

## Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World* as a Feminist, Anti-colonialist and Anti-speciesist Utopia

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Margaret Cavendish's *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666) is firmly rooted in the utopian tradition but departs from its predecessors in important aspects. The social harmony of the utopias of Plato, Thomas More and Francis Bacon is founded in institutional control, the effective management of nature and the rationalisation of culture. Cavendish's utopia is not so much a fantasy of order but of the order of fantasy. Inverting many of the characteristics of earlier utopias, *Blazing World* is a true *ou-topos*, in that it cannot be reached from Earth, and a true *eu-topos*, in that its harmony extends beyond the social and the human. It is populated by various kinds of human-animal hybrids who live in close communion with nature and in absolute peace with each other. Symbolically, they take on a double meaning, standing in for the human as well as the non-human other, for the indigenous peoples encountered in the New World as well as humanity's fellow creatures re-encountered, like Cavendish propagates, as sentient beings. *Blazing World* imagines these 'first contacts' as initiations of a benevolent but absolutist rule and voluntary but blind submission. In a strange mixture of progressive ethics and conservative politics, the text proposes a world in which female emancipation is realised without changing patriarchal structures and the other, whether ethnic or species, is met on the grounds of equality without suspending racist hierarchies or speciesist domination. To early modern readers, Cavendish offers a nostalgically idealized pre-civil war England without any social, political or religious dissent. But *Blazing World* is also an early document of tentative statement of what might be labelled feminist, animal-welfare and anti-colonialist sentiments.

**Keywords:** Early modern fiction, Human-animal studies, Female utopias

## The New Millennial Harmonies of Joanna Southcott and her Successors [part 2]: From Southcott to the House of David and City of David

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In 1903 Benjamin and Mary Purnell established a community for Christian Israelites in Benton Harbor, MI. Following a tradition of the recognition of prophets, the Purnells were believed to be the seventh prophet (as foreseen by Joanna Southcott) and the one that would directly precede the beginning of the millennium. They focused on preparing for the ingathering of believers that would precede the millennium of heaven on earth. Israelites from as far away as Australia (where Benjamin and Mary visited and established an outpost in 1904) were “called home” to Benton Harbor, with many more patiently waiting for the completion of buildings to house them. The House of David operated several very successful businesses and their financial stability no doubt added to their longevity, and by the 1920s they numbered more than a thousand. By 1920 the colony was embroiled in several legal problems and suffered an onslaught of public scorn and tabloid-like national newspaper coverage. In 1927 Benjamin was put on trial in a very high-profile case brought by the state of Michigan. Of all the charges, Benjamin was found guilty of only perjury. Shortly after this ruling Benjamin died, and the factions within the House of David began warring openly over control of the colony and its resources. More legal action followed, and in 1930 a settlement was reached, and the property divided into two communities, the House of David and the City of David. The City of David, led by Mary Purnell, started over, rebuilding and redefining their community. Both communities persist to the present day, although the population of each is now less than ten.

This paper overviews the messengers between Joanna Southcott and the Purnells, paying specific attention to the influence of other millennial movements in the USA in the nineteenth century.

**Keywords:** Joanna Southcott, House of David, City of David

## Austerity in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Swiss Republican Utopianism

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When B at Louis de Muralt returned to Switzerland in 1700 after a decade serving as a captain in the army of the French King, he converted to Pietism; he had then already written his *Lettres sur les Anglois et les Franois et sur les voyages*, although the volume would only be published in 1725. In this first piece on “Swissness”, the author insists on the necessity for every man who wishes to live according to the good rules of nature to isolate himself from the community (of human beings) and live a healthy and rural life. This major critique of luxury would result in a powerful republican reflection based on austerity and poverty.

The idealization of country life in part V of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle H lo se* has in fact inspired several Swiss authors like Jean-Pierre B renger, Samuel de Constant or Isabelle de Charri re. All these authors presented in their novels or political writings models of micro-utopias where simplicity and austerity (including a reflection on the simplicity of food) are part of a global thinking about happiness and social transformation. In my paper, I will focus on how Swiss authors connected the simplicity of food with joy of living and how a reflection on poverty was related to republican radicalism.

## Going through the Dark and Death... Tsar Ivan the Terrible in the Quest for the New Jerusalem

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In the first scene of Pavel Lungin's film *The Tsar* (2009) Ivan the Terrible is reading the verses about the Four Riders of the *Apocalypse*: the name of the Last One was Death... Then the camera moves from the tsar's room and we see them, the Four Riders of the Apocalypse, in person: they come neither from the Bible nor from Heaven but are the tsar's 'policemen' (*oprychniki*) riding the country in order to introduce, through death an fear, the tsar's will. The tsar's fear of the end of the world (or, the Doomsday) and of treason leads him to folly. He is eager to protect himself against any, real or imaginative, threat, at any price: first of all by murdering anyone who is or might be suspected of not respecting or following the tsar's will. But apart from sorrows and fears, dark and death, Ivan the Terrible is looking for the answer to the challenges he meets as a ruler: this answer is to be the New Jerusalem – a building (a palace) with no roof – for after the Doomsday the sun will never stop to shine; with only one entrance – for Christ will never leave the group of the Saved (i.e. the tsar and a small group of his followers); and with no windows – for there will no longer be the world outside to look at.

The film about Ivan the Terrible, and first of all the historical evidence of his rule, make it possible to trace the imagination of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Russian elites about the imperfect world to which people are condemned (violent, full of treason and lies) and the future one, bright and perfect, to which they, as Christians, aspired and which they dreamed about. The paper will analyze the social and political imagination of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Russia which in Russian culture expresses also much more modern fears and expectations: e.g. concerning the hopes to build up the New Jerusalem ('a perfect and just world on Earth') during the Soviet times and later on by means of terror and death. Were suffering and cruelty the only one and safe way to reach the New Jerusalem?

**Keywords:** New Jerusalem, Russia, Terror

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Existing histories and anthologies of utopian thought have focused on fiction literature in English, even if the latter tendency has been corrected in recent works such as Fortunati's and Trousson's *Histoire transnationale de l'utopie littéraire et de l'utopisme*. But much remains to be done to draw a really global map of modern utopianism which, in addition, accounts for the variety of manifestations of the utopian impulse and, finally, integrates this tradition in specific historical contexts and general history. Starting from this assumption, and drawing on a larger work in progress on this topic, this paper will give an overview of utopian literature and thought in the Spanish-speaking world –a region traditionally considered as land of utopias, but without a utopian tradition of its own– from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, the paper will highlight both the typical features of Hispanic utopianism –e.g., the ways in which it has been affected by transnational ideologies and trends such as anarchism, communism, science fiction and the second dystopian turn– and its peculiarities regarding its chronology, content and form. The triple question that guides this enquiry is how has history influenced utopianism and how has utopianism influenced history in the Spanish-speaking world, and what does this story tell us about the nature and function of utopianism –and anti-utopianism– in the modern world?

**Keywords:** Utopias, Dystopias, Spain, Latin America, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries