

ences and similar illusions. In the idiosyncratic traditional view that nobility – but he is careful to specify more to mental and spiritual health* – acceptance of the vicissitudes of real-

aphy: N. Ruddick. *Christopher Columbus Reader's Guide* 50. Mercer 1989: 40-47.

[B. Stableford]

TES

ial (1925-, USA)

was first published in New York in 1925. The city of Duluth, Minnesota, is a rich WASP town bordered by poor barrios, where the intrigues for wealth of the wealthy whites are suddenly presence of a red spaceship. Character- exit from the narrative, as the narra- indicates: for instance, at the begin- novel, Edna Herridge, a rich estate in her car stuck in a snowdrift while way to a magnificent mansion which Beryl Hoover wants to buy, having become the leading society woman of her resurfaces as a TV and movie star as the mistress of Napoleon in a novel by Rosemary Klein Kantor; from her, living in Duluth, who is the most powerful and dangerous person Edna resurfaces again as the wife of Edna, who, with wife and three chil- to epitomise the good American fam- of these characters weave in and out of Mrs. Bellamy Craig, a society is also "Chloris Craig" (a popular use novels are in fact written by her and a friend of novelist Kantor) and Duluth police Captain Eddie Thurrow, sex-maniac Lieutenant Darlene Ecks, Thico' Jones, who pursues their rounds exican illegal aliens and satirically hem sexually. A riot in the barrios city to burn, and its leading citizens prisoners of Pablo and other Mexi- manage to get a ransom for them. idge gets into the spaceship, and does th the aliens (bugs able to transform

fictional Duluth is destroyed by Kantor and the "real" Duluth is invaded by the myriad bugs issuing from the spaceship.

Analysis: A typical postmodern and metafictional piece of satirical fiction, attacking both corrupt powerful whites, black crooks, and latinos, *Duluth* presents some dystopic elements, in that an American city* and its inhabitants are presented in a highly negative mode, which is however debunked by ample use of humour. Elements from science fiction*, such as the spaceship, are less important than the constant interplay of fictions and the narrator's insistence in underlining the fictionality of all forms of narration. While elsewhere Gore Vidal plays with the form of the historical novel, with Hollywood novels, and contemporary biography, here he manipulates techniques from science fiction and detective stories.

Bibliography: S. Baker. *Gore Vidal: A Critical Companion*. Westport, Conn., 1997. – *Gore Vidal: Writer Against the Grain*. Ed. J. Parrini. New York, 1992.

[R. Mamoli Zorzi]

DYSTOPIA

As utopia represented a way to escape from the absences of reality through speculation, sometimes it had to go towards tradition and sometimes towards exoticism. As a form of compensation, it could go towards a mythical past and become a memory of a distant and happy age. This was the sense of the myth of the Golden Age*, which entered a meta-history constituted by an eternal positive present. The main feature of the Lost Paradise* was that it did not depend on human will. It depended on the respect of a law which was external to mankind and its perpetuation was guaranteed by the respect of prohibitions (the myth of Pandora and Eve). The fallen man left happiness and the future behind and the later consequences of his fall would be even worse. The Judaeo-Christian tradition overcame this obstacle by promising a compensation: after a wait and expiation the Promised Land would come. This was not yet utopia: mankind purified itself while waiting for transcendence and forgiveness and the ideal town was in the future but not built by men.

Assuming the existence of a place where the Golden Age had survived, the main elements by which to understand historical misfortune were geographical as well as mythical. Always inaccessible, utopia became parallel and contemporary to the present. It took this form from ancient

Utopia people had to reach it and it was not necessary to go out of time but rather out of the world. These were the two directions utopia had to follow.

However, a fundamental change occurred. From Thomas More onwards, the creation of the ideal city* depended on men and not on the divine will and utopia became a model to oppose to reality in order to transform it: it showed what could be possible if the axiological constants of reality could be changed and it taught that the past history was not the only possible one. Thus, utopia put forward a secularisation of millenarianism* and a turn towards anthropocentrism; a constructive will replaced the eschatological waiting. To secularise history meant to found human freedom.

Therefore, traditional normative utopia was optimistic by nature. The *Voyage en Icarie** by Cabet *Peuland** by Hertzka or *Almehland** by Herzl confirmed that the things that Utopians proposed were considered as feasible. This optimism was best expressed with Louis-Sébastien Mercier's invention of uchronia*. Unlike his predecessors, when Mercier imagined the universe of *L'an 2440** in 1771, he did not propose a parallel story, a "possible lateral" as R. Ruyer said: instead, he anticipated historical becoming. Mental experience could prolong and change the historical experience. So utopia was no longer out of the world and lost in a fabled geography*; on the contrary, it was the world which became "utopianised" and made true the promises of its previous evolution. The epigraph of the novel, attributed to Liebniz, stated: "The present is full of the future." The coming of a better world no longer rested on an act of faith secondary to a religious revelation but on a voluntarist and one-dimensional idea of history*. The future would bring an improvement of the human condition which would be the result of an indefinite progress*, of the excellence of institutions* and of the intervention of a benevolent Legislator. This confidence in ameliorism nourished the utopian odyssey until the end of the Age of the Enlightenment. In *Esquisses*, Condorcet said that we would see "mankind, free from all its chains, and rescued both from the empire of chance and from the enemies of its progress, walking at a good pace along the street of truth, virtue and happiness."

This confidence found new nourishment with the discovery of new sources of progress thanks to industrialisation and the technological development of the following century. In the *Catéchisme des industriels* Saint-Simon stated: "The Golden Age of mankind is not behind us, it

dence and a continuous fit seemed to support progress-oriented utopian speculations until the end of the last century.

However, this unanimity showed a number of fractures. Utopia began to doubt itself and started wondering whether the price to pay for the creation of this universe in which happiness was considered as an aim. In other words, people no longer started to wonder whether utopia was feasible, but whether it was desirable and paradoxically this question was posed for the first time during the Age of Enlightenment.

Everything started in 1714 with Bernard de Mandeville's famous *Fable of the Bees**. The theme of this apologue was simple. Some bees live in a hive which is very similar to human society: in fact, stinginess, injustice, vanity and laziness prevail. At their request, Jupiter makes this small world perfectly just and regular. However, it decays and the bees die before those of another hive who were less virtuous. Mandeville's lesson was simple: "Private vices, public benefits." Instead of an equal utopian society, free from all competition, which finds its harmony in a perfect identity of wills, Mandeville described a society made up of tensions, diversity and antagonistic forces which balance each other. He rejected utopian asceticism, the artificial levelling of human conditions, the repression of individual efforts and the extinction of emulation and competition. He thought that utopia mutilated men because it sacrificed human social trends. In the name of realism, Mandeville led the first attack on utopian optimism.

Twelve years later, *Gulliver's Travels** represented a new attempt to demystify utopia with sarcasm and irony. From a utopian point of view, Lilliput was a denunciation of the defects of society. Brobdingnag evoked a benevolent paternalism which was not convenient for mankind and Laputa was a sort of grotesque reconstruction of Campanella's *La Città del Sole** and, above all, of the House of Salomon in *New Atlantis** by Bacon. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift discussed philosophy, metaphysics and science*, and made it clear that he believed neither in progress nor in the excellence of human nature nor in the possibility for mankind to reach utopian perfection. This was described in the terrifying journey* to the Houyhnhnms, the thoughtful horses who lived in a primitive communism* without laws or limits but which was inaccessible for the Yahoos, deeply degraded and corrupted beings. According to Swift, utopia could be realised only by another species, free from original sin, purified from instincts and passions* and open only to the enlightening dictates of reason. Swift's analysis criticised the utopian man by reuniting both the

879
7994
641

man. Mandeville thought that utopia was rable and Swift thought that it was impo- sible realism, pessimism ruined the utopian

France, the Abbé Prévost questioned in three phases with *Le Solitaire anglais* *de M. Cleveland** (1731-1739). In the of Saint Helena, which was a happy com- * a few men were compelled to get mar- ried regard for their feelings by drawing order to respect the equality* law. Prévost imined out the basic utopian contradiction 1 collective and individual welfare: order nieved through the reduction of all to a n denominator and the elimination of the s*, considered to be anarchic. In this he episodes of Abaquis and of Nopandes that order and stability could be obtained y destroying individuals. None of these cieties, presented as perfect, passed the The collectivist paternalism of Saint . prevented most natural feelings, the shment of an enlightened despotism the Abaquis caused manipulation through d discipline and Nopandes' apparent sim- hid intolerance and tyranny. Each time, elusion described the failure of an ideal , founded on human cultivation in the of the collective welfare. Individualism s fatal for utopian speculations as well as 1 and pessimism.

*Histoire des Galligènes** (1765) by ne de la Roche, utopia was eroded from the Unlike utopian writers who described a per- and a stability obtained once and for all and ed from time, he showed that all institutions nked inexorably to the march of history* the decay of all human creations. Utopia ot last because man would always "desire ifferent from what he was". His idea of nature led him to believe in the infallibility y system and here scepticism invalidated n idealism. Sade described the same pro- n *Alvine et Valcour** (1788) the happy island oé, where people "who were virtuous with s and pious with no religion" lived, was con- with the terrible kingdom of Butua, a dark ounded on an unlimited and perfectly arch- espotism, given to evil and to the welfare of ation which was "the cruellest and the most e on earth." Annulling each other, these cieties showed the failure of all social rules ere universally valid, namely the axiom at se of the optimism of the Enlightenment, the n the undefined progress and the utopian

fidence of system creators who believed in the power of institutions or in the virtues of a reit- covered natural state to make this change in mankind, the only one which made the ideal city possible. Without doubt, these were still premon- tory signs: not many writers wondered about utopia's durability and validity. Mandeville, Swift, Tiphaigne and Sade were some eighteenth- century exceptions. What was new in their writ- ings was not the denunciation of utopia as an illu- sion but the modern use of the genre* against itself and its condemnation as inaspicious. Showing that utopia was rejected from within by a group of refractory people, Prévost and Tiphaigne discovered the process of which mod- ern anti-Utopians, from Zamyain to Orwell, would make considerable use.

In spite of the faith in progress of the follow- ing century, this denying process which started during the Age of Enlightenment soon found some new forms of expression. While the major- ity of his contemporaries - Owen, Saint-Simon, Fourier and Cabet - were excited by technical and scientific progress, Charles Nodier criticized the notion of progress and what he called "the mania of perfectibility"; he attacked the utopia- manufacturers stating that "it would be quite dif- ficult to create a perfect society if we do not find out a way to get the perfect man or to produce him." Hostile to Saint-Simonism, to the cult of science and to industrialisation, from 1833 Nodier used Swift's corrosive humour to satirise philosophers who believed in the ineluctability of progress and technical benefits in some short- story parodies such as *Huriblaux** and *Léviathan* *le long**.

In his satires, Nodier criticised the modern myth of progress and the confidence in a mecha- nised future in which both society and individuals would move restlessly taking advantage of mate- rialism. But what caused Nodier's scorn might provoke a sort of fear and a warning. Looking closer, *Le Monde tel qu'il sera** (1846) by Émile Souvestre can be considered as a predecessor of anti-utopia. In the year 3000, people will have submarines, planes and television, they will travel in vehicles thrown through underground tunnels and synthetic food* will eliminate the problem of hunger. Fed with artificial milk, babies will be selected for their future jobs by phrenology and they will take their school* exams with a series of registered answers using mnemonics because this technique will allow them not to think. They will cultivate highly specialised scientists as if they were rare plants and, through careful cross- fertilisation, they will obtain some "industrial

be brutalising and depersonalising and machines, carefully serviced, will clash with "these faded and exhausted men who move restlessly all around." This is already the working class that Wells would describe some years later in *The Time Machine**, *When the Sleeper Wakes** or *Shape of Things to Come**, proletarians constitute an uneducated rude and separated class, a stupid population serving the ruling classes. Tendence, love and imagination are unknown in this future universe and, as in Orwell's works, culture*, by this time unnecessary, is replaced by a scandal- obsessed press and feuilletons written by machines. Men will become pliable changeable objects.

The surprising feature of this first dystopia was not the ingenuity with which future machines were imagined but the awareness, expressed here for the first time, that science and technology, far from liberating men as in Cabet's *leairie*, were doomed not only to transform living and working standards but also to influence deeply human nature itself. Until the end of the eighteenth cen- tury and also in Mercier's, this denaturalisation was obtained through the improvement of insitu- tions and morals; Souvestre imagined more ingenious and definitive processes. In this way, the classic perspective of positive utopia changed. It was no longer a question of discovering the best institu- tions that would lead man to moral progress but of using scientific media - chemistry, drugs and con- ditioning - which were able to affect his biologi- cal and psychic status in order to make him accept the world prepared for him without objecting. Dystopia was generated not only by the anxiety for the possible establishment of a political regime but also by the fear of the possibilities of mechanism, sciences and technology and of the extension of a ruthless materialism which ques- tions the meaning of a society created at man's expense and which obtains "happiness" through unconsciousness and the mechanisation of behaviour.

The fracture created by Émile Souvestre became larger and larger during the following decades. The anxiety caused by the invasion of materialism was described in *Erewhon** (1872) by Samuel Butler. In *The Coming Race** (1871) Bulwer-Lytton wondered about the value of aims. In an underground world, Vril, a sort of mixture of all energetic strengths of substance, liberated mankind from work*, illness* and old age. These people should have fulfilled the old utopian dream: peaceful, wise, sheltered from passions and enjoying justice, health and entertainment,

men generally had: the passions and the desire for struggle and individual success. The inhabitants of this world were thus unable to enjoy their sup- posed happiness. This was a clear sign: utopia led to an empty welfare and to a suffocating perfec- tion and it was necessary to avoid it. Previously a human creation, now it became a negation of the human element.

The ideal city* turned out to be only one step in a not yet imagined story. Why should happi- ness, order and stability not be the beginning of a fall into barbarism? In 1894, *L'An 330 de la République** by Maurice Spornck predicted that Western society would be weakened by material comforts, undermined by a neurasthenia leading to drug-addiction and suicide and destroyed by more aggressive people. Describing a future affected by a debilitating happiness, Spornck, like Bulwer-Lytton, drew attention to the future of the human species. The same pessimism was present in *Histoire de quatre ans** (1903) by Daniel Halévy which portrayed a Europe free from all efforts in which the working time was reduced to two hours a day and "the use of entertainments became the most urgent social matter" and lost in drug-addiction and erotism. *L'Anno 3000** (1897) by Paolo Mantegazza was just as negative: the scientists' tyranny shaped a mankind which was more and more artificial and completely enslaved. Again, the same anxiety could be found in E.M. Forster's *The Machine stops** (1912) in which mankind, living underground, depends totally on the machine which it defies. One day, the life-giving monster stops working and mankind, unable to be self-sufficient, disappears.

In the second half of the nineteenth century there were many signs of crisis and people started to think that utopia was certainly feasible but that, in reality, the utopian paradise hid hell. In addi- tion to the failure of scientific progress, which Charles Nodier had already predicted, scepticism spread also to the old utopian dream of political institutions. Even though many writers, from Cabet to Morris, viewed the development of socialism* with optimism, others considered it merely as the realisation of an anonymous level- ling collectivism. In *The New Utopia** (1891), a satirical short-story written by the humorist Jerome K. Jerome, equality was obtained through a compulsory surgical treatment antipatching Zamyatin's general lobotomy. In *Les Socialistes au pouvoir** (1898), Hippolyte Verly made an early denunciation of an egalitarian society atro- phied by uniformity, concluding that "the social- ist regime was incompatible with human freedom and dignity." Horace W.C. Newt's *The Master* *Rever** (1907) saw in the socialist future a world

of a neofutur society

... On the con-

fectible man. Mandeville thought that utopia was not desirable and Swift thought that it was impossible. After realism, pessimism ruined the utopian ideals.

In France, the Abbé Prévost questioned utopia in three phases with *Le Solitaire anglais ou histoire de M. Cleveland** (1731-1739). In the island of Saint Helena, which was a happy community*, a few men were compelled to get married without regard for their feelings by drawing lots in order to respect the equality* law. Prévost here pointed out the basic utopian contradiction between collective and individual welfare: order was achieved through the reduction of all to a common denominator and the elimination of the passions*, considered to be anarchic. In this novel, the episodes of Abaquis and of Nopandes showed that order and stability could be obtained only by destroying individuals. None of these three societies, presented as perfect, passed the exam. The collectivist paternalism of Saint Helena prevented most natural feelings, the establishment of an enlightened despotism among the Abaquis caused manipulation through fear and discipline and Nopandes' apparent simplicity hid intolerance and tyranny. Each time, the conclusion described the failure of an ideal society founded on human cultivation in the name of the collective welfare. Individualism was thus fatal for utopian speculations as well as realism and pessimism.

In *Histoire des Galligènes** (1765) by Tiphaigne de la Roche, utopia was eroded from the inside. Unlike utopian writers who described a perfection and a stability obtained once and for all and sheltered from time, he showed that all institutions were linked inexorably to the march of history* and to the decay of all human creations. Utopia could not last because man would always "desire to be different from what he was." His idea of human nature led him to believe in the infallibility of every system and here scepticism invalidated utopian idealism. Sade described the same process. In *Aline et Valcour** (1788) the happy island of Tamoé, where people "who were virtuous with no laws and pious with no religion" lived, was contrasted with the terrible kingdom of Butua, a dark utopia founded on an unlimited and perfectly arbitrary despotism, given to evil and to the welfare of a population which was "the cruellest and the most dissolute on earth." Annulling each other, these two societies showed the failure of all social rules which were universally valid, namely the axiom at the base of the optimism of the Enlightenment, the faith in the undefined progress and the utopian dream of a perfect society.

Realism, pessimism, individualism and scepticism seemed to be the four forces destroying traditional utopia. They were the answer to the con-

fidence of system creators who believed in the power of institutions or in the virtues of a rediscovered natural state to make this change in mankind, the only one which made the ideal city possible. Without doubt, these were still premonitory signs: not many writers wondered about utopia's durability and validity. Mandeville, Swift, Tiphaigne and Sade were some eighteenth-century exceptions. What was new in their writings was not the denunciation of utopia as an illusion but the modern use of the genre* against itself and its condemnation as inauspicious. Showing that utopia was rejected from within by a group of refractory people, Prévost and Tiphaigne discovered the process of which modern anti-Utopians, from Zamyatin to Orwell, would make considerable use.

In spite of the faith in progress of the following century, this denying process which started during the Age of Enlightenment soon found some new forms of expression. While the majority of his contemporaries – Owen, Saint-Simon, Fourier and Cabet – were excited by technical and scientific progress, Charles Nodier criticized the notion of progress and what he called "the mania of perfectibility": he attacked the utopian manufacturers stating that "it would be quite difficult to create a perfect society if we do not find out a way to get the perfect man or to produce him." Hostile to Saint-Simonism, to the cult of science and to industrialisation, from 1833 Nodier used Swift's corrosive humour to satirise philosophers who believed in the ineluctability of progress and technical benefits in some short-story parodies such as *Hurlublu** and *Léviathan le long**.

In his satires, Nodier criticised the modern myth of progress and the confidence in a mechanised future in which both society and individuals would move restlessly taking advantage of materialism. But what caused Nodier's scorn might provoke a sort of fear and a warning. Looking closer, *Le Monde tel qu'il sera** (1846) by Émile Souvestre can be considered as a predecessor of anti-utopia. In the year 3000, people will have submarines, planes and television, they will travel in vehicles thrown through underground tunnels and synthetic food* will eliminate the problem of hunger. Fed with artificial milk, babies will be selected for their future jobs by phrenology and they will take their school* exams with a series of registered answers using mnemonics because this technique will allow them not to think. They will cultivate highly specialised scientists as if they were rare plants and, through careful cross-fertilisation, they will obtain some "industrial hybrids," proletarians compelled to work in factories who will anticipate the epsilons of *Brave New World**. Workers' jobs on the assembly line will

dehumanising and depersonalising and machines, carefully serviced, will clash with "these faded and exhausted men who move restlessly all round." This is already the working class that Wells would describe some years later in *The Time Machine**, *When the Sleeper Wakes** or *Shape of Things to Come**: proletarians constitute an uneducated rude and separated class, a stupid population serving the ruling classes. Tenderness, love and imagination are unknown in this future universe and, as in Orwell's works, culture*, by this time unnecessary, is replaced by a scandal-obsessed press and feuilletons written by machines. Men will become pliable changeable objects.

The surprising feature of this first dystopia was not the ingenuity with which future machines were imagined but the awareness, expressed here for the first time, that science and technology, far from liberating men as in Cabet's *Icarie*, were doomed not only to transform living and working standards but also to influence deeply human nature itself. Until the end of the eighteenth century and also in Mercier's, this denaturalisation was obtained through the improvement of institutions and morals; from the middle of the following century, Souvestre imagined more ingenious and definitive processes. In this way, the classic perspective of positive utopia changed. It was no longer a question of discovering the best institutions that would lead man to moral progress but of using scientific media – chemistry, drugs and conditioning – which were able to affect his biological and psychic status in order to make him accept the world prepared for him without objecting. Dystopia was generated not only by the anxiety for the possible establishment of a political regime but also by the fear of the possibilities of mechanism, sciences and technology and of the extension of a ruthless materialism which questions the meaning of a society created at man's expense and which obtains "happiness" through unconsciousness and the mechanisation of behaviour.

The fracture created by Émile Souvestre became larger and larger during the following decades. The anxiety caused by the invasion of materialism was described in *Erewhon** (1872) by Samuel Butler. In *The Coming Race** (1871) Bulwer-Lytton wondered about the value of aims. In an underground world, Vril, a sort of mixture of all energetic strengths of substance, liberated mankind from work*, illness* and old age. These people should have fulfilled the old utopian dream: peaceful, wise, sheltered from passions and enjoying justice, health and entertainment, they should know perfect happiness. On the contrary, however, these people were bored and decayed because they had forgotten everything

men generally had: the passions and the desire for struggle and individual success. The inhabitants of this world were thus unable to enjoy their supposed happiness. This was a clear sign: utopia led to an empty welfare and to a suffocating perfection and it was necessary to avoid it. Previously a human creation, now it became a negation of the human element.

The ideal city* turned out to be only one step in a not yet imagined story. Why should happiness, order and stability not be the beginning of a fall into barbarism? In 1894, *L'An 330 de la République** by Maurice Spronck predicted that Western society would be weakened by material comforts, undermined by a neurasthenia leading to drug-addiction and suicide and destroyed by more aggressive people. Describing a future affected by a debilitating happiness, Spronck, like Bulwer-Lytton, drew attention to the future of the human species. The same pessimism was present in *Histoire de quatre ans** (1903) by Daniel Halévy which portrayed a Europe free from all efforts in which the working time was reduced to two hours a day and "the use of entertainments became the most urgent social matter" and lost in drug-addiction and erotism. *L'Anno 3000** (1897) by Paolo Mantegazza was just as negative: the scientists' tyranny shaped a mankind which was more and more artificial and completely enslaved. Again, the same anxiety could be found in E.M. Forster's *The Machine stops** (1912) in which mankind, living underground, depends totally on the machine which it deifies. One day, the life-giving monster stops working and mankind, unable to be self-sufficient, disappears.

In the second half of the nineteenth century there were many signs of crisis and people started to think that utopia was certainly feasible but that, in reality, the utopian paradise hid hell. In addition to the failure of scientific progress, which Charles Nodier had already predicted, scepticism spread also to the old utopian dream of political institutions. Even though many writers, from Cabet to Morris, viewed the development of socialism* with optimism, others considered it merely as the realisation of an anonymous levelling collectivism. In *The New Utopia** (1891), a satirical short-story written by the humorist Jerome K. Jerome, equality was obtained through a compulsory surgical treatment anticipating Zamyatin's general lobotomy. In *Les Socialistes au pouvoir** (1898), Hippolyte Verly made an early denunciation of an egalitarian society atrophied by uniformity, concluding that "the socialist regime was incompatible with human freedom and dignity." Horace W.C. Newte's *The Master Beast** (1907) saw in the socialist future a world of greyness and decay which demonstrated that socialism was contrary to human nature.

The end of the nineteenth century seemed to be a discouraging and disenchanting age and even though positive utopias continued to hold an important position (in, for example, the writings of Bellamy, Morris, Hertzka and Hertzl), nightmares replaced dreams and *dystopia* replaced *eutopia*. Neither science* nor politics* was a panacea: there was an inclination to catastrophism and to the crisis of humanism. From the beginning of the twentieth century, this pessimistic inclination increased and represented a way to express the obsessions of a period of crisis and bewilderment. Modern utopia realised that general happiness was obtained at man's expense, that technology made man a robot without a soul and that social perfection led to totalitarianism.

Rather than Souvestre who is relatively unknown, the direct ancestor of modern dystopia was Herbert George Wells who wrote a utopian cycle opening in 1895 with the famous *Time Machine** and closing in 1933 with *Shape of Things to Come**. Wells' originality depended on the fact that he appeared as a transitional thinker with an approach which was both socio-political and eschatological. The universe of *The Time Machine** in 802,701 is an example of a capitalist industrial society in which Elois, degenerated descendants of the ruling classes, become preys of Morlocks, remote metamorphoses of proletarians. In this sense, this novel goes back to the class struggles at the end of the nineteenth century and to the prediction, made during the Victorian age, of a future of injustice. At the same time, it expresses a pessimistic idea of history and passes, through a sort of allegory, from the social order to the organic one. The final vision of this world, which is no longer heated by an extinguishing sun and inhabited by gigantic crabs, indicates that Wells wants to overcome the problem of the best- or worst-social organisation: his eschatology expresses a materialist fatalism founded on Darwin's theory of evolution. Wells' other dystopias – *When the Sleeper wakes** (1899), *A Modern Utopia** (1905), *Men like Gods** (1923) and *Shape of Things to Come** (1933) – are all like the rings of a chain leading to the future portrayed in *The Time Machine* or the sequences of a film. This element underlines once again that Wells' utopia is not a social one. His works display a metaphysics and a sense of evolution which defined man's future in biological and organic terms. The species was determined until its extinction under the cold sun in the year 30,000,000. All the rest was only one step in an irreversible process.

Other charges were brought against science and technology in the early twentieth century. *Le Grand cataclysme** (1922) by Henri Allorge described the scientific universe of the tenth mil-

lennium. In *R.U.R.* (1921), Karel Capek criticised a purely technological society and a degrading idea of man who, free from work, chose not intellectual improvement but laziness and pleasure. Alfred Doblin's lesson in *Berge Meere und Giganten** (1924) was that science and technology threatened to subject man to their own creations while he "denaturalised himself."

After the First World War, dystopia spread widely. The birth of great dictatorships, the clash of political blocks aiming for world hegemony, the experience of the concentration camps, anarchic overproduction and mass control destroyed the confidence in the future, which was considered as apocalyptic. People no longer believed in the state's organising power because of its totalitarian tendencies or in industrial development, which too often enslaved man instead of freeing him.

E. Zamyatin defined the main features of this genre. Written in 1920, *We** described the perfect union between a totalitarian power and science aiming at cultivating man. Unlike old utopian writers, who reached a unanimous consensus through the approval of universal reason, here it was obtained by conditioning, continuous control and surgical treatment. About twelve years later, *Brave New World** by Huxley gave a terrifying picture of the future under Fordism, a philosophy of applied science and industrialisation familiar to the public. The future would be characterised by anti-science, conditioning, compulsory sexual "freedom," the production of identical individuals, the use of sleep-learning to shape the spirits and manipulation through genetics and education. George Orwell's *1984** would complete this picture from a political point of view showing totalitarianism in a sinister light.

This invention was limited. Positive utopia had walked along the same streets and repeated dreams of happiness constructed with identical models. Dystopia found the same difficulties of bringing itself up to date after Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell had defined its paradigms. Fifty years later, writers described the same obsessions and terrors of a threatening future. In 1956, the dangers of technology applied to humans were described in *Un Saint au néon** by Jean-Louis Curtis and in *L'Île aux oiseaux de fer** by André Dhôtel; in 1957 in *Die Gläserne Bienen** by Inge Jünger and in 1975 in *2024** by Jean Dutourd. Nuclear war*, an obsession of our times, gave rise to some terrifying pictures of the post-atomic universe. René Barjavel's *Ravage** (1943), Huxley's *Ape and Essence** (1949), and Robert Merle's *Malevil* were examples of the degeneration of the species and its descendants, contaminated by gamma rays, and a return to barbarism. The awareness of a crisis in society and culture

encouraged by a politics which worried only about enslaving masses was described in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451** (1953), Ira Levin's *This Perfect Day* (1970), Pierre Boulle's *Les Jeux de l'esprit** (1971) and in Anthony Burgess' *1985* (1978). All of these novels described a society destroyed by advertising, mass media, chemical products and euphoric agents which made culture and individualism totalitarian.

By this time, this literary genre tended to describe the most miserable catastrophic aspects of the obsessions of the modern world. William Golding's famous *Lord of the Flies** (1955) took this disillusion to the extreme. As in Swift, utopia and the reasonable society were inaccessible to the human nature. The lesson was the same in Pierre Boulle's *La Planète des singes* (1963) which followed the lines laid down by Wells. He denounced the decay and the consequent hypertrophy of consumer society and foretold the degradation of the species. Boulle's pessimism reached Golding's in *Les Jeux de l'esprit* (1971). Would a world governed not by incapable corrupt politicians but by wise men who had solved the problem of hunger, overpopulation and war, as in Hulwer-Lytton, be a world where mankind chooses the path of intellectual development? The answer was no. For these utopian writers, the future would be not heaven but hell.

Was it necessary, then, to leave history and to reject all activity or movement which could cause this decay and to give up utopia? During the Nazi period, Hermann Hesse changed *Das Glasperlenspiel** (1943), first thought of as a hymn to pure spirit, into an apology for engagement in reality and resistance to a dystopia which was becoming a reality. In order to contest utopia, in 1977, in *Fumeswil**, Ernst Jünger invented the character of the "anarchic," a solitary man who understood how useless it was to try to intervene in history, and who was reticent when compared with chattering democrats and messianic despots. He made utopia ridiculous, a generous but futile aspiration to which he contrasted a disenchanted wisdom and the escape towards a sort of political histori-

cal imponderability, supreme manifestation of a radical individualism.

Despite this historical pessimism, strengthened by the painful experiences of a troubled century, hope was still alive and positive utopia reappeared. In 1962, Huxley showed the way with *Island** in which he taught how the negative elements of *Brave New World** – eugenics*, conditioning, sexual freedom and burden – could be reused with positive effects. Other writers thought that they could discover this issue in a reversal of the evolution of civilisation. In 1973, the French ecologist René Dumont stated that it was urgent to choose between *L'Utopie ou la mort*. After him, the desire to go back to another way of life emerged. The transformation of the political-economic system made this return possible, as in the case of *Ecotopia** (1975) by Ernest Callenbach or of *Mai 86** (1978) by Jacques Sternberg. Once more, in the name of a very near and threatening future, utopia warned and recalled people to reason rejecting the myth of indefinite progress and extreme industrialisation that Nodier and Souvestre had denounced. This marked the advent, although not yet evident, of an anti-utopia which tried to convince people about the virtues of a return to a simpler more natural life and the reaction against the mistakes of an artificial society which previous utopia faithfully had wanted to create. Like utopia, dystopia, far from being out of reality and history, developed quickly and, after many centuries, they both wanted to say that mankind was dreaming or doubting about its future.

Bibliography: R. Trousson. "L'Utopie en procès au siècle des Lumières." *Essays on the Age of the Enlightenment in Honor of I.O. Wade*. Ed. J. Macary. Genève, 1977: 313-327. – R. Bertinetti, A. Deidda, M. Domenichelli. *L'infondazione di Babele: l'antiutopia*. Milano, 1983. – *Utopia e distopia*. A cura di A. Colombo. Milano, 1987. – K. Kumar. *Utopia and Anti-utopia in Modern Times*. Oxford, 1987.

[R. Trousson]

ransomed back to her owner, while Bridget, outrageously, decides to stay on the island. Trading successfully, Mark is able to send back a ship of provisions and inhabitants to the colony, and he returns himself. The colony thrives from commerce and whaling, and receives other immigrants, and the structure of the society is discussed and regulated. The colony survives an attack by pirates, but not the immigration of a printer, a lawyer and four divines, who manage to spoil the Edenic quality of the community. Bridget and Mark decide to go back, with their little daughter, to do business and to see their families. While Bridget stays with her father for a year, Mark returns to the island: an earthquake has destroyed his (former) earthly paradise*.

Analysis: In this utopian novel, explicitly based on *Robinson Crusoe* in its first part, Cooper comments on the political issues which made him extremely unpopular in America: the book was in fact reviewed in England, but ignored in America when it came out. Cooper's quarrel, started with his *A Letter to his Countrymen* (1834), is with what he saw as the degeneration of American democracy, the disastrous role of the Socialist press (against which he had been bringing suits for libel), and the churches. An imaginary society is shown in its evolution and corruption to warn Americans about the dangers of their democracy. The novel presents discussions on modes of government, free trade, the right to private property, the role of the law and the church and the demagogic spread of the "people's rights."

Bibliography: C.H. Adams. "Uniformity and Progress: The Natural History of *The Crater*." *J.F. Cooper. New Historical and Literary Contexts*. Ed. W.M. Verhoeve. Amsterdam, 1993, 203-213. – J. Hale. "American Millennialism and the Crater." *J.F. Cooper, His Country, His Art*. Oneonta, State of New York, 1991, 143-155. – Th. Philbrick. "Introduction" to *The Crater*, Cambridge, Ma., 1962, vii-xxix. – J. McWilliams. "The Crater and the Constitution." *Texas Studies in Literature*, Austin, Texas, 12 (1971): 631-645.

[R. Mamoli Zorzi]

CRIME → JUSTICE

CRITICAL UTOPIA

In 1986, when commenting on twentieth-century events such as the co-optation of utopia on the part of the socialist state or the consumer society and the attack on present social systems on the part of dystopias, Tom Moylan saw in the

emerging oppositional culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s the basis for a revival of utopian writing. "Utopian writing in the 1970s," says Moylan in *Demand the Impossible*, "was saved by its own destruction and transformation into the 'critical utopia.'" By "critical" he means – in the Enlightenment sense of *critique* – the expression of oppositional thought with regard to the genre and the historical situation and – in the nuclear sense – the "critical mass" required to make the necessary explosive reaction." The critical utopia of the 1970s is represented, according to Moylan, by Ursula K. Le Guin, Joanna Russ, Marge Piercy, and Samuel R. Delany, who in their novels combine both vision and practice. These writers forge anew the traditional form of utopia; they maintain some of the original conventions, such as the alternative society and the visitor, but they employ them differently. A central concern of these writers, for example, is the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition. Thus, if on the one hand their texts reject utopia as a blueprint, on the other they preserve it as dream. In addition, their novels highlight the conflict between the originary and the utopian society, so that the process of social change is more directly articulated. Finally, they focus on the presence of difference and imperfection within the utopian world. Therefore, traditional conventions of the utopian genre are transformed so as to present a critique of the dominant social and cultural system. Thus, by forging visions of possible futures, utopian critical writings imply a critique of ideology and represent "the open space of opposition." The different utopian sets of these imaginary societies – either a nostalgic past or a post-apocalyptic future – are imbued with the historical, political, and social elements of the contemporary world.

The series of new utopian novels that emerged from the ferment of opposition in the United States in the 1960s, then, marked a revival of utopian writing. But the revival was actually a transformation which had to pass through the destruction of utopian writing as it was known until then in order to preserve it. Aware of the historical tendency of the utopian genre to limit the imagination to one particular ideal, authors of critical utopias assume "the risky task of reviving the emancipatory utopian imagination while simultaneously destroying the traditional utopia and yet preserving it in a transformed and liberated form that was critical both of utopian writing itself and of the prevailing social formation." Moylan's cogent analysis shows to what extent the new utopian novels retain and transform the conventions of utopian writings and detects three levels at which the critical utopia reverses and deviates from the original genre*: the iconic

level, or the way in which the alternative society is presented; the discrete level, or the way in which the protagonist is presented; and the level of generic form, or the way the text becomes self-aware and self-critical. Thus the critical utopia is a work in which both the utopian and the original societies are presented, but where the utopian society is seen in a more critical light, where the political quest of the protagonist both at the micro/personal and macro/social levels is foregrounded, and whose form is broken open and presented in a more fragmented manner. In particular, at the iconic level, two major changes appear to mark the break with the traditional genre. First, the critical utopia presents in much greater, almost balanced detail both the utopian world and the original society against which the utopia is presented as a revolutionary alternative; secondly, the critical utopia also deviates by presenting utopian societies which are ambiguous and imperfect – with faults, inconsistencies, problems, and, at times, even denials of the utopian impulse. Thanks to their formal operations, to their resistance to closure, and to the element of openness which negates a unitary ending or development, critical utopias counter static ideals, preserve radical action, and create a space in which opposition can be articulated and received. For example, an established convention of the utopian tradition such as the figure of the traveller acquires, in critical utopias, a primary importance: through the presentation of the visitor's journey* to an alternative society, the author can discuss at length and in great detail both worlds, the original society and the new reality which the visitor encounters. Ursula K. Le Guin's famous novel *The Dispossessed**, for instance, presents a good example of the new kind of traveller. In Le Guin's novel, the visitor leaves his utopian world for another planet and in his quest for knowledge he discovers the positive and negative elements of both societies.

The revision of utopian features and conventions takes place also at a textual level. In critical utopias the form of the genre itself is altered at the level of the text's self-reflexivity. The apparently unified, illusionary, and representational text of the more traditional utopia is broken, thus leaving a text which is open and presented in a fragmented manner. The openness and the multiplicity of perspectives presented in critical utopian texts therefore include a deeper commentary on the operation of the text itself. A good example of this innovation is Joanna Russ's *The Female Man**, a novel that, with its open and complex form, lends itself to many readings. As Moylan suggests in his analysis of Russ's novel, "central to this reading is the observation of how the formal operations valorise utopian literary

practice as an ideological rejection of the present situation by avoiding closure on any one reading – including the present one – and by calling attention to itself in self-reflexive commentary." The self-reflexivity of the text is made clear by the character/author's (Joanna) comments on the text itself as well as on people and events within the text. This is most apparent in the final paragraph of the novel, where Joanna sends her book off to do its subversive, revolutionary work in the world.

If read at the level of *ideologeme* (Fredric Jameson's "smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes"), the critical utopias of the 1960s-1970s become a meditation on action rather than on system: "where utopia as system can only be passively wished for, utopia as struggle can be taken on in a willed effort to transform the social system" (Moylan, *Demand*). Thus, the active protagonist symbolises the experiences of the social-political movements of the late 1960s. From this perspective, Annette Keinhorst also views critical utopias written by women writers as battlefields for a social and political critique of contemporary reality: "critical utopias offer possible historical alternatives to the present. In other words, the concrete historical situation fictitiously coexists with the chance to change or resist reality." Conventions and motifs such as the presentation of a utopian society, the voyage through time*, the containment of technology*, and possible scientific discoveries serve to pose a feminist critique of patriarchy. Women's critical utopias present different solutions within the public sphere in order to deconstruct the social factors which oppress women* within the patriarchal system. These critical utopias propose future societies which are non-hierarchical, pacifist, and often anarchist. They usually take the form of rural communities that are established far away from hyper-technological cities; these communities often recall Indian tribal structures and their ecological and spiritual philosophy. In these societies human life is adapted to natural cycles and women live in collective communities, often basing their relationships on the notion of sisterhood. Authors' imaginations are often inspired by a pre-historic or uncivilised model, the reverse of present-day industrial society. These novels present then, a "creative regression": the sojourn into the past becomes a projection into the future which in many ways surpasses the original.

The containment of technology and its effects on interpersonal relationships represent one of the tools by which women writers envision a change in gender* roles. If the abuse of science* is often responsible for the destruction of Earth which, in turn, leads to the establish-

ment of a new utopian community*, technology* is most subversively employed by women writers in order to question the traditional notions of family* and motherhood. In critical utopias, technology helps women to question the institution of motherhood; reproduction provocatively takes place out of the woman's body and motherhood is freed from biological difference. Furthermore, in many utopian societies envisioned by women, interpersonal relationships are shown to be based more on social bonding than on biological ties. The notion of patriarchal family itself is subverted by the idea of a communal family*, where everyone is responsible for the children. In many cases, as in Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time**, each child has several "mothers," women and men who become his/her parents. The importance of communal caring within these societies reinforces the idea that sharing responsible accountability is one of the main themes of feminist critical utopias. With the questioning of the traditional notion of family and the new technological ways of reproduction, gender* roles as defined in patriarchy are subverted. But women's ambivalence toward technology is often maintained within the same text: sometimes utopian and dystopian elements are present at once within critical utopias. Piercy's novel, for example, presents two different future worlds where scientific progress can either be a means to enslave women or to free individuals.

Whether critical utopias present frightening or liberating futures (Keinhorst) or ambiguous, imperfect societies (Moylan), they represent, for writers and readers alike, a site of resistance, opposition, and revision of present ideologies and a starting point for an effective choice to create a better future. The transformed social and sexual relations presented in critical utopias envision a utopian imagination which develops from a critique of present social reality – the vision of a future way of life which presently carries the seed of potential historical reality. In this sense, critical utopias may become a medium of emancipatory change. In their self-reflexive and deconstructive questioning of utopian discourse, critical utopias free the utopian impulse for the ongoing task of social change.

Bibliography: F. Jameson. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, 1981. – T. Moylan. *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*. London, 1986. – A. Keinhorst. "Emancipatory Projection: an Introduction to Women's Critical Utopias." *Women's Studies* 14 (1987): 91-99. – T. Moylan. "Utopian Studies: Sharpening the Debate." *Science Fiction Studies* 19 (1992): 89-94. – L.T. Sargent. "The Three

Faces of Utopianism Revisited." *Utopian Studies* 5, 1 (1994): 1-37.

[R. Baccolini]

CRYSTAL AGE (A)

W.H. Hudson (1841-1922, GB)

Dates: Published anonymously in 1887 in London.

Summary: During a botanical expedition somewhere in the mountains, Mr Smith falls down into an enormous pit where he lies senseless. When he wakes up he finds himself in a late summer landscape where a green valley is crossed by a clear river. The living greenness of the earth and the blue over-arching sky awaken in the Victorian traveller a feeling of peace and serenity and he comes to recognise, in what at first seemed to him a "new and unusual" world, the mythical "dear old mother earth." Cities, villages and spires have disappeared and in their place there stand only few and isolated old houses in which the Crystallite families live on agriculture in harmony with the beauty and the rhythms of nature and in peace with the other creatures (they are in fact vegetarians). They love physical exercise, art and music: as a consequence their bodies look beautiful and much younger than their real age, clothed as they are in "fascinating" garments and endowed with melodious voices.

Young Smith is accepted in the House, where, through various mistakes due to his Victorian habits, he learns to appreciate the principles of simplicity and transparency on which Crystallite society is based. In this learning process Smith is helped by his falling in love with Yoletta, the youngest daughter of the House. This very passion is the ground on which we can measure the distance between the moral and ethical systems of the two societies: while in Smith's world there are various kinds of Love*, amongst which self-love and sexual love are considered the strongest and the most natural, for the Crystallites there is but one kind of Love in which sex is only exceptionally involved.

Since sex is strictly connected to fertility and reproduction*, according to a logic Nature* likes to follow also with other species, it is reserved only to one couple which will acquire, with this high task, the highest authority on the remaining family made up of asexual sons and daughters. The Father of the House oversees daily life and checks that laws are obeyed; but it is the Mother of the House who gives life, who has the highest authority in the Family and, from her room, can modify even the decisions of the Father.