Novel, Utopia, Nation:
A History of Interdependence

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From a contemporary vantage point outside of utopian studies, the long history of utopia seems a suspicious one. No matter how productive the utopian imaginary of modernity has been, how persistent a genre utopian narrative, or in how wide a range of practices echoes of the Blochian utopian impulse can be detected, the concept of utopia stands in an awkward relationship to the dominant institutions and discourses regulating the socio-political normality of the early twenty-first century. It is the previous century, the twentieth, with its vigorous innovations in aesthetics, politics, and cruelty that is supposedly the utopian one; the twenty-first, judging at least by the culture industry, seems to be taking a pass on utopia, and is enjoying the apocalypse instead.[1]

But it would be wrong to suppose that the contemporary anti-utopianism, in which dullness of the political imagination has been elevated to the level of a criterion of rationality, is a unique phenomenon. The suspicion has been around for a long time, often justifiably so. In political-theoretical discourse, for example, utopia has been an easy target. There is usually no place for its impossible demands in the rationalist pragmatism of liberal thought.[2] Many conservative positions are fundamentally wary of the anticipatory, untested alterity that utopia postulates as desirable.[3] And at least the "classical" Marxist strain of leftist thought condemns it on grounds of both theoretical inadequacy and political inefficiency.[4]

So, most of the stern charges leveled at utopian projections as a form of political practice warn against the seemingly arbitrary and misleading flights of fancy immanent to utopia's figurational mission, and against its political impotence or passive idealism. When thus criticized, and insofar as it is taken to project both a blueprint of an alternative social order and an incentive to make the transition toward it, utopian figuration is excluded from the regimes of serious political thought as a failure of

method.[5] Consequently, one would be justified to expect that it would find a welcome place in the realm of the literary.

But here, too, it has been highly suspicious: despite serious attention devoted to the venerable early modern exponents of the genre, from Thomas More to Tommaso Campanella and Francis Bacon, and despite the fact that literary history, perhaps most notably English literary history, has been strewn with very influential texts, rare is the historiography that does not either segregate or exclude the utopian narrative tradition from the more noble history of the 'novel proper.' There are various reasons for that, ranging from the genealogical (utopian narrative can more plausibly be included in the longer parallel history of the romance) to the aesthetic (the literary value of utopia is "subject to permanent doubt" (Jameson, *Archeologies* xi)).[6] In other words, it might be that utopia's "neutralization, deconstruction, or deterritorialization of the ideological parameters of one social situation," which "opens up the space for the construction of something new" (Wegner, "Here" 115), makes it difficult to incorporate utopia into historiographies aiming to construct relatively seamless traditions of national cultural consolidation on an equal footing with more affirmative, or at least more neutral, generic traditions. On top of that, utopian figuration escapes somewhat the jurisdiction of mimesis, modernity's privileged representational modality.

A search, for example, of the term "Utopia" in Wiley-Blackwell's *The Encyclopedia of the Novel* reveals a symptomatic state of affairs: the entry "Utopian Novel" redirects to "Science Fiction/Fantasy," but the term itself, suggesting a wide range of utopian concerns across the history of the novel, is scattered throughout the *Encyclopedia*, suggesting a wide distribution of utopian themes, with the densest concentration, expectedly, under entries such as "Ideology" or "Russia (20th Century)" (see Logan). According to this and similar conceptions, which are as dominantly established as to be invisible, the novel and narrative utopia live parallel but antinomic lives. But in the many cases where they do overlap, the utopian surplus detectable in the novel is relativized as a "utopian vision" (167, 448), dimension (43) or even "yearning" (333), horizontally integrated into the polyphonic structure of the novel, just one of the many structurally equivalent discourses consumed and processed by the omnivorous novelistic beast. This conception is a hierarchical one, in which utopia is relegated to the role of a more or less arbitrary supplement to the novel; the two coexist as ultimately disjunctive territories between which nothing as fateful as a structural dependence can be established. Furthermore, in this conception, their interaction is always, no matter how implicitly, a polemical one: "Each of the opposing genres may then include parodies of key works and characteristic forms of the other, parodies designed to convince readers of the untenability of the[ir] antagonistic set of assumptions" (Morson 79). As any other polemic, the one between utopia and the novel is also, in essence, hostile: the antagonism perceived by Gary Saul Morson between the two generic "sets of assumptions" is never a purely formal one, but one based on aesthetic preferences emerging from a concrete ideological environment and pro-

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jecting a discernible ethical imperative.[7] According to Audun J. Mørch's Bakhtinian conception, which shares some of its own sets of assumptions with Morson, this is a choice between the utopian non-spatial monologue and the novel's dialogic spatiality. Utopia is, it follows, a closed ideological form to which the novel can be an antithetical answer.[8] Similarly, from his own formalistic perspective, Morson speaks of the categorical intention of utopia as opposed to the skeptical one of the novel, differentiating between their irreconcilable pedagogies: one static and preachy, complementary to hierarchies of authoritarian social orders, the other dynamic and inquisitive, complementary to orders that are participatory and interactive.[9] In our expansive democratic benevolence at the 'End of History,' it is of course inevitable that we choose the latter.

However, when attempting to ontologize historically contingent cultural adaptations in order to justify the desirability of a specific aesthetic regime, there is a danger of lapsing into idealizations that can easily be falsified by raking the muck of history. As an illustration, we can take Thomas More's originary text. In his analysis of More's *Utopia*, Phillip Wegner relies on Stephen Greenblatt's famous *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* to explain how More's Utopia is a part of a "wider humanist practice of producing 'carefully demarcated playgrounds,' places wherein one could experiment with ideas that might otherwise lead to dangerous conclusions" (*Imaginary* 31). In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Greenblatt further explains how More is in almost all of his writings, and we can certainly include *Utopia* in this group, spurred on by a motivation that is thoroughly skeptical, so that he "returns again and again to the unsettling of man's sense of reality, of questioning of his instruments of measurement and representation, the demonstration of blind spots in his field of vision" (24-25). Notwithstanding Greenblatt's ahistorical use of the term *man* in this passage,[10] it is possible to claim, against conceptions of utopia outlined above, how one of the primary reasons for the emergence of utopia as a modern genre is precisely the historical need for outlining the space of a critical dialogic possibility, relatively safe from the dangers of existing disciplinary practices. Moreover, an overview of the literary history and formal composition of the genre reveals a multitude of incorporated narrative traditions and devices, from travel narrative to the pastoral romance (all of them sedimented in one way or another in the later developments of utopian narrative), which means that Mørch's claim about the constitutive impossibility of utopian chronotope is also rather problematic.

So it seems the divide between the committed pedagogy of utopia and the anti-pedagogy of the novel[11] is a rather narrow one, despite the suspiciously instinctive appeal of the notion of their irreconcilable difference. Nonetheless, the divide indeed remains there, at least on a formal level, if we conceptualize utopian pedagogy as didacticism, a one-way transfer of fixed epistemic arrangements—a manual or a blueprint. This is, however, impossible to sustain as a criterion for distinction between novel and utopia because the historical development of utopia demonstrates that the same distinction has been active within the utopian tradition itself (in the oft-

referenced periodization by Miguel Abensour, the turning point from "systematic" to "heuristic" utopias occurred after 1848). If we, then, instinctively take a broader and more permissive view and conceptualize pedagogy as a social development of strategies by which the conditions of possibility for cognition are established and arranged, we will, of course, reach a conclusion that utopia and the novel are both necessarily pedagogical. But instituting a cozy complementarity to bridge an antinomy is not sufficient—especially taking into consideration that both forms developed in the same historical context, shared a range of formal devices, cultural references, ideological limitations, and audiences, such that it can be assumed that their multifaceted evolutionary dynamics have informed and motivated each other in various ways. It follows that some sort of a structural dependence between those aspects that they demonstrably share should be established. Without this, it remains too easy to argue for their strict separation in the name of ideological and exclusivistic aesthetics, and to use the supposed didacticism or generic limitations of utopia to conceal analogous effects of the novel.

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So in order to move forward with this, one must reject the assumption that the novel and narrative utopia are two parallel, antinomic institutions that converge only abstractly, only as contemporaneous elements of that vast territory we call modernity, and try to write a history of their interdependence. This history, as Philip Wegner's detailed and sophisticated *Imaginary Communities* demonstrates, materializes through a shared relation to that inescapable modern macro-institution called the nation.

In *Imaginary Communities*, after an elaboration of the structuralist project of Louis Marin's *Utopics* and his theorization of utopian narrative as putting into play the ideological discourse and its system of representations, Wegner describes the function of utopia's central semiotic mechanism, what Marin calls "Utopian figuration": "a schematizing, or 'preconceptual,' way of thinking, taking the form in the utopian text of the 'speaking picture,' the narrative elaboration of utopian society" (Wegner, *Imaginary* 37). This mechanism, in Marin's view, is an instrument of a deeply historical need: the situation where a socio-political innovation is still emergent does not offer a possibility of properly conceptual forms of thought. So, pre-theoretical utopia, as one of the first steps in the process of cultural adaptation in early modernity, prepares the ground as a type of vanguard for what will later be possible as theory/science. The pre-theoretical labor of the new form of the utopian narrative presents "a narrative *picture* of history-in-formation rather than the theoretical description of a fully formed historical situation" (38).

Departing from that, Wegner's analysis of More's text culminates in a conclusion that:

> [a]t this crucial historical juncture [...] the interchange between the imaginary community of Utopia and the "imagined community" of the nation-state works to instantiate the latter spatial practice in its distinctly modern form. Indeed, in More's text, the nation itself is a product of the operations of utopian figuration [....] More's *Utopia* helps usher

in the conceptual framework or representation of space of "nationness" within which the particularity of each individual nation can then be represented. (55)

In a further step, the next logical conclusion is drawn: if utopia is so important to figurational but also organizational efforts of the bourgeoisie, the class effecting essential socio-political innovation in modernity, it has also appeared "to play an important role in the formation of the preconditions for the rise of the greatest literary invention of this class, the English novel, whose own subject [...] is nothing less than a transportable version of the interiorized national space" (Wegner, *Imaginary* 60).

Thus, utopia has been instrumental in creating the conceptual space, a framework of basic social and political categories, in which the later chronotopes of the novel can operate. From this perspective, utopia, in its relationship to the novel, has to be thought of as a historic necessity, a condition of possibility for the novel's emergence. Utopia, we might say, is a kind of Australopithecus to the Homo erectus of the novel and the as yet unknown sapient forms that come after.

Tracing the development of utopia after More, Lewis Mumford observed, "[t]here is a gap in the utopian tradition between the seventeenth century and the nineteenth. Utopia, the place that must be built, faded into no-man's land, the spot to which one might escape; and the utopias of Denis Vayrasse and Simon Berington and the other romancers of this in-between period are in the line of Robinson Crusoe rather than the Republic" (113). This observation, although not quite correct, points in the right direction. Lyman Tower Sargent (276-77) shows there have been around thirty utopias in English in the seventeenth century and over thirty in the eighteenth century. However, the seventeenth century ones are much better known and influential. It is thus the eighteenth century that exhibits a poverty of utopia.[12]

In trying to explain this, we can build on the analysis of the relationship between the novel and utopia introduced above: far from being exhausted as a genre, or simply serving as the scaffolding in the process of the novel's emergence, a vanishing mediator enabling the novel's later dialectic with the nation-form, utopia has not gone out of fashion with the rise of the novel in its early canonical, national, proto-realist mode. Instead, a closer inspection reveals what might be a process of structural integration.

If we take the example of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*,[13] perhaps the most famous immediate progenitor of what Benedict Anderson called "the old-fashioned novel" (25), we cannot fail to observe that it is very often read with an emphasis on its utopian elements and what might be called its pedagogy of autopoiesis: as a "utopia of the Protestant ethic" (Parrinder, *Nation* 74).[14] Indeed, Franco Moretti's analysis (*Bourgeois* 25-66) can help us move beyond these thematic observations. As he points out, there are two Robinsons, sloppily existing as the narrative's two formally irreconcilable poles—the oceanic adventurer, and the rational manager of outcomes of the island. The historically, ideologically, stylistically more consequential one, emerging from Moretti's reading as a sort of narrative scandal, epochal formal breakthrough in the novel's history, is of course the Robinson of the island. Interestingly, it is also

this one—and not the adventurer—that is the utopia-making one. It is within the insular chronotope and utopian figurations of Robinson's island, and not during his scattered oceanic adventures, that the realist style and narrative codes of the bourgeois are born.[15] Viewed from the optics I suggest here, it is perhaps possible to understand Crusoe's figure as the convergence of the utopian delineator[16] and the later realist citizen-protagonist: in this restless, labor-intensive utopia, the delineator and the protagonist are merged to anticipate the class ideal of the bourgeois 'creating a world after his own image,' a bourgeois utopia. Understood in this way, Defoe's most important innovation in form, his aesthetically most interesting breakthrough, is simultaneously where he is at his most ideological. This can be used very neatly to support Fredric Jameson's key proposition that a Marxist "positive hermeneutic"—a non-instrumental conception of culture—should be derived from the same category of class as its "negative hermeneutic." In Jameson's concise formula: "the effectively ideological is, at the same time, necessarily Utopian" (*Political* 276).

Expanding the argument about the structural interdependence of utopia and the novel as a consequence of their development within the socio-political frameworks of the nation-form, it can be claimed that after More's foundational text had enabled the ushering in of the conceptual framework of "nationness," the task of Defoe's bourgeois utopia was to inhabit the space thus created with the figure of the model bourgeois citizen. The degree to which Defoe's text is not a typical systematic utopia is the degree to which the consolidation of the bourgeois ideological dominant within the emerging nation-form has been accomplished. Insofar as More's island of Utopia is the pre-theoretical image-thinking of the future sovereign space of the nation-state, Crusoe is the pre-theoretical subject of bourgeois ethics and property laws.

To illustrate this further, a similar approach can be taken in relation to another great English precursor to the realist novel, Jane Austen.[17] We can build again on the systematic work of Moretti, who maps the pattern of exclusion he detects in Austen's novels. The mapping of "Jane Austen's Britain" (Moretti, *Atlas* 12, 19, 21) reveals the insularity of Austen's chronotope(s), in which the industrializing areas and urban spaces of Great Britain are, as a consequence of the narrative (and ideological) preference for the country, completely invisible. The intercontinental traversing of space in search of wealth and adventure present in the broader framework of *Robinson Crusoe* is reduced here to the crossing of boundaries of neighboring counties. Austen's narratives dramatize the functioning of the "'National Marriage Market'" (15), which seems to allocate national resources quite successfully, as suggested by Austen's topos of happy ending: "[H]er plots take the painful reality of territorial uprooting—when her stories open, the family abode is usually on the verge of being lost—and rewrite it as a seductive journey: prompted by desire, and crowned by happiness. They take a *local* gentry [...] and join it to the *national* elite [...] They take the strange, harsh novelty of the modern state—and turn it into a large, exquisite home" (18). They, in other words, not only identify the social experience of the capitalist nation-form with

picturesque life-worlds of a single segment of the dominant class, but also offer a pro-
jection (a blueprint) of frictionless intra-class relations within the national context.

It should be noted that none of these two examples offers, as utopias perhaps
should, visions or hypotheses of external life that ours could then be compared to
and estranged by.[18] Theirs is not a utopia of radical alterity, but of radical likeness. The
question needs to be asked, then, about the historical conditions under which utopia
can be imagined, not as what is radically different, but as what is radically same. A run
through the British eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, from which our exam-
ples stem, provides a picture of continued colonial expansion with accompanying
conflicts, rapid technological advancement after the Industrial Revolution, loosening
of mercantilist doctrine by *laissez-faire* principles, the Napoleonic wars—in short,
British imperial dominance, consolidation of the new dominant class, and, from a
broader perspective, the establishment of a properly global capitalist world-economy.
Despite the messiness of history, its contingent, multidirectional development and
430   complexity, perhaps a continuous tone can be extracted from that cacophony that
could serve as a sketch of the shape all this could have taken when distilled into the
class consciousness of the abstract bourgeois. This is Defoe's prefiguration, in 1704:
"[V]ast trade, rich manufactures, mighty wealth, universal correspondence, and
happy success, has been constant companions of *England*, and given us the title of an
industrious people; and so in general we are" (Defoe 110).

The above quote is taken from Defoe's newspaper article, entitled *The Problem
of Poverty,* which contains a pragmatic argument against state intervention in the
alleviation of poverty and unemployment, and reveals the centrality of the famil-
iar problem of uneven distribution of wealth for capitalism and the state as early as
Defoe's age. Thus, Defoe's article also reveals the extent to which the bourgeois quasi-
utopias mentioned above can be such insofar as they are successful in repressing
what is beyond the horizon of their class perspectives. They have an easy task of doing
that, of course, as long as what is beyond those class perspectives remains pre-con-
ceptual, in the empirical domain of individual accident. They are utopian insofar as
their blueprint incorporates a glaring structural absence in relation to the historical
reality of their time; they are utopian insofar as they remain incomplete as realisms.

It is on this substrate of integrated utopia and bourgeois dominance, then, that the
epochal labor of the realist novel begins. The reason narrative utopia re-emerges in
the nineteenth century may be precisely that the realist novel, with its unrelenting
"secular 'decoding'" (Jameson, *Political* 152), leaves much less room for it within the
novel itself. If Utopia is conceived as a frictionless community, a community in which
all possible forms of conflict are constitutively private, a community without class
conflict (which does not necessarily mean it is classless), it is clear why the panoramic
socio-historical imaging of developed bourgeois society and careful archaeologies
of social fissures characteristic for realist narrative mimesis could not accommo-
date utopia (except as a surplus that must be excavated hermeneutically). Lukács has
famously celebrated Balzac for his ability to transcend the particular rationality of

his own class position and accompanying reactionary politics, as well as privileged realism in general for possessing a generic will to totality within which there exists a unique representational possibility of portraying individual characters as social types, and from which an inference of the systemic nature of the historical process can proceed. Once this breakthrough in representation is achieved, it is no longer possible to easily identify social totality with the dynamics of individual empirical experience (although representations of this totality can of course still be influenced in various ways by ideologemes and limitations characteristic of particular class positions). This move in relation to the proto-realist novels discussed here can, perhaps, and only provisionally, be seen as analogous to Marx's work in relation to Hegel, in particular in his theorizing of the Hegelian rabble of paupers as the proletariat, a social class defined by its structural position within the mode of production.[19]

But the realization of this representational possibility is certainly not without its problems, as Terry Eagleton reminds us:

> For one thing, capitalist society is characterized above all by the presence on the historical scene of a new form of protagonist, the masses, of whom Zola is a leading literary champion. But an individualist culture is not accustomed to portraying collective characters, and the realist novel finds it hard to depict this formidable new agent (already invisibly present, so Benjamin has shown us, as a constant hum and buzz in the background of Baudelaire) without falling back on older reach-me-down imagery of the insensate mob, storm-tossed ocean or volcanic eruption. The masses are curiously hard not to naturalize. (125-26)

Nonetheless, there are important conceptual differences between "the masses" and "the poor," as there is also a difference between poverty as a dynamic *state* (as it has been imagined and institutionalized following the post-Reformation desacralization of the poor) and as the systemic *effect* of proletarianization. It is precisely this awareness, registered and perhaps even strengthened by the realist narrative mode, that could in turn lead to the introduction of a new element in late nineteenth-century narrative utopia—the element of the utopian transition.

In an analysis of William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, Raymond Williams writes that the crucial element in Morris is the "insertion of the *transition* to utopia, which is not discovered, come across, or projected—not even, except at the simplest conventional level, dreamed—but fought for. Between writer or reader and this new condition is chaos, civil war, painful and slow reconstruction" (209).

In other words, utopia is achieved neither by a collective rationalist epiphany upon the discovery of the correct system, nor as a natural consequence of savviness possessed by superior faraway nations, nor through technological development; instead, like history itself, it is finally revealed to be a result of class struggle. This does not mean that utopia at this point simply turns to addressing the revolutionary subject of socialist theory in an effort to motivate revolutionary transition in reality, but that the form of narrative utopia can be used, from that point on, to represent and explore a conception of history that is found neither in past utopias nor in the realist novel.

Thus imagined, utopia cannot be a discovery, or a necessary development, but turns into a radical historical possibility, a figurational wager of sorts, a promise of some future 'realism.' Since this possibility can, as any historical possibility, be realized only collectively, utopia is presented with a similar representational problem as the realist novel: how to represent the masses? Morris does not solve this; he does not elaborate on the emergence of the instruments of formation of class consciousness. However, by introducing the element of historical transition and its collective protagonist into the narrative repertoire of utopia, his text goes beyond Dickensian moralism to introduce a futurity of "further labours of social construction" (Parrinder, "*News*" 271), rescuing class from the sentimental unity of national(ist) history and projecting an invitation for new class consciousness to materialize.

Interestingly, we can detect echoes of a similar need to refashion conceptions of history and the possibility of "transition" in the modernist novel—even though it is precisely the pedagogical focus of the above invitation that is problematic from a **432** puristic modernist perspective. As Theodor Adorno famously wrote, discussing and favoring Kafka and Beckett in relation to, in his reading, the much more didactically-minded Brecht: "By dismantling appearance, they explode from within the art which committed proclamation subjugates from without, and hence only in appearance. The inescapability of their work compels the change of attitude which committed works merely demand" (191). This is a sketch of a difficult, dialectical pedagogy: it is through compulsion that the modernist novel is liberating. But whom does it liberate; for whom does it deliver its utopian promise?

We can try to answer this by turning to one of the famous examples of modernist consciousness-fashioning, Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. At the end of the novel, Stephen Dedalus issues his proclamation: "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (Joyce, *Portrait* 185). Leaving behind the physical nation with its actually-existing nationalism, Dedalus departs to autonomously practice the compulsion of the aesthetic in hope of forging a new type of community: not just the nation (too petty bourgeois), not class (too technical), but "race" (sufficiently organic, appropriately mythical). Here, all the tensions of the individualist[20] pedagogy of compulsion appear: how is it possible to speak of a collective category, race, if its conscience still remains to be constituted as such?[21] Will the "transition" be initiated by willpower and recognition alone? Will the newly-forged conscience motivate the entire race to join Dedalus and the Parisian bohemia? If so, will it not become as suffocating as the nation?

Here, the new-found utopian promise of refashioning history beyond the bourgeois nation is identified with the autonomous ("I") and the authentic ("race") act of expression. It is a radically optimistic, anarchist conception that implies an audaciously hopeful wager and, narratively, a chronotope of open futurity: either the newly created form will compel the transition, or so much worse for reality. If felicitous, the hero of the novel becomes a hero of Utopia, Dedalus becomes Utopus, the

founder, as he is joined by the race in a mystical collective reconciliation and mutual acknowledgement compelled by the autopoietic act, outside of the belligerent pettiness of the historical nation-form, and the depressing realities of its class relations. (A famous poem by the great Yugoslav modernist poet of Croatian ethnicity, Tin Ujević, is entitled "Blood-brotherhood of Persons in the Universe.") It is a community that is universal and, despite the organic metaphor, fully abstract.

It might be that here the novel truly is beyond nation. But sadly, it cannot be beyond history, which is, for the Dedalus of *Ulysses*, a "nightmare" from which he is "trying to awake" (Joyce 28). As this awakening—and of this Dedalus is tragically unaware—can occur only historically/collectively, the projected transubstantiation will necessarily fail to materialize. Thus it has the potential to turn into its opposite, a narcissistic disappointment with history, when it fails to meet the high standards of the modernist utopian (the later Dedalus has felt this disappointment). But let this not be an accusation. It would be too much to lay the blame for a failure of finding adequate modalities of transition on the modernist novel and its specific historical articulation of utopian possibility. Symbolic enactment of that possibility, however limited by concrete ideologies, was at least an opportunity to maintain "the fascination of the impossible" (Cioran 83) that shines on the horizon of any historical endeavor.

It is with this that we finally arrive at the 'End of History.' It has been quite fashionable, and the beginning of this text also indulges in this fashion, to claim that the decades of postmodernity have been the age in which political utopia has outstayed its welcome. Rummaging through the literature of the US, the nation that has peerlessly dominated this period, one can find texts that roughly mark the moment where the utopian promise of modernist pedagogy of compulsion failed to materialize. In a type of pseudo-novel that has been quite visible both in literary history and popular culture, Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, the following lines, answering almost directly the question of what happened to Dedalus's utopian project, can be found:

> And that, I think, was the handle—that sense of inevitable victory over the forces of Old and Evil. Not in any mean or military sense; we didn't need that. Our energy would simply *prevail*. There was no point in fighting—on our side or theirs. We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave [....]
> So now, less than five years later, you can go up on a steep hill in Las Vegas and look West, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost see the high-water mark—that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back. (68)

The aftermath of this and other waves breaking, as is well known, has meant the universalization of capitalism—transnationalization of production, establishment of dense global flows of commodities including information and (to an extent) labor, systematic redistribution of wealth in favor of capital, and so on. In this context, what I referred to so far as "the novel" has been exposed to various pressures: the persistence of the nation-form—despite premature certainties of its passing—has

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institutionally and ideologically required a seemingly anachronistic imperative of the maintenance of the national canons. Realism in its afterlife remains here the institutionally privileged narrative mode, as confirmed by the affirmation, in so-called serious media, of narratives such as Jonathan Franzen's recent realist melodramas of the emotionally wounded contemporary middle class, or by the addition of the mandatory moniker 'magical' to 'realist' novels imported from the global periphery. Simultaneously, a reconfiguration of the literary field initiated in the US and tied to commercial workshops and university programs in creative writing has been spreading internationally. This is followed by ideological reconstitution of 'literature' as 'creative writing' where the prevailing contemporary ideological demand of the literary craft is to 'express' what is in the so-called post-national world known as 'identity.' Multiple sub-national canons arise. In whatever form, the novel persists, and so does utopia. Interestingly, it is precisely as the revolutionary wave of the 1960s was breaking, and skeptical inversions of postmodern metafictions recoiled from

434 modernism's excesses, that narrative utopia was reinvented and the speculative tradition reinvigorated in its "critical," "ambiguous" guise first by writers such as Marge Piercy, Ursula K. Le Guin, and later Kim Stanley Robinson, or China Miéville.

Having in mind the vitality, vast global readership, as well as the noticeable recent adoption of elements from the ignobly utopian traditions of "Science Fiction/Fantasy" by established Western novelists proper such as Kazuo Ishiguro, Michel Houellebecq, Cormac McCarthy, and others, it seems reasonable to assume that it is utopias and related forms that are today better equipped for contemporary challenges of representation. Their global influence is perhaps a signal that today it might be the other way around, that the speculative and utopian writing is now integrating the novel as it forms canons of texts that do not rise to the status of being, but originate as transnational. This development "beyond the nation" in which the novel is caught up can therefore mean only that whatever the novel is, far from being vitally dependent on the nation-form, it is dependent, much like the nation, on that more primal force of modernity, which is capital.

Notes

1. Both the "late-twentieth-century boom in cosmic-disaster stories" (Stableford) and the more recent global surge in popularity of the zombie apocalypse genre (currently in its sixth season, AMC's record-breaking show *The Walking Dead* is the most watched show in the history of cable television) witness to the contemporary vitality of apocalyptic imagination.

2. Two notable exceptions are John Stuart Mill with his sympathetic treatment of Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier, and more recently Richard Rorty, who happily takes over the term when discussing his liberal utopia (see Rorty 61).

3. The conservative moralist William Pfaff postulates that "the appeal made to the intellectuals and other members of the European elite in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by political romanticism and the idea of redemptive, utopian violence" led to the "loss of a code of national and personal

conduct" that he refers to as "chivalry" (3). This is interesting as an example of how even the fiercest anti-utopianism cannot avoid a utopian projection of its own.

4. The classical examples are criticisms of the utopian socialists in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's *The Communist Manifesto* and in Engels's *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. But even that characteristically sober line of political thinking is not exactly arid when it comes to utopia: "Bloch reminds us of Lenin's quotation from Pisarev on the importance of dreams that run ahead of reality. 'If there is some connection between dreams and life then all is well.' Lenin himself adds, '[O]f this kind of dreaming there is unfortunately too little in our movement'" (Levitas 295).

5. Ernst Bloch's analytical gesture, famously, went in the opposite direction: to counter this exclusion, Bloch's theorization of utopia in *The Principle of Hope* was a sustained attempt to demonstrate its universality.

6. A well-known contemporary utopian, Kim Stanley Robinson, claims in an interview: "The old attack on utopias as boring is partly a political attack, partly a result of them not being novels enough" (Szeman and Whiteman 185).

7. For William Morris's anti-novelistic stance, see Brantlinger; for Morris's and H.G. Wells's response to the "break-up of the coalition of interests in mid-Victorian fiction," see Parrinder ("*News*" 273).

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8. Interestingly, in Karl Mannheim's well-known sociological theorization it is precisely utopia that is the dialectical "answer" to the closure of ruling class ideology, and thus a guarantee of the continuous possibility of the historical process: "In this sense, the relationship between utopia and the existing order turns out to be a 'dialectical' one. By this is meant that every age allows to arise [...] those ideas and values in which are contained in condensed form the unrealized and the unfulfilled tendencies which represent the needs of each age. These intellectual elements then become the explosive material for bursting the limits of the existing order" (Mannheim 179).

9. Such static conceptions of utopia are extremely problematic and as such criticized by continuous theoretical work on utopia and the practical development of the genre. I am using these conceptions as a starting point here because they both base their analyses on an inaugural juxtaposition between utopia and the novel.

10. "[T]he unsettling of man's sense of reality" is dangerous precisely because it is not done to the philosophical "man," but to the historical, political, institutional one—the man, if I may be allowed a poignant reference, to which all revolutionary periods attempt in various ways to stick it to.

11. Morson writes that in novels, each truth is "someone's truth" (77), but never the novel's.

12. This is also confirmed for France, where, according to Franco Moretti's data (*Atlas* 53-54), the incidence of "narratives with imaginary and utopian settings" drops from 13 to 2 percent between 1750 and 1800.

13. My focus here is on Anglophone texts, but an analysis of another strain of the novel's complex historical heritage reveals a similar centrality of utopia: Cervantes's *Don Quijote*, a founding, canonical text of the modern novel form, beside epochally clipping the wings of the romance, is also actively engaged with the utopian tradition: from Quijote's private property-less Age of Gold, to Sancho Panza's Island of Barataria, there have been many studies excavating the juridical and political roots of Cervantes's engagement with utopia.

14. See Fausett (*Strange*) for an informative study of *Robinson Crusoe* that attempts to reconstruct broader cultural dynamics and mutual interactions of what are taken to be separate genres—narrative utopia, novel, travelogue—as "products of an evolving bundle of themes and devices" that texts process (Fausett, *Strange* 20). David Fausett, helpfully, is not burdened by the habit of primarily treating Defoe's text as foundational for the history of the novel.

15. Interestingly, there is a less well-known text that quite precisely "marks the transition" (Fausett, "Introduction" x) between the earlier literary/utopian traditions and the Robinsonade: *The Mighty*

Kingdom of Krinke Kesmes, a Dutch text published in 1708 by Hendrik Smeeks. For a genealogy, and an analysis of sources, see Fausett, "Introduction."

16. I am using here Morson's term for the narrative instance that elaborates the blueprint of the utopian order.

17. Patrick Parrinder (*Nation* 196) notes, for example, that Austen's Mansfield Park has been called a "utopia of Tory reform."

18. Here is Darko Suvin's oft-quoted definition: "Utopia is the verbal construction of a particular quasi-human community where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than in the author's community, this construction being based on estrangement arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis" (30).

19. For an influential contemporary reading of Hegel and Marx from this perspective, see Ruda.

20. In another modernist *Künstlerroman*, Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, the following paragraphs can be found: "Is it possible that in spite of inventions and progress, in spite of culture, religion, and worldly wisdom, that one has remained on the surface of life? [...] Is it possible that the past is false because one has always spoken of its masses, as if one was telling about a coming together of many people, instead of telling about the one person they were standing around, because he was alien and died?
Yes, it is possible [...]
But, if all this is possible, has even an appearance of possibility—then for heaven's sake something has to happen. The first person who comes along, the one who has had this disquieting thought, must begin to accomplish some of what has been missed." (17)

21. A similarly humanist paradox of the recognition of the unknown is anticipated by Ernst Bloch at the end of *The Principle of Hope*: "Once he has grasped himself and established what is his, without expropriation and alienation, in real democracy, there arises in the world something which shines into the childhood of all and in which no one has yet been: homeland" (1376).

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