Utopianism in World Literature

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My purpose in this paper is not to summarize the history of utopian thought, worthy as such an enterprise might be, but to indicate similarities in Eastern and Western notions concerning the nature of an ideal community. An extensive survey of *Utopian Thought in the Western World* has recently been published by Frank E. and Fritzie F. Manuel, and a more concentrated view of Chinese utopias has been presented as a dissertation at National Taiwan University by Hsiao-ting Yang. While drawing freely upon both of these excellent studies, I shall treat a number of works which they do not mention in order to offer my own comparative interpretation of the classics in the utopian genre.

In the broadest sense a utopia consists of an ideal or model society usually inculcating a uniform system of religious belief and in modern times likely to be oriented toward science and economic reform. Utopias are found in both actual history and imaginative literature. In history they represent societies organized for specific purposes and deliberately incorporating changes in the structures from which they emerged. Examples are experimental colonies such as Brook Farm or New Harmony in nineteenth century America and even entire nations such as France immediately after the French Revolution or Israel and the USSR in the twentieth century. The theme of utopia in literature and philosophy comprises all speculation and notions about an ideal society portrayed in any literary form. Utopia as a particular literary genre consists of a relatively detailed description of an imaginary society incorporating elements of the philosophical discourse or the fictitious narrative. Plato's *Republic* is the prototype of the former; Thomas More's *Utopia,* of the latter. Related genres developed from the narrative type, including imaginary voyages, trips to the moon, descriptions of lost islands, socialist novels, and scientific futurology. Within this tremendous variety, certain common characteristics may be noted. The utopia represents a separate community or state, it is fictitious, and it indirectly criticizes the imperfections of the society from which it emerges.

Finally, it is presented as a creation of human enterprise rather than of divine intervention.

Conventional utopias have been divided into two groups: those creating an ideal society apart from the one in which we live and which is never expected to be realized in this world, and those merely suggesting practical ways in which particular reforms may make the present world a better place to live in. A similar dichotomy consists of those which are based upon extensive material changes and those requiring moral or philosophical adjustments. Experience has shown that man can more readily change his environment than his behavior.

Although the solving of political and economic problems seems to be the paramount concern of societies featuring material renovations, the concerns of utopias are not limited to social organization. They also treat psychological, religious, and artistic aspects of life. A legitimate utopia in addition to merely providing material guidelines or patterns must reveal the human personality, recognize conflict, and allow for the expression of desires and emotions. Most important, the utopia must be presented in a literary form. Such working models for ideal communities as drawings, architectural plans, and constitutions may be valuable aids for future development, but they are not utopias. The utopia has been one of the most popular of all literary genres because it represents literature at its best, drawing upon fantasies, imagination, and rational powers, and providing pleasure while giving the illusion of easing the problems of day to day life. The utopia usually portrays an urban community, which is forward looking at least to the extent that it requires change, and which considers nature as an adverse force which is to be controlled. A related literary genre is that of Arcadia, which describes rural life, is usually backward looking or nostalgic, leaves things exactly as they are, and regards nature as a benevolent force to be enjoyed without effort. Although utopian and arcadian societies resemble each other by describing a pleasant way of life, the practical prescriptions of these two imaginary designs for living are likely to be completely opposed to each other.

The word *Arcadia* originally referred to Greece, but it was used by Sannazzaro during the Italian Renaissance as the title of a pastoral poem portraying ideals of rural tranquility and humanistic intellectualism. His and other Arcadian works reconstruct a remote past amid a rural environment in which nobility and virtue flourish with the same ease in which flowers and plentiful crops, the beneficent aspects of nature, adorn the landscape.

The *locus classicus* for the pastoral ideal, however, is to be found in Greek antiquity in *Works and Days* of Hesiod. Traveling back in time even before the eighth century B.C. when he lived, Hesiod portrayed a Golden Age in which "the fruitful earth spontaneously bore abundant fruit without stint. And they [men] lived in ease and peace upon their land with many good things, rich in flocks and beloved of the blessed Gods." Out of this attitude grew the pastoral tradition which flourished from Greek and Roman antiquity to the eighteenth century. Poets in this tradition nostalgically praised the lost age of innocence when men lived on pure water and freshly gathered nuts; shared all things in common, including the pleasures of love, and knew neither anger nor war.

Four centuries after Hesiod, Plato in the *Republic* introduced some of the themes which were to become almost constant subjects of attention in later utopian works: division of labor, status of women, role of the arts, and method of governance. Most important was the concept of justice, which Plato believed was the key to all political institutions. The aim of the *Republic* in common with that of most of its successors was to secure the greatest possible happiness for the community as a whole. Like the other works of Plato, the form of the *Republic* is that of the philosophical dialogue. Indeed the dialogue is second only to the fictional narrative as the most popular device for portraying utopian ideals.

So far we have been speaking of western literatures exclusively. Counterparts of utopian and arcadian lands, however, existed in other parts of the world. The descriptions of the mythical Hyperboreans in Herodotus are matched by a fanciful Chinese district in an anonymous work, *Lieh-tzu* of the Chin period. Its inhabitants live by water in a mild climate to avoid the toil of agriculture. All live to a hundred years without sickness, senility, or anxiety. People of all ages and both sexes associate in absolute equality. Water is all they drink to sustain life, but excessive consumption makes them drunk for days at a time.[1]

Two hundred years after Hesiod and an equal period before Plato, another Chinese writer, the philosopher Lao-tzu, described in brief compass an ideal society of the pastoral type. He envisaged a small country of sparse population. Although equipped with boats and carriages, arms and armor, and primitive signs for communication, the inhabitants never used any of them. They were contented with their dwellings, and rejoiced over their manners. The inhabitants of two neighboring countries were happy to

observe each other reciprocally and to listen to their dogs and roosters; but they died of old age without making reciprocal visits.[2] Lao-tzu and the Taoists were anti-intellectual, holding all propagation of knowledge, including their own ideas to be useless, and many other Chinese Sages, including the authors of some utopias, incorporated a philosophy of indifference, comparable to that of the Greek Stoics.

Utopianism of an intellectual type, anticipating the Thomas More variety, plays an important role in the works of Confucius (551-479 BC), a younger contemporary of Lao-tzu. His ideal society, described as Grand Union in the *Book of Li,* resembles a communist state governed by men of talent, ability, and virtue. Men love all parents and children as well as their own and, as a consequence, all members of the community are given equal, loving care. All provide service to the state, but each person is allowed to select his own type of work. There is no individual ambition to rise above one's neighbors and as a result no crime. Motivation consists entirely of self discipline in the observance of moral principles. Unfortunately this world of perfect brotherhood, like western Arcadias, was said to have existed merely in the past. It served as a model or example in Confucian thought, but no suggestion was made that it could ever be regained or restored.[3] A later group of Chinese philosophers known as the Legalists developed a theoretical community dominated by the military and based on notions of law and order. In this land nothing is taught but the law, and the functionaries of the state serve as teachers. Swordsmanship is esteemed not as an exercise but as a method of executing rebels. In the words of Han Fei Tzu of the third century B.C., "The people inside the borders of the state always follow the law when they talk, always have worthy objectives when they act, and excel nowhere but in the army when they seek recognition. Because of all this, the state is rich in times of peace, and the army is strong in times of war."[4]

Japanese Buddhist tradition incorporates a fanciful paradise closer to the Christian Eden than to the Confucian Grand Union, that is, the notion of Pure Land which originated in the tenth century. It provides the background for a short story by the modern writer Mishima, "The Priest of Shiga and the Pure Land." According to Mishima's version, the earth of the Pure Land is made of emerald and gold and contains millions of towers, halls, and ponds.

An eastern utopia, resembling Lao-tzu's prescription for communal living, appeared in China early in the fifth century, "The Peach Blossom Spring" by

the famous poet T'ao Yuan-ming (365-427). In this work a fisherman rows upstream a great distance until he encounters an immense grove of peach trees in full bloom along both banks of the stream. He enters a narrow opening in the side of a mountain at the source of the stream and reemerges on a broad plain dotted with well-built houses and fertile fields. The people welcome him and in a poem recount the origins and customs of their happy community. Isolated from the rest of the world, they pay no taxes and have no rulers. Children sing and old men pay each other visits. The people never change styles in clothing and exist without artificial contrivances, including calendars, relying on experience to foretell the seasons.

Two centuries later, a Chinese imaginary society combined notions of communal living with those of psychological indifference or imperturbility, somewhat resembling the views of Greek and Latin stoics and western portrayals of Arcadia. This was the Country of Intoxication envisioned by Wang Chi.[5]

A similar land where people solve the problems of life through sleeping was described by Su Tung-p'o in the eleventh century. The people of Ch'i who possess little intelligence belong to the Country of Slumber.[6]

The most important western literary utopia between Plato and More is a product of the Arab world, *The Good City* by Al Farabi, who lived in the tenth century A.D. This author's complete works were translated into Latin in 1638 and thus made available to western writers, but his work seems to have had no influence upon later western utopias or utopian scholarship. Al Farabi, however, was a student of both Plato and Aristotle and his *Good City* contains various references to Plato's *Republic*. Like Plutarch, Al Farabi inculcates the necessity of a wise leader. The characteristics he outlines for an Arabian philosopher king are those belonging to Mohammed himself. *The Good City* is not a religious allegory, however, for Al Farabi bases morality entirely on this life rather than on the expectation of rewards or punishments in a future state. He teaches, nevertheless, that each individual has the duty of arriving at a knowledge of God. Al Farabi has firm faith in the individual and allows him maximum choice in the way of life in the community provided that he consistently follow the order of nature. A close link to Plato consists in the portrayal of the organic unity of society as parallel to that of a human being, both man and society representing a moral entity. Al Farabi is even more specific than his western forerunner in tracing the allegory of the political state to the human body.

Thomas More, more than five hundred years later, added the narrative

element to the portrayal of an ideal state, creating the personality of Raphael Hythloday, a navigator, veteran of the voyages of exploration of Amerigo Vespucci. Although no direct connection can be established, there is a certain resemblance between the observant navigator in More's narrative, which established a convention in later works, and Marco Polo as the enthusiastic exponent of Chinese civilization in his *Il Milione* written in the last years of the thirteenth century. More's narrative framework gives his account verisimilitude and serves to create the impression that the conditions described actually existed. Other devices, however, including the concept of noplace in the title, tend to divert attention away from reality. It has recently been suggested that physical description of More's island was derived from mariners' accounts of Japan, and other scholars have surmised that the customs of the Utopians resemble those of Inca civilization in South America. These are merely theories; More's unquestionable indebtedness to Plato is revealed by many references throughout his work. The first part consists of a severe criticism of contemporary social abuses in England and other European states, bringing under attack monarchical despotism, the servility of courtiers, military conquest, luxury, and the privileges of nobles and clergy. Private property is denounced as the root of all evil. The second part describes society in which all these abuses have been eliminated. Some critics have argued that More did not intend his work to be intended literally and that it is filled with paradoxes or ambiguities like the *Praise of Folly* by his contemporary Erasmus. Thomas More was a committed Christian; yet it is natural religion which is practiced in Utopia. One may wonder whether More thereby suggests that his imaginary society is imperfect and in this regard no better than contemporary Europe or whether he is indeed like an eighteenth-century deist praising natural religion as the logical outcome of human reason without the benefit of revelation. His actual words strike a responsive chord among most people today: "that every man might be of what religion he pleased."

However More's ideal society is interpreted, there is no doubt that it reflects the tolerant notions of Renaissance humanism. A much stranger mixture of orthodox Christianity, science, supernaturalism, and astrology appears in *The City of the Sun,* which Tommaso Campanella wrote in Latin and his native Italian, the first published version of 1628 being in Latin. Like Plato in the *Republic,* Campanella uses the form of a dialogue. The details of the imaginary city, located somewhere on the Equator, are revealed by a Genoese sea-captain. Its population originally came from India, having

fled from the conquering Moguls. The Solarians forbid private property and allow sex for pleasure, but the emphasis is not upon the welfare of the individual, but on the collective welfare of the state. All aspects of life are, therefore, rigidly controlled. Natural religion and Christianity seem to be merged, but Christian authority is exalted. Campanella approaches the idea of progress by suggesting the eventual emergence of a universal Christian monarchy, and he considers as a good sign the large number of female rulers in Europe in the early seventeenth century.

The earliest German utopia, *Christianopolis* by Johann Andreae, obviously concerns a community dominated in large measure by religion. It was published originally in Latin in 1619, but not translated into German until 1741 and into English in 1916. In form it consists of a long letter addressed to a brotherhood or philosophical society resembling the Rosicrucians. Although it begins with a voyage to an island community, it takes place in an allegorical Academic Sea which is obviously Germany. Considerable attention is devoted to science and domestic arrangements, but the main concern is Protestant Christianity of a rigidly puritanical cast. In keeping with his allegory of the Academic Sea, Andreae goes far beyond his predecessors in discussing education, which is free and universal, girls receiving the same training as boys. One of the deficiencies of this and other utopias reflecting Christian ideology is that they are directed by God rather than by man and thus greatly limit human initiative and individuality. The concept of Eden as Arcadia, a pastoral paradise in which men live more or less without effort and without discipline is antithetical to the doctrinal basis of orthodox Christian communities, which almost inevitably leads to strict regimentation.

Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis,* 1627, has much in common with the *City of the Sun,* although Bacon places greater emphasis on science and has nothing to say about astrology and the supernatural. Also he stresses the importance of the family, private property, and individual enterprise. His main interest, however, is the development of science. The ideal community is located on the island of Bensalem, neighboring the lost continent of Atlantis. The inhabitants are mainly Christians, and a few Jews, the Old and New Testament having been delivered to them by miraculous means. The main feature of the island is an institution for scientific research entitled Solomon's House. The methods of porcelain making there resemble those of the Chinese, although the products are said to be finer and more varied. There are elements of utopia in *The Tempest* by Bacon's contemporary

Shakespeare as well as in the work of the greatest Chinese poet, Li Po, particularly in his "Dream of the Skyland: A Farewell Poem."

At about the time of Shakespeare there appeared a work in China, *Sequel to Water Margin* by Ch'en Ch'en, which historians of Chinese literature have classified as a utopia, but which bears little resemblance to western works that describe in circumstantial detail the constituent elements of communal life. The work which Ch'en Ch'en considers as a forerunner to his own has been translated into English by Pearl Buck as *All Men are Brothers* and by Sidney Shapiro as *Outlaws of the Marsh.* This novel concerns a group of 108 heroes who were forced to live as outlaws in a marsh area in order to combat social injustice – a band loosely comparable to Robin Hood and his men. During the course of the novel many of these heroes lose their lives, but at the end the survivors try to return to society bringing with them their ideals of community and brotherhood. They build a community of rich and poor, officials and generals, and every trade and occupation, living together on a basis of equality. Ch'en Ch'en bases his sequel upon the thirty-two remaining heroes. They go to sea and establish a self-sufficient community in the area which is the present-day Thailand. The reader is told that the country becomes a paradise on earth, but no details are given concerning principles of government or administration. This is actually neither true Arcadia nor Utopia, but a land of happy warriors, related to the military utopia of Han Fei.

The French scholar Etiemble has indicated that this narrative has elements of the cloak and dagger adventure, the historical novel, the picaresque novel, and even the epic, but he does not consider it as a utopia.[7] Etiemble interprets as a portrayal of the earthly paradise, however, the image of China in Jesuit reports concerning that nation widely spread in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[8]

The second half of the seventeenth century was dominated by several French novels of unbridled fantasy. Every work which we have discussed so far is realistic in the sense that nothing impossible is stated, even in connection with Arcadia. Another group of utopias, however, features imaginary creatures and fantastic situations far beyond credibility – trips to the moon, talking horses, people who never die, societies of giants, and islands floating in the air. Fantasies of interplanetary travel have long existed in literature other than utopias. A French author of the seventeenth century, Cyrano de Bergerac, described a number of societies, designed to satirize human foibles and vices, in his *Comical History or Voyage to the Moon,* a

major precursor of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels.* An actual utopia which also has much in common with Swift's masterpiece, *A New Discovery of Terra Australis Incognita,* 1693, by the French writer Gabriel de Foigny, concerns a society of Hermaphrodites. The narrator, James Sadeur, leaves at his death a manuscript containing a first-person account of a shipwreck, from which he was born on a plank to the land of Australis. He describes various economic, psychological and religious attitudes of the inhabitants nearly all of which appear superior to comparable attitudes in European civilization. Unlike many previous utopias, Australis has no connection with Christianity. The author's point of view is reflected in his comment that people who call themselves Christians "live worse than animals, although they are specially favored with grace, while pagans, relying only on the light of nature, manifest more virtues than the Reformed Church claims to behold." The hermaphroditic inhabitants averaging eight feet in height, go naked at all times, have all property in common, and, after learning about European customs, consider human beings as closer to the lower animals than to themselves.

Up to this point we have considered portrayals of single communities, presented as superior to the conditions and customs of everyday life in the author's social milieu. With Jonathan Swift and his *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World,* 1726, the original title of *Gulliver's Travels,* all this is changed. Gulliver visits a large number of different islands and communities, including societies of tiny people, giants, horses, mathematicians, sorcerers and immortals. In addition, he visits one real nation, Japan and is graciously received by the emperor. Most parts of *Gulliver's Travels* portray conditions in strange countries which are either exactly like those in England or exaggerated versions of the English. The purpose is satire, to bring out the stupidity and evil of contemporary life, not to urge reform. These sections of the work are not utopias, but dystopias, to use a word coined in 1952 to describe imaginary societies portraying the faults, real, exaggerated, or predicted for the future, of the actual world. A dystopia, in other words, is the opposite of an ideal society. This is the category to which belong Swift's country of the little people, the country of the giants, and most of the miscellaneous islands in the third book. The major utopian section of the work is the last book, "A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms," a land inhabited by ultra-rational horses who also have the power of speech. Since their "grand maxim is to cultivate reason, and to be wholly governed by it," all of their customs and institutions could be interpreted as models for reform.

An early imitation of *Gulliver's Travels,* which nevertheless, shows a considerable degree of originality, is a work in Latin published in Copenhagen by Ludwig Holberg in 1741, *Niels Klein's Journey under the Ground.* Designed like Swift's tale about Gulliver to satirize both the exaggerations and incredulities of travel writers and the thin line separating virtue and vice in contemporary society, *Klein's Journey* describes a series of adventures among the subterraneous heavens, that is, in the world within the shell of the earth with its own sun, planets and stars in due proportion. In the land of animate, speaking trees, Niels attends a university and receives a diploma affirming the opinion of his professors that he as a man could hardly be included as a rational being because of his obtuse and miserable judgment, ridiculous skepticism on matters of certainty and no less ridiculous credulity on dubious ones. Like most eighteenth-century utopias, Holberg's *Journey* portrays a deistical religion and equality of the sexes, the latter a topic upon which both Swift and Voltaire are significantly silent.

A number of works in China and Japan published within the same century have striking resemblances to *Gulliver's Travels* although no direct connection or influence has been proved. A Chinese novel, *The Destinies of the Flowers in the Mirror* by Li Ju-chen has been called "The Chinese Gulliver." Combining elements of utopia and dystopia, it is based upon a sea voyage to more than thirty exotic and imaginary places, including lands populated by women alone, people without sex, and black-toothed people. The mirror image in the title is designed to convey the notion that life is an illusion. Some of the most widely-read European works including More's *Utopia,* Swift's *Gulliver's Travels,* and Voltaire's *Candide,* satirize the cupidity of mankind by demonstrating that gold and precious stones have little intrinsic value, but are prized entirely because of their rarity. *Flowers in the Mirror* has an identical demonstration in regard to edible swallow's nests which in China are considered as a rare delicacy. Since they abound in the exotic Utopian land known as the Country of Gentlemen, nobody has any interest in eating them. In another country of *Flowers in the Mirror* people are born with a small cloud under their feet, representing conscience which changes according to their moral behavior. Evil actions turn the cloud black; good ones turn it into bright colors. Order is kept in the community not by strict laws, but by the efforts of the citizens to keep their clouds as colorful as possible.

Resemblances to *Gulliver's Travels* are even closer in Japanese works. In 1763 Hiraga Gennai published his *Romantic Biography of Shidōken* in which

the protagonist travels throughout Japan and various imaginary places, including a land of big people, a land of dwarfs, and a land of women. Like Swift, Hiraga Gennai is primarily interested in satirizing contemporary life rather than advocating wide-scale reforms, and his work is fundamentally dystopian.[9] *Wasōbyoe* or *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands* appeared in 1774 under the pseudonym Yukokushi. In this novel, the protagonist in a small boat is blown out of control by a typhoon. He lives for 200 years in the land of youth and immortality and later ventures into the lands of freedom, vanity, giants, love of antiquities, and desperation.[10] Takizawa Bakin in *Musobyoe, The Tale of a Wanderer*, 1809-10, has the protagonist travelling by dreams rather than by actual voyages at sea. A fisherman in this work visits lands of avarice, grief, sex and heavy drinking. Ingredients of self-satire are mixed with the denunciation of social evils. For the next seventy years there were no more utopias published in Japan until a partial translation of *Gulliver's Travels* appeared in 1880. Between that year and the end of the century 23 different Japanese utopias came from the press. This could certainly suggest a direct chain of influence. A translation of a Dutch utopia in 1868, which I shall mention subsequently, however, does not seem to have stimulated any imitators. According to the Japanese scholar from whom I have drawn the foregoing information, "Traditional Japanese utopias do not fit the Western model but remain instead at the stage of satire."[11]

A work in western literature which greatly resembles *Gulliver's Travels* is Voltaire's satirical novel *Candide or Optimism*, 1759. This third person narrative, departing from the usual techniques of dialogue and memoirs, is designed primarily to ridicule contemporary manners and philosophies, but one section devoted to the land of Eldorado is pure utopia. The latter represents a garden paradise, "cultivated for pleasure as well as need"; everywhere the useful is also pleasant. The city is adorned with skyscrapers prominent among them a palace of science, but there are no parliaments, halls of justice or prisons. One can consider as utopian advice, reflecting the attitude of Confucius which I have already quoted, the words of Candide which bring the work to a close, "we must cultivate our garden."

An English work by Simon Berington, 1737, entitled *The Memoirs of Signior Gaudentio di Lucca* concerns a peaceful land in the midst of the Egyptian desert entitled Meggorania. The protagonist, while being examined by the Inquisition in Bologna, describes this land "as Ancient, Populous, and Civilized, as the Chinese." The inhabitants, who believe in transmigration of souls, practice a strict, but sentimental virtue. Their government is

patriarchal, and they pay reverence to their parents, whether alive or dead, almost to the point of superstition. A more famous Enlightenment figure, Montesquieu, in his *Persian Letters,* tells of the happy country of the Troglodytes, primitive cave-dwellers, who lived as a single family, seeking the interest of individuals in the interest of the community and considering justice for others as charity for oneself.

Another work advocating primitivistic ideals is *Supplement to the Voyage of Bougaineville* by Diderot, written in 1772, but not published in full until the twentieth century. Bougaineville was a French explorer and naturalist who published an account of his travels through Tahiti and other islands in the south seas. Diderot cast most of his imaginary supplement in the form of a dialogue between the ship's chaplain and an islander. The conversation begins when the latter, after regaling the chaplain with a wholesome meal, summons his wife and three daughters in a state of pure nakedness and invites the chaplain to sleep with the lady of his choice. The ensuing discussion presents Diderot's argument that simple native habits are far superior to the complexities of civilization, which falsely attaches moral values to certain physical acts, such as sex, which carry no implications of vice or virtue. This is a rare form of utopianism, combining the languor of the Arcadians with the economic and political egalitarianism of social planners. The symbol of Diderot's ideal is sexual freedom, and the solution he proposes is to establish a single morality based upon the eternal, universal relations of men with one another. Diderot, moreover, does not expect to attain moral perfection or anything like it. "Nature," he affirms, "includes both vice and virtues along with everything else."

A new element was added to the utopian genre by Sebastien Mercier in 1770, that of a perspective into the future. His work, entitled *An 2440, ou Rêve s'il fut jamais,* has been translated into English as *Memoirs of the Year 2500.* The narrator instead of travelling to a foreign country or another planet remains in his own city, Paris, but leaps almost seven centuries into the future by means of a dream. Presumably in the interests of verisimilitude, he has become an old man. Mercier reflects the notions of human perfectibility, natural benevolence, and education based upon scientific discoveries made possible by the telescope and the microscope. A three act play with a similar title *L'An deux mille* (1790), *The Year Two Thousand,* is notable merely because of its form as a drama. It was written by a prolific writer Restif de la Bretonne, author of several unconventional prose utopias. His play concerns only one aspect of communal life, that is, marriage relations, which

are here contracted in a public ceremony in which those men who have performed public service are given first choice of the available women. The notion comes directly from a description in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* of the young people of an ancient Greek community, the Samnites, being convened in one place for an examination of their conduct. He that was declared the most virtuous and foremost in public service "had leave given him to take which girl he pleased for his wife; the person that had been declared second best chose after him; and so on." It is somewhat of a paradox that Restif attributes to the twenty-first century an institution which Montesquieu had traced to the ancient Greeks.

A large degree of sexual freedom exists in the first major utopia to appear in the Americas, *Equality,* described as a political romance, which was published in 1802 in a deistical periodical of Philadelphia, *The Temple of Reason.* Its scheme of rational hedonism involves equality in political and economic relationships, and a system of contracting marriages similar to that in Montesquieu and Restif de la Bretonne. Concern for sexual satisfaction was carried to its most extreme length in the thought of a nineteenth-century French economist, Charles Fourier, who devised a system by which every conceivable sexual relationship could not only be gratified, but also socially approved, even including young males and females assuaging the desires of the aged. Several communities of Fourier's disciples, called phalansteries were organized in France and the United States. In the wake of the French Revolution, a number of other experimental colonies were established in the New World, the most famous of which were New Harmony, Indiana, under the leadership of the Scotsman Robert Owen; Brook Farm in Massachusetts, listing among its members, Margaret Fuller and Hawthorne; the Oneida community in New York, populated by mystical perfectibilians with a flair for commerce; and Nauvoo, Illinois, a nest of immigrants attracted by a French legislator and reformer, Etienne Cabet. Before leaving France, Cabet wrote *A Voyage to Icaria,* 1840, a description of what an ideal colony should be like, and the settlement in Illinois represented an attempt to convert theory into practice. The main concept on which *Icaria* is based is that of the eighteenth-century notion of perfectibility, which had been expounded by Franklin, Condorcet, Godwin and many others. In Icaria, everybody works for the republic, all trades and professions being considered absolutely equal; travelers are fed and transported by the state without charge. The economy is not in the least primitive, for machines are multiplied to the maximum, and even music is artificially produced. The actual community of Icaria which was

established in Illinois, however, unfortunately fell apart. A modern novel *Icaria, Icaria,* 1974, by the Catalan writer Xavier Benguerel treats the historical movement of Cabet. Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote his *Blithedale Romance,* 1852, about Brook Farm, and a Japanese novelist, Saneatsu Mushakoji, wrote a number of works including *A Beautiful Village,* about an experimental community that he established in Kyushu in his country.

Henry David Thoreau lived for a time at Brook Farm, but could not adjust to the other colonists. His personal experience of idyllic seclusion described in *Walden* could be described as experimental solipsism (a utopia for one).

Shortly after Cabet's attempt to create an artificial utopia in the United States, another Frenchman, G. Eugène Simon, who used a pseudonym Fan Ta-gen, published a book entitled *La Cité chinoise,* 1885, idealizing the Chinese way of life. His title should not be translated literally, but rather as *The Chinese Community,* for it is agrarian communal living which is portrayed as utopian. Although a free-thinker, Simon outdistanced seventeenth-century Jesuits in praising the morals and gentle character of the Chinese. He even used eighteenth-century terminology in describing the Chinese farmer as a "natural man" following "natural laws." Simon's book was translated into English, and an admirer, a certain Major Poore, attempted to organize a colony in Wiltshire based on the social structure of the Chinese family.[12]

New Harmony, Icaria, and the Oneida Community were all secular societies, but a larger number of Christian communities was established in the United States during the nineteenth century. Many of these reflected the millenial doctrine that the world as we know it would soon come to an end and be redeemed by the return of Christ to the earth. In Russian literature, the novel, *What Is to Be Done* by Nikolai Chernyshevsky has little in common with classical utopias, but it is, nevertheless, classified as a utopia in contemporary scholarship. Partly epistolary in form, the novel reverses the manner by which Goethe resolved the amorous triangle in *Werther.* Chernyshevsky has the husband who is gifted with sympathetic understanding, shoots himself and leaves the wife free to marry the mutual friend. The ideological content of this melodramatic novel emphasizes egalitarian relations between husband and wife together with cooperative methods of merchandizing, but it has little relevance to community organization. Like Diderot, Chernyshevsky advocates marital unions based on mutual preference which last only as long as this mutual preference does.

Although Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* is sometimes considered as an anti-utopian reply to Chernyshevsky, he wrote a Christian utopia of his own reflecting the doctrine of the imminent return of Christ.[13] In his "Diary of a Writer," he predicts in miscellaneous forms, the final battle of the apocalypse to be followed by a millenial ideal society.

The most famous nineteenth-century author to follow Mercier's example of casting utopia into the future was the American Edward Bellamy, but he was preceded by a little-known Dutch author who combined science and futurology. This was Peter Harting, who under the pseudonym of Dr. Dioscordes, published in 1865 *The Year 2065 ... a Look into the Future.* Since at this period in Japanese history the only western country allowed to trade with Japan was Holland, Harting's book has the distinction of being the first western utopia to be translated into Japanese, which took place in 1868. As we have already indicated, however, this did not lead to a rash of Japanese utopias, for these did not begin to emerge until the translation of *Gulliver's Travels* twelve years later. An English version of Harting followed the Japanese by three years, the translator, A. V. W. Bikkers, modifying the title to *Anno Domino 2071.* The Dutch author falls asleep in his arm chair and dreams of finding himself in the company of Roger Bacon in London on New Year's Day a century later. Bacon is chosen as his companion, presumably because of his having predicted in 1542 the invention of long-distance telescopes, automobiles and machine navigation. Harting's ability to forecast scientific and technological advances not only precedes but greatly outdoes Bellamy's achievement in *Looking Backward.* In Harting's glance into the future, entire cities are covered by glass, warmed in winter by currents of hot air and cooled in summer by cold. They are lighted by magnesium or electricity. Communications are made by telephone (thanks to improvements upon a rudimentary system actually invented in Europe in 1861) and by a cable under the Atlantic Ocean. Transportation is provided by automobiles driven by energeiathecs, or preserved wind and water power. Passenger balloons, which rapidly traverse the entire world, are steered by electric magnets. Everyone speaks two languages, his own and an international one resembling Esperanto called "the traveling language." Fast trains run between Pekin and Amsterdam, burrowing through tunnels in the Alps. Although civilization has required all of these mechanical amenities, research in pure science is still vigorously pursued. The European nations have compulsory education, universal literacy, and national libraries open to all, including the working class. In the universities, individual examinations are favored over

the Chinese system of state-wide examinations. There is universal suffrage with no restrictions based on sex or age, even babes in arms being carried to the polls by their mothers. The two major political parties represent men and women. War no longer exists because past conflicts had bankrupted the major nations and they had devastated each other with weaponry. They have learned that further use of their military technology could endanger the survival of civilization. In general, Harting's work is one of the most successful examples of scientific futurology from the perspective of richness of imagination, but the literary presentation of his prophecies fails to hold the reader's interest. This is why it has never attained the popularity of *Looking Backward,* 1888, by the American Edward Bellamy.

The protagonist of this novel is mesmerized in the year 1887 and restored to active life in the year 2000, from which vantage point he surveys the enormous progress society has made since the nineteenth century. Like Rousseau, Bellamy expresses faith in the fundamental goodness of mankind, but he advocates the reformation of society rather than retreating from it. He is not concerned with the individual, but with organizing social behavior to its maximum efficiency by following the methods of the military. Although by no means an innovator in predicting technological advances, Bellamy has probably impressed most readers by his forecasting of radio, television, automobiles, airplanes and air conditioning. Bellamy's work has probably had a greater influence than any other utopia in literature, having been translated into every major language in the world.

A work much less popular than *Looking Backward,* but one, nevertheless, written with a certain stylistic flair, *The Crystal Button or Adventures of Paul Prognosis in the Forty-Ninth Century,* 1891, also uses the device of a protracted sleep to explain a great leap forward in time. The author, Chauncey Thomas, a Boston carriage engineer, repudiates by anticipation the host of science-fiction utopias of our times. He predicts the complete passing of the age of mechanical discovery into a period in which there will be no need for further technology. In common with his predecessors, he establishes an economy of abundance and a political system in which people and government are synonymous terms. Unlike most of his forerunners, however, who confined their ideal societies to a particular city, province, or nation, he predicts a world government based upon permanent and universal peace. This concept was developed in much greater detail between the two World Wars by a Chinese author, K'ang Yu-wei, in a book with a title which has been translated as both *United States of the World,* 1935, and *One World*

Philosophy, 1958. Apparently K'ang Yu-wei never encountered any of the writings of western utopians or social philosophers except possibly those of Marx and Plato. Yet every one of his major principles, apart from adherence to Confucianism, may be found in at least one of his western forerunners. In his concept of One World, all former national divisions or sovereign states have been abolished. The globe has been arbitrarily divided into grids or areas of measurement, but these are merely administrative units. Government is in the hands of one public authority, but most administrative work is carried on by local governments, which are pure democracies. Racial differences have been eroded by a blending process. The family as a unit no longer exists. Children are born in a public nursery and remain in one public institution or another for the first twenty years of their life. When people fall in love they simply contract to remain together for a maximum period of one year, and if mutually agreeable, they renew the contract indefinitely. Men and women are entirely equal in work, responsibilities, and privileges. They are not even distinguishable by the clothes they wear. Homosexuality is not condemned. Machines perform the more arduous tasks. All means of production are publicly owned, and all needs of the citizens are provided by the state. Presumably crime and laziness will disappear. But there are prohibitions against laziness, the idolizing of an individual, competition, and, strangely enough, abortion, since euthanasia is allowed. After a citizen has worked twenty years for the state, he has the option of studying Taoism for the rest of his life. The only novelty is in the great power given to the science of medicine. Medical authorities have the final decision of all matters of policy in every phase of life. All physical problems are, therefore, eliminated except old age and accidents. Chapter headings indicate that One World will emerge through the abolishing of the major restrictions to unity in the present organization of society, that is, those brought about by national boundaries, class, race, sex, family, and professions. A Chinese utopia of the same period by Liu Jen-hang, *Preliminary Studies Concerning the Great Equality of the East* (1926) failed to attain the world-wide popularity of K'ang's, perhaps because the system it proposed would be fundamentally matriarchal. Otherwise Liu followed his predecessor in considering science and technology as the primary forces of the future.

The total number of utopias in the western world alone is enormous, and it increases with each passing century. A recent scholar has produced a list of utopias in this century occupying 21 printed pages. Despite this prolixity and fecundity, the literary value of twentieth century works has not in

general been considered comparable to that of previous ages, and it is the dystopias which have captured the attention and admiration of critics.

Regardless of the precise effect which utopias may have exerted on political reform movements or the molding of social institutions, it cannot be doubted that as a form of literary expression they have made a significant contribution to intellectual history. Political issues raised by Plato and More are still being debated. Voyages to never-never lands provide a release for individual fantasies while restraining scientific futurology within human dimensions. The imaginary societies of Enlightenment satirists and their eastern counterparts stimulate awareness of imperfection and the absurd wherever they are encountered. The collectivist planning of Bellamy and others, while perhaps not providing lasting solutions, at least offers some notion of the means to attain social uniformity and a forecast of the resulting problems. Finally, modern dystopias exaggerate the defects of the present and warn against potential developments which we would hope to avoid at all costs.

Although one of the oldest of all literary genres, the utopia remains one of the most popular. Incoporating an endless variety of situations and circumstances and ranging in scope from Thoreau's monocommunity to K'ang Yu-wei's one world, the utopia provides a perennially fresh vision of the prospects for the cooperative creation of a better life. Writers in both East and West have shared in the growth of this cumulative vision.

Notes

1. Yang Hsiao-ting, "Utopian Tradition in Chinese Literature: A Sampling Study," Diss. National Taiwan University 1980, p. 28.
2. Etiemble, ed., *Philosophes taoistes* (Paris, 1980), p. 83.
3. James Legge, trans., *Li Chi (Book of Rites)* (New York: New Hyde Park, 1967), I, 364-6.
4. W. K. Liao, trans., *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu* (London, 1959), 2:120.
5. Yang Hsiao-ting, p. 151.
6. Ibid., p. 221.
7. *Quelques essais de littérature universelle* (Paris, 1982), pp. 149-64.
8. P. 308.
9. My information about *Shidoken* and the following two works is derived from an article "Traditional Utopias in Japan and the West: A Study in Contrasts" by Seiji Nuita in David W. Plath, ed., *Aware of Utopia*, University of Illinois Press, 1971, pp. 12-32.

10. English translations of "The Land of Perennial Life" and "The Land of the Giants" are given by B. H. Chamberlain in "Wasōbyōe, the Japanese Gulliver," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, First Series, Vol. 6, Part 4 (1879), 287-313.
11. Further treatment of the influence of *Gulliver's Travels* in Japan may be found in Karl Florenz, *Geschichte der japanischen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1909), pp. 544-46, 552-53.
12. Gilbert Gadoffre, "Eugene Simon et l'utopie chinoise des années quatre-vingts" in *Le Mythe d'Etiemble* (Paris, 1979), p. 66.
13. Gary Saul Morison, *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's "Diary of a Writer"* and *the Traditions of Literary Utopia.*