were diverse. From his reading, and perhaps prompted by Francis Place, Owen learned of the seventeenth-century utopian, John Bellers, whose "Colleges of Industry" must have appealed because of their proposed linkage of education and industry, in the wider sense. On a European tour in 1818 he visited Hofwyl, the school run by Fellenberg, devoted to the education of rich and poor children, both cohorts being taught agriculture and crafts. Thanks to his travels and the numerous visitors to New Lanark he became increasingly familiar with the work of other enlightened reformers, such as Rumford, and almost certainly knew of the work of the Dutch Society of Benevolence which later promoted villages for the poor. By this time he may well have been in touch with some of the religious communities established in the United States, including those of the Harmonists in Ohio and then Indiana.⁷

By this time a much more millennial tone was already evidenced in his propaganda with the communities proposed by the plan transformed into "Villages of Unity and Mutual Co-operation". Competition was to be replaced by co-operation. However, he was careful to emphasise that equality could not

immediately prevail and that social class (in four divisions), sectarian or religious affiliation and appropriate skills would be important criteria in the selection of personnel. He even appended a complex table showing all possible combinations of religious sects and political parties to which future communitarians might conceivably adhere.

It seems likely that the earliest visualisations of the model community, mentioned above, date from this period, but they were soon enhanced to show a series of communities, all identical rectangles, stretching to the horizon. Three sides of the square were lodgings, the fourth being dormitories for all children over three years of age, notably in families with more than two children (was this one of his pleas for family limitation as a solution to the poverty problem?). The central building was to house a public kitchen and dining rooms, one on its right the infant school, lecture room and a place of worship, and a symmetrical block to the left, a school for older children, library and meeting rooms (all reminiscent of New Lanark). Apartments would be provided for the superintendents, clergyman, schoolmaster, and surgeon, as well as for visitors. Owen allowed for a store and a range of buildings for craft and simple manufacturing, such as milling and brewing (as at New Harmony). Beyond the gardens attached to the community stretched the farmland, with hedge rows dedicated to fruit trees. The subsistence and environmental messages were strong.

And while there were later refinements, the original concept was enhanced rather than radically altered. Owen stuck to the plan with the same determination that characterised his social policy, regardless of context.

Report to Lanark and the Motherwell Scheme

Owen took the community scheme further through a major investigation of the post-war economic and social crises carried out in 1820-21 on behalf of the elites in the county of Lanark. There the landed and merchant classes felt threatened by disorder, but apparently this had not reached the gates of New Lanark. Owen's solution was a trial of his community near what is now Motherwell on the estate of Archibald James Hamilton of Dalzell, a local landowner who had embraced Owenism. The Motherwell scheme was important since it represented Owen's first attempt to translate the ideas of the plan into reality in a specific context and location. In his report he pointed out the importance replicating the New Lanark experience in the new community thus helping to solve the problems of unemployment and poverty which were then overwhelming the authorities. And again he repeated the universality of his proposal, which thus took on national rather than local significance.⁸

At this juncture a number of potential supporters presented themselves, some promising capital, others offering to direct operations either with Owen or on his behalf. Joining Hamilton was a prosperous Edinburgh businessman, Abram Combe, another convert to Owenism and brother of George Combe, the celebrated phrenologist who pronounced Owen's "bump of benevolence" the largest he had ever seen.

At the same time, as plans for Motherwell were being explored, Owen, prompted by Irish landed elites and clergy (who visited New Lanark in some numbers) tried to promote his community scheme in Ireland, which he visited in 1822-23.

Inspecting the poverty and near-starvation in some parts of the country, he was asked for his remedies, suggesting an experiment with one of his villages. At public meetings in Dublin and elsewhere Owen was able to display, by means of large visual aids, possibly prepared by Winning or Whitwell, views of both New Lanark and the proposed community, presumably Motherwell. Again New Lanark was represented as a model community where moral order prevailed and education and welfare underpinned a humanitarian workplace regime.

In a repeat of his experience in England, there was plenty of enthusiasm, but the financial backers, in the end, proved elusive. Meantime back in Scotland, and despite Owen's withdrawal to New Harmony in autumn 1824, a modified version of the Motherwell scheme promoted by Hamilton and Combe went ahead at Orbiston, about 15 kilometres south of Glasgow.

Orbiston Community

Given the enormous amount of attention Owen had given to the design and arrangement of his proposed communities, there was plenty of information from the *Report to Lanark* and subsequent proposals on which Hamilton and Combe could draw. Orbiston was therefore built to earlier plans though with modifications. The main building resembled the design advocated earlier in *Relief for the Poor* and the *Report to Lanark*. A classically styled central block (somewhat akin to both the Institute and Mill No. 3 at New Lanark) was to be four storeys high and be intended for community use. It would house the kitchens, dining rooms (to accommodate up to 800 persons), drawing rooms, ball room, lecture hall and library. The vast symmetrical L-shaped wings on either side were to provide private living quarters for the communitarians, with

special accommodation for the children. As at New Harmony, separate dormitories would house young unmarried males and females.

The first phase consisted of the north wing which Owen is thought to have inspected during a flying visit from the United States in summer 1825. By the autumn enough had been completed to accommodate the workmen and for a meeting of the shareholders (or “proprietors”) to be held in the newly completed apartments. Here it was decided on financial grounds to complete the wing, postpone the central block, and instead build workshops nearby. Nevertheless the partly completed Orbiston did in effect closely resemble the design Owen had originally proposed, although the maximum population only reached 300 (much smaller than either New Lanark or New Harmony) of which 130 were children. The communitarians were divided into three main groups (though theoretically under the New System there should have been no divisions), the management (or “proprietors”), the specialists (an elite group of artisans, teachers, printers, etc) and the ordinary members. The last consisted mainly of workers who had fallen victim to the on-going slump following the end of the wars, particularly a group of hand-loom weavers, casualties of mechanisation. As in the original scheme the poor and unemployed were being assisted much as Owen intended. Among the educationists were Catherine Whitwell, and, for a time, Joseph Applegarth, another Owenite teacher, who later participated in the New Harmony community.

Economic foundations, in common with the majority of the Owenite communities, were shaky, though as the design suggests, considerable thought had been given to the social and educational aspects of life. Several interesting descriptions survive of the community and its facilities including those for

education, presided over by Catherine Whitwell. Her brother, as it happens, almost certainly inspected the community for himself.

Stedman Whitwell and his Designs

Now is the time to introduce another of the many Owenites attracted to communities, a young architect, Stedman Whitwell (1784-1840), whom Owen probably met in London or Birmingham.⁹ Whitwell's sister, Catherine, who was also artistic, became a teacher at New Lanark, producing many of the famous visual aids used in the school, later moving, as we noted, to Orbiston. He attended lectures given by the great art collector, Sir John Soane, and offered to prepare illustrations for them, but was evidently rejected. Whitwell was employed on a number of public works, including the London docks, later undertaking several schemes of public architecture in Coventry, and at Leamington Spa made a proposal for a suburban community to be called "Southville", which never left the drawing board.

It is unclear when Whitwell actually coincided with Owen, though it may have been around the time of Owen's Irish tour. Whitwell does not seem to have visited New Lanark till October 1824, not long after Owen's departure for the United States. Nor do we know whether or not he produced his design independently of earlier plans (although it seems unlikely) or if he volunteered to help Owen or was commissioned to do so. Indeed it is possible that without having been there until 1825-26 Whitwell was designing for New Harmony, so as far as that context was concerned imagination must have been more significant than knowing the ground. Moreover there seem to have been several versions of Whitwell's drawing, some showing more detailed ornamentation and

vegetation than others, for example, the print circulated in the United States showed an agricultural community appropriate to a setting on the American frontier.

The design was altogether more grandiose than earlier, but suggested many original features and as before there was a strong emphasis on community and educational provision. Whitwell's drawing was accompanied by an enumerated key to all the facilities, which included thoughtful attention to heating and ventilation which he may have discerned at New Lanark.

Whitwell's drawings provided the template for the famous architectural model commissioned in 1825. 1,800mm square it showed the proposed community raised from the prairie on a platform (as in the drawings). Family houses under peaked roofs surrounded the square, while dining halls and other communal facilities extended toward a huge central greenhouse. The corner buildings were to be schools and "conversation rooms" for adult communitarians. One of Owen's more imaginative ideas, borrowed from New Lanark, was extending bunks from walls at night and tables on pulleys that could be raised to free space. The physical environment around the community was to be appreciated, as industry (not represented on the model) would be at a distance. This arrangement is suggestive of present day ecovillages where some participants work in the community itself while others have occupations in the economy beyond.

The model appears to have been a remarkable construction, made ready in time for Owen to use it at a lecture in London in September 1825, after which it was shipped across the Atlantic to be shown to President John Quincy Adams and then put on public display in Washington (and probably in New York and

Philadelphia). It was large enough to show the various buildings and their relative dimensions, presenting in miniature the Whitwell-Owen vision of an ideal community.

Whitwell later prepared a detailed description of his model, explaining the design of the buildings and the range of facilities they were intended to provide.¹⁰ Remarkably a piece of Whitwell's model has survived, now displayed in the Owen House at New Lanark.

Subsequent Developments

The abandonment of the grand design for New Harmony was by no means the end of the story. However, none of the later communities, so far as we know, revisited the earlier designs, possibly because the socio-economic context had changed. Yet there was still a characteristically strong emphasis on land and agriculture, seen in both the Irish venture at Ralahine and that of Queenwood, England, the most durable of the Owenite experiments.¹¹ Around the same time the Chartists, whose aims were essentially political reform, developed a land settlement scheme, though of individual units rather than the communal arrangements promoted by the Owenites.¹² There were, of course, significant links to contemporary European and American developments, particularly the Saint-Simonians in France, though their imagined communities rarely became realities. In the United States the New Harmony legacy was more enduring, being echoed in a communitarian movement throughout the rest of the nineteenth century that was often religiously inspired.¹³

Owen later restated much of this in *Home Colonies* (1841), partly a rejoinder to the emigration movement, where he returned to a familiar design

still essentially based on Whitwell's concept of 1825.¹⁴ For Owen these and other schemes were always closely modelled on New Lanark. Yet, in many ways, it was an inappropriate model, a capitalist enterprise, philanthropic to a degree certainly, but where the profit motive, rather than community or co-operation was always paramount. And in contrast to industry from which he had accumulated the wealth that allowed him to promote his ideas, they seem in general to have represented a return to some sort of utopian rural idyll, personally experienced in his youth and in the community by the river Clyde at New Lanark.

Owen always regarded his community projects as experiments and as such could never be described, as they were by his detractors, as failures. In the ever-optimistic view of Owen and his followers the utopian design always remained a possibility.

Notes

¹ I am grateful to those who so kindly offered comments and suggestions on this paper at the 8th International Utopian Studies Conference, University of Plymouth, England, July 2007.

² For detailed histories of the Owenite communities in Britain, Ireland and the United States, see Claeys; Harrison; Garnet; and Royle.

³ On the background to Owen's schemes, see Donnachie 2000 and 2005.

⁴ On the building history and architecture of New Lanark, see Hume 1971.

⁵ For a review of the history of the community under Dale and subsequently Owen's management, see Donnachie / Hewitt 1993.

⁶ On the 1817 scheme, see Pollard / Salt 1977; Harrison 1969; and Donnachie for the background. Claeys 1993 reproduces the relevant pamphlets.

⁷ On the influences, see Claeys 1993, vol 1; Harrison 1969; Donnachie. On the agricultural colonies in the Netherlands, see Robert Dale Owen's travel diary, edited by Elliott (1969).

⁸ See Garnett 1972 and also Donnachie 1971, on the background to the Motherwell and Orbiston projects. Claeys 1993 and 2005 reproduce relevant pamphlets.

⁹ Whitwell is the subject of an entry in Colvin 1995: 1046-1047.

¹⁰ See Whitwell 1830. This is reproduced in part in the websites mentioned in the list of works cited.

¹¹ For Ralahine, see Garnett 1972 and also Geoghegan 1989 for a more recent account; on Queenwood, see Royle 1998.

¹² On Chartist activities, see Hatfield 2000.

¹³ On New Harmony, see Harrison 1969 and also Donnachie 2000.

¹⁴ Later developments are covered by Harrison 1969 and also Royle 1998. Claeys 1997 reproduces relevant contemporary material.

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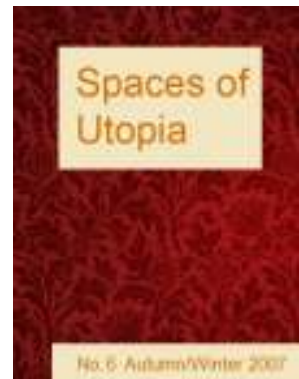
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How Utopianism Disappeared from Dutch Socialist Feminism (1970-1989)

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In this paper I will analyse, based on primary sources – *i.e.* the three most important socialist-feminist Dutch journals of that time – how the strategy of socialist feminism has changed from working from below in autonomous groups into a strategy directed at the government. I want to show that in this process socialist feminism lost its utopian potential. I will begin by considering the idea of utopianism and then briefly describe Dolle Mina and the way feminist-socialist movement dissociated itself from the beginning of the Dutch women's movement. My analysis of the primary sources starts in the year 1975 and ends in 1989, when the last issues of the socialist-feminist journals were published. In my concluding remarks I will explore some developments within socialist feminism that have contributed to this change of strategy.

1. Utopianism, Including Utopian Movements

As a core definition of utopianism I resort to the idea that utopianism is the expression of a desire for another way of being and/or living together (Levitas 1990; Poldervaart 1993). Lyman Tower Sargent has convincingly argued that utopianism has three faces: utopia as design/theory, utopian movements and

utopian studies (Sargent 1994). So utopianism is more than “hope”: it has to be expressed in a design or in a movement, and utopian studies elaborate on both. However, as I have noted before, in utopian studies very little attention is given to utopian movements. Most publications on utopian studies describe or analyse utopian designs, or they are case-studies of intentional communities. These intentional communities are rarely compared with each other and placed in their socio-political and historical context. They are not studied as belonging to movements, resulting in a lack of analysis of their differences or similarities to other social movements. Another result is that most of the time people are not aware of the fact that many utopian movements are not based on a clear utopian design; besides, not all utopian designs were and are meant to actually be put into practice.

After studying social movements for a long time, I concluded, stimulated by the analyses of Zablocki (1980) and Lent (1999), that social movements resort in general to three different strategies (Poldervaart 2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2006b):

1. The utopian strategy (or, as we currently say, “do-it-yourself” (DIY) or “prefigurative politics”) (Graeber 2002). This strategy focuses on organising from below. It is based on the notion that individuals who are discontent with the existing conditions have to try to live according to their ideals in their daily lives, and that this will change them and their immediate environment. Within this strategy activists disregard the existing power structures and the state. The changes aspired to are based on a re-organisation of everyday life, on self-reliance and self-respect. Most of the time, people seek allies who are also

discontent with the way things are. Together, they endeavour to put into practice alternatives for their existence, mostly in a sort of intentional community. This strategy of social movements has a very long history although social scientists have largely neglected it in their research until today. However, as I will show, in the 1960s socialist feminists considered this strategy as “their” own and also as the most important way to distinguish themselves from Marxist activists.

2. The revolutionary strategy. Adherents believe that fundamental changes are needed before a movement can put its ideals into practice (Zablocki 1980). A common enemy (such as capitalism or the state) must be defeated before one can conceive ways of living according to one’s own ideals. In this strategy it is the aim that counts, not the process. Therefore, strong leadership is needed. Although one can see many violent revolts in history, in Western history revolutionary social movements did not occur before the sixteenth century, when disparate farmers, sometimes stimulated by heretic groups like the Anabaptists, fought against the power of the church and nobility. Famous examples are of course the American and French revolutions (although “revolts” would be a better word); later this strategy is emphasised by Marxists and revolutionary anarchists. Because of this different strategy, I don’t think of Marxism as a utopian movement (but I will not elaborate on this point now).

3. The negotiating strategy. In this strategy activists seek to directly influence the existing power structures. Historically, it is the most recent strategy of social movements; in fact, it could have only arisen after the development of the Nation-State and the concept of citizenship. Although this

pragmatic strategy has brought about significant changes in laws, it has scarcely changed dominant values and norms (Lent 1999). Nonetheless, this strategy has always been the primary interest of social sciences (see Tarrow 1998). In this strategy, representation is needed (with the danger of losing the grassroots support).

In this paper I will show how the Dutch socialist feminists, slowly and almost unnoticed, moved from a utopian strategy to a negotiating one, and how they have lost their socialist feminist ideals during this process. I will begin by describing the famous socialist feminism of Dolle Mina, who was more Marxist-like organised, and from which the later socialist feminists have dissociated themselves.

2. Dolle Mina (1970-1975)

When in January 1970 the first actions of Dolle Mina (Wild Mina) started, it seemed as if everybody in the Netherlands had been waiting for them: the many, playful actions this group performed, particularly during the years 1970-1972, were positively and enthusiastically received by the media. I quickly became involved and was on television or mentioned in the newspapers almost every week. All the attention was really amazing. In retrospect, I understand that this happened because Dolle Mina embodied something totally new: young, uninhibited and progressive women whistling at men or disrupting a gynaecological conference with slogans written on their bodies: “[We are] Boss in our own womb”. For the founders – mostly socialist men and women who belonged to the student movement –, this was really the beginning of the

socialist women's movement. This was particularly true for men, who thought that they had the moral duty of helping women to organise such a movement, which should be different from the more liberal women's movement that had emerged two years earlier in the Netherlands (MVM: Man, Woman, Society) but that until then had refrained from undertaking public actions.

Nobody had expected the playful public actions of Dolle Mina to be as successful as they were, and the Marxist inspired men and women who had initiated the actions quickly became overwhelmed. Just a few weeks after the beginning of the public actions, thousands of women and some men indicated their desire to join up as members of Dolle Mina. In response they were told to start a Dolle Mina group themselves! After three weeks, there were Dolle Mina departments in fifteen towns and, one year later, they could already be found in 35 cities (Bogers 1982). All these groups started to organise autonomous actions that varied from place to place. Having realised that the whole Dutch society was male-dominated, they felt that everything had to change! The divergence of these actions, however, bothered the more socialist initiators, who were hastily searching for one uniform ideology and organisation model.

At the first Dolle Mina conference (April 1970) a big struggle arose between the socialists who wanted a clear organisation and the more anti-authoritarian activists who rejected the idea of a top-down organisation with formal membership and a socialist ideology. At the time this conflict remained unsolved, but during the second conference (April 1971) the socialists won: feminism was not only about male-female relationships, it should also be considered as part of the class struggle. In the meantime, however, the

consciousness-raising groups were formed – a concept that departed from American feminism – and some important women left Dolle Mina to organise such groups themselves. They wanted to talk about their own experiences without male leadership. After the second conference, more Dolle Minas went to these consciousness-raising groups. The rest of Dolle Minas carried on, organising study groups about Marxism and continuing to mount public actions, until around 1975, when most activities of the Dutch socialist women's movement started to be held under the umbrella of the "femsoc" (feminist-socialist) movement. Dolle Mina succumbed then and became part of this movement.

3. The Beginning of the FemSoc Movement: Building on and Rejecting Dolle Mina

The rise of the femsoc movement was partly granted on the positive reception of Dolle Mina, even though the femsoc women seemed to reject this movement. The reason for this negative appraisal was twofold. Firstly, the concept of feminism had gained a positive meaning due to the consciousness-raising groups. Before 1972 the word feminism was not used: when someone defended women's rights she or he was a Dolle Mina, not a feminist, because feminism had the dusty image of the old suffragettes. Secondly, feminism had now acquired the meaning of being the struggle of women without men. Dolle Mina was associated with dominant men against which the femsoc movement opposed because of their emphasis on "being feminist" (although after 1972 Dolle Minas started to call themselves feminists as well). However, the "feminist" label had a deeper meaning: Dolle Mina pursued a movement to

emancipate other women (and men), but from 1972 on feminism was something that had to do with one's self, with one's own experiences as a woman. That was an almost unnoticed, but very important change, which also influenced the organizational structure and the aim of the movement: one had to live feminism in his or her daily life, and that meant changing oneself and trying to re-organize private life. This idea was expressed in the slogan "The personal is political".

In 1973, some feminists connected with Dutch colleges started courses for women, relating female experiences with their position in society. As with Dolle Mina, the idea that the whole society had to change soon emerged, and therefore a socialist society looked the most logical. These courses stimulated the idea of the creation of a feminist-socialist network and, after a long preparation, some women organized a full-day platform discussion in April 1975. They invited all women who were presumed to have a socialist vision (also Dolle Minas) and formulated three starting points for the femsoc network: 1) the situation of women within this capitalist society cannot change in its essence; 2) the socialist society is the best known answer but does not give a complete solution because within socialism the problem of equality of women is not considered as a specific problem. We have therefore to look at this solution critically; 3) the problem should be discussed with women only, at least at the very start of the discussion.

In the accompanying reader prepared for this Platform gathering, the organizers also formulated their ideas about organisation and strategy:

The organisational structure should be as minimal as possible, because the power of the women's movement consists of basic groups who organize themselves for their own purposes and who develop their own strategies based on their own situations. It is not good to create an artificial unity or a general strategy. Every femsoc woman has to

choose her own femsoc practice; the platform is an umbrella for activities to be done somewhere else. The only central point is the national femsoc **secretariat**, consisting of women who volunteered and who have one and only task: to organise the contact addresses and the Newsletter of the platform. This secretariat has not a substantive but just a facilitating task, to avoid the impression that a right policy exists that could be formulated from the top down. Therefore, another group, the **Platform group**, will take care of the organization of the study days twice a year; only on these days something *on behalf of the platform* can be decided.

As mentioned earlier, this kind of organisational strategy may be considered as being typical of utopian movements. However, the concept of utopia was never used in the feminist movement: the members were too much influenced by Marxism to consider utopianism as a positive concept. Although their type of organisation had much to do with anarchism, this concept wasn't used either: for years, socialist feminists considered their way of organisation and strategy to be a typical feminist invention.

4. Analysis of the *Newsletter of the Feminist-Socialist Platform* (1975-1979)

From October 1975 to September 1979, 21 issues of this Newsletter appeared – and 8 readers for the Platform study days. Besides a very divergent action agenda in every issue, substantive articles were also published in the Newsletter. Analysing these articles, there are two phenomena that strike us: in the first place, the fact that much attention was given to, and discord existed about, the organisational structure. Secondly, the fact that there were many articles about housework and feminist courses for housewives; it was clear that girls and women with less education belonged to their target group towards which these feminists directed their socialist involvement.

The discussions about organisational structure in the Newsletter can be divided into **three discourses**¹: the first was a plea for more structure; the

second was an argument against structure; and the third was a request for a combination of “our” nonstructural organisational principles with more strategies at the same time.

In the second issue of the Newsletter arguments **against** the femsoc ideas about organisation and the need of a real structure were put forward, connected with arguments for a bundle of demands and for chosen representatives. Influenced by the article “The Tyranny of Structure Lessness”, by the American feminist Jo Freeman, the defenders of more structure argued that the movement had to represent itself to the outside world and had to undertake actions in the name of femsoc. This group also emphasized that the movement should try to make connections with official politics. Without doing so, the relationship between feminism and socialism would be devoid of content.

Most arguments, however, were *pro* “our” organisational structure, because the Femsoc Platform should not degenerate into an imitation of the Left movement. The defenders of this discourse wrote in *Newsletter 2* “that a programme by itself does not accomplish anything, women have to organise themselves, from below; it is more important to listen to the problems of women and to know what they want than to ply them with just a nice program”. They also argued that “nothing is so disruptive for a movement as the attempt to force an artificial unity”. In the reader entitled *Organization Discussion* of the Platform day in February 1977 it is stated that “the most important achievement of the women’s movement is to work on what you yourself think is the most important, in a group or structure in which you feel comfortable and which you have helped

to build up". But also: "Our autonomy is our power, as well as our loose organisational structure. The traditional Left doesn't recognize our organisational forms. (...) *Democracy* means that people can think and decide about their own things and that is only possible in a big system of decentralisation". One year later, in issue no. 12 (January 1979) the importance of decentralisation is again emphasized, now against the Dutch government that presumably tried to take over the organisation of the women's movement by forming subsidized emancipation bureaus which had to connect all the different women's initiatives: "If we go with the government, then our struggle will get a partial technocratic character; it means that we have to unify ourselves in one arrangement, that we have to make compromises and in the end all it will do is lead to apathy".

The third discourse about organization was brought in by the women who had until then defended "our feminist organisational principles". In the Platform reader of February 1977, these femsocs began to argue in favor of the use of more strategies at the same time. They emphasized that

the situation is now different from the beginning of the movement: nowadays there is high unemployment and a policy of retrenchment, and that demands another strategy: we have to work with others and try to hold on to what we have already achieved. (..) As an action group we have not yet been admitted to the groups that make decisions, so we must try to sit in these clubs too. We have to organise a politics of alliances and see the Platform as a refuelling station.

In issue no. 19 (May 1979) the famous Dutch feminist Anja Meulenbelt pleaded for "small groups that can create a feminine culture as a kind of training-place for other ways of relating with each other, another image of yourself, to develop an image of the future". However, she stated, "we cannot permit ourselves

merely to sit and talk in small groups and leave the struggle against the demolition of our collective provisions to political parties". She pleaded to combine different forms of strategies and organisation.

Although the Dutch feminist movement was at its height during the years 1976-1979 (sometimes with, for example, 15,000 visitors on their yearly Women's festivals) (Newsletter 16 and 21), it seemed, according to a research done by the editors of the Newsletter in 1979, that there was not much sentiment left in favour of the Platform nor much support for the national secretariat of the femsoc movement. Therefore, the editors decided to stop publishing the Newsletter even though they appealed to their readers to think of another journal. This has led to the creation of the (socialist) feminist journal *Katijf* (which means a strong woman), which started in 1981. In the meantime, however, a more academic journal was also set up by the women who had pleaded first for no structure and later for a combination of different strategies: *The Socialist-Feminist Texts*.

5. The Socialist Feminist Texts (SocFem: 1978-1989)

Eleven issues of this more scholarly journal were published annually as a kind of yearbook. The editorial of the first issue explained why socfem is a better term than femsoc: "We place ourselves within the tradition of the femsoc stream of feminism, but our first loyalty is to the autonomous women's movement. (...) This means that the women's movement performs an anti-capitalist struggle starting from the position of women" (Sevenhuijsen *et al.* 1978a: 14). In a joint article in the next number they added: "Because the situation of women/of

ourselves comes first, we emphasize 'feminists'. Because we cannot achieve our aims in the capitalist system, we have to be socialists too" (Sevenhuijsen *et al.* 1978b: 216). Yet I have to conclude that this journal has never elaborated a clear connection between feminism and socialism.

Besides all kinds of scholarly articles concerning divergent topics, in the first issues of this journal some important analyses of the women's movement were also provided, in which sometimes a glimpse of its utopian desires were revealed. In the first issue, in a long article about the women's movement, the editors concluded that

consciousness-raising and working in small groups continue to be necessary. Although society is becoming more and more conservative, we have to emphasize our autonomy, but we should not choose one strategy only. We can use the existing niches in the parliamentary system without falling into an unjust loyalty to political parties and governmental bodies. We have to remain suspicious of the Left as long as these groups consider the performance of hierarchically organised mass actions behind prescribed slogans to be of greater importance than the small-scale revolutions at home. (Sevenhuijsen *et al.* 1978a)

The same plea for combining different strategies and simultaneously being wary of parliamentary politics is done in the same issue by Sevenhuijsen, who stated:

We must not make an opposition between parliamentary politics and politics of small groups. We have to recognize the contradictions of the parliamentary politics and we must not give our whole soul and blessings to this type of politics. Feminism can then only be partially translated in terms of parliamentary politics. Translating feminism to a package of demands fails to appreciate that we have to work for our liberation ourselves. (Sevenhuijsen 1978: 16-66)

Yet she pointed out that we can expect something from parliamentary politics: it can give us rights tied up in law legislation.

In *Socfem Texts 2*, Anja Meulenbelt pleaded for more feminist dreams:

We have to develop a women's culture. In such a culture it is recognized that time, space and normal daily life are connected. Old images have to be broken down and

images of the future built up. *It is a misunderstanding that it is the analysis that mobilises people.* People are rather mobilised by the idea, the feeling, the experience *that life can be different.* Only after this, comes the need for analysis of why it isn't as we want. (...) Dare to dream loudly, make dreams visible, bring dreams into practice. (Meulenbelt 1978: 207-213)

She criticized the culture of the Left: "Battle songs, musical slogans. The message comes first, only later the forms of struggle. Muscular language. Once a year the fist up. Grim. One may not think that we are here for pleasure. Forms of one way traffic" (*ibidem*). With this manly, weightlifting culture she juxtaposed the culture and strategy of the women's movement: "The leaderless group and the non-hierarchical structure are perhaps the most important contributions of the women's movement" (*ibidem*). She requested that women look for new forms of struggle, and for a *language* that fits us.

In the same issue the editors analysed the Dutch women's movement again. They noted it would be foolish to ignore parliamentary politics, although they identified the problems this kind of politics poses: if one works in vertical organisational structures with representatives, one runs the risk of losing grassroots support. Working within the hierarchy of the political parties can never replace the groundwork of the small groups. Parliamentary politics is only one of the means, never the ultimate goal of feminism, they stated. "Self organisation can never be replaced by some kind of organisation structure" (Sevenhuijsen *et al.* 1978b: 214-244).

In *Socfem Texts 6* (1981) Korten and Onstenk criticized the supposition that socialist and feminist struggles are connected. Stimulated by the book *Beyond the Fragments*, by Sheila Rowbotham *et al.*, the Dutch authors warned

that when the socialist and feminist struggle aligns itself in an unproblematic fashion, feminism always becomes subordinated:

Feminism is different from socialism, because feminism means: unfolding your activities yourself; taking your life in your own hand; developing your own truth. Making politics yourself. Accepting that there is no just theory about how you have to organize yourself. Creating another culture and alternatives that anticipate another society and other relationships between people (...). Against a politics of postponement: things have to change *now*. The struggle of the women's movement is not a *single issue*, because women are also young, black, gay, working-class. Therefore, the feminist struggle has consequences for almost all forms of struggle. (...) But do we want to talk about *power* in the same way socialists are doing? (Korten / Onstenk 1981: 81)

No, they concluded, because we emphasize rotating tasks (chairpersons, spokeswomen), cleaning turns and we reject a central institution. The strategy and organisational structure of the traditional Left and the women's movement differ too much and we should not waste our energy in changing the Left.

This was the last article about the women's movement, its desires and differences from the socialist movement that appeared in the *Socfem Texts*. One of the editors of this journal, Joyce Outshoorn, later wrote that, in the 1980's, the women's movement had consolidated into more and more professionalised organisations, which had conquered a fixed institutionalised place within all kinds of negotiating structures and with this had directly gained admission to diverse governmental bodies. The majority of the women's movement was integrated into the political system through subsidies and, at the time, only the anarca- and lesbian feminists strove to create a feminist culture. One may ask, she concluded, whether the women's movement has now ceased being a social movement and has been transformed into some pressure- and interest group (Outshoorn 2000).

However, Outshoorn did not analyse how this transformation happened. Therefore, in the next section, I will analyse the socialist feminist journal that was considered to be the successor of the *Newsletter*. In this journal, *Katijf*, one can recognize the transformation of the socialist feminism strategy from a utopian one, aimed at autonomous self-organisations, to a pragmatic one, directed at negotiations and obtaining political power.

6. *Katijf*, a Socialist-Feminist Vision (1981-1983); a Feminist Vision (1983-January 1989)

In the eight years of *Katijf*, the volunteers of this bi-monthly journal published 48 issues. According to the first editorial, the aim was to stimulate discussions about feminism and socialism in practical as well as theoretical terms and to devote attention to all kinds of developments, national and international, that are important for women. No attention was given to the label femsoc or socfem except for an opening statement which announced that “We are socialist feminists”. In the very first number, the strategy of the femsoc movement was criticized:

It was never possible to say something in the name of the femsoc, and women who were not active outside their own femsoc group wanted to organise actions in the name of the femsoc movement. These women did not like all the discussions about organisational structures. *Katijf* wants to make possible discussions about the longing for power and our attitude towards the subsidy policy of the government, discussions that never took place in the *Newsletter*.

In my analysis of all the discussions about the strategy of the socialist feminist movement in *Katijf*, I recognize **5 dominant discourses and 1 non-dominant warning discourse**. I will formulate these discourses in more or less the same chronological order as they appeared in *Katijf*. In every discourse one can

summarize one specific slogan/message, or what may be called “storylines” in discourse analysis.²

a) the discourse of the connection with the emancipation policy of the government. Storyline: *we have to influence governmental bodies.*

In *Katijf* no. 1, it is argued that we cannot ignore the emancipatory policies of the government. Therefore, “the best thing we can do is to work with the government in our own ways: to articulate our own demands for control every three years if we really need the money from the government”. But in no. 4 someone else pleaded for more women in government institutions, without stipulating conditions beforehand. In no. 10 it was not only argued that “in the end all our actions are dedicated to the purpose of influencing the policies of the government”, but also that “we have to think more in legal terms: we have to use more legal processes as a method of reaching particular goals”. In no. 12, the last issue with the subtitle “socialist-feminist”, the traditional women’s organisations were mentioned for the first time. These organisations used to be viewed as non-feminist, but were now seen as important ones because of their capacity to influence the government. It was suggested that by cooperating with these organisations we, feminists, could also probably acquire influence. Two years later, in 1985, the feminists succeeded in forming such a coalition: The Association Distributing Paid and Unpaid Labor. In no. 29 this coalition, consisting of 16 feminist and traditional women’s organisations and all political parties, was criticized because the breadth of this umbrella implied too much political neutrality and entailed the risk of losing its political sharpness.

However, in a subsequent issue, the critique of the Association was rejected: “pragmatism is not a dirty word and collaborating with divergent women’s organisations provides play for women within and without official politics”. And in one of the last issues (no. 45, June 1988), Joke Swiebel, who served as a member of parliament, concluded with satisfaction that

ten years ago the emancipation policy of the government was considered to be one big conspiracy to suppress women, but nowadays this has changed thoroughly. The fear for encapsulation seems definitely over. Women’s groups lobby in The Hague with concretely formulated demands.

Forgotten was the warning, made 5 years before in *Socfem Texts*, stating that feminism could not be translated into a straightforward package of demands.

b) the discourse of criticizing “our” organisational principles and equality.

Storyline: *we need a stronger organisation and leadership to become more effective.*

As mentioned before, in the very first issue of *Katijf* the non-representational orientation of the socfem movement was criticized. No. 2 pleaded for more extra parliamentary power of the movement and in no. 3 it was stated that such power needed a higher level of organisation. Yet in the first issues there remained some feminists who defended “our” organisational principles. In no. 5 it was argued that the most important strategy of the women’s movement is “the challenge to show that you can live in another way” and someone else emphasized that “feminism is the need to politicize private life and to struggle for changes in all societal structures”. This author emphasized that

feminism wants more than mere extra-parliamentary power because this means it would become effectively political only in one front, namely in what concerns our success in the visible public sphere, and our relationship with state institutions and with the media. But feminism is also about making political those questions that are never considered

as such, like motherhood, sexual violence, relations between women, etc. Feminists are people who *make* political problems.

However, nobody responded to these statements. On the contrary, in the following issue (no. 6, December 1981) a fierce attack on “our” organisational principles was launched. The idea of **autonomy** was criticized because it implied that we, feminists, could not make decisions and formulate a global policy and because we failed to learn from each other. The **horizontal organisational structure** was defined as ineffective for acting adequately. And the idea that **all women are equal** was also described as a trap: “competence, division of tasks and leadership are connected and we have to learn how to handle these things. We have to accept differences between women. When we stick to our three principles we risk of becoming paralysed”. After this article scarcely anybody wrote something positive about “our” organisational principles.

c) the discourse of making an individual career. Storyline: *women have to get higher/the highest positions.*

No. 18 of *Katijf* argued for the first time in favour of pursuing an individual career; no. 22, again, put forward the idea that by networking women can help each other in fulfilling career goals. This indicated a big difference from the beginning of *Katijf*: no. 2 had stated that when an individual woman achieved a power position, she was not the right woman for the movement any longer. The change not only entailed the acceptance of women in higher positions, but this was now considered as a desirable goal for all feminists. This was probably

connected with the abandonment of the “socialist” label. Typical of this change is the fact that, in contrast to the *Newsletter*, *Katijf* devoted very little attention to the labour situations of the less-educated women.

d) the discourse of the (non-existing) relationship between feminism and socialism. Storyline: *disconnecting feminism and socialism gives feminists more freedom.*

In no. 2, a group of authors called for a redefinition of the concept of socialism, because of all the misery and bureaucracy in socialist countries. However, nobody actually formulated such a redefinition. When the editors of *Katijf* no. 13 (May 1983) dropped the term “socialist” from the magazine’s subtitle, they did so not because of the negative situation in the “real existing socialist countries”, but because of the changes in the Dutch feminist movement. Previously, the editors stated, Dutch feminism was divided into three “streams”: radical feminism, emancipation feminism and socialist feminism. But now

these divisions do not exist any longer; there are many forms of feminism. Moreover, the Left movement has shown little solidarity with feminism. The strategy of feminism is first and foremost directed at the power inequality based on gender. It is true that our analysis goes further, but therefore we don’t need the term socialism any longer.

Nobody protested against the disappearance of the term socialist. Yet, many issues later (no. 29, October 1985), Jet Bussemaker – currently the undersecretary for Health and Human Services – wrote that “the disconnection between socialism and feminism has created more freedom, but (...) by this the all-embracing vision of life that lays behind our acting has disappeared”. She stated that the left parties had translated feminist demands in concrete policy,

“although these parties only focus on feasibility”. The last time that the relationship between the left parties and feminism was discussed in *Katijf* was in no. 33 (June 1986), in which the author concluded that the social economic demands of feminism were picked up and supported by the left parties, but that they scarcely reflected on masculinity and femininity. However, she wondered whether party politics could change ideas and practices of male- and femaleness. And this remained an unanswered question in *Katijf*.

e) the discourse of happy-go-lucky and the rejection of feminist morals.

Storyline: *I, my career, you, your witches, let 1 000 flowers blossom.*

As mentioned, the argument for abandoning the term socialist in 1983 (no. 13) was justified on the grounds that at that time feminism had many forms. In number 25 the editors stated that contemporary feminism included spiritual, career, anarca, political, black, peace and other feminists. In an overview of 25 numbers of *Katijf* an author pointed to the happy-go-lucky idea of feminism: “I, my career, you, your witches group”. She stated that you can see this trend in *Katijf* too, and she considered this as being positive: “The journal has evolved along with other trends in the women’s movement”. However, in the same issue, someone else pointed to another aspect of the notion that everything was permitted:

The feminist morals, the images as to what is good and bad constituted a cohesive element in the movement. Nowadays the oppressive “we-feeling” is over for most feminists. Consciousness-raising groups are replaced with networking, individual careers are accepted, girls do what they want to do. This development was needed because prescriptions as to how to behave is opposite to what feminism advocates. But the all-encompassing nature of feminism makes it very difficult to decide what should be the effort of the feminist struggle nowadays.

In no. 35 (October 1986) the editors stated that “the” feminist struggle doesn’t exist any longer, that feminism is a landscape consisting of many little and big streams. How to go further?”. This question remained open too.

f) the non-dominant discourse of warning for the liberalisation of feminism. Storyline: *professionalism, the translation of the principle of equality in emancipation policy and the use of legal procedures undermine the political power of feminism.*

In *Katijf* no. 25 (February 1985) the academic feminist Judith Vega elaborated on the question “Has feminism become liberal”? Yes, she concluded:

Nowadays there is much attention to appearance, to style and a real politics of difference has arisen with different feminist identities. The happy-go-lucky attitude has made of feminism a liberal movement, one that has forgotten *to organise boldness*. This has undermined its political power. (...) The movement is further liberalized by the emphasis on careers and networking with the aim to entrench women in higher positions. Working with paid labourers and the declining trust in self-help also fit in this development like the **individualisation** in social security does. With regard to sexual violence the demands are directed at legal procedures and at the police, by which the judge acquires a more central role. The idea of “asserting your rights” has an individualizing and isolating effect. Troublesome is that the Left has also become liberal, because the State gives women more grip on the means of coercion of politics than the negotiated freedoms of the social partners.

In number 27, Vega repeated her warnings, but her cautionary insights were not acknowledged.

One can, with Vega, conclude that in the 1980s socialist feminists went along with the neo-liberal flow, just as the Left did. This flow reflects and enables the middle-class idealisation of self-reliant upward mobility. At the same time, it indicated the end of self-organisation and solidarity and, simultaneously, the end of socialist feminism. In 1989 not only the *Socfem Texts* came to its end, but also *Katijf* disappeared.

Concluding remarks

What kind of developments within socialist feminism have contributed to the change of this movement from a utopian “we-do-it-ourselves” strategy to a pragmatic negotiating stance? In the first instance, this development was due to the relationship between feminism and socialism, which was not elaborated above and beyond dissociating itself from Marxism. In the beginning of the femsoc movement, the term “socialist” was used to indicate that the whole society and not only the gender relations had to change. At the same time, the socialist feminists were so influenced by Marxism’s rejection of utopianism, that they did not permit themselves to conjure up an image of their ideal society. Yet, as in some of Marx’s own work, it is possible to identify in the socialist feminist journals an occasional glimpse of an idealized future. In the first issues of the *Texts*, for example, a vision of a women’s culture was formulated in which it was recognized that time, space and daily life were connected and linked to new images of the future: people must embrace a feeling that life can be different. Therefore, as it was argued, feminists have to dream loudly, make dreams visible, bring dreams into practice. However, with the abandoning of the term “socialism” in *Katijf*, in 1983, utopian dreams and the feeling that life can be different disappeared. Instead, the conventional idea of politics arose: the aim of feminism was then to influence governmental bodies. Because the Dutch government became more and more neo-liberal and because feminism had not developed a (utopian) vision of society, feminists went along with this flow.

A connected development in socialist feminism was that only at the beginning it advocated in favour of the strategy of working in autonomous small groups without hierarchical structure and that feminists had to formulate their political problems themselves. This strategy, expressed in the slogan “The personal is political”, had much to do with the utopian strategy of bringing into practice your ideals into daily life. After some years, however, the defenders of this (utopian) strategy stated in the *Newsletter* that it was necessary to **combine this strategy** with other strategies that enabled alliances with other groups in order to hold on to what had already been achieved. However, no attention was devoted to the difficulty of combining the “we-do-it-ourselves” strategy with the negotiating one. The utopian DIY strategy entails a reliance on autonomous self-organisations in which dreams become visible in order to reveal that you can live in another way and make your own politics. The negotiating strategy, in contrast, required adjusted language, the appointment of special spokespersons in order to work within representational politics. It also implied accepting the hierarchical idea of more or less important people and allowing the government to decide who feminists had to collaborate with. There is a big difference between autonomously formulating political problems in feminist groups and granting the government the right to do this for the groups, and that’s really what has happened. In this way, not only the strategy of working in autonomous small groups disappeared from (dominant) feminism, but the same also happened to the slogan “The personal is political”.³

With all this I do not want to argue that the negotiating strategy is always a bad strategy. Social movements need all three strategies. But without a

utopian vision and without the utopian strategy, movements can no longer provide an alternative model of society. Regrettably, this is what has happened in Dutch socialist feminism.

Notes

¹ A short definition of discourse is: an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena (see Hajer 1993: 45).

² Discourse analysis belongs to the social-constructivist approach and this approach is one of the four theoretical approaches of studying social movements. In the social-constructivist approach one is not interested in the success of movements but in its problem solutions, its producing of knowledge and presenting alternatives (see Eyerman / Jamison 1991). Because discourses are very difficult to analyse, one uses “storylines” as a kind of summary (slogan/message) of the discourse. “Story lines are the medium through which actors try to impose their view of reality on others, suggest certain social positions and practices and criticize alternative social arrangements” (Hajer 1993: 47).

³ At the moment, the utopian strategy is again being used in (a stream of) the alter-globalization movement (see Poldervaart 2006b).

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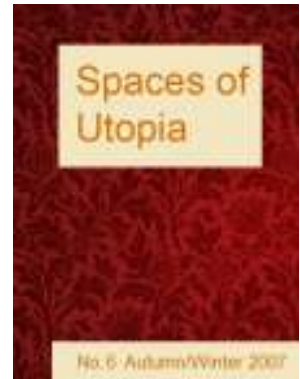
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Anarchism is Back. We May Now Re(dis)cover Utopia¹

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To Ferro Piludo and Lucia Salimei who, several decades ago, raised in a very brilliant way the cosmic aspect of utopia.

*

Le sens d'une interrogation ne se démontre ni ne se réfute. Il est affaire de conviction, et c'est en tant que tel qu'il guide le travail des scientifiques et intervient dans leurs controverses. Mais cette conviction n'est pas pour autant arbitraire: elle se nourrit du passé pour définir ce que pourrait être demain une nouvelle cohérence de nos sciences. Cette cohérence ne devrait plus traduire une hiérarchie, expression d'un jugement, mais une exigence dont chaque science aurait la charge: l'exigence de rendre explicite, dans le concept singulier de son objet, et notamment dans la manière singulière dont il articule hasard et nécessité, le type de question qui en assure l'accès le plus pertinent, le type de regard et de pratique qu'il a fallu apprendre pour devenir capable d'en reconnaître la singularité.

Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers

Introduction

Utopia is generally understood as an act of the mind, a creation of individual or collective imagination. By contrast, it is in the actual world that we meet growth, violence, connections, competition, life and death. It is in the name of that reality that we are taught and governed. We need hard facts and, even if we hate reality, it's the only place where we can find a good drink, meat and potatoes.

How then could we abide in utopia, which by definition is nowhere? How can we return to the various ages of utopia, which Marx considered as superseded by science and which some philosophers equate with totalitarianism? Yet present day alternative movements proclaim that other worlds are possible and their antiauthoritarian forms of organization give rise to thousands of new dreams. Is all this world movement confined to marginality, is it literally *outlandish*, in the outskirts of nothingness?

Utopia is at the crossroads between the actual world and collective imagination. It questions nothing less than a world vision, because it is a query about reality. The first part of this paper will discuss reality as it is defined by the anti-utopians. An alternate view will be offered in the second part, which is titled "Where is nowhere?". However, utopia is much more than a creative process of building castles in the air, or a field of study in which specialists study these castles; thus, the third part will discuss the contemporary rediscovery of anarchism in alternative political and social movements as well as in art, and what this implies for a present day understanding of utopia.

Indeed, utopia is *the* challenge to reality, which will be discussed in the first part.

Reality and its Students

Ron Suskind, a well-known American journalist, once received this comment from one of President George W. Bush' senior advisers:

We're an empire now, and when we act, we create reality. And while you are studying that reality – judiciously, as you will – we'll act again creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.²

Such a comment echoes the biblical Adam naming each creature in paradise, thus creating human reality as he is taking possession of every animal.³ In the same way, leaders, delegates, presidents or heads of state paint a picture of reality and their flocks usually accept their presentation of events. Of course, many patterns are drawn by collectivities, and their prestigious guides engrave those portrayals. The media generally pick up those which are produced by the maestros and transform them into common knowledge.

Power's dirty little secret is that it may create reality just by naming it. Such was Humpty Dumpty's lesson to Alice:

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.'
'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.'
'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master -- that's all.'
(Carroll 1872: chap. VI)

The custodians of tradition declare what is *essential*. For instance, in religions such as Christianity, people did not and do not concede any substance to this life.⁴ Everything in the environment refers to some superhuman being(s); individual and collective history is interpreted as the discourse of such entities. The faithful rely on shamans, prophets, priests and sacred writings to read the message enclosed in each event of their lives. This function was and is still also accomplished by scholars and more recently by technocrats, who are the present day successors of the clerics, while the vast majority of the population relies more and more on the narratives of the media, which are the voices of their rulers.⁵ Legislators decide what is appropriate or unauthorized, not the individual conscience as Henry David Thoreau would have wished. High level experts in

every field stipulate what is dangerous or harmless, and they are, in some way, the administrators of collective fears.

Unsurprisingly, disbelievers, dissenters and rebels offer divergent representations of the world. Materialist thinkers, for instance, confine utopia to the ephemeral and immaterial realm of fantasy and ideals. Karl Marx's stand on utopia is well known, and it is commanded by his interpretation of "reality". The *Communist Manifesto* drew a strict line and inaugurated a new paradigm:

The significance of critical-utopian socialism and communism bears an inverse relation to historical development. In proportion as the modern class struggle develops and takes definite shape, this fantastic standing apart from the contest, these fantastic attacks on it, lose all practical value and all theoretical justifications. (Marx/Engels 1848)

History was Marx's conception of reality, not imagination. Dialectical materialism was to replace naïve visions of the world, his theory was to be substituted for utopian socialism as capitalism had removed feudalism. In the course of history, there was no return. Reality was a one way road of progress through science. "It would certainly be very pleasant if a really scientific socialist journal were to be published", wrote Marx to Engels (Marx 1968).

To ideology, Marx opposed historical development, which he interpreted as the concrete historical process of production. Ideologues as well as utopians were kept captive by their fantasies, and so were the socialists of the past who wished to abolish the causes of class struggle rather than consider those relations of production as the key to social change. Sure, utopia contained the germs of socialist critical materialism, but it was not only an uncompleted analysis because it was set up on an improper ground. It was now to be superseded by Marx's own revolutionary theory (*apud* Morton 1963: 37). The fantasies of utopia, its

doctrinaire scientism, its lack of a theory of history were to be replaced by the revolutionary science of history. Communism had to bid farewell to Fourier, Owen and the others.

While many Marxists perpetuated that stance, the tradition was far from monolithic. Within the so-called Frankfurt school, a philosopher like Adorno understood reality differently. For him, totality already exists, utopia is only the longing for the new, it can only be a fresh experience, a new combination of some of the possibilities within a spectrum, but the spectrum remains the same. People are like a child in front of a piano, searching for an unheard chord. The chord is there since all the possible combinations are limited. In effect, the quest for utopia would often cause the repetition of the same, particularly of the catastrophes of the past, as he would remind his colleague, Walter Benjamin.

It was through a revision of history that Walter Benjamin had tried to rehabilitate utopia. He saw each new stage of production as accompanied by a collective imagination which compared the future with the mythical past and strived to both suppress and sublimate the inadequacies of the social product and the failings of the social order of production (Benjamin 1989: 3). Utopias functioned in a rather ambivalent way since they would be used both as a tool for the critique of society and a means of transfiguration.

In a later work, as he took into account Adorno's remarks, Benjamin considered the mythical elements of utopia. These were the reference to the idealized past and the transfiguration of the present. What mattered was the history of the losers. Therefore the past was irretrievable when the present did not recognize itself in it. The present created a political link by recalling the past and

redeeming it. By recognizing itself in the past, both present and past were transformed, thus preventing the tradition of the oppressed and their inheritors, the present historical agent, from being co-opted by the class that dominates them (Benjamin 1977: 1247-1248). The return of the past was also the repetition of the catastrophe – the Third Reich – and the mythification of the future could also bring its return. It was therefore necessary to consider its function as an awakening of the forces of emancipation but, at the same time, to consider in a critical way the reciprocal relation of utopia and its reservoir of passions.

Benjamin still identified reality with history, particularly the catastrophe of World War I:

For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. (Benjamin 1968: 83-4)

Reality could be the eternal return of catastrophe.

Such a conception was different from Marxist thought, which considered progress as inevitable. This distinct view of history related to a contrasting perception of utopia. There was a rehabilitation of human subjectivity, even though it was to be supervised by critical reason.

Not surprisingly, the neo-liberal stand, as exemplified by one of its major proponents, Frederick Hayek, of the Austrian school, is not very distant from Marx's conception of reality. Reality is identified not with history but rather with the self-regulated market, which Hayek sees as natural a process as the self-regulated population of animals in an ecological niche – an erroneous interpretation, by the way, because in an ecosystem, self-regulation cannot occur at the level of the niche, it is the system that is self-regulating.⁶ Such an institution

reveals its superiority in creativity and progress. The utopia of central planning, on the contrary, destroys individual liberty and prevents the natural emergence, without design, of self-organizing structures. The determinism of the market replaces, in Hayek's theory, the determinism of history, which he totally rejects. In sum, human destiny depends on the free market.⁷

The new form of capitalist globalization has been accompanied by a choir of anti-utopian thinkers. In Germany, it was particularly declamatory; in France, the so-called "nouveaux philosophes" made the headlines of the media.⁸ The fall of the Berlin wall offered a new occasion to identify utopia with the communist state. Thus Marxism was accused of being utopian and therefore messianic and apocalyptical. Its propagators were the false prophets who erroneously predicted the downfall of the capitalist system. Utopian thought was inherently vicious because, in fine, it was totalitarian and engendered concentration camps and the return of the catastrophes.⁹

Indeed, while some writers made extravagant comments, endeavouring to demonstrate how utopias of happiness were indeed dystopias, their real target was the political utopia, because it endangered the *status quo* and the powers that be. As long as ideas remained in the field of literature, most often limited to a minority of literates, they were a harmless pleasure; but all the whistles would blow as soon as someone questioned the political systems.

As a substitute to the rejection of utopia, contemporary society offers a number of myths which, of course, surround the ideology of the free market like the clouds around the Biblical God.¹⁰ There is a proliferation of myths of happiness

propagated by the advertising industry: well-being through consumption, success stories of the jet set, democracy through the free market and so on.

Myth is also presented as utopia, as indeed both are often mingled. It is true, their respective definitions vary considerably, and some clarification is now appropriate. I will refer to a distinction that is broadly in the line of Gustav Landauer, Karl Mannheim, Mircea Eliade, Gilbert Durand and Cornelius Castoriadis.

Myths refer essentially to the symbolic order which is seen by a society as its ultimate reference. As Gilbert Durand writes, it is the pre-semiotic language in which the body movements of rite, cult and magic act as a substitute for grammar and lexicon.¹¹ Myth accredits a reality which may be attained through ritual and is seen as essential. Myth is reality *par excellence*.

The function and importance of myths vary through time according to the various types of society. In contemporary complex cultures they are imbedded in a multiplicity of national and global as well as specific ideologies. They may explain the supposed origin of the world, as Mircea Eliade says, but also appear in the rituals of power, such as the Hippocratic Oath or the oath of office, which are meant to countenance the quest for authority and honour of some of the present hierarchies. Most of them are less universal though pretending to universality and more easily manipulated by the narrators and in nation-states it is particularly the reality of the hierarchical order. The cap and gown, the crown and the flag may no longer have the same importance as in the past, other symbols have replaced them, particularly with which group you may mix. Free market remains the gospel

that reminds you of the hard facts of life, the evidence of the market, and the nonsense of utopian political thought.¹²

While in the past human fate was identified with history, it is today linked to the free market or some other grand narrative enriched by myth and ritual. Indeed, utopia does not belong to such a world, it can only be nowhere.

Where is nowhere?

As is well known, the word utopia was coined by Thomas More, from the Greek *ou-topos* (“no place”). In fact, the manuscript he first sent to his friend Erasmus in 1516 bore the title *Nusquama*, which in Latin means “nowhere”. It also was a pun on *eu-topos* (“the good place”). This refined Renaissance *double entendre* was forgotten by the Western tradition, and while successive philosophers referred to antecedents such as Plato’s *Republic* and, more seldomly, to the *Ta te Ching* of Lao Tzu, they tend to distort the idea of “the good place” as being “the ideal society” or, on the opposite, to identify “nowhere” with “nothingness”.

What can “nowhere” mean for us today? It cannot be *nothingness*, which is a metaphysical concept today mostly used to defend creationism: by its very definition, nothingness does not exist. Lewis Carroll’s *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* describes a chilly banquet in which the Professor says: “I hope you’ll enjoy the dinner — such as it is; and that you won’t mind the heat — such as it isn’t.” A comment follows: “The sentence sounded well, but somehow I couldn’t quite understand it ...” (Carroll 1893: chap. 22)

Nothingness does not mean *void*, either, because the idea of void refers to space. Nowhere seems to be a stupid word, an answer given to us when we look for things which we cannot find or are non-existent. But what if we ask ourselves

the question: where is the universe? Of course, we know no answer; or we may say that the question is stupid or irrelevant. However, we may not say that humanity will never discover one. And we realize that beyond the universe there can be no space, because it would also belong to the cosmos and therefore would not be beyond it. Even if we consider that the absence of space does not mean that there may not be other universes, differently structured, it is not irrelevant to say that the universe is nowhere.¹³ Yet it exists.

If utopia is nowhere, it may be seen as a metaphor of the universe. And since utopia is contrasted with reality, one must ask if any thought about reality should not start with a discussion about cosmology rather than with an anthropocentric interpretation of history or free market. One must then notice that the Western philosophical view of the universe as reality has since its origins been elaborated in opposition to chaos. In the Mesopotamian and Egyptian myths, in the Book of Genesis, the story of creation is one of victory over chaos. In Plato's *Timaeus*, the demiurge imposes order (Plato 1957: 33, 160). Aristotle, who does not feel any necessity to refer to a cosmogonical myth, offers a philosophical ground for the understanding of a beginning:

Principles account for, and establish, the order of the world. As principles of knowledge, beginnings are the origins of thought. As principles of being, they are the sources of origination per se. Beginnings in the political or social sphere are due to *archai* or *principes* – those who command. (Hall 1982: 58)¹⁴

Chaos is unprincipled, an-archic, without *archai*. And as David Hall writes,

The dread of anarchy that is so much a part of our cultural heritage is in large measure related to the primordial fear of chaos that is its presumed attendant. The political anarchy that Carlyle found “the hatefulest of things” is but an expression of “the waste Wide Anarchy of Chaos,” which John Milton saw personified as the “Anarch old”. (*idem*, 53)

This Western approach, so different from the Taoist metaphysics, presumes an anarchic world, without *archai* or *principia*, and gets the picture of chaos with negative insinuations. Yet contemporary science does not always consider chaos as disorder but as unpredictable. Things which are chaotic may be governed by laws unknown to us. Or they may be unpredictable, as in the case of a pinball machine, because though the ball moves according to the laws of gravity, it has a very high degree of sensitivity to initial conditions.

Chaos may even be deterministic, because randomness does not exclude regularities, such as for instance the laws of great numbers or points of equilibrium. For instance, the solar system seems stable and predictable, it is not impossible that one of the planets suddenly escapes into outer space through the influence of gravitational attractions. Furthermore, if we look at evolution, we see that it contradicts Adorno's view that "everything is already there". When the earth was mostly made of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, water vapour, and methane, to predict that life would appear could have been called utopian. And when the sea was filled with fish, to prophesy that some day animals would fly was utopian. Deterministic chaos consists not only of regularities, but also includes the conditions for the emergence of unexpected complexities which are more than the sum of their elements.

True, many utopias may just be seen as manifestoes, programs elaborated by people that Proudhon called *idéomanes* – the word will be explained later. Some of their narratives simply propose a reorganization of their contemporary environment. Nevertheless, I will swim against the current and offer instead a crazy paradigm. Instead of seeing utopia as a production of human mind, I will

consider it first and foremost as in the very essence of the cosmos. Emergence of novelty is more than a combination of the old, it introduces the unexpected event, the pristine and unfamiliar creation.

It may be worth investigating what I would call “utopian realism” as a fresh form of knowledge, probably a branch of complex system theory. The Fichtean dialectic, which apprehends “synthesis” as a result of the conflict between thesis and antithesis, does not offer a space for the unexpected Other. While chaos theory has offered us some helpful formal analogies, it is essentially grounded in mathematics and physics. The emergence of “a higher order” and the nature of open systems require an approach adapted to the complex exploration beyond the given collective imagination of a historical moment. Utopian realism spotlights the infinite creative possibilities carried by the unexpected, and applies also this method to societies. It includes an analysis of the dynamics of power, as all new events are immediately co-opted by the powers that be and their spin doctors. While such an endeavour is beyond the scope of this study, it may be useful to establish on some ground the relation of the global alternative movement with utopia.

The resurgence of anarchism and utopia

The anarchist revival

A series of events such as the Chiapas insurrection of 1994 and the Seattle Black Blocks in 1999 have contributed to the emergence of a new collective agent, the world antiglobalisation movement. The Mexican Zapatista rebellion was characterized from the outset by its international dimension. On the one hand, the government dishonestly presented it as emanating from foreigners, thus qualifying

it as multinational. On the other, Rome to New York, the world offered expressions of solidarity and the Internet appeared as a new medium for the creation of multiple networks. Later on, during the anti-World Trade Organization demonstrations, the media characterized the “black block” as anarchists.¹⁵ This brought the public’s attention to possible anarchistic influence and set off a number of studies on the libertarian trends within the antiglobalisation movement, thus conveying the idea of a collective actor.

True, this network is particularly anarchistic in its rejection of hierarchical structures, its preference for temporary autonomous zones, affinity groups, and fragmentary consensus. It may be referred to as “accepted anarchism”: it is a practice without any formal affiliation to some organized movement or anarchistic ideology, it is social in the same way as some people go to church for social reasons rather than religious convictions.¹⁶ While church goers may value the community to which they belong more than their intimate beliefs, which perhaps they keep to themselves, the anarchist decision systems are part of militants’ group identification and its attractions.

Anarchist practice in global meetings coexists with a large variety of ideologies, most of which call for a better state rather than no state at all. The professional activists come in contact with the usual crowd of frustrated protesters expressing themselves on the basis of an ethics of indignation, groups filled with negative feelings of *ressentiment* and limiting their protest to denunciation. They also encounter identity entrepreneurs, who organize a group on the basis of some ethnic or special interest issue, and of course the swashbucklers and the managers of violence.

The most dangerous of them are, perhaps, those people whom Proudhon calls “idéomanes”, individuals imprisoned in the bubble of their ideas, including doctrinaire anarchists. They propound a platform popped out of the mind of some leader or bureaucratically elaborated in some insular institutional meeting, and they require emancipation movements to subordinate themselves to that program. These obsessive personalities try to convince the world, they offer the philosopher’s stone, they even elaborate “utopias”. They sacrifice their lives, their desires, their aspirations and their families to “the Cause”, and if they go so far as to mould themselves in those trends that seem to carry their ideas, they may even mutate into monsters. They do not help people to find their own tools for their personal and collective emancipation; instead, they ask them to submit to those ideas. The *idéomanes* are blinkered, their ideas are an obstacle to the analysis of their own subjective reality and hold them back from the theoretical exploration of the infinity of possibles.

By contrast, anarchism does not attempt to occupy some defined space, to create some specific identity around a common symbolic reference, to match the real with the ideal; it is not an ideology in competition with other ideologies; it is open to the diverse and real game of all the practices and theories which are pregnant through all the multiform shades of reality and it simply tries to allow all forces of emancipation to federate.

This is why the revival of anarchism is also the resurgence of utopia. Utopia is not some ideal society; if the cosmos is utopian, then perhaps we should not look at history like many Marxists and some anarchists, seeking for the

determinisms that may break up the capitalist system, but instead, like consistent anarchists, step into the breaches.

History as anarchy

History, indeed, is full of gaps. Take institutions, for instance. They seem to be firmly grounded and strongly intermeshed. Yet the establishment, the system and the institutions are in a perpetual process of de-structuring and re-structuring. When I used to walk in New York, I was impressed by the huge skyscrapers, their superb proportions with their ample avenues. I used to wonder how such a paramount nation could ever be struck by some revolutionary event. It seemed that this could never happen... until September 11.¹⁷ In the same way, everything in the planet seemed regular... till we discovered that the climate was changing.

It takes less than a week for some unknown nation to start a war against your country or vice-versa. History is full of gaps that originate a new series of events, which no one would have predicted any more than, say, the fall of the Berlin wall... History is anarchy. It is the conjunction of myriads of causes which create singular and unpredictable events which apparently come from nowhere and sometimes appear nowhere except in one's intimate experience. It is made of exceptions – there will no longer appear another Babylon. Many events remain unrecorded by historians and often forgotten by their actors. The same things happen to people, there are gaps in their lives. Does not the present instant appear as a gap between the past and the future?

And see how things do happen. You have planned to take the children to the circus and a phone call changes your life. Or you get out of a pub and find

yourself in a riot: the police take you to prison; in a glimpse, your whole view of the political system is transmogrified. Some of the most important events in our lives have occurred by chance, even if afterwards we can always reconstruct some causality.

When I went to the Soviet Union, I discovered how the people's life experience was even worse than the capitalist press reported. I wondered how those men and women could endure such an existence. And I realized that their preoccupation was elsewhere: not in the wordcraft of politics or the stagecraft of family life but in the pub, in some love affair, in the reading of a particular novel and so on. In a certain way, all that is not recorded by history, except when some grandmother says "in my time", which children correctly understand as "once upon a time", because it now appears as no more consistent than a fairy tale. The event happened nowhere except in the most intimate feelings and thoughts of an individual, feelings and thoughts which, at the same time, belong to what Gustav Landauer calls the *topos*, the symbolic reservoir of a given society, with all the subjective flux that such signs may spark off (Mannheim 1956: 126).

History is unpredictable, lives are full of breaches and millions of possible utopias lie ahead. They are not in doctrines or theories, but in the intimacy of the thoughts that cross people's minds. As Zerzan says, these thoughts reveal the abyss between signs and things, and this abyss is the door of the infinite multitude of indeterminations and possibilities.

Contemporary utopias should no longer be seen in beautiful descriptions, programs, platforms, ideas, or even symbols, but in the very movements of the social body. And here one must refer to the wonderful idea of "plateau", developed

by Bateson and also by Deleuze and Guattari (Bateson 1972; Deleuze/Guattari 1980).

Consider, for instance, the French movement against the CPE (Contrat Premier Emploi) in 2006. The new law, instead of offering the possibility of a serious integration within an occupation transformed all employees into interim workers. The protest started in the University of Rennes and for a long time remained confined to that institution. Then, suddenly, it spread all over the French universities and stabilized for a time: it was on a plateau, in a state of intense stabilization. After some time, it ascended to another plateau, when the demands were no longer confined to the abrogation of the CPE but to more and more claims expanded in many other areas. It started by asking for the withdrawal of the projected law, but then went on to demand the abrogation of the “law on the equality of chances” and other issues. In stark contrast to conventional protest movements which remain within the bounds of rituals, the successive plateaus of this social movement expressed the very moments of the emergence of new forms of consciousness. New generations discovered their collective power, the thrills of activism; new forms of comradeship appeared and the king suddenly seemed naked.

Utopia is not simply a landscape of thought, it is embedded in movements. And, of course, the question then is: how does a group or a crowd reach a succession of collective states of emancipation, how does emergence occur and why does it not continue incessantly? There are, of course, many reasons for this, but let us take the very simple example of a session of brainstorming. Such an

action is supposed to bring forth new thoughts. Why do these ideas appear? There are at least two reasons for this.

Proudhon explains that when several individuals combine their work, they produce a result that is more than the sum of each contribution. They may for instance pull down a tree, something which none of them could do alone or in a succession of the others. There is a value added to the result, and this value is due to the group, not to any particular individual. In the same way, exchanging ideas with others may result in some illuminating idea. The second reason is that the exchange that occurs within the brainstorming session must be unrestricted. There are no taboos, no value judgments, a total openness to the others' thoughts.

If we apply this to social movements of protest, we understand that the passage from one plateau to another is due to the fact that participants are not hindered by a person or an organization who decides *in their name* to negotiate with the powers that be. As long as participants remain the masters of their exchanges and actions, the movement may emerge to some other height. This is collective empowerment and emancipation.

We can now imagine a new type of activist, the utopian, who will facilitate these exchanges to produce the magic of creativity. And rather than playing the role of a leader, he will endeavour to be nowhere. Like utopia.

Utopian realism is not only a matter of knowledge but also of grassroots activism. In a world of fast and pervasive change, no one can afford to live with a petrified mind. Half a century ago, Blaise Bargaic wrote:

Only a few months are necessary for the unbelievable to be absorbed and become normal. Nuclear energy and Sputnik are digested today as electricity, the airplane and the cinema were digested.

Today, we have assimilated the Internet, mastered the laptop, incorporated the cell phone; yet while many inventions of long ago were the result of creative individuals, workers or engineers, today they are concocted in secret high tech locations under the arbitrary and quasi autonomous command of the military industrial complex. The privatization of armies, the militarization of outer space and the growing power of the merchants of death, the cloning of animals and later of human beings, the destruction of the ecosphere are in the hands of multinational corporations. They own the think tanks, the teams of forecasters and they plan our future.

Fortunately, people have access to science fiction, to virtual reality, to poetry and art. They are capable of reasoning by analogy, by intuition, of creating new mental combinations. They have the experience of randomness, accident and even serendipity. The road to utopias may become a collective journey in the unceasing succession of social movements throughout the world.

As a non-conclusion of this essay, one must add a caveat. There is always a danger that social movements and utopia can be made a new substitute for the fetishism of history or of the free market. They too may create monsters, disasters, catastrophes. Utopia is earthly. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

And we return to the core anarchist issue: who is to occupy the driver's seat?

Notes

¹ I am indebted to Daniel Colson for many of the ideas in this communication. I also wish to thank John P. Clark for his careful editing and Laurence Davis who was the *deus ex machina* for this article: had he not invited me to write a communication, this would probably never have happened. This paper was given at the 8th International Utopian Studies Society Conference, Plymouth, 12-14 July 2007.

² Conversation between Ron Suskind and an unnamed senior adviser to the president (*apud* Bargiac 1958: 1-9).

³ “And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof” (Genesis 2.19-21). Naming, in the Bible, means taking possession.

⁴ This is not the case, for instance, for religions which do not recognize any transcendent beings. Concepts like *mana* (Melanesians, Polynesians) or *orenda* (Iroquois) are powers inherent in persons or in nature. Another different approach is Buddhism, which views all existence as a succession of transitory states.

⁵ On the role of intellectuals, see for instance Makhaïski 2001.

⁶ I wish to thank John Clark for this remark.

⁷ Karl Popper also rejected utopia: “If I were to give a simple formula or recipe for distinguishing between what I consider to be permissible plans of social reform and impermissible Utopian blueprints, I might say: Work for the elimination of concrete evils rather than for the realisation of abstract goods... Or, put it in more practical terms: fight for the elimination of poverty by direct means – for example by making sure that everybody has a minimum income” (Popper 1948: 114). See also Olssen 2003.

⁸ For Germany, see Raulet 1994: 103-115.

⁹ See, for instance, Berlin 1991.

¹⁰ Cf. Deuteronomy 33.26; 2 Samuel 22.12; Job 26.9.

¹¹ “Le mythe est dans ce métalangage, ce langage pré sémiotique où la gestuelle du rite, du culte, de la magie vient relayer la grammaire et le lexique” (Durand 1979: 27-28).

¹² An alternative view is that the decline of the myth is correlated with the rise of hierarchy. Žizek considers that to a large degree the myths are no longer necessary since ideology is embedded in everyday life and institutions. People can face the harsh reality and accept it without protest: “Je sais bien, mais quand même” “Yes, but”. The question is how one defines ideology and myth, whether ideology may include mythical elements in so far as it gives the feeling that one’s actions belong to the most essential reality and correspond to a truth that ought to be universal.

¹³ In 1917, Einstein presented a mathematical model of the universe in which the total volume of space was finite yet had no boundary or edge.

¹⁴ See the whole chapter of this book for a development of the ideas presented in this paragraph.

¹⁵ The establishment generally characterizes as “anarchists” people who have never claimed to be so while it systematically ignores the anarchist movement and its aspirations. Oddly enough, many academics are fond of describing certain works of art or music as “anarchistic” while remaining aloof of people they derogatorily (and stupidly) designate as “self-proclaimed anarchists”.

¹⁶ For instance, I have met the president of a student union who used to attend the Presbyterian Church because she could meet there the upper crust of the university administrators. It is for the same reason that ministers and priests do organize all sorts of meeting places so as to maintain the links within their flock.

¹⁷ September 11 was certainly a traumatic event, but it set up a new course of history. It was “revolutionary” in the sense that it initiated a social structural discontinuity in several nations as well as in several patterns of international relations.

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Fears of Globalization:

Anti-Corporate Visions in Recent Utopian Texts

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A new partnership of nations has begun, and we stand today at a unique and extraordinary moment. (...) Out of these troubled times, our fifth objective – a new world order – can emerge: A new era – freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice and more secure in the quest for peace.

George H. W. Bush¹

George Bush, Sr., former President of the United States, is famous for this promise that he gave in a speech in Congress on September 11th 1990. It was a promise for a utopian world of global union and peace that was ironically used to justify a war, which many considered more an act of policing than an act of conquest. For the authors of *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, world police action such as this is emblematic of the constitution of a "new world order" of different magnitude. In their book Hardt and Negri posit that we are witnessing the constitution of a global system of power relations that they refer to as Empire. Empire is the result of the progression from modernity to post-modernity and of the decline of national sovereign power. It is expression of a global market and a worldwide flow of products, information and population. In their opinion, Empire usurps the sovereign vacuum and establishes a new world

order. It should be noted, though, that Empire is not imperialism:

In contrast to imperialism, Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a *decentered* and *detrterritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command. (Hardt / Negri 2000: xii f.)

It must be stressed here that Hardt and Negri consider Empire not the imperial project of any nation-state, even though the US are considered to be the main source of Empire's policing and military actions – the centre of operating power so to speak. They clearly argue for Empire to be of "hybrid constitution", mixing the three functions of power and merging them "in the form of a rhizomatic and universal communication network" (*idem*, 316ff.). Hardt and Negri see the corporate world as a major participant in the constitution of Empire and position it in the middle of this web of power relations that interconnect the different layers: "[This layer] is structured primarily by the networks that transnational capitalist corporations have extended throughout the world market – networks of capital flows, technology flows, population flows, and the like" (*idem*, 309f.). It is to corporate interests that the articulation of Empire's goals and needs falls. It is through their networks of communication that they establish and assert power over the other layers. It should be noted that this is just a rough summary and interpretation of the state of Empire, since the realities of the power relations are far too complex and interwoven for this presentation.

For my purpose, it shall suffice to say that transnational corporate capitalism is at the heart of a new world order that has been establishing itself for quite a while now. The settling of Empire, though, has received a major thrust following the events of September 11th 2001, which in accordance to my hypothesis I see as an attack on Empire, not the nation-state of the US. Central

to the motivation of the attacks was a deep-seated hatred of the way that Empire operates. It is not surprising thus that the attack was aimed at the World Trade Center, one of the operational centres of the corporate part of Empire. In the actions that Empire has taken after the attacks, one can clearly see that the new world order has firmly established itself in power. Not wanting to go too deeply into political speculation I would just like to posit that transnational corporate interest has played a major role in many global political decisions that have been made since the events of 9/11.

It is with this thought in mind that I would now like to turn to the subject of utopian literary production. In taking the work of Tom Moylan as a basis for analysis, I consider the new millennium to present us with a historical specificity. Today's sociopolitical circumstances differ greatly from those of the 1990s. In keeping with Hardt and Negri's argument, the formation of Empire can be seen as a paradigm shift in sociopolitical power relations – from international to imperial sovereignty. Therefore, there must be some resonance at the site where alternatives are constructed and resistance to the *status quo* emerges. If in fact Empire constitutes itself more radically in the new millennium, we should then find the articulation of opposition to it in the utopian imagination.

As Tom Moylan describes in his book *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, the dystopian variant of the utopian imagination delivers an exploration of the “very worst of social alternatives” (Moylan 2000: 147), but can differ greatly in its outlook on hope for betterment. As many critics have pointed out before, one of the main points of dystopian critique lies with corporate capitalism. This anti-corporate sentiment can be traced from as early as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* through Kornbluth and Pohl's *The Space Merchants* to Marge Piercy's

He, She and It. The fear of the evils of corporate capitalism is not new, but the constitution of Empire denotes a paradigm shift to which dystopian literature responds. It is not in the formal aspect of category – classical or critical – that a difference is to be found. Rather it is within the frame of the sociopolitical critique that these dystopian texts negotiate the paradigm shift brought about by the emergence of Empire.

This negotiation can be seen in an argument that Hardt and Negri take up from Michel Foucault. They define the sociopolitical constitution of Empire along the lines of two concepts: the society of control and the biopolitical nature of power. The society of control, as opposed to disciplinary society, bases its power not on the sanctioning of appropriate behaviour and the punishing of deviant behaviour, it rather controls by socially integrated operations and through directly organizing brain and body of its subjects via communication systems. The normalizing of society is thus internalized within all aspects of this network. The second aspect of Empire, that Hardt and Negri posit, is that its power can be recognized as biopolitical:

Biopower is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, interpreting it, absorbing it, and rearticulating it. (...) The highest function of this power is to invest life through and through, and its primary task is to administer life. Biopower thus refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production and reproduction of life itself. (Hardt / Negri 2000: 23f.)

It is especially the concept of biopower that exerts influence on the dystopian imagination of the new millennium. Authors like Margaret Atwood and Geoff Ryman acknowledge Empire's strategic rule over human life and all its biological aspects and thus choose this mechanism as a main point of critique. I will now analyze the latest novels of both authors in respect to their treatment of

the biopolitical.

Margaret Atwood's 2003 novel *Oryx & Crake* describes a world in which corporations have exploited the earth to an extent that natural resources are almost depleted, the climate problems have led to massive droughts, which left the corn chambers of the world empty. The elite of human society has taken refuge in corporately owned and heavily guarded enclaves, the so-called compounds, while the mass of people live in the unprotected pleeblands. In this corporately owned world, employees are regarded as assets, some more, others less valuable. Since agriculture and breeding is impossible, the most cherished products for a company lie within the field of the life sciences, creating new species of plants and animals to comply with the demands of a growing population, and researching medical and cosmetic products. Consequently, the most valuable assets to a company are geneticists and other natural scientists. It is within this framework that Atwood places her protagonist Jimmy, with his worthless humanistic traits, at the edge of corporate society.

Creative work is of little use in the world of corporations; it is limited to either the advertisement branch – called contemporary application – or has to find an economically more valuable outlet. Atwood inscribes the human creative potential not in the arts but in science and especially in genetic splicing. Under corporate control, grade school pupils are introduced to the creative potential of genes and grow up with the fundamental knowledge that the power of creation is at their disposal. Under careful guidance, an elite is being educated to be employed at the most advanced corporate compounds. This leads to the exploitation of nature even in its smallest parts, as humankind invents species for its own purposes such as the pigoon, which is used for growing human

tissue organs, or the wolvog, an enhanced watchdog for security personnel. *Oryx and Crake* shows human science to be the master of all biomass – to borrow a term from Neal Stephenson – and the corporations the masters of Science.

It is thus obvious that *Oryx and Crake* takes us into the realm of the biopolitical, with the question of who holds power over life at its core. Corporations have managed to integrate themselves into the lives of their employees, they provide for education, entertainment, information, communication and profession. With this method the corporation controls all social interaction and has integrated its values and standards into society. In this society of corporate control, the biopolitical becomes the key field of power struggle and Atwood is very apt to place her main critique on corporate capitalism here.

In *Crake* we are presented with a scientific genius that is the perfect tool for corporate ambitions. He is highly intelligent, rational, a “numbers person” as Jimmy calls him, and can achieve everything in corporate society. After graduating, he receives a research position at one of the wealthiest compounds and gets a *carte blanche* for his project *Paradice*, which researches the corporate holy grail: immortality. In order to assure this immortality to the well-paying customer though, Crake has to get rid off the many hazards that life offers, most of which are caused by human. Crake names religion, politics, and economics as hazardous but highlights sexual drive as the main cause for war, diseases, and overpopulation. All of this can be stopped by the BlyssPlus pill, which is the first of his scientific initiatives for immortality. The pill not only genetically alters humanity so as to make it immune to sexually transmitted diseases, it intentionally but unknowingly to the user also sterilizes the

population. The second step to immortality, then, will be to present the now sterile customer with an alternative in reproduction, a better human race that has none of the destructive features of the old one. To this aim, Crake has created what he calls floor models of a new form of human reproduction – a species of humans whose features can later be added or subtracted from your privately bought and custom made model. He has genetically altered humanity and created a new product, which is supposed to be sold as an alternative to children. In this we find Atwood's most poignant critique of corporate behaviour, as she extrapolates the idea of the biopolitical to literally take hold of the means to the reproduction of life, not only in the manipulation of our natural surroundings, but in the very essence of humanity itself. Human society falls victim to the exploitation mechanisms of creating a disease for the profit of selling a cure: "[T]he benefits for the future human race of the two in combination would be stupendous. They were inextricably linked – the Pill and the Project. The Pill would put a stop to haphazard reproduction, the Project would replace it with a superior method" (Atwood 2003: 366).

But Atwood does not succumb to anti-utopian pessimism; this corporately controlled world of human products does not become reality. Unknown to the corporation Crake has secretly nurtured an anti-corporate sentiment and worked on a plan to save the human race from destroying the earth. He has designed his floor models without the flaws he sees in humanity: they have no hereditary diseases, are beautiful and docile, are better adapted to the climatic changes; they are sexually promiscuous and they are equipped with the ability to feed on their own excrements. Thus they do not need to kill, to possess, to worship or to be jealous. They are naturally able to survive in the

harshest conditions without any of the amenities to which corporate society clings. Thus, when in a terroristic act Crake infuses the pill with a retrovirus that kills human society, his creations are best equipped to survive in the non-functioning world. To his own logic, he has broken the cycle of self-destruction and saved the human race. Atwood has commented on Crake's intention herself:

The human race seems bent on destroying itself, and the biosphere along with it, because it seems unable to check its own greedy and aggressive behaviours. An individual in my book uses science to speed up the process, true, but only because he thinks that he's made some essential improvements to the breed, and wants in all benevolence to eliminate the defective model – ourselves. (Atwood 2005: 163)

It is with this benevolent act, that Crake undermines the corporate vision of a capitalist utopia in which all human reproduction, all life, has become a marketable product. He has loosened the corporate chokehold on the world's biomass – humanity included – and has given it a chance for betterment. With this creative act, he has written the future anew, creating a counter-narrative that challenges the hegemonic order and reveals a glimpse of hope. It is not hope for us though, but for the created and revised version of humanity.

And in this I see the fundamental difference of *Oryx and Crake* as regards other dystopias – be they critical or classical – that have been written before 2000. In recognizing the fundamental paradigm shift towards Empire, with its power based in the biopolitical, Atwood creates a society in which corporate control is not limited, but universal and all-embracing, it is a constituent of life itself. Consequently, her site of resistance, her counter-narrative needs to be biopolitical as well and so she creates a new human race; renegotiating social life from its interior, interpreting it anew and rearticulating it,

in order to re-write the creation myth of Genesis.

But Atwood is not alone in her contestation of Empire's rule. We can see a similar renegotiation of the biopolitical in Geoff Ryman's latest novel *Air*. *Air* tells the story of Chung Mae Wang who lives in a small village somewhere in the mountains of Central Asia, in the fictional country of Karzistan. Her village is the last place on earth to go online exactly at the moment of a technical turning point in communication development. Karzistan has been chosen by the information-technology corporations to be the testing field of a new communication system called Air, which will allow everyone access to an internet-like network in their head. Even though the test is only for one day, it opens a new world to the villagers and they soon recognize the utopian promise, but also the dystopian threats that the online-world holds. In a connected world, with global networks, Karzistan's existence will be jeopardized and the people of the village will be ground up in the machinations of the world market. The village has already lost many of its young to the city, and even there a productive future is limited. The globalized world that Ryman describes leaves little room for underdeveloped countries in Central Asia. The fact that its people get exploited by greater corporate goals is most effectively shown by the field test for Air. The low position in the world market leaves the county prone to corporate interests, and thus it can be bought as a guinea pig for this new technology.

The test commences without anyone in Mae's village even being properly educated to deal with the intense experience of a virtual world in their minds. Consequently, there are several accidents, the most severe of which leaves Mae's neighbour dead in her arms and both their spirits entangled in Air. Air is

all pervasive, a broadcast that imprints itself on the user's mind and like a technical DNA-code identifies him wherever he may be. But Air is also a battleground for corporate interests, the format or interface to accessing Air proving to be the most lucrative piece of software ever to be developed, since all of mankind will be using it. In an open allusion to Microsoft's Windows, Ryan describes the corporately owned Gates-Format as competing with the more open UN Format. Mae's unique status and her malfunctioning Air-imprint are seen as valuable assets to the technology corporation in its battle for the software monopoly. She is brought to the research facility with the promise of treating her malfunction but then gets probed and tested instead while help is denied.

Ryman describes the world of *Air* to be traversed by corporate networks; the information and production flows are global and controlled by forceful capitalistic markets. They are shown to influence even the far-reaches of the world. The old online information system is causing an impact on the villagers by infusing them with capitalist ideals, standards and ambitions, which their reality cannot comply with. The promised world of the new information system Air is even more threatening to the old ways of life; the system leaves no choice to not become integrated into the corporate world; it is universal and ubiquitous. Ryman describes a society of corporate control, in which power is exerted by infusing all social interaction, all of life, with corporate standards and values. The biopolitical seems a manifest aspect of Ryman's view of the future with Air representing a form of power that regulates social life from its interior and functions as a corporate enclave within every human being.

If Ryman on the one hand describes his world to be even more

pervasively controlled by corporations than Atwood's, he also, on the other hand, has a more optimistic outlook at resistance to this biopolitical power. In Mae he describes not only a fierce activist for her own people, but also a person that uses the given pervasive system of power and manipulates it for her own goals. She establishes several online businesses that deal with the conservation of old folkways and manages to educate the villagers in the matters of both information systems. In taking some of the biopolitical power into her own hands, Mae creates a site of resistance to the system and thus ensures that an alternative is possible. But Ryman goes one step further in objecting to the corporate rule over biomass – over the minds of all humanity. He provides for a human evolution that goes beyond the need for corporate software. In her fight against the malfunctioning Format, Mae discovers the true nature of Air lying beyond corporate imagination. Air can be described as merging the ideas of Carl Gustav Jung's collective subconscious with Saul Kripke's possible worlds theory²:

Air was real life – all of life all at once, for it made all times one time. (...)
We live and we die in eternity. Our physical bodies occupy the balloon world. The balloon world has space, and we are trapped in one part of it. The balloon expands and we are trapped with that expansion. And that is time. Air has no time.
Air is everything that has been and will be, waiting its turn to puff out of its tiny dot into our brief world. (Ryman 2004: 372f.)

It is with this knowledge, that Mae is able to free herself from the malfunction, and by that struggle also, to free Air from any human endeavour to capture its essence. In the end, Ryman shows human evolution to surpass any corporate dystopian vision and in Mae's struggle for knowledge inscribes all of humanity with the inherent ability to be free from biopolitical manipulation. Our future world may have been scarred by corporate control over the biopolitical, but it is

within our abilities to evolve beyond that control and make that future better nonetheless. In this I see Ryman's argument for a horizon of hope, just as Atwood posited hope in the creation of a new species. In both cases the authors of these utopian visions have reacted instinctively, if not knowingly, to the power relations of Empire. It is the question of the reproduction of life, the question of the biopolitical that drives their novels. Both *Oryx and Crake* and *Air* show a deep understanding of the mechanics of corporate control and the biopolitical. And with the negation of that power, both novels open the mind of their readers to the possibility of an alternative model.

Notes

¹ George H. W. Bush, "Toward a New World Order", speech given to US Congress, Washington D.C. on 11 Sept. 1990.

² See, for instance, Jung 1971 and Kripke 1984.

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