

Tendencies of Utopia: Reflections on Recent Work in the Modern Utopian Tradition

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"Weird Land" by Mark David Rogers

Intellectuals recommending the political utility, and deepening, of utopian research today ought to welcome a certain healthy suspicion as to their motives. Let it be agreed that the big question is how to change the world for the better -- to achieve juster societies that enable, not just the end of hunger and poverty but the beginning of equal life-chances, not just substantive political and personal freedom but more satisfying group and interpersonal relations. It does not automatically follow that composing or criticizing narratives or images of non-existent societies, dramatically different and better than existing ones, will help provide an answer. Utopias -- or, working at imagining and critically considering utopias -- would seem especially called for only in certain sets of circumstance. During periods when radical political struggle seems off the agenda or impracticable because the powers that be have too much power and too many options, utopian speculation trained on redressing the oppressions of the present may teach and move the oppressed and those who side with them. Again, and especially, if a struggle for basic change seems impossible or irresponsible because the conventionally envisaged alternative social arrangements lack appeal and conviction, utopian imagination may be a prerequisite to any significant political action -- to the very idea of revolution or radical social transformation.

Unfortunately, such grim sets of circumstance obtain, if not globally yet in what used to be called the core Western countries, and evidently account for and justify the demand for utopia among left intellectuals that has been stirring for the last twenty years or so, a demand manifest, for example, in the calls for a feasible socialist model of the late 1980s, in the routine reference to utopia or utopian politics in cultural studies and social-space theorists, and in the ongoing reconsideration of religious politics (or at least the calls for that). The principal contexts making for the conditions have been often remarked and abundantly discussed, but it is as well to state them explicitly.

One context is, not the triumph of capitalism, but the existential obviousness, the naturalness, in new as well as old core countries, of its ordering principles: an ideological effect of any dominant mode of production, but which has become entrenched in official dogma since the fall of the Eastern bloc countries and the market euphoria of the early 1990s. Whether it is entertained in the mode of celebration, simple relief, or enervating foreboding, this -- the belief that capitalism is here to stay, that the market principle is definitive of all the nature we or succeeding generations shall know -- works straightway to still political discontent before it knows itself as such or can define itself in struggle, and is surely, since the end of the Cold War, the tap-root of contemporary anti-utopianism. But if the main immediate result of the feeling that capitalism is the only way is to disable utopian impulses and research, its more durable effects are perhaps more equivocal. On the one hand, as an evident malady of the system, an ignorance more or less presenting itself as such, anti-utopianism can tend to create possible allies for the serious left, aligning the mature recognition of historicity, the simple acknowledgement that social arrangements have been very different in the past from what they are now and will likely prove to be so in the future, with the demand for utopia. On the other hand, as not a few people have observed, the more militant market fundamentalists, by tending to reduce capitalism to the free-market principle and by projecting the future as an endless series of de-regulatory acts, paradoxically identify anti-utopianism as a species of utopianism itself. The phantom of a pure market society, seen for what it is, its invidious practical effects as apparent as its interminable illusiveness, works to lift the scorn and sense of inherent unreality from the idea of non-market alternatives, while yet leaving leftist intellectuals with a strong sense of the need for some comparable imaginary machine or machines.

The second context has of course to do with the history of socialism, or with the situation of those who identify with its manifold legacy and so must be committed to learning something from it so as to further it. Here the economic failure and defeat of the Soviet Union, and over the past few years the broadening of the Chinese capitalist road into a super-highway, have left an obvious need for an economic model, an image of socialist (or, if you prefer, non-capitalist) planning sufficiently plausible and tested that reasonable people won't feel that being desirous of revolutionary change is like wanting to walk a plank into the dark. Reversals suffered by social democratic regimes since the collapse of the Eastern bloc would seem to have convinced most that cobbling together some image of a market socialism will not serve to fill this hole. Something simpler and more radical is needed, something more amenable to real complication; and the consciousness arises that this will most likely be articulated by economic reason only

after the fact of its provision in political and cultural struggle, its adumbration in the collective imagination or political unconscious. Socialists today, finding themselves in the position of wanting to know what socialism might look like (in the position, in other words, of utopian thinkers), no longer want, as many on the New Left of the 1960s and 70s did, simply to revalue or revive the anarchist tradition and the legacy, associated with it, of utopian socialism.¹ The agenda is not really to undo what many feel was Marxism's original sin, its predominantly hostile relation to these traditions, but rather to do it over again, to replay the relation, but with new content, and more generously and dialectically this time.

The old conflict between Marxism and anarchist (or utopian) socialisms manifested itself mainly in class, but also, and necessarily, in social-spatial terms. The classical Marxist charge against anarchism was generally that it expressed comparatively marginal (typically petty-bourgeois or lumpenproletariat) interests, rather than those of the structurally central (usually the industrial) working class. The more spatializing anarchist response was to the effect that Marxism wanted to make the world a workhouse; it typically pitted against that centralizing, homogenizing vision some looser, more decentralized or loosely federal, organization of communities. That we, today, tend to think of utopian problems in spatial terms of carving out separate interest areas within a larger permissive continuum, rather than as class struggle or definition (as a matter, say, of discovering what the working class might now be, or what sort of society its paradoxically emancipatory rule might yield) -- this must say something about the current period. Meanwhile, it certainly seems that the relation between general and particular is at issue in many utopian recent works; and it is often hard to tell which (the more general, class, or the more particular, interest-group) impulse is uppermost. This cannot be decided on the basis of whether a given utopia is depicted as an enclave or not, since utopias tend to be enclaves; rather it is a matter of how the utopian enclave makes its claim, whether it is synecdochic or metonymic in relation to "actually-existing society". So, to take two of the more stimulating modern "practical-utopian" texts, I would say that in Michael Sorkin's *Local Code* (1993), a set of rules, evidently much indebted to green political thought, for the construction of a utopian city, the synecdochic impulse is in fact, and in spite of the title, dominant, whereas in Yona Friedman's *Utopies realisesables* (1975), an argument for a global federation of extremely diverse utopian regional communities, it is the metonymic that is prominent.² But one could clearly hold the opposite in either case, since both are negotiating issues of group interest and larger social-political organization.

Even as utopian politics have taken on new relevance, literary utopianism has tended, on many accounts, not to recede exactly, but to lack the imaginative scope, the radical organizing narrative ideas, of what one calls the 1960s utopias (though many of them were published in the early and mid-1970s), all of which struggled head-on with the problems of thinking and plausibly rendering something like an anarchist socialism: the 1960s books that come to my mind first here are Ursula Leguin's *The Dispossessed* (1974), Samuel K. Delaney's *Trouble on Triton* (1976), Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) -- the first of these fairly classically anarchist in its dominant viewpoint, the second bohemian, the third feminist, each falling into the category of

science fiction -- and Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975), an inventive but more or less straightforward descriptive utopia whose most basic motives, as the title suggests, are ecological. That such works, though in some sense from an earlier time, continue to speak directly to the present is attested by the fact that the authors have gone on writing and pursuing their essential issues, if in less totalizing contexts. So Piercy's *He, She and It* (1991), the story of a utopian city, an electronic-crafts "island" within a global corporate dystopia, would seem primarily interested in the quasi-religious issues raised for its female protagonist and her community by the invention of a robot, virtually human in "emotional" terms, but endowed with such superhuman physical and mental skills as potentially to render it of exceptional strategic value; yet on consideration the robot is also very much a device for figuring and updating older questions of class and political strategy. And Delaney's recent *Times Square Blue and Red*, a polemic on behalf of pre-Giuliani Manhattan, may be read as a sober defense of the utopian values of *Triton* or *Stars in my Pockets like Grains of Sand* which arguably teaches more about the conditions of possibility of the urban freedom, the libidinal anonymity, those books celebrate than they do themselves.

Meanwhile, there have appeared works in the last decade or so by a new generation of science fiction writers, some of which, if not so radically utopian as the 1960s texts, certainly pose interesting questions. I will mention two works, trilogies both of them, and both happening, perhaps significantly, to be by writers more classically Marxist and socialist than the 1960s authors mentioned. The more evidently utopian is Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy (1993-96), whose last two books tell the story of the revolutionary secession from an imperialist home-planet Earth of a planetary colony originally settled, and still guided if not governed, by scientists, but increasingly subject to an immigration boom (*Green Mars*); and of the scientific colonists' struggle to find a government for their governments, a way of organizing so as to maintain the integrity of the various communal and ethnic groupings, liberationist and otherwise, that form the bulk of the population (*Blue Mars*). The other recent trilogy of manifest utopian interest is China Mieville's *Perdido Street Station* series, an alternate-technology history, to coin a term, which is generally allowed to occupy the disputed borderline between science fiction and fantasy (its cast of species doesn't just include humans and cyborgs but cactus-men, vampires, and mantis- and mosquito-people). *Iron Council*, the last book, narrates the noble failure of a complexly overdetermined working-class revolution against the corrupt imperial city-state of New Crobuzon, and commemorates the moment of revolutionary coalition and achievement as a utopia, in a manner reminiscent of Marx's writing on the Paris Commune. *The Scar*, the middle book, deals with the adventures of the city of Armada, a piratical floating-fortress island formed from the combination of hundreds of ships, whose old-fashioned mercantilist economy -- depending, it seems, more on trade than on plunder -- and relatively egalitarian polity become utopian, as it were, in the course of fending off the dual threats of imperialist attacks from without and the emergence of an intensified capitalism from within. What do these works have to say about utopia today? To try to answer the question would require extensive consideration and analysis, and in this essay I intend only to review some recent critical work whose arguments seem essential to such analysis. Suffice it to say of Robinson's work that it explores the utopian implications and possibilities of the natural (and particularly the

increasingly paradigmatic biological) sciences at a depth unprecedented in science fiction, both as modes of sociality, in the lab and in the scientific community, and as the source of a potential hegemonic social ideology; and that it brings remarkably rigorous, not to say obsessive, attention, to problems of constructing and maintaining federations, groupings of groups. Of the *Perdido Street Station* trilogy I would more tentatively suggest that its alternate historical setting might be understood as enabling the narrative exploration of possibilities of revolutionary coalition in the global or post-national city, and that the books' more or less punk aesthetic indirectly raises questions about the hegemonic value of postmodern body politics.

The three scholarly books I wish to review and reflect on here -- Phillip E. Wegner's *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, The Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity* (University of California Press, 2002), Tom Moylan's *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Westview Press, 2000), and Carl Freedman's *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Wesleyan University Press, 2000) -- share an attitude of skeptical enthusiasm for modern and late-modern literary-utopian writing. And taken together, they encourage one to consider that it might not be such a bad sign for the project of rewriting and re-enacting the relation of Marxism and utopia that, if the practical-utopian surround of political projects is less rich than what Marx and Engels surveyed when composing the *Manifesto*, recent utopian literary exploration has been comparatively strong.

Utopia and the nation-state

The political mission of utopian research, given the contexts noted above, will almost necessarily, and properly, be both moral-demonstrative and cognitive-analytic. It will be in the first place to show that utopia exists at the heart as on the margins of the anti-utopian present, thus to counter its everyday stigmatization. And it will be to inquire as to how to learn from utopias, as to how they can best be used, especially given the surcharge of skepticism, evident in utopian works themselves, attaching to any particular positive vision of a radically different, better society, and attesting as much to the disunity of oppositional forces as to any unconscious fear of utopia. But if either aim is to be undertaken successfully, a critic must somehow, better early than late, take account of another basic, though longer-term, context, namely the phenomenon of the nation-state and nationalism (which latter must surely be figured into the very definition of the historical nation-state, just as a distinction between core and peripheral regions, and the variable immiseration of peripheral regions, has been part of the definition of "historical capitalism"). Indeed it can very plausibly be maintained, and has been, that Marxism's fatal original mistake was its underestimation of the power of nationalism, and the failure to handle its consequences and contend with its appeal, rather than its failure to accommodate utopian socialisms. And again, it can be maintained that the two mistakes are closely related, since the collectivity-founding, identity-supporting power of national myths calls forth analogies with utopian visions, and has solicited the consideration of some nationalisms, at least, as peculiarly effective utopian ideologies.

No work has more convincingly and usefully argued the case that there is an intimate relationship between utopian thinking and nationalism than Phillip Wegner's *Imaginary Communities*, whose richest chapters are on early twentieth-century works. Indeed, one of Wegner's main theses is that the literary utopia as we have known it has helped to found and reinforce the nation-state in its obviousness as a political body and spontaneous object of collective allegiance. He contends that utopian figuration in general dialectically conditions (that is, both determines and in return is determined by) the abstract social space of the nation-state, and that its specific role is to provide imaginary resolutions to national contradictions. With respect to the moral-demonstrative mission of contemporary utopian criticism, *Imaginary Communities* makes a brilliant, if also problematical, move, locating in nationalism itself another site of "actually existing" utopianism, to be added to the salvific market fantasy. But the lessons he teaches about how to use utopias must then be in good part monitory -- though utopian solutions may of course be better or worse, and it is not clear to me that Wegner means to claim that utopias are always and everywhere at root nationalist.

Let us look more closely at the logic of Wegner's argument. It might seem that commonplaces about the variousness of utopia, or the variety of utopian dichotomies (to the effect that utopias tend to be either urban or rural, technological or anthropological, hedonist or spartan, and so on) give the lie to the evidently single-minded thesis that the utopian genre helped to construct, and habitually expresses, the nation-state. But Wegner's argument is not vulnerable to such objections, since it is cast in terms of social space. His focus is on the complex and peculiar political-ideological event by which a net of seemingly imaginary uniformity is imposed, with real homogenizing results, on a territory of some size, comprising culturally diverse communities, peoples, and regions. The reference in the title to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* is explicitly acknowledged in the introduction (p. xvi): imaginary communities lead to imagined ones, and put in play the same paradoxical relation between the general and the particular, with the territory homogenized by the state's institution then needing to assert its aboriginal character, its nationness (whether this be a kind of purity-the German character, say -- or some special sort of mixture or diversity -- the "melting pot"). For Wegner, the punning coinage Thomas More came up with to set off the difference between his imaginary society and previous ones -- "utopia" = eutopia/outopia; a good-place that is a noplac -- is to be explained by the singular imaginary character of the modern nation-state as a mode of sociality. In an early chapter on *Utopia*, he proposes that the crucial role allotted to the separation of the island from the mainland, and the accompanying stress on the social homogeneity of the island, figure or proleptically enact the emergence of the modern nation out of post-feudal social relations. Later, more thoroughly developed readings of modern utopian works, most notably those of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, show how these works consolidate the abstract particularity of the space they presuppose, their figurative "discoveries" effacing ethnic and class differences to nationalist ends. So in *Looking Backward* the application of military organization to the entire workforce looks toward the emergence of a professional-managerial class and reminds us in advance of its affinities for the state; and so the novel's peculiarly memorable snapshots of the domestic life of the future, in a residential building that strikes as a cross between an extremely upscale dormitory and a

hotel, with amenities piped in from central locations and shopping streamlined and easy of access, anticipates the stifling bliss of consumer society. Likewise in the narrative of *The Iron Heel*, the overcoming of labor troubles and ethnic rivalries by an alliance between corporate industry and the state figures the "solution" yet in the wings of a bureaucratic-industrial class (fascism, but also the American military-industrial complex). Though he never puts it quite so starkly as I am doing here, Wegner's position tends to be that the modern utopia is in fact an unconsciously *nationalist* genre, selecting and shaping ideologies and discourses to ends that further nationalist agendas on the one hand, but that also wind up symptomatically displaying the antinomies of the national idea in practice.

As I read *Imaginary Communities*, I found myself comparing it less often to Benedict Anderson's book than to Manfredo Tafuri's *Architecture and Utopia* (1967).³ Wegner's argument about modern utopias might indeed be considered a politician variant for literature of Tafuri's exceedingly incisive, and rather more pessimistic, essay on architectural utopia, and it seems worth outlining the affinity here. Tafuri began with mid-eighteenth-century city plans, and the late baroque remodeling of the city along axial avenues, the convergence of which on symbolic monuments and buildings is allowed to speak, as is usual in studies of the baroque, of the shaping power of the neo-feudal (i.e., absolutist) state. But for Tafuri, the imposition of a centralized form as if from without more pointedly -- and already -- registers and defends against bourgeois anxiety at modern conditions of existence. Though the precise conducting mechanisms involved remain largely unexamined in this manifesto-like work, it is made all the clearer for that how it was that Enlightenment city plans anticipated and responded to an essential capitalist imperative. The aboriginal utopian moment for Tafuri's architects and planners emerged in the passage from the economic phase in which capital gained control of the means of production, and commenced to make use of these, and existing labor processes, as they were, to the logically subsequent phase when capital began to refashion tools and labor processes in a systematic hunt for surplus efficiency and hence profit. To put this in Marxist shorthand, Tafuri's architectural utopia initially consists in the move from the formal to the real subsumption of labor under capital. Or, more precisely, it coincides with the *prospect* formal subsumption brings of the relative rationalization of labor conditions and processes. The mandate issued by this moment to technical innovation (thus mediately to the physical and natural sciences) knows its mediated architectural correlative, with social space taking the place of labor processes as object to be "rationally" refashioned. Make me a new space (a building, a city, a region), says capital to architects and planners. Let it represent the new values of value (the abstract value that generalized commodity production stamps on all social products): liberty, equality, and fraternity, for example. And let it be functional: that is, let it aid in increasing value, accumulating capital.

Part of Tafuri's main case is that capital -- in the first place because of its constructive abstraction from and of existing labor processes, but which means as well from the practices and conventions bound up with them -- involves an imperative to form: it brings with it a need and indeed an anxious desire to remodel the social space of labor in its ongoing rationalization, as well as the space as it were left behind by it; and this desire is

-- within capital's own limits -- totalizing, and hence inherently utopian. Though this basic trait of the system is peculiarly accessible to the recognition of architects and architectural theorists, Tafuri does not present them as persisting in a fast grip on it. His focus rather is on the architectural ideologies by which the possibilities and limits of capital's utopian dictate are inflected and disguised, and as a rule his practice involves showing how the ideologies come to grief on being, or in failing to be, realized. Architectural success, for him, tends to involve an especially critical utopianism, which throws in elegant relief the contradictory political and economic demands brought to bear by value.

Like Tafuri, then, though with specific reference to the broader spatial region of the nation-state, Wegner casts the practice of utopia as rather integrally functional to the reigning system. New institutions, social groups, cultural practices and mechanisms -- such things as these, utopias do pre-figure or "discover". But the discoveries partake of the static dialectic, the changeless change, of the modern, insofar as they are grounded in the (capitalist) nation-form. If the utopian genre or form at one time projected a place outside the system, it has been pulled within it today, which is to say that it has now become capitalist if it wasn't always. Such arguments are no doubt useful, and point to a basic problem to be kept in mind by any proposal for a utopian politics today. Marx and Engels cast utopian socialisms in general as misguided politically for drawing good people from the central struggle against the ruling class and to overthrow the state; and they often also presented them as misguided in their social visions, which on examination would prove to feature the Golden Age of some old noble faction or the Cokaigne of a yeoman remnant, dressed up and disguised to fool the people. But the danger today, Wegner and Tafuri would suggest, is that any conceivable utopia comes into the world already thoroughly co-opted, potentially of direct service to capitalist redevelopment or national reconstruction.

Yet this seems a partial view. One way of arguing the partiality is by referring to the effect of the arguments' success. To the extent that Tafuri and Wegner are persuasive that the utopian noplacement is exchange-value or the nation-state, to that extent the utopian effect of the works in question tends to be diminished, to seem a ruse, to appear inauthentic. Yet if it is distorted or diminished, the utopian appeal, the sense of new and available possibility, is not eliminated. And consideration suggests that such authenticity as remains is owing simply to the revelation, rarely accessible to ordinary experience, of the systematicity of what exists, the imputation of spectral structuring power to categories of capital or nation. But this, the effect produced by systematicity as such, surely implies that the ultimate object and means of utopian production/ imagination is somewhat more general and slippery than such readings as Tafuri's and Wegner's would have it. Utopias, I would propose, are conditioned on, and aim to clear the space for and of, not the particular mode of production of capitalism, but modes of production themselves in their interrelation. Among the most basic of their uses, then, is to encourage a recognition of the overdetermined modality of the social, and the possibilities inherent therein.

If this last seems implausible at first, to make it less so I would refer here to two received anti-positivistic axioms (which are about as commonsensical as anti-positivistic

axioms can be). The first has to do with the conceptualization of the mode of production, and I will put it briefly here; the second concerns the invention of utopia, and it will require some explaining and analysis. Any reader of Marx's *Capital* will remember how a basic historical and epistemological paradox is gradually shown to stem from the emergent laws of motion of the capitalist system itself. On the one hand, no social system would seem to naturalize itself so insistently at most of its levels as capitalism, and to negate so effectively its various agents' sense of history: commodity fetishism indeed, which Marx implicitly casts as the new quasi-religious medium of capitalist production and exchange, masks the very origin of social products in (exploited) labor from their buyers and consumers. But on the other hand, Marx more than once notes that it is the separation out of the economy's component parts from one another, and accordingly the very generality of the categories it in a sense creates by rendering available (categories such as "labor-power", "value", "surplus value", for example, or for that matter "production", "distribution", and "exchange") -- this abstraction of the economic permitted the discovery of the concept of the mode of production, and hence encouraged a systematically comparative point of view (the definition of capitalism as against feudalism, the slave mode of production, and so forth). In light of this paradox, to suggest that utopias (or at least the profounder of them) take the modality of the social, rather than the capitalist mode, as their object, is not necessarily to move the utopia's putative generic focus a long way.

The second axiom, from the history of utopia, ought to be better known than it is, and might be put thus: that the work that gave the genre its name enacts a materialistic re-situation of "idealistic" ideas. Let it be granted (what one might raise doubts about in another context) that Thomas More was imitating Plato's *Republic* when he wrote *Utopia*. Everyone knows that *The Republic*, once it has defended, early on, its definition of justice as the cobbler sticking to his last, spends the rest of its many words in determining just what the last is, and what it entails, for the ruling, and indeed for the most part the governing, class. For all the reactionary radicalism of Plato's refashioning of the ruling class, *The Republic* never questions the fitness of the city-state's basic class-structure: it rather takes the form of the city-state for granted -- which I believe is to say, Plato took city-state social structure as an *idea*.

Thomas More, in coming up with his island commonwealth, is indeed, as Wegner stresses, imaging a more compact and discrete society than was known anywhere at the time. But the bigger news is that he remakes the social substance from the ground up, beginning with the economic imperative that all citizens should know two crafts and work at least six hours a day at one of them. Attention is thus focused right away on the total shape of the island society, on what it will turn out to be. Largely because the narrative then assumes the form of description -- or in other words largely because More does not resort to the convention, which would not have been hard to find, of the native informant guiding the visitor's interest from one area to another (back and forth from public to private affairs, for example) -- the center of interest in Book II of *Utopia* is relatively strictly on the unfolding logic of the various social levels or fields (the economic, the political, the familial, the military, etc.), both in themselves and in their

notoriously slippery relations with one another. Attention is trained, that is, on the different social logics in what we might call their overdetermination.

The wit of *Utopia* then consists in the fictive materiality of the social image or idea it describes, and in the enigmatic relation between the socially conceivable and the possible which this materiality instates. If the foreign society can be described so objectively and intricately, even in its incongruities and seeming contradictions, does that not mean that it is derived from the societies we know? and ought it not then to some extent to be available, a possibility for "us"? Diderot was activating a deep-utopian convention, as well as making a joke, when he had one of his interlocutors say, after a native description of Tahitian mores and sexual practices, that these seemed quite European.⁴ "This utterly strange, fearful, and happy place -- it is us": this reaction corresponds to a central moment of Utopian structure, underscored by More's Book I, which shines a bright light on the frightening and overdetermined dynamic of unemployment in England that made such a re-organization of the economy as is depicted in Book II thinkable. Yet as a rule, or in the most developed utopias, the foreign society described clearly is not a possibility for us -- not, that is, a political possibility: that is why it is a "noplace"; and it is partly by encouraging one to consider the grounds of this impossibility that the utopia paradoxically may claim to possess a strategic value.⁵ So it is that the enigmatic materiality of finished utopias indicates -- and, I would argue, stems finally from -- the abstract status, and the necessary overdetermination, of modes of production themselves, rather than from the dominance of capitalism.⁶

Utopian dystopia

But let us grant that Wegner's theory has reason, and that many modern utopias are implicitly but centrally nationalist, or conditioned by the form of the nation-state. I've suggested that to the extent this is recognized to be true of a utopian work, it tends to lose its utopian character; and the question might be asked as to what character it then assumes. One possible answer is that it tends to become a dystopian work.

With the enunciation of the term "dystopia", though, one comes upon a nest of quarreling commonplaces. The idea is an old one that utopias and dystopias (or negative utopias) are closely related, though some, such as the great scholar of utopias, Lyman Tower Sargent, confidently distinguish between utopias and dystopias, good and bad places, while others insist on their indistinguishability: critics of anti-utopian persuasion, for obvious reasons, generally have it that utopias are always dystopian, brave new worlds of their very nature despotic old tyrannies.

The idea, however, is also old-though it has been strikingly revived by Jameson and begins to be taken for granted in science fiction criticism-that utopia and dystopia are quite different things. Jameson likens their relationship to that between sadism and masochism according to Deleuze, who showed that these perversions are not inversions of one another, as often held, but rather involve radically different subjective orientations. The claim that dystopias are the truth of utopias is belied especially, Jameson has it, by the characteristic dystopian focus (as in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, easily the most influential

twentieth-century dystopia) on a middle-class protagonist's experience of and hopeless struggle against an oppressive system. This he sets in contrast with the unstorylike, epistemologically exploratory, narrative set-up of the utopian work.⁷

Can one reconcile the two commonplaces? Two observations may be helpful. The first, simpler one concerns the notion that utopia and dystopia are radically different genres, rather than inversions which might easily turn the one into the other. That they are different literary creatures, with different needs and appetites, doesn't mean that they don't go together or can't be combined in the same literary or narrative work -- anymore than the structural difference between sadism and masochism means that sadists will avoid masochists' company, or that a sadist can't also be a masochist. The structural difference between utopia and dystopia might even provide a useful way of thinking about their close "empirical" relationship, and thus about the form of much science fiction, some of it very good. Think, for example, of Philip Dick's great novels of the 1960s, which typically combine dystopian and utopian dimensions, and the role in them of "decent" middlebrow slacker characters.

The other, more complicated observation concerns the reasons intrinsic to utopia for dystopian (or negative) effects, hence for ambiguity. On the one hand, there is the matter of the collective standpoint(s) from which the better society is to be projected. Utopias tend to be imagined mainly from some one or two of these. This means that a given utopia will in practice assert itself against other collectives' basic assumptions and gratifications, or be more or less indifferent to them. Thus More's Utopia is anti-noble. Diderot's Tahiti is indifferent to the peasantry.

On the other hand, if, as I've suggested, an ultimate aim of utopian form is to force the recognition of the overdetermined modality of social existence, then it's hard to imagine the collective ego that would welcome that recognition and straightway set about striving to establish conditions that would let it live securely in its light. Intense ambivalence is the reaction one would expect, and the recoil from the recognition goes some way toward explaining the charge that there is something inherently totalitarian about utopian thinking -- a charge that may then inform, or become a constructive principle in, utopias themselves.

The most contentious of Tom Moylan's main aims in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* is to rescue the dystopian genre from its conservative reputation. He moves toward this case by way of a demonstration that science fiction has become the modern repository of the utopian literary tradition. This he delivers in the form of a descriptive history, both of the trajectory of science fiction, especially since the 1960s, and especially of science fiction criticism, which has increasingly moved toward being a branch of utopian studies. I would stress that *Scraps* is particularly useful as a review of the best that has been thought and written about utopian and dystopian science fiction in the last half century, and that it owes this utility partly to its refusal to succumb to the fiction of steady progress that generally usurps upon such intellectual histories. Moylan charts the trajectory of science fiction and its criticism rather as a series of responses to the major movements and events of the period. In his book, these are -- unobjectionably enough --

the 1960s counter-cultural "revolution"; the neo-liberal conquest and hegemony of the late 1970s and 80s, issuing in the defeat of actually existing socialism; and the gathering disillusion and collective regrouping of the 90s. The drift of science fiction is readily legible in relation to these big events: a wave of positive utopias in response to the 60s; its supersession by dystopian works in response to neoliberalism; and then (now), in a somewhat hopeful third phase of dialectical synthesis, a deepening of dystopian novels, which include utopian episodes or open out into them on their margins. Moylan's research and defense of dystopias, or rather of what he calls critical dystopias, comes as a timely critical project at the end of this trajectory, presenting itself as answering to the movement of science fiction itself.

No matter how impressive and inclusive they are, one may always raise questions about such literary-historical stories by citing works that go unmentioned or that figure only as exceptions to the trend. Didn't people go on writing dystopian novels through the 60s and 70s? How does Kim Stanley Robinson's remarkable and decidedly utopian *Mars* trilogy, already mentioned above, fit into Moylan's dystopian 90s? But the tendencies Moylan charts seem plausible and supported enough to make one look for ways of saving and enriching his story, rather than casting it aside.

The same can be said for the case that dystopias are not necessarily anti-utopian and are becoming less inclined to be. Moylan seems to me to offer two different arguments for this position. The more strictly theoretical one is that dystopias are properly neither anti-utopian or utopian, but mediate or can mediate between the two positions in this ongoing dispute, leading from an anti-utopian mindset to a utopian. A part of the idea here -- that writing a dystopia doesn't commit one to the idea that utopias are intrinsically bad, or in other words doesn't entail anti-utopianism -- is clear enough. Why dystopias should *lead* to utopia does not seem to me to be articulated in Moylan's theoretical formulations. But the principle involved does come through in the other, practical-historical, argument for dystopias -- that is, in Moylan's splendid summary-analyses of three recent exemplary critical dystopias: Robinson's *The Gold Coast* (1988), Octavia Butler's *The Parable of the Sower* (1993), and Marge Piercy's *He, She and It* (1991). Here his main argument is that "it works that way", that these highly self-conscious and developed dystopian novels of the near or not too distant future do indeed include or project vital utopian communities in the interstices or blank places of the dystopian world. Still, on consideration, there seem to be two distinct conditions or motives that help to explain how it is that dystopias contain utopian pockets. One principle seems to be formal: since the dystopias tend to be extrapolated from tendencies in actually existing societies, these are generally attributed a totalizing character and momentum; and at its limit the diagnostic narrative almost necessarily raises the question of what tendencies the totalization has left out, and whether these do not include more benign social principles, which might also be available for development. On the other hand, the conditions for the emergence of pocket utopias are social-economic in nature, and have to do with the fragmentary and autonomizing dynamic of capitalism, which leaves gaps into which micro counter-communities can intrude.

The case for utopian dystopia seems to me on the whole convincing and indeed uplifting. Yet one element is missing, or at least seriously understressed, in Moylan's story of dystopia. This is that the dystopian novel was in the Western popular imagination at least a Cold War weapon, serving the pervasive and essentially mendacious dichotomy between free or open and totalitarian or closed societies. One imagines that the dystopian efflorescence of the 1990s was made possible partly because the dystopia was freed from its role in capitalist apologetics, which role had meant that even if a writer caricatured aspects of capitalist society, her points would be encumbered by the analogy with Stalinist socialism (wherein, for example, the doublespeak of the newspaper reminiscent of the *New York Times* must be just like, or even worse than, Pravda). Surely this too then is part of the reason Moylan can show from the works themselves that dystopias now tend toward the utopian side of the utopia/ anti-utopia divide. Meanwhile, that the Cold War scenario remains rather formative, and has not been forgotten, is evident in Moylan's use of the categories of "open" and "closed" as evaluative terms to be applied to utopian works -- a lingering habit in much science fiction and utopian criticism, which deserves the censure of all people of political good will, both the open- and closed-minded ones. To talk of open and closed societies without specifying what possibilities are opened up and closed off, and to what ends, is always misguided. But more to the generic point, to say that a utopia is open or open-ended is already to imply that there might be an engrained tendency to premature "closure", and this implication partakes of the anti-utopian recoil from recognition of the modal overdetermination cultivated by utopian form itself. One senses an understandable desire to have the old Cold War scenario behind one, and an anxiety that it has not entirely receded. But the political and ideological role played by (the reaction against) formerly-existing socialism in the recent history of the utopian idea and genre was considerable, and goes on being so. It seems best to deal with it directly.

Utopian narrative as theory

While it is generally allowed that the utopian literary tradition has largely been taken up into the field of science fiction from H.G. Wells on, the manner in which it has been accommodated has not often been carefully articulated.⁸ Darko Suvin's argument, in his groundbreaking *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), that the utopia was science fiction's dominant subgenre left one wondering how exactly utopia was to be distinguished from the structure of the genre itself, which was defined in terms of the presentation of an alternate world. Moylan's case that the science fiction dystopia is different from utopia, while leading to its inclusion, gives a sense of how utopia can in some science fiction works figure as a structurally subordinate narrative unit, though like Suvin he continues to treat science fiction as basically utopian without saying exactly why (anti-utopian science fiction is a contradiction in terms, I suppose, if anti-utopianism is finally a version of utopianism; but what about a simply un-utopian science fiction -- can that be?). One of the many virtues of Carl Freedman's *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* is that, while following in Suvin's path, it offers a more precise, and a plausible, case as to how the utopian genre is taken over into science fiction. Since this involves a change in the nature of the utopia, Freedman also has some searching things to say about how science fiction utopias, at least, are to be used.

Most people who have considered the discursive conditions and makeup of science fiction would agree that it presupposes the novel, or that it is a kind of novel. Freedman specifies this proposition in two original ways. First, he casts science fiction as a species of the historical novel, or rather virtually as a *continuation* of it whose mission is in part to preserve the ideological prerequisites of the form as constructed by Lukacs in the opening chapter of *The Historical Novel*: historicism, popular nationalism, and the notion of progress through class struggle.⁹ If the historical novel takes as its object of representation some episode or phase from the national past, remote enough temporally and culturally to be felt as different, the science fiction novel paradigmatically represents an episode from an equivalently remote, if hypothetical, future, and accordingly accepts the same set of narrative imperatives. These include, above all, constructing a set of characters whose motives and feelings are different in fairly basic ways from what are known today. This however cannot be managed without the provisions of a plausible, if implicit, explanation for such difference, which -- since significant comparison between two utterly unlike things is impossible -- generally turns out to involve the positing, or indeed the quiet demonstration, of a continuity, an underlying ground of identity, between present and future. The result, if the imperatives are successfully met, will include two partial sketches, that of the future frontally rendered, that of the present laterally and implicitly summoned to mind, from what is thus projected as a larger story of class struggle. Now one knows that in Lukacs' chronology, the historical novel went into decline after 1848, with the dissipation of the ruling classes' will to understand the past historically. But the novel of the future, Freedman suggests, was largely exempt from the decline. This was partly because no such sanctions as had fallen into place with respect to the familiar events of the bourgeoisie's rise to power applied to hypothetical future happenings.¹⁰

But there is another main reason for the exemption, and here we come to the second original inflection Freedman gives to the proposition that science fiction is a kind of novel. Freedman supplements Lukacs' focus on novelistic narrative with Bakhtin's representation of the novel in terms of a certain basic kind of language practice. According to this influential theory -- which is yet more deliberately eulogistic of the novel than Lukacs' -- its formal end is primarily the democratic one of pitting and weighing a generous portion of the linguistic stock of discourses, usages, idioms, in relation to one another, so as to create a sense of language as a site of social struggle and development, and to institute a healthily reflexive linguistic perspectivism. In view of science fiction's largely mass or pulp status, this might seem an unpropitious theory to which to have recourse. But Freedman argues that the creation of an alternative world puts pressure on science fiction writers to invent or extrapolate plausible new usages or idioms, and that this leads to an especially prominent quotient of linguistic dialogism. This case is articulated cogently in the theoretical second chapter of *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, but most persuasively, if quietly, made in a deft series of extended close analyses that comprise the third. In the theoretical chapter, he uses the following bit of dialogue, from the opening of Dick's *Ubik* (1969), as an example of the premium placed on heteroglossia by science-fiction narrative. The head of an agency whose business is keeping track of psychics and telepaths is roused from sleep by the news that another psychic has disappeared:

Sleepily, Runciter grated, . . . "What? Melipone's gone?. . . You're sure the teep was Melipone? Nobody seems to know what he looks like; he must use a different physiognomic template every month. What about his field?"

"We asked Joe Chip to go in there and run tests on the magnitude and minitude of the field being generated there at the Bonds of Erotic Polymorphic Experience Motel. Chip says it registered, at its height, 68.2 blr units of telepathic aura, which only Melipone, among all the known telepaths, can produce."

Freedman's commentary on this passage (pp. 36-39) lays stress on how the informational surplus conveyed by the neologisms ("teep", "physiognomic template", "minitude", etc.) is managed and made to seem accessible by accents from (hard-boiled) detective slang and generic bureaucratese, a recognizable but newly intense linguistic mixture suggesting the passing of as yet unencountered barriers in modern society's ongoing journey toward the reification of the soul. His main point is that the utopianism of the novel is effective in and by means of the sustained practice of such "anticipatory" dialogism.

For Freedman, then, science fiction represents an extension and continuation of the historical novel tradition. One can wonder, indeed, so important is this lineage for him, whether the utopian tradition brings anything substantive to the novel other than a precedent for representing plausible hypothetical societies, instead of remote and hard-to-imagine past ones. The critical dimension of science fiction, which for others stems either from its professed alignment with the epistemology and cognitive attitude of the physical sciences or from its utopian inheritance, for Freedman tends rather to derive from its impress by the historical, hence the realist, novel. He justifies and qualifies this position by reference to the work of Ernst Bloch, generally regarded as embodying the greatest modern Marxist theory of utopia, but which in fact exhibits, as Freedman notes, something of a prejudice against the tradition of descriptive utopia. Bloch's notion was that head-on attempts at utopian description were something like category mistakes; he in fact preferred to find authentic utopian impulses implicitly or indirectly expressed, in fairy tales, for example, or in Nazi propaganda. His reasons for this had to do with the contempt for the historicism of linear Progress that he shared with Walter Benjamin, a contempt predicated in both writers on a non-stagist understanding of the problematic of modes of production. If there are a limited number of modes of production, and if "nonsynchronous development", to use Bloch's term, is the rule, then it is virtually axiomatic that "future" as well as "past" modes -- or less science fictionally and "stagistly" put, emergent as well as residual ones -- know a displaced and partial existence within the present, or dominant, mode. There is nothing particularly mystical, then, about the claim that the future can be known in advance -- only for Bloch, such nonsynchronous knowledge, of the future as of the past, is typically located in the domains of ideological conventions and of feeling, of characters, rather than in institutions and fixed social structures, and so manifests itself symptomatically.¹¹ Straightforward descriptive utopias, with their stress on institutional arrangements, tend necessarily to overlook the symptomatic presence of utopia in the present; and, in

extrapolating a whole society from tendencies in (rather than elements of) the present, tend to perpetuate the myth of linear Progress. Freedman's argument is that the novelistic narrative of science fiction saves the literary utopia from such objections, its dialogic rendering of character and event enabling a properly indirect and uneven, yet rather ample, figuration of the future.

If the novel's combination with the utopian genre updates and improves the latter, the orientation of the novel-form too undergoes change. Lukacs' historical novel had as its basic aim to narrate an episode from the past such that it became legible in its import for all social groups and classes, indeed understandable as the product of class struggle. This image of the past as class struggle was then to reflect on the present, to de-reify it or estrange its actions from its pet ideologies, by casting it under the aspect of class struggle also. The science fiction novel does not leave behind this totalizing realistic motive, according to Freedman, but in his construction the accent falls more on the theoretical effort needed to de-reify or estrange what exists, on the self-consciously interpretive character of the narrative act itself, than on any finished positive image or discovery.

This is deft generic construction, and a brilliant apology for science fiction. My reservations have to do in the first place with the characterization of the pre-science fiction utopia as relatively static and shallow -- an understandable modernist prejudice (which is partly to say, make no mistake, an individualist prejudice), rather uncritically taken over from Bloch, which does not weather sustained attention to the great utopian works, admittedly few in number, of the transition to capitalism. This leads one, in the second place and more importantly, to look with some skepticism upon the relative seamlessness with which Freedman has the novel -- not a particular favorite of Bloch's either, it might be worth noting, nor a form particularly adapted to anticipatory figuration according to him -- combining with and improving utopian narrative. No doubt there are various modes of combination; but the hypothesis seems a plausible one that in general science fiction is a constitutively uneven or discontinuous genre, its novelistic presentation habitually in tension with its descriptive utopian core or quotient. Such unevenness would account, for example, for the mixed sense of exhilaration and disappointment with which one reads often even the best science fiction. The disappointment is often the result, I think, of the split between characterology and world-construction in them -- though I'd emphasize that by this I don't mean to agree with the old putdown that you rarely find strong (or believable, or richly developed, or memorable) characters in science fiction, for science fiction abounds in richly individualized characters: the problem tends to be rather that they are too rich and believable, and their motives accordingly not sufficiently foreign from "our own". One might consider this split as utopia's revenge upon the novel for its invasion and colonization of its relatively impersonal ground.

Meanwhile, a last reservation has to do with the idea of science itself in science fiction, or with the relative neglect thereof. Perhaps we simply have to do here with an instance of unfortunate naming, which can be contrasted with the incredibly felicitous title "utopia". H. G. Wells' favored term for the genre he invented was "scientific romance", and it might be worth pursuing the rather different implications of this name

for the role of scientific ideas in the narratives in question. Most readers of science fiction, in any case, have thought that they were reading a kind of writing that professed to owe a real debt to scientific thought of some sort. Neither Freedman nor Suvin would seem to address this assumption sufficiently; though they perhaps tacitly depend on the idea of its filiation with real science to put over the case for science fiction's superior cognition effects.[12](#)

Freedman's broadest claim about science fiction, reflected in the book's title, relates it provocatively not to the natural sciences but rather to the humanistic ones. Its aim of cognitive estrangement makes it the most theoretical of genres -- the narrative correlative, then, of what he calls "critical theory". By this last he means thought that lives up to the Kantian break with naturalism, or in other words that securely recognizes "the primacy of interpretation", the need to construct the object of social knowledge conceptually, without taking for granted information provided by the senses or custom. At times he refers to this as the anti-positivistic, dialectical tradition, and its strongest versions he finds in Marxism, psychoanalysis, feminism, and certain post-structuralisms. The historicist-constructionist bent of science fiction determines its affinity with these various radical forms of modern theory. Just as lyric poetry was the privileged object of the New Critics, for example, corresponding to its conceptual stresses and prejudices and affording it an opportunity to show what it could do best, so science fiction ought to be recognized as the privileged object of critical theory; indeed it is privileged even if critical theorists don't know it.

Experience suggests that the claim that science fiction is the most critically sophisticated and intensely theoretical genre around frequently meets with initial skepticism. Any reader reacting thus should pause to consider whether she does not continue to be governed by highbrow prejudices against mass-cultural artifacts, and then go out and read some of the novels Moylan and Freedman write about. For his part, in a series of elegant readings in his third chapter, Freedman has no trouble showing how Ursula Leguin's *The Dispossessed* (1974), Samuel Delaney's *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* (1984), and Joanna Russ's *The Two of Them* (1978), for example, both teach and test core propositions of Marxism, deconstruction, and feminism respectively. What ought to elicit skepticism in Freedman's argument for science fiction as privileged object of critical theory is, not the claim for the theoretical character of much recent science fiction, but rather the propriety of the category of critical theory, a peculiarly capacious omnibus which, insofar as it rests on a myth of a modern break with the past, will one day likely stand revealed as the sort of story intellectuals under capitalism couldn't help telling themselves. Yet Freedman's analyses of the novels leave little doubt that they move among contemporary Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, and difference-logic as if they were aspects of one another, and probe their social significance and possibilities -- this is a quiet leitmotif in Freedman's series of readings -- in ways and at a depth not often encountered in presentations of the theories themselves. So *Stars in my Pocket like Grains of Sand* does more than Derrida to suggest what a politics of difference might mean, and you can learn more about the potential of, and relations among, gender consciousness, biopolitics, and the emergence of the techno-body from *He, She and It* than from Donna Haraway. One is finally tempted to wonder whether

science fiction's relation to theory is not more active than the formula of "privileged object" lets on -- whether indeed the utopian medium of the novels does not help to construct the contemporary state of the theoretical to which critical theory in fact refers, as well as to render it strategically.

That an estranging, elucidatory, unifying role is accorded science fiction in the realm of theory tends to be supported by Freedman's concluding arguments about the status of critical theory and science fiction in postmodernity, which latter he understands, uncontroversially, in terms of the increasing saturation of society by the principle of exchange-value. In the absence of large-scale struggles against the dominant system, theory, because of its relative dependence on collective action, comes to exhibit the properties of art: Adorno, and above all his *Minima Moralia*, is instanced as an exemplary, and formative, case here; but one might think of how one increasingly reads theory-Deleuze or Zizek or even more empirically minded theorists such as Spivak-for its narrative, or symptomatic, value, rather than for any claim to an adequate purchase on social reality. Meanwhile art, traditionally more individualistic in its productive context and less strapped by the hibernation of collective energies for change, will continue to come into its own and its figurative activity assume by proxy greater social-conceptual value.

Not the least of Freedman's merits, in any case, is to keep calmly to the fore the centrality of utopian fictive hypothesis or figuration to the continued critical understanding of society. Witness, in conclusion, his striking critique of the trend within science fiction known as cyberpunk:

The success that cyberpunk has enjoyed . . . is based on the way it imaginatively registers perhaps the two most prominent features of late-capitalist society today: the multinationalization of both finance and industrial capital, and the growing technological importance of the computer. . . . cyberpunk at its best (which is mainly to say [William Gibson's] *Neuromancer*) offers an unprecedentedly forceful picture of certain key features of postmodernity, displaying an ultracommodified global totality increasingly difficult to comprehend and increasingly resistant to . . . counterhegemonic projects. . . . The enormous and virtually instant commercial success of cyberpunk . . . is . . . due to the attitude of essential *acceptance* with which cyberpunk orients itself to the postmodern environment. . . . Many [critics] have proclaimed that in cyberpunk science fiction finally becomes . . . part of "mainstream" literature. But some understanding of the counterhegemonic conceptual resources of science fiction is required in order to evaluate this claim for what it really is: an admission that, in contrast to some earlier science fiction . . . cyberpunk is *less* radically critical and so less radically science-fictional. . . . science fiction is, at least in our time, the privileged generic vehicle for utopia; that is, for those anticipatory figurations of an unalienated future that constitute the deepest critical truth of which art is capable.

A more persuasive justification for utopian thinking is not to be found than in the searching identification made here between the ability to imagine a different society, on the one hand, and the capacity on the other to maintain a critical attitude. And it would seem at least implicit, to recur a last time to my guiding theme of the overdetermined modality of the social, that maintaining a critical attitude entails considering existing social phenomena as products of a set of possible systems whose reciprocal determinations need not be as they are, but might be redisposed.

Notes

1 The best thing I know on the anarchist legacy is T. J. Clark's chapter on Camille Pissarro in *Farewell to an Idea* (Yale University Press, 1999), 55-138.

2 Michael Sorkin, *Local Code: The Constitution of a City at 42 Latitude* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1993); Yona Friedman, *Utopies Realisables* (L'Eclat, 1974), and, in an updated version, available online at <<http://www.lyber-eclat.net/lyber/friedman/utopies.html>>.

3 Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, Barbara Lapenta, tr. (MIT Press, 1979).

4 "behind the abruptness and the savage accent I seem to detect European ideas and European turns of phrase"; from "Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage", in *Denis Diderot: "This is Not a Story" and Other Stories*, P.N. Furbank, tr. (Columbia, MO: 1991), p. 72.

5 Its reflexive stress on its own cognitive limits is a constant theme in Fredric Jameson's writing on utopia; see most recently *Archeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fiction* (Verso, 2005), esp. chs. 4 and 11.

6 I have argued the position in the above paragraphs at greater length in the introduction to my *Utopia, Carnival, and Commonwealth in Renaissance England* (University of Toronto Press, 2004).

7 See Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (Columbia University Press, 1996), Part One.

8 This no doubt has to do with science fiction's status as a mass-cultural genre, which was until fairly recently banned from college literary curricula. To lay stress on its continuity with utopian tradition, rather than on, for example, the role of scientific or technological extrapolation, was a way of winning academic respect for the genre, hence making courses in science fiction possible.

[9](#) Georg Lukacs, *The Historical Novel*, Hannah and Stanley Mitchell, tr. (University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

[10](#) Jameson has similarly argued that the utopian novel of the late nineteenth century was a way of keeping history alive, in "Progress Versus Utopia; or, Can We Imagine the Future?" *Science-Fiction Studies* 9.2, July 1982, pp. 147-58.

[11](#) See in particular Bloch, "Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to its Dialectics", Mark Ritter, tr., *New German Critique* 9, Fall 1976, pp. 3-11.

[12](#) Perry Anderson's observation (in *New Left Review* 26, Mar-Apr 2004, pp. 72-75) seems unassailable, that the technological potential of the physical sciences has been a main utopian concern from early on, absorbingly so since the revolution in genetics and microbiology. His implication that this merits more consideration than Jameson tends to give it applies to the writers reviewed here too. (Jameson, though, goes some way toward making up the lack in "If I find one good city I will spare the man": Realism and Utopia in Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars Trilogy", in *Learning from Other Worlds: Estrangement, Cognition, and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia*, Patrick Parrinder, ed. [Durham, 2001], pp. 208-32, and now reprinted as the last chapter in *Archeologies of the Future*.)