The Palgrave Handbook of Utopian and Dystopian Literatures

Edited by

Peter Marks · Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor
Fátima Vieira

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ISBN 978-3-030-88653-0 ISBN 978-3-030-88654-7 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88654-7

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Cover illustration: @Maurice Rosenfeld/Getty Images

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Acknowledgements

This book is the result of immense effort from dozens of people around the world over several years. The editors would like to acknowledge the contributions of all the authors gathered in these pages, thanking them for their expertise, their labor, and their patience. We also want to give special thanks to the skilled and determined team who, whether proofreading, translating, or formatting, helped transform individual chapters into the finished volume. Our sincere gratitude, then, to Bethany Doane, Ben Eldridge, Raquel Jones, and Jo Watson; without your generosity and diligence the completed work would not exist. Thanks, too, to our long-suffering partners and families for their forbearance. Finally, at the risk of seeming self-indulgent, the editors would like to thank each other for the camaraderie, energy, and good humor that has sustained us through life changes, illnesses, and a global pandemic. Working in three separate continents and in three vastly different time zones provided immense challenges, but the volume resulting from our collective efforts is a small testament to the vitality and indeed the necessity of the utopian spirit.

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Introduction

Peter Marks, Fátima Vieira, and Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor

Introduction

Thomas More's *Utopia*, first published in Latin in 1516, was written for a small, intellectually elite audience, in a world where few people could read. The book's very title, subtly playing on the prefixes *eu* (good) and *ou* (no)—so that the island of Utopia that gives the book its name famously is the good place that is no place—could be appreciated fully only by people able to recognize such complexities and contradictions. To miss these provocative ambiguities was potentially to misunderstand the book itself, to believe among other things that More himself endorsed the conditions, practices, and philosophy said to exist on Utopia by Raphael Hythloday, who claimed to have visited the fantastic island. Hythloday (a name suggesting to the learned someone who was a "purveyor of nonsense") presents himself as a returned adventurer who had sailed with Amerigo Vespucci at the turn of the sixteenth century, asserting that he came across the island of Utopia somewhere in a Pacific Ocean then largely unknown to Europeans. Hythloday argues with

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P. Marks et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Utopian and Dystopian Literatures*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88654-7_1

More's doppelgänger and other real "characters" in the text itself that Utopia is far superior in organization, customs, and philosophy to the Europe they inhabit. The text More fashions out of this complex and intense debate is a sophisticated and consciously challenging blend of the real and imagined, the serious and absurd, a world of communal living and slaves, where materialism is scorned, mercenaries are hired, and where every house door opens automatically, so "there is nothing private anywhere" (More 2002, 42). In our world, where Mark Zuckerberg can comment that privacy is an outmoded concept, such a phrase has a dreadful power, but More was probing the degree to which his contemporaries might be willing to give up privacy for security or stability.

Built into *Utopia*'s DNA is the comparison of one world with another, a maneuver that generates much of the originating text's intellectual dynamism, activating arguments about the world conjured up by Hythloday in relation to the world its first readers inhabited. What is remarkable is that over 500 years later *Utopia* (now translated into dozens of languages in countless editions) still can perform this task, prompting readers in the twenty-first century to think critically about the world they inhabit in relation to a place imagined more than five centuries ago. The terms "utopia" and "utopian" have long been part of the lexicon of informed cultural and political debate, of brilliant and inspiring speculations, and of chilling forecasts. *The Palgrave Handbook of Utopian and Dystopian Literatures* aims to display this immense and still-active richness in its historical sweep and international reach, surveying and assessing the range of topics, critical thinking, and creative genius that continue to make the utopian and dystopian thinking vital to and invigorating in our world.

By definition, any artistic genre requires multiple examples produced over an extended time period by numerous figures. *Utopia* later came to be understood as inaugurating and naming a genre that has produced innumerable projections across subsequent centuries, including arresting sub-genres such as dystopias and anti-utopias. In this broader sense, *Utopia* and texts like it encouraged new ways of thinking, the adjective "utopian" extending the boundaries of the genre well beyond the literary world into other cultural forms and into social, political, and philosophical debate. Utopian thinking prompted people to construct actual communities on the bases of what their inhabitants understood as utopian principles. For some of its detractors, this potential "real world" application makes utopian thinking inherently programmatic and potentially repressive. The political philosopher John Gray, for example, in his polemical critique *Black Mass* (2007), likens utopian thought to apocalyptic religious zealotry, an "attempt to remake the world by force" (Gray 2007, 15). For other critics, such as Friedrich Engels in his essay "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," (Engels, 1972) utopian thinking is hopelessly and indeed dangerously optimistic, distracting attention from harsh social and political realities that need addressing through the "scientific socialism" Engels himself advocated.

Against these nay-sayers are those who, in diverse ways, understand utopian thinking as productively critical of the world as it is, pointing creatively toward

worlds still to be built. More than a century ago, in *A Modern Utopia*, H.G. Wells declared that "every generation will have its new version of Utopia" (Wells 1994, 220), while Ernst Bloch's three-volume *The Principle of Hope* (originally published in 1954) argued that a sense of the "not yet" is built into the human condition. Ruth Levitas argues in *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society* that "the utopian experiment disrupts the taken-for-granted nature of the present. It creates a space in which the reader may, temporarily, experience an alternative configuration of needs, wants and satisfactions" (Levitas 2013, 4). Utopias are also flexible enough to allow that such possibilities are not achieved, that complex social dynamics are not fully resolved, that the "not yet" remains tantalizingly incomplete, and that that is not necessarily a bad thing. Indeed, for Lucy Sargisson, "Utopias will always fail.... They need to. They are no places. But they are important because they function to show us that radical thinking needs to be attempted; they deny that there are no alternatives" (Sargisson 2012, 39). Not for nothing did Ursula Le Guin, one of the genre's most brilliant and thought-provoking exponents, subtitle her novel *The Dispossessed* (1974) "An Ambiguous Utopia." That we could equally apply that subtitle to More's original text speaks to the inherent intellectual vitality, complexity, and playfulness of the genre as a whole. Few works first published in Latin half a millennium ago are even read today. Fewer still provide the basis for a dazzling array of planning, imagining, and debate exemplified by utopian texts in the intervening centuries.

As its title indicates, *The Palgrave Handbook of Utopian and Dystopian Literatures* concentrates on creative literature and the commentary on that literature. But it also contains focused chapters on vital cultural arenas such as film, animation, architecture, and the recent innovation of electronic gaming and web-based hyperutopias. The handbook strives to recognize and celebrate the current state of thinking on utopias and dystopias, to provide a guide to key creative and critical texts through history. But the sheer volume of primary and secondary material makes it impossible for any volume to be comprehensive—even one with over fifty chapters by scholars from around the globe. In devising the structure of the handbook, the editors were mindful of the need to deal with conceptual questions about the definition of utopia and its sub-genres, as well as to recognize the long historical narrative and vast geographical sweep of utopian projections, including extra-terrestrial worlds. They also took account of the amazing diversity of cultural, social, and political approaches and issues that have been enlivened by utopian responses and counter-responses. One necessary realization was that no volume could adequately cover the vivid immensity of the topic. Instead, the editors trust that the handbook can act as a richly informed guide and as a prompt for the vast audience of academics, students, and the intelligent public to whom it is addressed. Such readers are encouraged to use the handbook as a catalyst for creative and independent thinking, very much in the spirit of More's original work.

In that spirit (and as a counter to critics of utopias and of utopian thinking per se who see them as irredeemably reductive and rigid), there is no single perspective taken in these pages, no overarching or subterranean ideology hidden in its chapters. Contributors were allowed to demonstrate their own awareness and expertise and to express these without the imposition of a standardized jargon. In a similar way, the editors expect that few readers who pick up *The Palgrave Handbook of Utopian and Dystopian Literatures*, whether literally or virtually, will read it sequentially from cover to cover, instead following their own intellectual inclinations. We hope that exploring in this way they will inevitably venture down new paths, discovering fresh, illuminating territory for thought, study, and discussion. This open-minded approach recognizes overlaps between chapters as well as competing or even contradictory interpretations of primary and of secondary texts. But, in the spirit of Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," where the question "Do I contradict myself?" receives the confident reply, "Very well then I contradict myself," *The Palgrave Handbook of Utopian and Dystopian Literatures* is large and contains multitudes.

The First 500 Years of Utopian and Dystopian Literature

When Thomas More forged the neologism *utopia*, he constructed a platform for the unlimited exercises of imagination that have become part of the identity matrix of Western societies. Over the centuries, literary utopias and utopianism exploded in different directions, but they never lost sight of the literary work that was at their origin. This happened because More did not just publish a book, but also proposed a new way of addressing problems. More was, in fact, a *founder* of a specific *discursivity*, as Michel Foucault says of Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx: like the Austrian psychoanalyst and the German philosopher, More produced "the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts"; he set up a discursive practice that is "heterogeneous to its subsequent transformations" (Foucault 1984, 114–116). This is why, when we look at contemporary utopian literature and coeval utopianism, or when we analyze every stage of their evolution, we notice a transformation of the utopian discursive practice while acknowledging its affiliation to the primeval text. The result is there is no such thing as an isomorphic utopianism.

From this perspective, although Utopia as a literary genre is to be defined in light of the structure, narrative framework, and fabulation strategies that characterize More's masterpiece, we need to consider how it has been influenced throughout the centuries by other literary genres—travel literature, romance, novel, autobiography, epistolary works, science fiction, and hyperfiction, among others—and by different worldviews. These influences have resulted in an evolution of the genre, a mark of its capacity to adapt to new times and tastes, which ensured its survival. Five centuries of variations on utopian possibilities have transformed utopian literature into a *site of memory*,

as Pierre Nora defines it (1998): of countless alternatives and historical opportunities for transformation, in the case of utopian literature; of the human capacity to resist, oppose, and counteract, in the case of dystopian literature. This memory has pervaded the diachronic identity of Western societies, forming its connective structure and performing an autonoetic[1] function, i.e., providing societies with an awareness of what they are, how they are meant to (re)act, and what they are supposed to become.

Reporting on 500 years of utopian and dystopian literature with the aim of evincing the most meaningful evolutionary moments entails the creation of typologies that may sound artificial. It is with this awareness we offer an account of five centuries of utopias, highlighting, in each century, changes in how utopian and dystopian fiction relate to real/fictional space and time, how they focus on the interests of the community or of individuals, or how they range from idealizing society to proposing feasible ideas.

The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

The label "Renaissance Utopias" hides many particularities that may be arranged in five different groups to reflect changes in the utopian tradition. The first group is modeled after Thomas More's *Utopia,* from whence springs not only utopia as a literary genre but also what we would call the *idealistic strand* of utopian literature, concerned with philosophical concepts such as justice, and resting upon the idea that reason will engender the good society. Many names, such as William Godwin or William Morris, will join this strand over the centuries; in the eighteenth century, utopists will take it to a further stage, and imbue it with the conviction that human progress is possible. This was an idea More would never subscribe to, constrained as his views were by the unavoidable belief in Original Sin. The "authoritarianism" that characterizes the utopias of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries results, in fact, from the tension caused by Christian Humanism, which led utopists to believe that the progress of societies is possible—while human progress is unachievable. The recipe, then, for a good society, will be the creation of strict laws. That is why imagined communities are set on distant and unreachable islands, and once a "utopian recipe" is created, it is crystallized in time.

The first literary utopias do not offer, in fact, a blueprint for a possible future, but provide space for a critique of the present, evincing what needs to be changed. They are, in this sense, critical and speculative; the main question that worries utopists is the exploration of alternative ways of organizing society. Parallel to the *idealistic strand*, a *materialistic strand* is discernable, also crossing the centuries. Stemming from Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1626), this strand extends its reach to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888), and toward the science fiction that pervades the second half of the twentieth century. What distinguishes Bacon from More is not just a whole century of political, economic, social, and religious changes, but also the conviction that science will bring about prosperity. While not relinquishing the

power of reason, Bacon establishes that scientific progress can afford material prosperity and thus engender the good society; at the same time, his utopia hints at how science may also generate political and social unrest. This opens up a critical debate: are scientific and technological development to be seen as positive inspiration, or as potential threat?

Both of the types of literary utopias created by More and Bacon are clearly inflected by the tropes of Renaissance travel literature. Travel is in fact at the basis of utopian literature from the start: the discovery of new worlds led to the publication of reports on travel and on the exploration of distant places; discovery voyages led to imaginary voyages—and then to utopian thinking and utopian (Hartig and Soboul 1976, 165).

The third stage of the evolution of Renaissance utopias is to be found in Gerrard Winstanley's *The Law of Freedom* (1652) and James Harrington's *Oceana* (1656). In the turmoil of civil war and Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate, respectively, these utopias speculate on very concrete solutions: Winstanley calls for the economic liberation of the people from the landowners and for the establishment of non-hierarchical, communistic society, while Harrington, standing for the rights of the bourgeoisie, forges a plan for the instauration of a society based on a fair system of private property. Forging the ideal constitution thus becomes the focus of Renaissance utopian literature, as it will once more in the late eighteenth century.

The Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 seems to calm revolutionary aspirations. The few literary utopias that are then written (and form the fourth variety of Renaissance utopias) concentrate on idealizing the moral role of the king. But in the decades following the Restoration, another kind of utopian mode arises: no longer geared toward making concrete proposals, these texts turn to satire to prompt critical attention to controversial philosophical and religious matters. This is a historic moment of mutual influence between two utopian literary traditions, the French and English, as several French utopias are translated into English, and vice-versa. Examples of this utopian exchange are the *Histoires des Sevarambes* (1667–1669), by the French writer *Denis Varaisse d'Allais*, and *Les Aventures de Jacques Sadeur,* (France, 1676; England, 1693 as *A New Discovery of Terra Incognita Australis, or the Southern World*), by Gabriel de Foigny. These satirical texts take the utopian imagination to its limits, and find English counterparts in works such as *Gerania* (1675), by Joshua Barnes, or *The Blazing World* (1668), by Margaret Cavendish. This is a moment when utopian imagination scans the four corners of the globe, in an attempt to rejuvenate the genre (Trousson 1979, 96). Indeed, that imagination reaches beyond our globe, for as early as 1638 appear two utopias set on the moon. Francis Goodwin's *The Man in the Moone* and John Wilkins' *The Discovery of a World in the Moon* indicate that utopia's previous relation with space or time does not prevent the reader from entertaining these utopias as plausible or realizable, despite the technical impossibility of flying to the moon.

The fifth stage of Renaissance utopias will have a significant impact on eighteenth-century literary utopianism; bringing together all these influences, it will show an interest in fanciful settings and details as a way of enhancing critical thinking on contemporary matters. By the end of the seventeenth century, after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the philosophical and political essay regains an important place among intellectuals; while these texts cannot be labeled as strictly utopian, they too will influence the next stages of the utopian literary tradition.

The Eighteenth Century

The English eighteenth century starts with a disconcerting anti-utopia, *The Island of Content* (1709), voicing scathing criticism of the idea of utopia itself, i.e., the aspiration to construct an ideal society, and to express the desire for a happier, freer, unregulated life. Although anti-utopias are not to be seen as variations of utopia as a literary genre, it is essential to note that they replicate their narrative framework to denounce the shortcomings, or even the danger, of longing for what will never happen.

Three types of literary utopias are discernable in the eighteenth century. The first type, the satirical utopia, predominates and is exemplified by Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). In these utopias, the fictional space works as an inverted representation of the utopist's society, benchmarking what needs to be corrected. As most of the planet has already been explored, the author of the satirical utopia either invents spaces on our planet without any concern for the plausibility of their existence, or directs the imagination toward the moon, in the tradition of Goodwin's and Wilkins' utopias.

The second type of literary utopia is influenced by the ideas of human progress and perfectibility, both of which preside over the spirit of this century. Grand scientific discoveries affirm an optimistic worldview that transits to literary utopias. In England, the third Earl of Shaftesbury proposes in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions and Times* (1711) that the *educated man* (the Whig aristocrat) is capable of countering the human tendency to evil. But it is in France especially that the ideas of infinite human perfectibility and technological progress give birth to the conviction that the future is bound to bring about not only a fairer society, in terms of social justice, but also a society of material plenty. In France, these ideas inspire Louis-Sébastien Mercier to write *L'An 2440: Un Rêve s'il en fut jamais* (1771), which marks a significant deviation from the way utopias traditionally relate to space and time: no longer in a far place, but in Paris; no longer in a parallel (unreachable) time, but in the future. Mercier's utopia introduces the idea of causality: the future will only be brighter if we act now. It should be noted, however, that it will take almost a century for euchronias to be popular in the anglophone tradition.

The third type of utopia traverses the entire century and testifies to the permanence of the *idealistic strand* that Thomas More initiated while also denoting an evolution as regards the ideas of space and time. "A Description

of 'New Athens' in 'Terra Australis Incognita'" (1720), by Ambrose Philips, describes the three-year pilgrimage by one-hundred-thousand Greek citizens in search of a place where they may enjoy liberties without danger. Likewise, *An Account of the First Settlement, Laws, Form of Government, and Police, of the Cessares, A People of South America* (1764), by James Burgh, reports on how the Cessarians traveled from Holland, where they lived under the permanent menace of a Spanish invasion, in pursuit of an area where they could realize a fairer society. The novelty of these utopias is that they bridge the gap between the utopias of the Renaissance, which describe a place without explaining how to reach it, and the socialist utopias of the nineteenth century, which not only describe the passage to utopia (the revolution) but also set it on national soil and evince its feasibility. The literary genre itself also evolves, incorporating the popular epistolary genre: *New Athens* is presented in the form of a letter addressed to a London esquire, while the account of *The Cessares* comprises nine letters signed by a Dutch explorer.

Later in the eighteenth century, after the American and French Revolutions, inspired by Thomas Paine's idea of the "new Adam" (i.e., the conviction that it is possible to start over) and by William Godwin's idea of a new, moral man, further developments are detected in this third strand of idealistic utopias. *Memoirs of Planetes, or a Sketch of the Laws and Manners of Makar* (1795), by Thomas Northmore, depicts a utopian society not at its final, crystallized stage, as was the case with Renaissance utopias, but open to further development, thus announcing the dynamic utopias of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, resting upon Godwin's idea of a most needed "revolution in opinion" (Godwin 2013), *Memoirs of Planetes* makes it clear that the change depends not on a set of strict laws but on an internalization of a set of moral values.

In many ways, the literary utopias of the eighteenth century prepare for the socialist utopias that will predominate next, but they also pave the way for the birth of the dystopias that will prevail in the first half of the twentieth century. The critical tone that pervades satirical utopias and the projection of utopia into the future are, in fact, the tools dystopia will need to transform utopia into a cautionary tale.

The Nineteenth Century

The turn from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century is marked by the desire to construct a *euchronia*, to make a "good time" into a historical reality. It is best summarized by Henri de Saint-Simon when he proclaims that the Golden Age lies not in the past but in the future (Saint-Simon 1814, 112). While Friedrich Engels disparaged the likes of Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, and Robert Owen as "utopian socialists," none of those three actually produces a literary utopia. Still, their influence on the genre is perceptible in the conviction that the existing order is not immutable, and that it is

the human being's responsibility to transform it. The space and the time for fulfilling social dreams are, they propose, in the *here and now*.

Although Marx and Engels, too, never published a literary utopia, their theories have an even more profound impact on the evolution of the utopian literary genre, as they redefine the very premise upon which euchronias are based. Mercier projects his utopia into the future, because he believes that a fairer society could be built by and for a more perfect human being. Marxist utopists see a promise in history itself. Furthermore, they believe that only when the economic, social, and political conditions are changed will the *new human being* be born. By subscribing to Marxist ideology, utopian authors of the nineteenth century imbued their work with an awareness of historicity. Moreover, they redefine the idea of progress as no longer a merely intellectual venture, but rather as a strong economic and moral project. In light of this idea, the utopian imaginary becomes both expansive, even global, in its purview; and it becomes dynamic, understood as setting forth a guiding principle.

The Marxist-euchronian perspective is no doubt what most impacts the utopian literary genre in the nineteenth century, forcing it to reconceptualize its relation to space (the national soil) and time (utopia will be established only after the revolution takes place). But the euchronia is not the only, or even the predominant, form of the time. The over 1,100 entries that Lyman Tower Sargent offers for the nineteenth century in his online *Utopian Literature in English: An Annotated Bibliography from 1516 to the Present* testify to the coexistence of a variety of perspectives. Although the list includes texts that go beyond utopia as a literary genre (also considering political and religious treatises, essays, poems, plays, and short stories, among other literary forms), we can see throughout the century how the *idealistic strand* that stems from More's *Utopia* persists. John Lithgow's *Equality – A Political Romance* (1802) is an excellent example of how the idea of an ordered society informs nineteenth-century utopianism. As the century goes by, euchronias—not necessarily in Marxist terms—take the utopian imagination further into the future. Some of these utopias are inspired by the theories of the utopian socialists, as is the case with William H. Graham's *Henry Russell; Or, The Year of Our Lord Two Thousand* (1846), which reports on an intentional community, based on Charles Fourier's socialist principles, that manages to establish itself worldwide. Other nineteenth-century euchronias are motivated by speculations regarding the role of technology in a future society, and by the early expressions of feminists who begin mobilizing for social reform, gender equality, and financial independence for women.

Alongside the idealistic strand, the *materialistic strand* finds its best expression in the euchronias that rest upon the idea that technology will bring about a society of plentiful resources, as in *Messages from Mars by the Aid of the Telescope Plant* (1892), by Robert Braine. Here, science and technology have solved all problems, and people now benefit from the discovery of the Elixir

of Life. And many utopias of this time combine the idealistic and the materialistic strands. Such is the case with *Three Hundred Years Hence* (1836), by Mary Griffith, in which advances in technology make women's lives easier within the framework of a society where economic equality between men and women prevails. Another example is *1931; A Glance at the Twentieth Century* (1881) by Henry Hartshorne, in which technological breakthroughs are but an aspect of a far more advanced, democratic society.

The possibility of negative consequences from a shifting social landscape, brought about by technological developments and by the redefinition of the role of women, causes the satirical utopia to flourish again. Annie Denton Cridge's *Man's Rights; or How Would You Like It* (1870) is one notable example that exploits the satiric "reversal" trope of utopian fiction in order to critique the deep-seated—but, Cridge hopes, not irreversible—sexism of American society, and in particular, of the traditional division of labor. Several texts from this period tap into the familiar "dream-vision" structure of utopian writing to imagine a new life for women; Rosa Graul's *Hilda's Home: A Story of Women's Emancipation* (1897), for example, refers to the "dream-picture" painted in a speech made by the eponymous Hilda, who asks, "How can I dare to hope [this dream of a cooperative home] could ever be realized"; and wonders whether it is not "wrong-headed … to be constantly sighing for still more" (Kessler 1995, 114). And in "A Divided Republic: An Allegory of the Future" (1887), Lillie Devereaux Blake imagines women finally having had enough, and leaving their homes *en masse* to create their own society out West. A predictable collapse of the abandoned men into untidiness, disorganization, and sexual frustration brings about their ultimate surrender. This sort of gender-reversal utopia, in particular, effectively highlights the systemic devaluation of women's bodies, minds, work, art … the list goes on.

Utopia as a literary genre continues to rework its relationships to contiguous literary genres, such as the romance and the novel, and moves closer to science fiction. The many imaginary voyages to the Moon that are now published allow utopists to explore not only alternative social organizations but also the potential of technology from a different, speculative stance. According to Sargent's *Bibliography,* the last twelve years of the century feature 660 utopias and dystopias. Besides the feminist texts just mentioned, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) and William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890) foster the debate on Fabian and socialist-communist proposals, respectively. Utopia as a literary genre is now, more than ever, a vehicle for the political debate; but it is also the moment when the difference between the *materialistic strand* represented by Bellamy and the *idealistic strand* represented by Morris becomes more striking: for Bellamy, technological development will ensure prosperity and bring about social order; for Morris, the Revolution is the *sine qua non* for a fairer society, and for a further development of the human being. In the twelve final years of the century, many utopias either support or contradict Bellamy's and Morris's proposals. The century also witnesses the rise of dystopia, with interesting narratives such

as Richard Jefferies's post-apocalyptic *After London* (1885), where utopian possibilities can be discerned at the end of the book. Population control and eugenic concerns are also voiced by nineteenth-century utopias, dystopias, and anti-utopias—by men and women alike. But it is also in this period when H. G. Wells' unsettling novel, *The Time Machine* (1895), is published, announcing the shape of things to come in the first decades of the next century.

The Twentieth Century

The history of utopian and dystopian literature of the first half of the twentieth century is traditionally summed up through the reference to three main authors: H. G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, and George Orwell. These are, no doubt, the most interesting authors from a literary point of view, as they stood the test of time, but to consider only these three writers is to miss the subtleties and complexities of utopian literature of this period, which go beyond dystopian thinking.

Sargent's bibliography, which relies on a broad concept of literary utopianism, offers for the period 1900–1949 an impressive list: 364 titles in the 1900s; 281 in the 1910s; 303 in the 1920s; 416 in the 1930s; and 227 in the 1940s, totaling 1,581 texts. A careful analysis of every decade in this period will lead us to important landmarks and trends, only a few of which we can mention here: the essays in this *Handbook* help to fill out this history. Indeed, the legacy of this literary triumvirate overshadows at least two other critical strands: utopian writing by feminists, which as we have seen has already become a vehicle for political protest; and by writers of color.

Thus, one of the most important texts from the first quarter of the twentieth century is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's series, *Moving the Mountain* (1911), *Herland* in 1915, and its sequel, *With Her in Ourland* in 1916. Anticipated in her shorter "A Woman's Utopia" (1907) these were all essentially "self-published," appearing in the politically progressive *Forerunner*, which Gilman herself launched in 1909, writing the entirety of each monthly issue for the next seven years until the journal closed in 1916 under financial duress. According to Carol Farley Kessler's introduction to the much-needed anthology, *Daring to Dream: Utopian Fiction by United States Women Before 1950* (first published in 1984), Gilman's popularity among feminist critics stems from her "incisive [thinking] about gender, although not about sexual, racial, or class issues. Her fiction and essays are cut from one cloth in their consistent concern to explicate or expose gender practices" (Kessler 1995, 131). Despite the essentialist nature of her thinking on sex and gender, and her apparent "racism and elitism that readers must not ignore" (132), Gilman plays an important role in highlighting the need for women's education and economic independence *as a social good*. Other feminist texts in these early years included visions of communitarian and egalitarian living, interplanetary travel—in both directions: one woman-traveler visits an unknown planet on

which men and women are equally responsible for child care; and a Venusian observer critiques the hierarchical gender relations on Earth.

The year 1932, which sees the publication of Huxley's *Brave New World*, is particularly fertile for utopian thinking. The list of utopian texts prepared by Sargent displays 49 titles, of which only 11 are truly dystopian, aiming to explore negative consequences of technological developments. Sargent also lists three satirical utopias, five ambiguous/flawed utopias, and 29 utopian texts offering positive views on social arrangements and on how technology can improve our lives. And if we look at the utopian texts written in 1949, the year of the publication of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, we will find that, out of the 22 texts published along the year, there are seven dystopias (mainly troubled by authoritarian governments and negative technological developments), two satirical gender-reversal dystopias (written by two male authors), four flawed/ambiguous eutopias/dystopias, and nine eutopias offering positive views on technological developments and communal ways of living. While utopian visions outnumber dystopian narratives, this does not mean that Huxley and Orwell do not reflect the spirit of their time. Their work registers a fear which is genuinely of the period: that technology can be used for the consolidation of the power of authoritarian governments. But we should also note that even Huxley, after publishing his dystopian *Brave New World,* writes *Island* (1960), a utopia that, in spite of its dystopian ending, suggests it is worth trying to construct a better society.

In between those years, 1932 and 1949, Katherine Burdekin's *Swastika Night* (1937) taps directly into anti-authoritarian fears for the future, and, just as significantly, also identifies the hypermasculine toxicity of such regimes. Interestingly, however, this is not Burdekin's first dystopian effort: *The End of This Day's Business* was completed in 1935, but was not published until 1989! In this quite riveting text, Burdekin imagines a female-ruled regime equally as hierarchical as the masculinist dystopia of the later, published novel—although in this text, one woman, herself a member of the ruling class, detects the flaws in the country's ethical and political systems—and breaks the law by educating her son out of the brutish existence expected for all males. As Daphne Patai writes in her excellent afterword to the novel's 1989 publication, Burdekin would

> [excoriate] women for imitating, in their own writings, men's sexual sadism. She attributes the antifeminism of many women's writings during this period to their habitual desire to placate men and their lack of self-esteem because they could only give life, not take it in battle. (Patai 1989, 174–175)

Nonetheless, Patai concludes, Burdekin displays no misandry or bitterness; "it is always with sadness, not with glee at having found men out" (175).

Nor should we overlook the disturbing satire of the African-American back-to-Africa movement in the early twentieth century, George S. Schuyler's

Black Empire, published serially from 1936 to 1938 in two parts: first, "The Black Internationale: A Story of Black Genius Against the World," followed by "Black Empire: An Imaginative Story of a Great New Civilization in Modern Africa." The two parts were published as a single volume only in 1991). The author (who originally published these stories under the pseudonym, Samuel I. Brooks) was a conservative critic of Marcus Garvey, head of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and of the Black Star shipping line that Garvey helped create with the goal of eventually transporting African Americans back to the continent, and building up a global African economic system. Schuyler's rather outrageous and unsettling text depicts Garvey himself in the guise of a ruthlessly authoritarian yet charismatic savior, preposterously named Dr. Belsidus, who uses a form of aerial biological warfare to infect and exterminate the entire white race in America, and then uses this same flight technology to reunite the African diaspora on its home soil through a sort of reversed Middle Passage. For all its stylistic extravagance, which ironically signals the satiric nature of the author's intention, the novel nonetheless marks an early example of what we now call Afrofuturism, complete with then—speculative technologies such as solar power. Schuyler himself was sympathetic to pan-Africanism, even as he was deeply suspicious of self-proclaimed liberationist leaders like Marcus Garvey who, he seemed to suggest, were manipulative and Manichean in their reform practices. Like Burdekin, perhaps, Schuyler's abhorrence of fascism tainted his view of utopian possibility. Schuyler was not opposed to Garvey's ultimate goal of organizing the black race so that, as he wrote, "they can present united opposition to those who seek to continue their enslavement" (quoted in Hill and Rasmussen 1991, 275), but the very success of his publication at the time seemed only to verify a low view of the average citizen. To one P. L. Prattis (editor of *The Pittsburgh Currier*), Schuyler writes the following in 1937:

> I have been greatly amused by the public enthusiasm for "The Black Internationale," which is hokum and hack work of the purest vein. I deliberately set out to crowd as much race chauvinism and sheer improbability into it as my fertile imagination could conjure. The result vindicates my low opinion of the human race. (Hill and Rasmussen 1991, 200)

Nonetheless, *Black Empire* stands out as an early, if acerbic, example of black re-imaginings of race history and social-justice movement. The 1960s and the 1970s are marked by "ambiguous utopias," as Le Guin described her own *The Dispossessed* (1974). In fact, Le Guin stands as one of the great figures of the last 100 years of utopian and dystopian writing, her work touching on just about every theme mentioned thus far in this introduction, and then some: technology; interplanetary travel; authoritarianism; colonialism; gender and sexuality; history and historicity; the nature of dream and reality; the archival impulse of humanity; sustainability of not only environment but of

culture; war; and freedom. The intellectual scope of her writing is extraordinary, sometimes drawing her into odd places from a literary point of view; but when her prose matches her vision, the result is profound and, without overstating the matter, almost mythological. Le Guin's writing is in one sense typical of the period, insofar as it carries a positive awareness that social and political arrangements will always have flaws, but also that these flaws leave space for improvement.

Utopias of the period between 1960 and 2000 are dynamic, open to social and political experimentation—and in fact Le Guin is only one of numerous important feminist utopian writers (though not all of them call themselves such): Suzy McKee Charnas (*Walk to the End of the World*, 1973); James Tiptree, Jr. [Alice Sheldon] ("The Girl Who Was Plugged In," 1973); Joanna Russ (*The Female Man*, 1975); Marge Piercy (*Woman on the Edge of Time*, 1976); Angela Carter (*The Passion of New Eve*, 1977); Doris Lessing (*The Making of the Representative for Planet 8*, 1982); Margaret Atwood (*The Handmaid's Tale*, 1985); Fay Weldon (*Darcy's Utopia*, 1992); Nicola Griffith (*Ammonite*, 1992); Octavia Butler (*Parable of The Sower*, 1993); Karen Tei Yamashita (*Tropic of Orange*, 1997); Nalo Hopkinson (*Brown Girl in the Ring*, 1998)—and many more. We do see separatist utopias—Wittig's *Les Guérillières* (1969), or the ambiguous vision of Sherri Tepper's *The Gate to Woman's Country* (1993), for example; but also the dystopic nightmare of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, the impact of which is very much with us, giving us contemporary texts such as *The Power* (2017) by Naomi Alderman, another gender-reversal dystopia.

A quick survey of names reveals the broadening range of voices—from Afro-futurists to indigenous to queer and gender-bending writers. For all their differences from one another, these texts share one thing: the effort to challenge and in many cases overturn what we know or think we know regarding just about everything having to do with human and, indeed, other-than- and more-than-human lives. The popularity and excellence of science fiction explodes with the fearlessness of authors' imaginations, and with the expansion of technological possibilities, including the modern versions of dreams and fantasy in the opening up of virtual planes of action. Science fiction and speculative writing by the likes of Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Philip K. Dick, Frank Herbert, J. G. Ballard, William Gibson, Kim Stanley Robinson, Ursula Le Guin, and so many more finally pulled that genre out of second- or third-rate literary status, and made it impossible for detractors *not* to see the narrative and speculative possibilities of writing intimately related to utopian/dystopian tropes of structure and critique. The "(other-)world-making" aspirations of these authors—whether of a utopian sensibility or not—have led readers to astonishing, queer places and non-places, and created pathways for writing in the new millennium. As Kim Stanley Robinson recently said, "Science fiction is the realism of our time" (Robinson 2020).

The Next 500 Years of Utopian and Dystopian Literature

In fact, there has always been something "queer" at the heart of utopia. In its critical function to make strange normative idea(l)s and practices, to "think otherwise" and "desire differently," utopia's essential conundrum, its trafficking in the "real" and the "unreal," the abstract and the concrete, keeps destabilizing the ground under us—or dematerializes "the ground" altogether! The queerness of the concept of utopia lies in the essential plasticity of its forms and speculations, which is the source of the "strangeness" that characterizes the experience of any utopian/dystopian traveler-reader. To say this is finally to reject any "utopian blueprint" idea, which seems to have emerged from a fundamental simplification of what Sir Thomas More was onto in the first place.

Contemporary philosopher Miguel Abensour defines utopia as "*the various forms of alterity* to which the desire for freedom … has given birth through the course of history": "Utopia may seem to tell a story about historical tendencies and ideologic propensities that direct history a certain way; but utopia is also a kind of disruption: [what matters is the] *orientation toward what is different, the wish for the advent of a radical alterity* here and now" (Abensour, 407). Thus, the crucial characterization of utopia as "the ever-reborn movement toward something indeterminate" through "a new struggle for alterity" (409). This "ever-reborn"-ness, accounting for utopia's historical "persistence," is a regenerative quality made possible by the conceptual plasticity of utopian and dystopian speculations, and their representational forms in literature. As symbolic forms of desire, whether individual or collective, utopian narratives capture what Abensour calls the essence of utopia, "this non-achievement of being, in its gap in relation to essence, [in which] persistence of utopia resides, the engine of enigmatic rebirth … [that] derives its force from non-accomplishment" (2008, 409). To "demand the impossible," as utopia theorist Tom Moylan (1986) enjoins us, is to entertain the possibilities of other worlds, forms of speculative biologies and sexualities, new forms of cognition, of social repertoires, and of cultural practices. But also, in our so-called real world, we must entertain new narrative forms that can accommodate these (im)possible imaginative visions.

One etymology of "queer" (*twerkh*) reminds us that centuries before the word had any relevance to descriptions of gender or sexuality, it had simply to do with spatial oblique-ness or off-centeredness, its meaning gradually evolving to describe people or things that are odd, strange, peculiar, off-kilter, twisted. (The first known reference to a homosexual as a "queer" was in 1894, when John Douglas, the 9th Marquess of Queensberry and the nemesis of Oscar Wilde, established this word as a homophobic slur.) The queer horizons of utopian and dystopian literatures today are multi-directional, multi-perspectival, multi-dimensional, in both space and time: in other words, *emergent*. In a recent (2019) major study of contemporary British utopian

literature, Caroline Edwards (also a contributor to this *Handbook*) refers to an "emerging caucus" (29) of contemporary texts that foreground the relationship of temporality to narrative, producing thereby a set of methodological horizons attuned to the writer's experience of contemporaneity and—more characteristically—*noncontemporaneity.* Today's utopian texts, Edwards argues, reflect a remarkably common perception of "the contemporary" as disjointed, or parallactic, or queer.

For this reason, the first decades of this twenty-first century represent a particularly robust period of experimentation and inventiveness. Edwards's method of analysis lets loose the play of evolving temporal dimensions and plastic narrative structuralizations. Such novels, she proposes, should be read

> as enacting "theories of their own," ... their interventions into contemporary political and philosophical discourse demonstrat[ing that fiction] reveals to us the possibility of redeeming our past miscalculations in a temporal ambit that is already alive with utopian futural alternatives. (Edwards 2019, 29)

Edwards's characterization of reading as productive in these ways is an appealing challenge to the reader, as it explicitly joins us to the project: that is, the reader is invited to think about reading itself as enacting those theories and involving us in that a critical practice. Our reading is directed, but within a narrative that is self-reflexive regarding its (our) movements "among narratology, formalism, post-structuralism, ecocriticism, post-secular readings, utopian thinking and philosophies of time" (25).

In addition to utopian and dystopian literatures' ongoing investigation of temporal frontiers—queer temporalities, broadly speaking—these texts continue to explore the possibilities of queer embodiment and ontological evolutions. For that matter, we can speak of the queerness of *dis*embodiment, as virtual beings are able to inhabit virtual worlds that are co-temporaneously as real as the one you are located in now. William Gibson's co-evolving subjects and landscapes come to mind: in *The Peripheral* (2014), for instance, we glimpse the grotesque adaptations of "the Patchers," who inhabit a sort of "eighth continent" of toxic plastic trash, the direct descendant of today's Great Pacific Garbage Patch; or, we wonder at the rather thrilling "living tattoos" that canvas the body of a skin-artist. These animate tattoos respond, as skin does, to changes in the artist's own environment, as if illustrating her own sensory experiences; yet they seem as well to respond to her *thoughts*, as well, representing a sort of a mindscape. China Miéville's and N.K. Jemisin's astonishing hybrid creatures, alt-speciations and Remades populate worlds that accommodate all manner of new strangenesses including, *contra* Margaret Atwood's Crakers (in *Oryx and Crake* (2004), from the MaddAddam trilogy), a newly emergent aesthetics made possible by the "glandular arts" of a Kepri (insectoid-human) sculptor in Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* (2001) in the *New Crobuzon* series. N.K. Jemisin's "stone-eaters" in *The Fifth Season* (2015)

are one of the more astonishing of her inventions; appearing as literally statuesque beings in "our" world, they are made from, move through, and consume rocks. And, rarely, they can love and protect a human.

Similarly, post- and eco-apocalyptic imaginaries, by-now "standard" symptoms of planetary dread, might seem to traffic in the inventive predictions of decadence and entropy. But in some authorial hands, severe historical disruption also clears the way for something like a "post-normative" state of freedom, alongside the wreckage. Indeed, in a discussion of Miéville's theoretical clash with science-fiction theorist Darko Suvin on the future of utopian writing, Rhys Williams (2014) observes that Miéville's prose characteristically seeks "the novel's rejection of normative genres and its seeking for a new, satisfactory frame." Satisfactory, but necessarily temporary, as the narrative constantly presents "a dissolving of boundaries and the search for an escape—a Deleuzian *line of flight*—that does not lead back into the old tangle of thought but instead strives, as far as possible, *to break with the ground and articulation of that thought*" (2014, 629, emphasis added). Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007) is another excellent example of this urge to "break with the ground," and to reject the old entanglements: while "everything is imprinted with what it once was," observes this novel's refrain, we can only evolve by pursuing escape—not from "the world" but from the "same old story" of that, our, world. In an essay from *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (1997), Winterson observes that we need not "give up reading nineteenth-century novels … What we must do is give up writing them" (191). Temporal linearity is defied by *The Stone Gods'* representation of temporality (as in others of her novels); temporal and spatial boundaries blur and fold backward and forward over vast distances in multiple directions and dimensions, effecting just the kind of *noncontemporaneity* that Edwards describes.

New speculative fiction takes up the investigation of embodiment and sexuality where James Tiptree, Jr., Ursula Le Guin, and Octavia Butler left off. There are clear implications for not only generic narrative structures but also for the nature of characterological subjectivities. In Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* (2000), the narrator of the entire story turns out to be an about-to-born, neuronally "enhanced" (by epigenetic accident) child of paternal incest. This suggests a new direction entirely for not only the history of the African diaspora, already departed from Earth to inhabit a new, free planet; but also for the history of the trans- and post-human. Winterson's *Stone Gods* includes a spaceship crew member who is a *Robo Sapiens*, a product of the co-evolution of AI bots and *Homo Sapiens Sapiens*; genderless—but presumed by the human neuronormals to be female, and desired as such even though "she" insists that gender is irrelevant to the *Robo Sapiens*.

Moreover, each year brings forward new works by queer and trans authors whose world(ing)s explore levels of physical and psychological intimacy atypical of traditional utopian texts. A 2017 anthology entitled *Meanwhile, Elsewhere: Science Fiction and Fantasy from Transgender Writers* (eds. Fitzpatrick & Plett) may be the first such publication to pointedly resist tropes that