A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias. (Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, 1891)

Oscar Wilde’s poignant analysis suggests that three important aspects of Utopia are evident in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Firstly, Wilde recognizes the persistent ubiquity of utopian desire in human history. Utopia springs from the same impulse as the myth or the eschatological desire for a better afterlife and thus yearns to realize a condition of happiness, well-being and social harmony. Indeed, myths of the Island of the Blessed, the Land of Cockaygne, Elysium, Shangri-La and the Garden of Eden haunted philosophers, writers and travellers for centuries and paved the way for the geographical utopia of the Renaissance period and the voyage utopia of the eighteenth century which believed in the transformative quality of alterity.

Wilde’s aphorism also indicates that neither the genre’s founder, Thomas More, nor seventeenth- and eighteenth-century followers could claim perfection and universality as invariable principles. What we therefore see, mostly later in the period, is recognition of the human restlessness that renders the classical idea of human nature and thus the ideal of static utopianism futile. Utopias are discourses on change itself rather than simply blueprints.

Generically, too, utopias of the period are hybrid, integrating the ‘literary’ and ‘political’ into a polygeneric and polymodal literary genre. Primitivist and nostalgic utopias, sentimental individualist utopias, voyage utopias, satires, anti-utopias, pornographic utopias (somatopias), feminist utopias (feminotopias), micro-utopias, philosophical tales and utopias with mixed legislative systems document this diversity. Two main paradigms of utopias of the period however can be identified: utopias that are strictly regulated by the state/government in all aspects of human life and society (‘archistic’) and utopias which are based on the idea of maximizing freedom and
self-regulation (‘anarchistic’). Thus, while utopia’s form, function and content are historically variable, its defining characteristics remain constant: the desire to recognize, mobilize and transform.

In 1516 Thomas More (1478–1535), advisor to King Henry VIII, Catholic martyr and saint, published his most controversial book, De optimo reipublicae statu de que nova insula Utopia Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus (Of the best state law and of the new island Utopia, truly a golden booklet, as beneficial as it is cheerful), now known as Utopia. Whilst More’s Utopia was unique in its ‘atopic’ quality, that is without one singular and certain meaning, it also reignited classical utopianism and adapted it to the early modern context.²

The term ‘utopia’, however allegorical its meaning, has always carried a spatial dimension that created imaginary geographies. Renaissance and early modern utopias displaced their ideal and other worlds by locating them in faraway, undiscovered countries and remote uncharted islands and planets. Texts such as More’s Utopia, Francis Bacon’s New Atlantis (1627), Francis Godwin’s The Man in the Moone; or, A Discourse of A Voyage Thither (1638) and Gabriel Plattes’s A Description of the Famous Kingdome of Macaria (1641) were clearly influenced by contemporary quests of discovery and colonization. Utopia exists because Abraxa (the original name of the country) and its people were forcefully colonized by King Utopus. Francis Bacon’s New Atlantis echoes Richard Hakluyt’s Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation (1589) and reflects Walter Raleigh’s journey to and disastrous colonization of Guiana. Gonzalo’s famous micro-Utopia in The Tempest, ‘Had I plantation of this isle, my lord,/And were the king on’t, what would I do?’, borrows from the 1609 Bermuda pamphlets³ but also paraphrases Michel Montaigne’s primitivist argument on natural justice and virtue made in his essay ‘On Cannibals’ (1580). Michael Drayton’s poem ‘Ode to the Virginian Voyage’ (1606), borrows from Hakluyt, projects ‘Earth’s onely Paradise’ onto the New World but at the same time calls upon ‘You brave heroic minds,/Worthy your country’s name’ to refuel England’s eminence in the colonization of America. The extensive appropriation and settlement of the ‘New World’ is justified by a model of progressive socialization: such narratives use the displacement of fantastic voyages, Robinsonades and Utopia, to define society and civilization as progressive alienation from barbarism to civilization. The narrator in Book II of Utopia emphasizes that the original inhabitants of Abraxa, ‘rude and uncivilized inhabitants’ were brought ‘into such a good government, and to that measure of politeness, that they now far excel all the rest of mankind’.⁴
Paradoxically, More’s *Utopia* also resonated with or inspired utopian projects that attempted to reverse the colonial process or at least create peaceful relations between colonizers and colonized. In 1520, initially supported by Charles I, Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484–1566) tried to establish a network of farm communities in present-day Venezuela inhabited by both Spanish and free Indians, but had to abort his plans in 1522. Vasco de Quiroga (c. 1470–1565), translator and passionate disciple of *Utopia*, attempted on several occasions to realize More’s blueprint in Mexico. His hospital-pueblos of Santa Fe and the free Indian communities in Lake Pátzcuaro were highly successful until the prohibition of slavery was lifted by Charles V in 1534. Quiroga’s book *Información en derecho* (*Information on the Law*, 1535) projects the utopian vision of a Christian state onto the New World. Like More and Montaigne, who were disenchanted by some aspects of European society, Quiroga hails the native justice and virtue of Mexican Indians as exemplary, and sketches out the scheme of an elective Christian monarchy to govern the Mexican Indians freely and peacefully without colonial force and intervention. Both de Las Casas and Quiroga pre-empted the eighteenth-century Jesuit utopian colonies (‘Reductiones’) in Paraguay which sought to reconcile primitive Christianity and aboriginal primitivism.

Campanella wrote a City of the Sun. What about my writing a ‘City of the Moon?’ Would it not be excellent to describe the cyclopic mores of our time in vivid colors, but in doing so – to be on the safe side – to leave this Earth and go to the Moon? (Johannes Kepler)

Utopia is inseparable from the imaginary voyage. Prester John’s Indian kingdom, the voyage of St Brendan and St Brendan’s Isle, *terra australis* and the icy north of the kingdom of Thule, voyages within the earth and beyond the stars are all expressions of utopian desire. Medieval and Renaissance maps (*mappae mundi*) inserted the speculative geographies of Eden, the Island of the Blessed, St Brendan’s Isle and the mythical island of Brazil (Hy-Brazil) into their navigational charts, destabilizing the boundaries of the world. The lunar voyage challenged the boundaries of the cosmos. The tradition of the lunar voyages popular since Lucian and Plutarch’s *The Face of the Moon* was reignited both by the geographical discoveries of the age of Columbus and by the heliocentric discourse of the Copernican revolution. In that sense, imagining a world on the moon was perhaps a response to the Renaissance world in which systems of hierarchy, authority, religion, as well as planetary revolutions, were called into question. Reflecting on the consequences of Copernicus, John Donne concludes that ‘new philosophy calls all in doubt’ (*An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary*, 1611).
Literature on moon travel was also fundamentally satirical, providing a safe medium to criticize contemporary society.

The mathematician, astronomer and disciple of Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler, wrote his lunar dream, *Somnium* (posth. 1634) partly as a defence of the non-geocentric solar system but also to speculate on the possibilities of interplanetary travel and life. Kepler’s endeavour to promote Copernican science and challenge his contemporaries’ scientific view by providing a ‘lunar’ perspective on planetary science would have clashed with a detailed utopian blueprint of an idealized lunar society. His *Somnium*, however, paved the way for subsequent lunar utopias and science fiction.

In 1638, Bishop Francis Godwin published the first English lunar novel, *The Man in the Moone: or a Discourse of a Voyage Thither by Domingo Gonsales the Speedy Messenger*. The book takes the form of a travel account, combining elements of adventure narration and literary utopia with scientific description. What makes Godwin’s voyage utopia so interesting is that the picaresque wanderings of the main character take him to different worlds that all function as a critical contrast to his own, not so utopian world. Gonsales’s voyage starts in Spain, brings him to St Helena and then to the moon. Godwin accepted the notion that air filled the space between worlds and that the moon was inhabited by intelligent human beings. Thus, after a successful flight that followed the scientific principle that the earth’s gravitation diminishes with distance, Domingo Gonsales meets a ‘Man in the Moon’ who acts as his liaison to the Lunarians. Their conversations include the fundamentals of the lunar society, science, the Lunarian language, religion in contrast to the nature of politics, and religious conflict on earth. Though earthly society seems inferior, Gonsales returns home to spend the rest of his days with the Jesuits in China. Thus pre-empting the critical voyage utopia of the eighteenth century, Godwin does not propose one simple utopian blueprint, but uses the picaresque, Robinsonade and the lunar voyage to reflect critically on his own society and world.

Godwin’s work influenced John Wilkins to revise his *The Discovery of a World in the Moone; or, A Discourse Tending to Prove, That ’Tis Probable There May Be Another Habitable World in That Planet* (1638) and *A Discourse Concerning a New World & Another Planet* (1640). Both Godwin’s and Wilkins’s works were imitated in several important ways in Cyrano de Bergerac’s *Histoire comique contenant les États et Empires de la Lune* (1657). The lunar voyage persisted in the eighteenth century with David Russen’s *Iter lunare* (1703), Diego de Torres Villarroel’s *Viaje fantástico* (1723), Eberhard Kindermann’s *Die geschwinde Reise auf dem Luftschiff nach der obern Welt* (1744), Robert Paltock’s *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins* (1751) and Voltaire’s *Micromegas* (1752). Subterranean
voyages such as Lamékis ou les voyages extraordinaires d’un Egyptien dans la terre intérieure; avec la découverte de l’Isle des Sylphides (1735–8), Baron Holberg’s Journey of Niels Klim to the World Underground (1741) and Casanova’s L’Icosameron (1788) further extended the boundaries of the imaginary geography of utopia in the eighteenth century.

Although geographical utopias/voyage utopias of this period are akin to contemporary narratives of explorers, conquerors and merchants, they also projected archaic ideals of Paradise onto new worlds. If Paradise or the Golden Age had been lost, then surely it could be found and thus become a utopian paradigm. The Irish monk, St Brendan, documented his seven-year search for the earthly Paradise in the Navigatio of Saint Brendan. The settlement of America was recorded as the discovery of Eden, Paradise, Canaan and a chiliastic ‘new Heaven and a new Earth’. Even the later Cotton Mather’s Magnalia Christi Americana (1720) and the writings by the Shaker Ann Lee described America as Eden. This quest for Paradise, embodied in the iconographic tropes of the Golden Age and Arcadia, was shaped by either a nostalgic grief for the lapsarian loss or, in the case of Thomas More, a dynamic utopian impulse that sought to recreate the terrestrial Paradise. Arcadia’s yearning for containment forges an ‘artful’ harmony (Philip Sidney) that reassures the individual in an immediate natural environment but at the same time alludes to the conflicts in the ‘non-pastoral’ world. Instead of merely harking back to the memory of a long-lost Golden Age, the pastoral juxtaposes an idea of moral economy with the historical disturbances of war, feudal exploitation and the increasing split between country and court. Arcadia thus has always been a classical literary trope and appears in different guises and cultures. The Chinese myth The Peach Blossom Spring, recorded in a poem by Tao Yuanming (365–427) describes a peaceful peasant society, inaccessible and irretrievable. The early Irish Tír nan Óg (‘The Land of the Ever-Young’), recorded in Micheál Coimín’s poem Laoi Oisín i dTír na nÓg (1750), mythologizes the simple Arcadian existence. In 1502 the Italian poet and humanist Jacopo Sannazaro published his poem Arcadia, which fixed the early modern perception of Arcadia as a lost world of idyllic bliss, remembered in regretful laments in the manner of the Idylls of Theocritus. Edmund Spenser, in his Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, places The Faerie Queene (1590–6) in the tradition of a Morean utopianism, depicting ‘a Commune welth such as it should be’. Thomas Traherne’s ‘The Third Century’ in the posthumously discovered and published Centuries of Meditation (1908) marries visions of blissful prelapsarian childhood with arcadia utopica and in many ways pre-empts the Romantic utopian celebration of childhood innocence.
The most striking example of an anarchistic pastoral text is the medieval *Land of Cockaygne* (Land of ‘small cakes’). Merging the classical myths and fantasies of Lucian’s *True History* and Hesiod’s Golden Age of Kronos and the chiliastic yearning for Heaven and Eden, it adds to the history of early modern utopianism the element of the carnivalesque. Addressing similar issues to More’s preoccupation in Book I with rural poverty, land migration and agrarian capitalism, the *Land of Cockaygne* tells of a prelapsarian land of plenty where peaceful peasants once lived in abundance and well-being with no restrictions of private property or laws, juxtaposing the ideal of plenty with the reality of feudal serfdom and rural poverty. In the same vein, the Spanish novelists Antonio de Guevara in his *Libro Llamado Menosprecio de Corte y Alabanza de Aldea* (1591) and Miguel de Cervantes in *Don Quixote de La Mancha* (1605) use the utopian fantasy of a rural Arcadia to comment on the conflict between rural migrants (*jornaleros*) and farmers.

We have thus seen so far that any consideration of the legacy of Thomas More’s text needs to consider cross-over influences by other genres and ideal-society writings. The texts and projects considered above are part of a larger and European-wide conversation about the ‘best state of a commonwealth’.

The question remains what the generic and modal matrix is within which utopia operates. Whilst indebted to classical utopianism, early-modern travel writing, the pastoral/Arcadian tradition and finally Christian Chiliasm, *Utopia* borrowed its generic make-up from classical literature, particularly Menippean and Lucian satire, travel writing and the romance novel. The Platonic dialogue is prominent in More’s *Utopia* and doubled-up by the dialogue between Books I and II. It offers a systematic and detailed description of Utopian society and contrasts historical reality with the alternative history/society. Through this ‘cognitive estrangement’ (Darko Suvin) or the imagination of strange worlds, the reader learns to see his/her own world from a new perspective. ⁸

*Utopia*’s literariness and didacticism spring from Renaissance poetics. In particular, Philip Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy* (1595) provides a useful model for *Utopia*’s commitment to verisimilitude but also rhetorical ambivalence. His central premise is that poetry is an art of imitation, that is a ‘representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth’ not unlike a ‘speaking picture’. ⁹ More’s thought-experiment to resolve early-modern Europe’s problems is thus a literary counterfeit, an imaginary history of a ‘Not-Yet’ better world (Ernst Bloch). ¹⁰ With the emergence of new literary genres, especially the early novel, the generic make-up of utopias diversifies.
Thomas More’s *Utopia* provides the model for the archistic Utopia, a strand of utopianism that believes in strong governmental control to achieve the common good. Underlying More’s *Utopia* is the idea of (original) sin. Certainly, ‘the chief and progenitor of all plagues’, Pride, is sought to be eradicated in the utopian environment where strict social control, education and the threat of the death penalty replace self-interest with the idea of common good and true friendship. The absence of privacy, private property and the idea of self-interest in an isolated social environment forces pride to fade. In *La Città del Sole* by Tommaso Campanella (1623) and Johann Valentin Andreae’s *Reipublicae Christopolitanae Descriptio* (1619), the sins that are targeted are Tyranny, Sophistry and Hypocrisy, variations on Pride and self-interest. Again, social engineering and education are proposed to eradicate these great evils. However, the danger of sin is not overcome in these Renaissance utopias. Instead human nature is reprogrammed and disciplined (often through the threat of the death penalty). The primarily monastic make-up of the archistic utopias functions to subdue sin in favour of the common good.

In opposition to the geometry of the archistic utopia, the anarchistic utopia is ruled by an Arcadian primitivism that determines the constructed environment, social relations and organization of private/domestic relations. Especially, the liberation of human sexuality (strictly regulated in the archistic utopia) is the main reason for the success of these utopian societies. Rabelais’s *Abbey of Thélème* (1534), which foreshadowed the libertarian utopianism of de Sade, declares the absolute authority of the individual, governed only by his or her wishes and desires. ‘Do as thou wouldst’ is the motto of the Abbey. However, the strand of archistic utopianism remained dominant, if expressed through different religious denominations and reform principles, for the two centuries after More produced his ‘Golden Handbook’.

*Utopia*’s initial critical reception is contained within the prefatory letters (*perargae*) of the volume: the letters from More’s own friends and contemporaries endorse the text. Six reprints of the Latin text in the sixteenth century and translations into German and English document the popularity of *Utopia*. By 1611 the word ‘Utopia’ was entered into an English dictionary and inspired writers throughout Europe to imagine idealized communities which were situated in the distant reaches beyond the known world. The most prominent ones are predominately Christian utopias of different denominations. The utopias by Andreae, Stblin, Campanella and More propose ideal states that seek ‘to lessen the burden of our mortality’ (Johann Andreae) by making religion, education and science their utopian handmaidens.
More’s *Utopia* was closely followed by Johann Eberlin von Günzburg’s pamphlet series *Die fünfzehn Bundesgenossen* (1521). Embedded in the series is Eberlin’s ideal city state, *Wolfaria*, today acknowledged as the first Protestant utopia. Eberlin’s social and political reform programme derives from the principles of the Lutheran Reformation and the Peasants’ uprisings between 1502 and 1517. Eberlin’s utopia was not as radical as More’s work, but certainly its commitment to social equality and justice and the appraisal of technology and science for the common good were uncompromising and, as Eberlin thought, necessary reforms. Eberlin’s fellow Swabian Kaspar Stiblin published his Counter-Reformation Utopia *Commentariolus de Eudaemonnensium Republica* in 1555. The frame narrative follows *Utopia* and describes the Catholic plutocracy of Macaria, the neighbouring island of Utopia. The capital city Eudaimon is radial and built on principles of hygiene and transparency. Physical labour, science, liberal arts and technological advancement are elevated to the guiding principles of the society, but the ultimate focus is on the afterlife; in opposition to More, Stiblin’s Utopia is fundamentally chiliastic.

*La Città del Sole* (*The City of the Sun*), by Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639), was originally written in Italian in 1602, just after Campanella was condemned to life imprisonment for sedition and heresy in Naples. *The City of the Sun* is very much a result of Campanella’s active role in the Calabrian rebellion against the Spanish in 1599. Convinced that great political and social changes were imminent and that he was both a prophet and a leader of the millennium, Campanella wanted to replace the existing form of the Spanish rule with a utopian commonwealth. His *City of the Sun*, written in prison, took the archistic principles of *Utopia* to the next level as every institution of the state is geared towards the education of the community spirit (*bonum commune*) in the Solarians. Set within a short frame narrative, the bulk of the text is the ‘poetical dialogue’ between a Genoese sailor who had accompanied Columbus on his voyage to America and a Knight Hospitaller. The City of the Sun was devised as a ‘body politic’ with its individual parts integrated so as to form a unitary organism and its various limbs, specialized on definite functions, entirely coordinated to serve the communal well-being. In that way, Campanella anticipated Thomas Hobbes’s metaphorical use of the biblical figure of the Leviathan. Campanella’s city state is a theocracy, governed by twenty-four priests and the head of the state, Sol. There is no division between the state, church and judiciary. Three priests are responsible for the government of private/social issues such as love and sexual relations; indeed, the community of goods extends to women and children. Social control is again exemplified in the urban structure. The city
Utopianism after More

is radial, divided into seven large circuits, named after the seven planets. The city walls carry educational murals, time lines and samples of metals, stones, minerals, fluids, specimens of trees, herbs and other objects, moving from the representation of mathematics on the inner wall of the first (inner) circuit, to geography, social anthropology, geology, medicine, evolutionary biology and mechanical arts, and culminating in a portrayal of Jesus Christ, the twelve Apostles, Caesar, Alexander and other famous historical and religious figures. These murals are used for the elementary education of the children but also for the continuous and indeed subliminal instruction of the adults. The end of knowledge is to know God, the centre of the radial city is Sol. But despite these elaborate technologies of the self, the ‘Utopian Paradox’ appears in the City of the Sun, too. Crime is not eradicated and dissent from the communal good occurs. Similarly to More’s Utopia, the commonwealth relies on agriculture and some minor trade with the outside world. However, in opposition to More, agricultural technology is, as the murals suggest, advanced and used to maximize yield on a minimum of work.

A Lutheran version of the perfect commonwealth was proposed by the German theologian Johann Valentin Andreae. In his Reipublicae Christianopolitanae Descriptio (Christianopolis) (1619), Andreae sought to renew ‘the inner life of the Lutheran church’ and society. The pattern of Andreae’s fictitious community is succinctly described in the text as a ‘republic of workers, living in equality, desiring peace, and renouncing riches’. It is based on principles of rationality, order and complete social control, underpinned again by a geometric city plan with a College in its centre. Christianopolis’s motto is: ‘We have come from freedom to doing good.’ The political relationship between government and governed is patriarchal, and based on the relationship between God and man. Education is the principal political and social tool in Christianopolis. It is the basis of a superior society, consisting of intellectually and morally exceptional citizens. This basic theme is reflected in the spatial and symbolic placement of the main institution, the College. It is the heart of this utopian enterprise and, accordingly, occupies the most prominent position in Christianopolis. However, academic and moral instruction is not confined solely to the academy. The complex curriculum is expanded to the city itself with a range of visual materials, exhibits and libraries. The city of Christianopolis thus is not only a massive proto-industrial and self-sufficient workshop, but also a large-scale educational institution with a very distinctive political agenda: the education of the utopian subject.

Campanella and Stiblin in many ways prefigured science fiction, not by using imaginary science to reach other places and planets (like the vast body
of moon voyages), but by their preoccupation with using science and technology to create an ideal, or at least better, world.

The period between 1620 and 1638, at least in England, is characterized by a distinct shift in ideal politics due to changes in the political arena, an increasing global trade and a historicized consciousness of time. What we can identify is the gradual shift from geographical utopias (utopias) to chronological utopias (uchronias), and more importantly, a period of paradigmatic overlap where the ideal commonwealth is located in an imaginary, undiscovered, isolated place and at the same time, reforms are revealed as utopian hope and utopian possibilities. This becomes particularly apparent in the utopian experiments of the New England Puritans (and generally millenarian groups), where utopian mastery is exercised not in an imaginary but an actual utopia.

The rhetoric of ideal politics in the writings of King James I transcends the brief of a mere royal proclamation. The justification of his absolute reign by divine right provided a discourse of ideal politics and its utopian implications, analogous to the utopian impetus in Bacon’s *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) but also in contemporary utopias as discussed above. What unites James I and the utopian writers is not the genre of utopia but an expression of an anticipatory hope that transcends mere political ideology, and, at the same time, invests in early modern colonialism, mercantilism and the scientific revolution.

Francis Bacon’s fragment, *New Atlantis: A Worke Unfinished* written by the Right Honourable Francis Lord Verulam, Viscount St Alban, posthumously published as part of *Sylva Sylvarum* in 1627, is perhaps the first true scientific utopia. Following the now familiar pattern, it describes the accidental discovery of a fortified city state, Bensalem, located in the Pacific Ocean. The main body of the text consists of conversations between the unnamed narrator and different officials and citizens. These reveal, if insufficiently, the social and political structure of this utopian society as well as its complex foundation history. The centre of the city is Salomon’s House or the College of the Six Days’ Work, a fictional precursor to the philosophical college founded in London in 1645 and the Royal Society of 1660. It unites a scientific community composed of different disciplines with a defined hierarchical structure of fellows, novices and apprentices. Salomon’s house, ‘dedicated to the study of the Works and Creatures of God’, institutes faith and social order through scientific knowledge. Economically, Bensalem is, by choice, isolated and self-sufficient. Family life is hierarchical and regulated by fundamentally Christian principles. Whilst the scientists do not have any direct political power, they exercise a greater and sanctified moral
authority. They are indeed the true rulers of the Atlantan society. Although ‘the end of our Foundation is the knowledge of Causes, and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of the Human Empire, the effecting of all things possible’, the scientists withhold that ‘which we think fit to keep secret’. Thus, the utopian subject is the subjected object of Atlantan utopian principles.

What defined the utopianism of the 1640s was a steadfast evolution towards concrete political and social reform. The circle around Samuel Hartlib, Jan Amos Comenius and Gabriel Plattes, the Pansophists, pre-empted the rise of a revolutionary idealism that resulted in later constitutional changes. What characterized their language and that of later Parliamentarians and pamphleteers and writers was a novel and radical political leverage, a practical, social approach to political discourse and an element of millenarian chiliasm. Pansophy’s ultimate goal was salvation, but salvation for the Pansophists meant deliverance from ignorance, tyranny and conflict. Thus their reform programmes focused on politics, education and religion to recover the original wisdom that mankind lost with the expulsion from Eden.

Jan Amos Comenius’s *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* (1623) is a spiritual allegory on utopian hope and sets out more general and cosmopolitan principles for the transformation of human society through education and Enlightenment. Ultimately, though, for Comenius, salvation can only be found in the soul, in the acceptance of Christ. Gabriel Plattes’s *A Description of the Famous Kingdome of Macaria. Shewing its Excellent Government* (1641) and Samuel Gott’s *Nova Solyma* (1648) targeted directly the Long Parliament (1640–53), where a special select committee was set up to frame ‘a remonstrance on the deplorable estate of the kingdom’. Given the political context, it is not surprising that Gott and Plattes were proposing institutional reform and an educational system that would promote the creation of the best possible society in advance of the coming millennium.

They were not the only utopians. James Harrington’s *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), dedicated to Oliver Cromwell, and William Cavendish’s *Advice to Charles II*, revised the *Speculum Principis* tradition for the mid-seventeenth century. Gerrard Winstanley’s Digger pamphlets of 1648 and *The Law of Freedom* (1652) were perhaps the most radical readings of Scripture to challenge private ownership of land. In 1649 Digger communities squatted on common land on St George’s Hill in Surrey, Cox Hill in Kent and Iver in Buckinghamshire to sow ‘the ground with parsnips, carrots and beans’.

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1642, the death of Charles I, and the Protectorate document the radical changes that different religious and
political groups wanted to implement. Utopianism spread throughout the whole nation through public debates, petitions and millenarianist reform proposals. These now also provided a space for women writers. Mary Cary’s visionary text, *A New and More Exact Mappe; or, Description of New Jerusalems Glory* (1651), brings together the millennial ideal of a just society with the pragmatic political questions surrounding the establishment of the English Republic. According to Cary, the millennial society will be truly just and egalitarian – a society based on the ‘holy use’ of reason which makes no distinction of class or gender.

On the other side of the political spectrum is Margaret Cavendish’s *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666). *The Blazing World* is a fictional utopia of an absolute monarchy ruled by an enlightened Empress and her alter-ego, Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. As its basic guiding principles – one monarch, one language, one religion – attest, it is clearly a reaction to the disruptions of the Civil War in England at the time. However, *The Blazing World* is far from being a conventional aristocratic plea for monarchy. It raises questions about women’s education and intellectual perfectibility, scientific paradigms and gender and genre in such a progressive and modern way that Margaret Cavendish was labelled ‘Mad Madge’ by contemporaries.

Indeed women’s education became one of the rallying points and common denominators of female utopian writing in the seventeenth century. Margaret Cavendish, Bathsua Makin and Mary Astell built upon the ground cleared by Descartes and his philosophical adherents. Descartes and other authors advocated the development of woman’s intellect, and claimed not only that education was in the interest of and even a natural right of the individual, but also that women’s education would ultimately benefit society. Arguments for female education converge with the concept of ‘perfectibility’ to underpin utopian projects and fiction in the late seventeenth century. Mary Astell’s *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (1694) with a sequel of 1697, Part II: *Wherein a Method is Offer’d for the Improvements of their Minds*, is the best-known publication in this debate. Astell envisaged a community founded on the sole pleasures of ‘Noble Vertuous and Disinteress’d Friendship’ of women which was informed by a specific understanding of intellectual and spiritual perfectibility – a concern that has forged the post-Reformation link between convents and female academies. Secular and religious aspirations for women’s education such as Astell’s scheme prompted a nascent utopian tradition that envisaged secular or Anglican convents and, quickly, the ‘female academy’.

But utopian hope was not universally embraced. Bishop Joseph Hall’s *Mundus Alter et Idem* (‘The Other and the Same World’, c. 1605) initiated
the tradition of the anti-utopia later perfected by Jonathan Swift. Set in *Terra Australis incognita, Mundus* is a carnivalesque satire on the futility of utopian hope. There is indeed nothing worth discovering in the *Terra Australis* and the narrator is finally asked: ‘What other age are you dreaming of, what other land?’ What Hall’s anti-utopia indicates, however, is an increasing widening of the generic and typological spectrum of utopia throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In the eighteenth century, the geographical utopia evolved into different models. Eighteenth-century utopias made use of Enlightenment discourses on progress, perfectibility, reason, sociability and reform. Utopian writers formulated a range of alternative possibilities in their stances against absolutism, against the sycophantic existence of the aristocracy and, in the case of French writers, at least, the dogmas of the Catholic Church.

Ethnological utopias speculated on diverse models of progressive socialization from a ‘state of nature’ culminating in an ‘Age of Commerce’ (Adam Smith), or in modern civil society (Samuel Pufendorf). Natural histories of civil society developed an idea of a gradual progression of at least a portion of humanity through comparisons between European and non-western societies. Such narratives served to demarcate western achievements in science and technology, the arts and culture, in short, civilization. This conjectural historiography not only reinforced the superiority of the ‘Old World’ but justified and naturalized the extensive appropriation and colonization of the ‘New World’ – as we have seen in Thomas More. A more relativist representation of human nature and human values drew attention to fundamental geographical, climatic and historical differences between peoples and cultures. Within this framework, progress and the concept of civilization itself were redefined as relative, not absolute. This is also where utopia intersected with non-utopian historiographies of civil society and political economy and literary genres such as the pastoral, and indeed became another stepping stone for contemporary anthropology and political science. Historical pessimism created utopias that idealized the ‘state of nature’ and defined society and civilization as progressive alienation from an original good – they thus opposed Hobbes’s anti-social notion of the ‘natural’ man. Here utopia promised the regeneration of society to its original state of innocence and peace. Utopias such as Denis Vairasse’s *History of the Sevarites* (1675) or Gabriel de Foigny’s *La Terre Australe connue* (The Southern Land Known) (1676) document simple, virtuous and self-sufficient communities and thus offer their own contribution to the contemporary debate on luxury. Aphra Behn’s rather conventional description of the Indians in Surinam in *Oroonoko* (1688)
anticipates Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s apparent paean to the innocence, simplicity and peaceableness of the ‘noble savage’.

The projection of utopian hopes and desires onto the New World continued in the eighteenth century. These utopias promoted domestic, self-sufficient economies of production, based on Native American economies, accompanied by the abolition of private property and money within the utopian society. Frances Brooke in *The History of Emily Montagu* (1769) set her micro-utopia on the American continent where the narrator’s remarks on the Canadian Indians combine primitivist anthropology with an explicit social critique of European gender inequality. Brooke’s celebration of the native utopian model however is ambivalent. Henry Mackenzie in *The Man of the World* (1773), Lesage’s *Les Aventures de M. Robert Chevalier, dit de Beauchêne, capitaine de fribustiers dans la Nouvelle-France* (1732), and Abbé Prévost’s great philosophical novel, *Le Philosophe anglais, ou histoire de Monsieur Cleveland* (1731–9) idealized the simplicity of the Native American societies. This idealization also became a notable trope in German literature of the time. Sophie von La Roche’s *Erscheinungen am See Oneida* (1798) is an interesting reworking of Rousseau’s novel *Julie*, which outlines a conjectural history of society from the Edenic union of Adam and Eve (the Wattines) in the American wilderness to the creation of a city with other European immigrants. Sophie Mereau’s *Das Blüthenalter der Empfindung* and Henriette Frölich’s *Virginia, oder die Republik von Kentucky* provide similar blueprints.

A variation on the primitivist theme was proposed by Smith and Priber. Reverend William Smith of Philadelphia’s utopian tract, ‘A General Idea of the College of Mirania’ (1753), offers an account of a fictitious college of learning in an imaginary American colony which instructs youth ‘in the liberal arts and sciences’. What is interesting and novel is the curriculum of non-denominational religious teaching, government, basic reading and writing, husbandry and agricultural studies, mathematics, astronomy and navigation, ethics, history and metaphysics and, finally, conversation and public speaking. Smith sought to include the Native American nations (as suitable British allies) and German immigrants (again as necessary allies) in the educational and cultural assimilation of the community.

Another, more conspicuous but real-life community was founded by Christian Gottlieb Priber, who left Germany in 1735 to found a city state named Paradise, for prisoners, criminals and slaves amongst the Cherokee nation. Priber sought, if unsuccessfully, to imitate the simple and more ‘natural’ lifestyle of the North American Indians, a lifestyle he encountered as a former captive of Indians himself.

The fast-expanding geographical knowledge of the New World located an important sub-genre of eighteenth-century fantastic voyage and utopias
onto the still-unknown Antipodes. As the essential world upside down, early representations of the Antipodes projected the monstrous and the grotesque onto the continent and provided, in the eighteenth century, an important new locus for the anti-utopian satire. By the second half of the eighteenth century, Pacific explorations forced authors to review their dystopian projection. Denis Diderot's *Supplement to Bougainville's 'Voyage'* (1772) made a case for the simple, natural ways of a South Sea Island culture as reported by Bougainville, a French explorer. The European lifestyle is discredited in comparison. Communal property and complete sexual freedom are the mainstays of their philosophy, although few details of government, law and the economy are given.

The continent of Africa was less used in eighteenth-century utopian writings than in the utopias of the nineteenth century. This was partially due to the lack of geographical knowledge and exploration. However, Gabriel de Foigny's *La Terre Australe connue* (1676) locates two of his four utopian episodes in the kingdoms of Congo and Madagascar, Simon Berington's *The Adventures of Sig. Gaudentio di Lucca* (1737) sets his utopian city state in the centre of the continent and the Pirate Commonwealth in the *General History of the Pirates* (1728, attributed to Daniel Defoe) is located in Madagascar. A perhaps more ambivalent utopian re-colonization project was the relocation of former African slaves by the Sierra Leone Company in 1792. Three colonies in Sierra Leone, Bulama and Port Jackson were devised as quasi-utopian ‘Provinces of Freedom’ for former slaves. Furthermore, ‘the Blessings of Industry and Civilisation’ were to be introduced into Africa, with a focus on profit and economics, and Freetown was eventually renamed ‘A Town of Slavery’.

But it was not only the New World or the Antipodes but the Orient too that served as a site of utopian desire and imagination. Male fantasies of ‘oriental sapphism’ dominated the travel literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and opened the doors for a wide range of pornographic (somatopian) literature set in the Orient. Women writers such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in her posthumous *Turkish Embassy Letters* created Orientalist utopias by contrasting their (liberating) experiences of the Orient with an experience of eighteenth-century England that was patriotic, expansionist, eurocentric and patriarchal. Paradoxically, it is the despotic Orient and in particular, the harem, that provided the space for their imaginative geography.

Eighteenth-century utopias might be collectively identified as offering a ‘poly-utopia’ or ‘critical utopia’. These texts contrast a plurality of social models in one text without offering one satisfactory utopian solution. These
poly-utopias are indeed critical utopias; that it to say, they are aware of the limitations of the classical utopian model and at the same time strive for a dynamic utopia. Their structure is episodic and moves from philosophical exemplum to exemplum to juxtapose and debate contrasting arguments about visions of utopia and human happiness. In Gabriel de Foigny’s *La Terre Australe connue* (1676), the protagonist Sadeur – very much a Robinsonian figure who was conceived ‘in America and born on the ocean’, is taken on a voyage of discovery and self-discovery via the East Indies, Zaire, Congo and Madagascar to Australia. He encounters the Congo and Zaire as versions of the classical utopia distinguished by an artificial harmony and order through splendid isolation. Consequently, he suffers from boredom and inactivity. Sadeur ends up in Australia in a homogenized paradise of hermaphrodites only to discover that he does not belong. In Samuel Johnson’s Oriental tale, *Rasselas* (1759), Rasselas and his companions reflect on their sojourn in the Happy Valley only to confirm that ‘such … is the state of life, that none are happy but by the anticipation of change: the change itself is nothing; when we have made it, the next wish is to change again’. Abbé Prévost’s *Monsieur Cleveland* (1731–9) also traces a range of utopian spaces and societies from the paradisiacal Caribbean island of Sainte-Hélène, the island of Madeira to the native society of the Abaquis and the Nopandes in North America and the commune of Fanny in Cuba. All utopian models, even the one created by Cleveland himself as the legislator of the Abaquis, are flawed, and based on an artificial and thus fragile model of harmony and order. And Voltaire’s own sceptical *Candide* (1759) takes us from the ‘terrestrial Paradise’ Thunder-Ten-Tronckh to El Dorado to Candide’s garden where utopia is actively created, indeed cultivated.

More pessimistic and openly anti-utopian is Swift’s satire *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726, revised 1735), which echoes in some ways the formal characteristics of More’s *Utopia*. Indeed, what *Utopia* and *Gulliver’s Travels* share is the technique of distortion (*reductio ad absurdum*) as corrective in its aim. In a letter to Charles Ford on 14 August 1725, Swift wrote about the first draft of his book: ‘I have finished my Travells, and am now transcribing them: they are admirable Things, and will wonderfully mend the world.’ Structured as an imaginary voyage with elements of the Robinsonade, the first-person narrator travels through imaginary geographies and encounters very different societies and people. The fast-expanding geographical knowledge of the New World located *Gulliver’s Travels* onto the, by then still relatively unknown, Antipodes. As the essential ‘world upside down’, seventeenth-century representations of the Antipodes/Australasia projected the monstrous and the grotesque onto the continent and provided the ideal locus for his anti-utopian satire for Swift.
Gulliver's Travels sets up a complex paradox between Gulliver, the reader and eighteenth-century Europe. Although Swift’s book was a great and immediate success with contemporaries who particularly relished the unforgiving but witty political satire (thus revealing ‘Keys’ to Gulliver's Travels were very popular), its careful and sustained parody on Enlightenment philosophy and religion is perhaps more significant. Ultimately, though, Swift’s construction of Gulliver as a myopic and unreliable narrator has its greatest satirical design on the reader himself. Gulliver's Travels raises questions about the fault lines that developed during the eighteenth century on ideas of language, history, perfectibility and, indeed, utopianism itself. Whilst Gulliver finds near-utopias in the Brobdingnagian and Houyhnhnm societies, Swift concluded that human nature itself (including Gulliver’s) thwarts the realization of any utopian society. This becomes particularly apparent in Book IV, often interpreted as the only true utopia that Gulliver encountered. The society of the Houyhnhnms is based on the immutable principles of ‘Temperance, Industry, Exercise, and Cleanliness’. But – and we have a similar critique of static utopianism in the contemporary voyage utopia – this homogenized, prelapsarian paradise reveals itself ultimately as a system of mental and political slavery. The Houyhnhnms’ insistence on ‘the Perfection of Nature’ (which is indeed the etymology of their name) was to parody and perhaps question the possibility of perfectibility in an Anglican or philosophical sense. Insisting that ‘I do not hate mankind’, Swift resigned himself to the fact that human beings ‘degenerate every day, merely by the folly, the perverseness, the avarice, the tyranny, the pride, the treachery, or inhumanity of their own kind’. Like the critical utopia, Gulliver's Travels identifies the paradoxical complexity of the Enlightenment project and its fundamentally utopian nature.

Swift’s satire established a long tradition of sequels, often termed Gulliveriana. The first response was by Abbé Pierre Desfontaines, the French translator of Gulliver's Travels, who published Le Nouveau Gulliver ou Voyages de Jean Gulliver, fils du capitaine Lemuel Gulliver in 1730. Bernard Mandeville’s Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits (1714), the anonymous Les songes du Chevalier de La Marmotte (1745) and L’Isle des Philosophes (1790) all echo Swift’s anti-utopian stance. Whilst Thomas More started an influential conversation about Utopia as De optimo reipublicae statu – as ‘a very good, or excellent, state of the commonwealth’, eighteenth-century utopian satires declared this conversation to be over.

Another strand of geographical utopias contains the ‘individualistic’ utopias, the Robinsonades, that pre-empted the critical voyage utopias in their celebration of the self-imposed exile or involuntary retreat from the
world as the only place where true happiness, contentment and self-fulfilment can be ensured. It is thus not surprising that Jean-Jacques Rousseau celebrated Robinson Crusoe as a man in a ‘state of nature’ who lived a solitary life of simple virtue. The Robinsonade is related to the utopian satire and the imaginary voyage but is essentially a genre in its own right. The main difference is that the ‘worldview implicit in the English Robinsonade does not envisage the construction of a perfect world beginning from the zero-point of history (the state of nature)’. Whilst Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* defined the genre in 1719, other texts such as Grimmelshausen’s *Der Abenteuerliche Simplicissimus Teutsch und Continuatio des abentheuerlichen Simplicissimi* (1668), Henry Neville’s *The Isle of Pines* (1668), *Les Aventures de Télémaque* by François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon (1699) and Hendrik Smeek’s *The Mighty Kingdom of Krinke Kesmes* (1708) provided prior models. Defoe’s novel was likely influenced by the real-life castaway Alexander Selkirk, who was stranded for four years on the Pacific island Más a Tierra, Chile.

Robinsonades participated in the eighteenth-century discourse of colonization, bourgeois individualism and unfettered capitalist accumulation. In *Das Kapital* (1867, 1885, 1894) Karl Marx read Crusoe’s experiences on the island as representing the inherent economic value of labour over capital. What Marx failed to see is that Robinsonades also complicated and in some ways questioned the paradigm of conquest, adventure and colonial capitalism. Grimmelshausen’s Simplicissimus declines returning to Europe after fifteen years of solitary living, preferring his individualist utopia to his homeland. Like Robinson Crusoe, Peter Wilkins in Robert Paltock’s *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins* (1751) forces a flawed replica of Georgian England onto the society of Saas Doorpt Swangeanti only to realize his great misjudgment when leaving it. Indeed, Hendrik Smeek’s *The Mighty Kingdom of Krinke Kesmes* (1708), Neville’s *The Isle of Pines* (1668), J. G. Schnabel’s *Die Insel Felsenburg* (1731-43) and again Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe in his *Farther Adventures* (1719) all came to distance themselves from the providential enthusiasm invested in colonial utopianism. Certainly, *Robinson Crusoe* and the *Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* and *The History of the Pirates* (1734) (though Defoe’s authorship is disputed here) suggest that colonial utopias as experiments of racial hybridity were likely to fail.

Half a century later, Thomas Spence used the Robinsonade again as a form to advocate a cooperative commonwealth with majority rule and a citizen militia. In the *Supplement to the History of Robinson Crusoe* (1780), Spence returns to Crusoe’s Island, and establishes a democratic utopia in ‘Crusonia’. The *Description of Spensonia* (1795) and the *Constitution of
Spensonia (1803), modelled on the French Constitution of 1793, complemented Spence’s thorough attack on the institutions of English society at the time. Spence’s particular interest lay in ownership of land, legislative reform, education of the labouring poor and female suffrage.

At first sight, Robinsonades are masculinist in their celebration of possessive individualism and colonial triumph. The female characters in Grimmelshausen, Neville, Schnabel and Paltock were framed merely in terms of their sexual and social usefulness. However, the female Robinson promotes the utopian rather than the colonist conceit of the Robinsonade tradition, and added particularly proto-feminist concerns to the genre. Perhaps the first English example of a (lunar) female Robinsonade was The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World, by Margaret Cavendish (1666), where the heroine actively conquers and organizes the New World. In a similar vein to women’s domestic utopias of the time, the eighteenth-century female Robinsonade advanced female friendship (if there are more shipwrecked travellers), peace, equality and harmony. The island experience, for instance, in Die beglückte Inseln, oder die Geschichte der Fräulein von Jalling, von ihr selbst aufgezeichnet (1777), is one of harmonious government by a female matriarchy, and pre-empts modern separatist utopias by writers such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman (Herland, 1915). Rescue in this context then meant a forced return to the patriarchal European society, and like some of their male counterparts, not all female Robinsons welcomed their return home.

The eighteenth-century novel also offered to the utopian mode a formal innovation within which utopian explorations could be extended and reconfigured – the utopian novel per se and the ‘micro-utopies’ or ‘petites sociétés’. Delarivier Manley’s Atalantis (1709), Sarah Scott’s Millenium Hall (1762) and Lady Mary Hamilton’s Munster Village (1778), utopian novels in their entirety, serve as examples of the former; Sarah Fielding’s David Simple (1744) presents one good example of the latter.

In 1709, Manley published her notorious roman-à-clef, Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of both Sexes. From the New Atalantis, An Island in the Mediterranean. Written Originally in Italian. The book is a satire on contemporary society – the first edition even had a separately printed key that revealed the true identities of the protagonists. Within it, however, is embedded a separatist locus amoenus, a country retreat based on shared property, friendship and pleasure that echoes Astell’s female Paradise. Like Astell and subsequently Sarah Scott, Manley creates a community that emancipates women from patriarchal oppression and sexual exploitation.
The eighteenth-century reverence of sensibility results in two paradoxically antithetical stances. On the one hand, ‘sympathy’ bound feeling human beings in a community of affectionate responsiveness to one another’s joys and sorrows; the identification of the witness with the pain of the sufferer extended and consolidated the human community of which both are a part by directing the immediate feelings of the responsive witness into sympathetic action, the requirements of moral duty. On the other hand, sentimentalism, a novelistic outgrowth of the cult of sensibility, leads to the ‘individualist utopia’ – the private return to nature or the retreat of the like-minded few, the alternative micro-societies of Scott’s Millenium Hall, Rousseau’s Julie: ou, La nouvelle Héloïse (1761) and Sarah Fielding’s David Simple. Scott’s vision of an economy based on social capital is representative of these writings. Although carefully couched in the context of decorous behaviour, apparent support of the institution of marriage, chaste living and genteel good works, Millenium Hall represents a major challenge to patriarchy, mercantilism and colonialism. Scott’s utopian world is made up of women who are remaking their environment through the exchange of individual fortune and power for feminist solidarity and community. It is important to note that Sarah Fielding’s The Adventures of David Simple and more specifically Volume the Last (1753) are, on the one hand, a radical critique of patriarchal capitalism, but on the other, also a reflection on the futility of utopian hope based on feminine and sentimental values.

More optimistic was Olympe de Gouges, a playwright of some note in France at the time of the French Revolution. After the French National Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, de Gouges rewrote the document to include women in her 1791 Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen. Unfortunately, her proposal for professional and educational equality and freedom of speech was not welcome. Article 10 declares that ‘If … woman has the right to mount the scaffold; she must equally have the right to mount the rostrum.’ She was herself guillotined in 1793.

Whilst eighteenth-century women writers clearly address the position of women and their rights in marriage in their utopian writings, male authors, too, defended universal human rights and civil liberties for women. James Lawrence’s Empire of the Nairs, or The Rights of Women (1793, trans. into English in 1811) based his progressive ideas on Mary Wollstonecraft’s Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) and William Godwin’s Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793). The Travels of Hildebrand Bowman (1778), An Essay on Civil Government, or, Society Restored (1793) and William Hodgson, A Treatise Called the Female Citizen: or, A Historical,
Utopianism after More

Political, and Philosophical Enquiry into the Rights of Women (1796) were also particularly forthright in their claims for women’s equality.

At the other end of the utopian spectrum, writers such as Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle and Morelly, following Plato’s and More’s models of statism, sought to rehabilitate the institutions of the state, and devised, in strikingly different ways, interventionist political systems. These texts were motivated by the threat of poverty and social turmoil that could be resolved only by radically new forms of economic and social organization. In the case of Morelly, his philosophical treatise Code of Nature (1755) and the epic poem Basiliad advanced the remedy of communism to eliminate poverty and social exploitation. Seventeenth-century English agrarian republicanism represented by Winstanley’s Law of Freedom inspired a surge of political utopian pamphlets at the time and was reconceptualized into eighteenth-century radical politics in the writings of John Clare, Thomas Spence, John Thelwall, Richard ‘Citizen’ Lee and the Pantisocratists.

The middle ground, so to speak, of utopian schemes, was occupied by reform programmes deriving from a partial fusion of utopianism and the tradition of seventeenth-century commonwealth writings. Mixed legislative models such as the enlightened or benevolent monarchy were devised; these either envisioned the transformation of a whole civic state (Johann Gottfried Schnabel, Insel Felsenburg (1731–43)) or tribal associations (La Mothe-Fénélon, Les Aventures de Télémaque). William Hodgson’s The Commonwealth of Reason (1795) and Elihu Hubbard Smith’s deist ‘Pansophia’, The Institutions of the Republic of Utopia (written in 1796–7), successfully marry the characteristics of the classical utopia (geometrical town plans, strict division of electoral districts, republican government, state-enforced system of moral education) with Enlightenment principles of universal education and, if in moderation, women’s liberation. Both utopias are essentially statist, a reaction not only to the Terror of the French Revolution but also, in the case of Smith, to a keen interest in the intersection between physical and moral health (Smith wrote extensively on epidemiology and the nation’s health).

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive
But to be young was very heaven!

William Wordsworth

The French Revolution’s slogan, Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité, stands in dialectical relation to the Enlightenment’s epistemological projects and utopian philosophy of history. Utopian thought was integrated into the multiple levels of Enlightenment political debates, and utopian elements were evident
in various combinations in much Enlightenment political writing. This also meant an amalgam of genres and literary modes.

In 1790 Edmund Burke published his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, which set off a pamphlet war between Burke and English radicals such as Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. Despite his fervent support of the American Revolution, Burke turned in his *Reflections* to defend ‘antient principles’ of ‘virtue, honour, courage, patriotism and loyalty’. The French Revolution for him was an expression of horrific barbarism and the violent overthrow of a legitimate government confirmed by history and tradition. His antagonists argued for and promoted principles of republicanism, agrarianism, civic virtue and liberty, and understood British (and French) history as the history of naturalized oppression.

Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) was published in response to Burke. Hers was the first response in a pamphlet war in which Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* (1792) became the centrepiece for reformers and radicals. Wollstonecraft not only attacked monarchy and hereditary privilege but also the language that Burke used to defend and elevate it. A *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) continued Wollstonecraft’s plea for civic virtue and equality with a special focus on women’s rights and education. Her political philosophy was based on principles of reason and perfectibility, though her novels drew heavily on the language of sensibility to promote women’s rights.

William Godwin’s *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793) and his novel *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) equally advocated the rule of reason and personal freedom. In opposition to Burke, Godwin believed that existing political systems failed to produce happiness, equality or freedom. *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams* are thus penetrating enquiries into the ways in which private property, aristocracy and monarchical government impose themselves upon individuals and limit the political development of society as a whole. Developing his philosophy from Rousseau, Godwin argued that the pursuit of perfectibility, reason and universal benevolence would eventually abolish the need for governments and institutions. Godwin’s philosophical anarchism had a profound influence on Robert Owen, Robert Bage, William Thompson and other utopians in the nineteenth century as well as the Romantic poets.

The poetry of Romanticism was governed by a form of utopian displacement where the goal of liberation from hierarchy, oppression and poverty and the political struggle to achieve a just and egalitarian society were resituated in a variety of visions such as the pastoral, agrarian utopias, prophetic art/creativity, and onto the ‘New World’.
William Blake’s *America: A Prophecy* (1793) and *Europe: A Prophecy* (1794) serve as models for utopian reform in the light of the utopian hopes that the American and French Revolutions generated (and disappointed). Joseph Priestley, a staunch but persecuted English supporter of the French Revolution, sent his son Joseph, Jr, and son-in-law Thomas Cooper to America to start a community of ‘English friends of freedom’. Mary Wollstonecraft’s partner Gilbert Imlay also wrote a tract, *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* (1792), that sought to inspire the foundation of utopian communities. Both Cooper’s and Imlay’s writings may have influenced Southey and Coleridge, whose own ‘Pantisocratic’ society was to be located, like Priestley’s community, on the banks of the Susquehanna. The ‘Pantisocracy’ was framed in principle in Coleridge’s *Lectures on Revealed Religion* (1795) and was to be a utopian, noble and philosophical project where the tenet of equal rule by all prevailed. After grave disagreements and quarrels about the final location (the plans were for Susquehanna or Wales) the project was aborted in 1795.

The Romantics’ interest in childhood and education led to another strand of perhaps more practical utopianism. Robert Bage’s novels were particularly shaped by Rousseau and Wollstonecraft and their idea of the education of the utopian subject. *Hermsprong: Or, Man As He Is not* (1796) outlines the childhood of an American boy raised entirely by American Indians, without either formal education or religion. Thomas Day’s children’s book *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1783–9) also promoted the utopian educational ideals set out by Rousseau in his controversial *Emile, or, On Education* (1762) and complements a range of contemporary pamphlets and novels on the importance of education of future (utopian) generations ranging from Mary Astell, Daniel Defoe, Edward Chamberlayne, Clara Reeve to Mary Wollstonecraft.

... ‘Twas in truth an hour
Of universal ferment; mildest men
Were agitated; and commotions, strife
Of passion and opinion fill’d the walls
Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds.
The soil of common life was at that time
Too hot to tread upon; oft said I then,
And not then only, ‘what a mockery this
Of history; the past and that to come!
Now do I feel how I have been deceived,
Reading of Nations and their works, in faith,
Faith given to vanity and emptiness;
Oh! laughter for the Page that would reflect
To future times the face of what now is!

William Wordsworth

The new emphasis on history-as-progress had a profound impact on the genre. What determines this shift are successive epistemological paradigms, a philosophy of history and the emergence of a public sphere that makes (political) satire redundant. The period between 1750 and 1800 is marked by a canon of conjectural and philosophical histories that include utopian elements or are indeed utopias. But these conjectural histories differ greatly in their understanding of history and progress. Enlightenment, understood by Kant as ‘man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity’, is a desirable end to the achievement of which thinking should construct history in order that ‘we might by our own rational powers accelerate the coming of this period which will be so welcome to our descendants’ (What is the Enlightenment?). Reason in history thus will produce progress.

Rousseau’s Discourses (Discours sur les sciences et les arts, 1750, and Discours sur l’origine et inégalité parmi les hommes, 1754 on the other hand are histories which refer nostalgically to pre-modern or primitive cultures and reject the notion of history as perfectibility. However, rather than being simply primitivist, Rousseau suggests in his conjectural anthropology that society corrupts men only insofar as the Social Contract has not de facto succeeded. A new and egalitarian Social Contract is needed to ennoble man and modern society.

Voltaire and Condorcet did not share Rousseau’s nostalgic pessimism and presented more dialogic views of possible futures, implying, as was the case with Condorcet and Mercier, that a better future required a break with the imperfections of the past. The latter laid the path for the temporalization of the early modern ‘geographical’ utopia culminating in the futuristic visions of Louis-Sébastien Mercier (L’An 2440: Un rêve s’il en fut jamais/Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred, 1771) and Julius von Voß (Ini: Ein Roman aus dem Ein und Zwanzigsten Jahrhundert, 1810).

Mercier’s utopia provided a detailed and harsh critique of the ancien régime. Consequently, it was immediately banned upon its initial publication but went on to become a bestseller. It follows the classical utopia paradigm in proposing order based on reason, moderation and work. For Mercier, the path towards a better society lay in the triumph of reason over passion and the sacrifice of individual desires for the common good.

Voß’s now rather neglected novel Ini and his later play Berlin im Jahre 1924 complement his visionary non-fiction, such as Hohe Aussichten der Menschheit oder Der Christenstaat (1808). In opposition to Mercier, Voß has clear ideas about the development of a futurist society from the late
nineteenth century to the twenty-first century, outlining the necessary paradigms for reform and perfectibility. In his utopianism of Francis Bacon with the idea of the enlightened monarch in his blueprint for a ‘monarchical republic’. The formation of the utopian subject in Infi can be traced back to Campanella, Bacon and Andreae with a strict scientific approach to human behaviour and moral education. Voß set the scene for a German tradition of futuristic writing and was followed by August von Kotzebue's Die hundertjährigen Eichen oder das Jahr 1914 (1821) and later in the century, Rudolf Greinz's Der Jüngste Tag (1893), while the French tradition was successfully continued by Jules Verne.

Not all visions of a future world, though, were positive. Mary Shelley’s apocalyptic The Last Man (1826), a document of the post-French revolutionary disillusionment, mourns the corrosion of revolutionary ideals by flaws of human nature. The novel clearly questions the Enlightenment faith in the inevitability of progress through individual and collective perfectibility.

Historians still dispute the extent to which the philosophes and utopians directly influenced the events of the American and French Revolutions and vice versa. If nothing else, Kant’s article, What is the Enlightenment? (1784), promoted an emancipatory commitment to critique and reflection, ‘a concept of reason that is sceptical and post-metaphysical, yet not defeatist’. Eighteenth-century utopianism reflected this mandate and in ‘some instances, too, utopian tracts led liberal and humanitarian thinking about individual rights, at least a century and sometimes two in advance of their times’. In the nineteenth century, the utopian tradition continued to prosper in the guise of utopian socialism, communitarianism and the cooperative movement. The nineteenth-century novel and utopian romance became an established medium to popularize utopian political and economic principles. Similarly, a number of communal ventures were undertaken by Owen, Fourier and Saint-Simon in the form of contained, usually short-lived, utopian communities intended to test the feasibility of a fully cooperative society (as a converse to the Industrial Revolution). What the nineteenth century learnt from its utopian predecessors was that, in the words of H. G. Wells, the ‘Modern Utopia must be not static but kinetic, must shape not as a permanent state but as a hopeful stage leading to a long ascent of stages.’

NOTES


The so-called Bermuda Pamphlets were accounts of a shipwreck that occurred in the summer of 1609. News reached England in 1610 and the earliest account by William Strachey, *True Reportory* (1625), possibly circulated in manuscript form in 1610. See Alden T. Vaughan, ‘William Strachey’s *True Reportory* and Shakespeare: A Closer Look at the Evidence’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59:3 (Fall 2008), 245–73.


The book went through three editions within five years and each edition was changed significantly from the previous one.
Utopianism after More


**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


