

Oryx and Crake: Towards a Social Harmony or Calamity

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The twentieth-century utopian novels are the explosion of utopia-pessimism. Themes of these writings are riddled with autocracy, national chauvinism, and technological runaway. The technological concerns proceed in the new Millennium and prevail with the prosperity of bio-technology, information technology and artificial intelligence which grow enquiries: Can we harvest harmony in the future? Will technological elites dominate the world? How will the inferior conduct themselves in the technologically hijacked society? In *Oryx and Crake*, Margaret Atwood unfolds her satiric views over the arrogance of the elites and her solicitude on the destiny of the human race. By exploring the communal construction in *Oryx and Crake*, this paper aims to dissect Atwood's insight into science, humanity and the prospects of the future.

Keywords: Utopia, Harmony, Technology

The 'Everyday' in Science Fiction, Avant-Gard Art and Speculative Design: Utopias and Dystopias of Future Consumption

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In his work "*Passagenwerk*" Walter Benjamin warned us that in the capitalist world consumer goods are also connected to another kind of phantasmagoria: the idea of progress. Thus, according to his vision, the idea of future goes hand in hand with the modern city and with the consumer society that inhabits it. If the word "utopia" as coined by Thomas More, is originally defined as the "ideal city that has not yet taken place", so the role of consumer objects becomes evident in shaping the utopic sense of contemporary and future consumer society, which has its main scenario in the modern city. Beyond the end of ideologies and great historical master narratives (Jean-François Lyotard), in today's society the space of progress utopia is occupied - or rather, vampirized - by the market: pitifully the market is, at this time, the only technology of the future (Elie Ayache). Despite all attempt to resistance, in capitalist society, consumption is still at the center of everyday life. Consequently one question arises: what would be daily life like in a future post capitalist society? Currently new political accelerationist theories (Nick Srnicek, Alex Williams and Nick Land) develop out of the "trench" of the post-modern left focused on the critique of the present and the reinterpretation of the past, looking retrospectively back at the future. These theorists propose that we speculate on the possible outcomes of an acceleration, and an alternative appropriation, of the material platforms of capital (or the collapse of capitalism), and of the market / consumption as part of them. On the other hand, as Rosi Braidotti affirms, utopian or dystopian science fiction allows us to think popular culture in a different way, so that sci-fi is presented as a space for speculation and imagination also of the design, the media and the market of the future. What are the possibilities for our daily life in 200 years? Which objects will constitute our daily landscape? Building on Rosi Braidotti's notion of science fiction and on accelerationist theories, my paper proposes an interdisciplinary theoretical introduction and a speculative visual analysis of the future everyday life. It aims at articulating the ways in which future everyday life is outlined in some cases of study drawn from three specific contexts, namely cinema, contemporary art, and design. In particular I will use examples from science fiction films, such as *Barbarella*, *Blade Runner 2019*, *Blade Runner 2049* or *Ex Maquina*; the futurist or situationist avant-gard architectures of Antonio Sant'Elia or Constant; the Italian Radical Architecture of the seventies, as well as recent Speculative Design.

Keywords: Utopia, Future Everyday Life, Consumption

Plato and More in the Indies? A living Utopia in Colonial-era Spanish America: Vasco de Quiroga and the Jesuit Missions in Paraguay

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In the New Spain, Thomas More's *Utopia* was unexpectedly embraced early on in the work carried out by Father Vasco de Quiroga who, through his renowned hospitals, sought not only to ensure the Indians' spiritual salvation but also provide them with a refuge where peace, brotherhood and prosperity reigned supreme to counteract the moral and material cataclysm brought on by the arrival of the white man in the American continent.

From that point on, driven by the extraordinary historical circumstances as well as the erratic and paternalistic policies applied by the Spanish Crown, Spanish America became a fertile proving ground for the widest array of Utopian experiments. In these efforts, Vasco de Quiroga's hospitals were soon joined by the missions set up by the Jesuits among the Guaraní Indians in Paraguay. Inspired by Plato, these missions sought to fulfill a purpose similar to that behind the hospitals built by the Bishop of Michoacán. Given how long they lasted and their legacy, it would be no exaggeration to assert that they were the most successful Utopian communities in all of history.

This paper focuses on two particular aspects of these Utopian experiments. First, the manner in which their founders embraced and interpreted the philosophy espoused by Plato (*Republic* and *Laws*) and More (*Utopia*). Second, the peculiar anthropological conception which Vasco de Quiroga and the Jesuits had of the Indians, and that - in their view - partly explained the success enjoyed by the (Utopian) Hospitals and the (Platonic) missions, which over time gave rise to the idea of the "noble savage". Finally, we will argue that this anthropological conception contained a certain degree of ambivalence regarding the real nature of the "Indian", an ambivalence which reflects dystopic traits lurking behind the harmony of the respective Utopian projects.

Keywords: Utopian communities, Indigenism, Spanish Colonial America

Political Harmony and International Peace in Seventeenth century French culture: the Interesting “case” of *Le Nouveau Cynée* Written by Emeric Crucé

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Eméric Crucé was born in Paris in 1590 and died 1648. He was a clergyman. His father was a supporter of the catholic “League”, the violent faction of the Catholics who was responsible for many slaughters of the Calvinists during French religious wars. He published his masterpiece in 1623: *Le Nouveau Cynée, ou Discours d’Estat représentant les occasions et le moyens d’establiir une paix générale et la liberté du commerce par tout le monde. Aux monarques et princes souveraines de ce temps*. The main purpose of his work is to find a better way to set up an enduring peace in the whole world. It contains for the first time the idea of avoiding war, by founding an international arbitration court. The court, settled in Venice, is built up as a general assembly with representatives of all States, even of the Turkish Empire. This assembly is called to discuss any kind of controversy which may rise among the States and it is supposed to vote for a final solution. Crucé was in favor of the abolishment of national armies. He believed in religious toleration and in human brotherhood. He was also convinced of the necessity of establishing a complete freedom of trade, as a mean to promote peaceful relations among States. He was strongly in favor of political harmony and he was convinced of the possibility of creating a peaceful international order, even if Thirty years war was going on. This work inspired many authors to reflect upon peace, but it soon disappeared. My contribution means to give details upon the *Nouveau Cynée*, its interesting circulation and the reference to it found to in the following pacifist literature.

Keywords: International peace Projects, French political culture in Seventeenth Century, Pacifist utopia in early modern political thought.

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Even if ‘the end of history’ thesis heralded by the apparent reconciliation and homogenisation of geopolitics after the Cold War seems an increasingly insufficient analysis of the present, proclamations of the presence of democracy in and as its capitalist, liberal and state form - and the finality for politics it implies – continue to foreclose the possibility of (even imagining) radical social, economic and political change. However, this ‘end of history’ names not an abstract or inevitable set of conditions but rather particular modes of governance produced by state and non-state actors, grounded in this foreclosing historico-political temporal logic. It seems if we want to seek a more just society we can only do so within the established terms of the governing (neo-)liberal tradition; there is no opening to the coming of a radically different future. To play with the political coordinates of the present is seen as either fatally dangerous, or impossible. This paper, however, is invested in cracking this closed framing of politics in our time. Both colloquially and etymologically tied to the impossible, thinking utopia allows us to see the fallibility of claims of historico-temporal closure. Drawing on the emphasis of this conference on ‘New Harmonies’, I pay attention to two seemingly disparate events of resistance, which in their manifestation of desire for that which is good but impossible saw the emergence of seemingly impossible heterogeneous communities. These two cases of resistance – The Gezi Park uprising in Istanbul in 2013 and the Aboriginal Tent Embassy established in Canberra in 1972 – not only haunt claims to the temporal consistency of any ‘end of history’ through their demands and ‘ghostly presences’, but also remain as evidence of harmonies that can echo upon the striking of seemingly impossible chords.

Keywords: Resistance, Utopia, Temporality

Elevation and Harmony: Some Notes on the Role of Emotions in Utopian Speech

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What makes harmony so desirable to human beings? What does it offer us so that it has ended up becoming an ideal so widely shared by all? Above all, why does harmony, as a generalized desire, always appear to us as a reality so distant, so difficult to achieve -- or as many try to emphasize -- so utopian?

Our intention is to offer some answers to these questions from a perspective that allows us to understand harmony as a human aspiration coming from our own emotions. We believe that this principle -- along with the no less important and so closely related to the concept of coherence -- invites us to contemplate what surrounds us as an integral part of a whole, in which all parties fit consistently and effectively. And, consequently, all this leads us to think that everything that has an internal coherence works harmoniously, and therefore works well.

Human beings have always wanted to be surrounded by the most coherent systems, ideas and world views possible, since this allows us to structure the different levels of our existence and, therefore, obtain a sense of meaning. But where do we place the limit of this meaning? Because the higher and higher the sphere in which the human being feels a part of, the more intense and comforting will be the feeling of fullness and satisfaction. Using a very diverse series of examples ranging from movements like Saint-Simonianism to more contemporary cultural productions such as films and novels, our presentation will try to determine to what extent harmony responds to an intrinsic need for human beings to display elevated yet not necessarily religious feelings from where to project a sense of purpose, leading to pleasurable experiences and the appearance of altruistic commitments and personal improvement.

Keywords: utopia, apotheosis, emotion

Harmonic Worlds or Uniform Societies? The Evolution of a Utopian Concept in Rough Times

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How difficult it is to understand utopia without harmony. Even today, conceiving of a better life without having this condition or quality seems unimaginable. From time immemorial, humans have dreamed of a frame of coexistence where they could surpass the diversity of their interests and realities; a social horizon where peace would reign and conflict would be eradicated for eternity.

This task has come to fruition, and thanks to the capacity of humankind to detect patterns in nature, it is possible to obtain a satisfactory theoretical and symbolic reference effective enough to elevate this concept to be considered as the mainstay of the ideal of perfect human sociability.

And yet, the concept of harmony has undergone an evolution that has, in the end, turned it into an ambivalent term, awakening very opposed emotions and feelings. The images of spontaneity and fluidity with which the classical ideal of harmony was originally defined have given way to another radically different vision -promoted by modern scientific and mechanistic discourse- from which notions so related to utopian thought as transparency and community have seen how they have been losing an important part of their positive and hopeful dimension.

To what extent have the criteria of uniformity and homogeneity contributed to stifling the ideal of harmony in the present? Does harmony play any role even in our current collective imagination? Can harmony be subversive today? Is it possible to conceive of a globalized world without appealing to harmony? Or would doing this involve imagining a dystopia? Based on examples from the cinema and other areas of the current entertainment culture, this presentation will attempt to reflect on these issues in the context on an increasingly global stage.

Keywords: Homogeneity, Dystopia, Globalization

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The American writer Jack London defended the rights of the oppressed and the poor throughout his life, and he narrated the difficult living conditions of the workers in most of his works. As Robert Owen, he believed the necessity of social equality; for this reason, he struggled against capitalism and unacceptable working conditions having appeared after the Industrial Revolution in the USA. In his work, *The Iron Heel* (1908), he criticises the political system of his period through a fictional regime named Iron Heel which has the similarities to the late 19th-century American capitalism. London's novel composes a story within a story; it includes a diary written in the beginning of the 20th century and the diary is presented with the footnotes of a fictional editor living in the 25th century. The 20th-century society, governed by the capitalistic and oligarchic regime, is introduced as a dystopian world to the 25th-century readers. Through his novel, London points out the absence of social unity and 'harmony' in a society governed with the capitalistic ideals. Moreover, as the other socialists of his period, London was influenced by Karl Marx's ideas on social evolution, and in his novel, he creates a utopian world which achieves socialist ideals. In other words, the novel represents socialism as the solution to the inequality which capitalism has caused. In London's dystopia, the capitalists are like the Social Darwinists of the period; they do not only compete with each other but also fight against the workers who defend their civil rights. They create a society where the ones who have enough power could survive. Within this context, this paper will discuss how capitalism paves the way for a dystopian world where people struggle to protect their individual interests rather than the interests of the community.

Keywords: Dystopia, Capitalism, Socialism