

Dis-harmonic language: dystopian discourse and ideology in Edward Bond's *The Chair Plays*

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This paper will explore the ways in which the double narrative structure of literary dystopia is built in Edward Bond's *The Chair Plays* trilogy (2000-2005) through the characters' contrasting discursive positions. Structurally, the literary dystopian text is composed of 'a narrative [of the hegemonic order] and a counter-narrative [of resistance]' (Raffaella Baccolini). In the case of dramatic dystopias, the nature of the dialogic exchanges among the characters is key to understanding the textual mechanisms leading to the alienation of the dystopian subjects. In a theatrical dialogue, not only is what the characters say to each other important, central are also their discursive positions, i.e. the conditions of production of their dialogue (Anne Ubersfeld). Sharing a discursive position means to be part of the same ideological system. Therefore, understanding the power dynamics of a linguistic exchange will enable us to distinguish between the dystopian oppressors and the oppressed.

Following David Birch's theory that language is based on conflict much more than on co-operation, I will analyse how Bond's characters use language as a dystopian weapon either of attack or defence. Set in an unspecified location in 2077, *The Under Room*, *Have I None* and *Chair* all present characters struggling for control over their lives, in a broken world that has left them powerless. By using insights from conversation analysis, I will consider (among other things) register dominance, conversational goals, turn-taking, and the construction of contrasting subject positions to expose the dystopian ideology at play in the characters' exchanges. Such process will not only reveal the dystopian nature of the plays considered, but also pave the way for a theory of dystopia which is more inclusive of forms other than the novel by creating an awareness of dystopia's medium-specific features.

Keywords: Drama, Language, Dystopia

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This paper will explore the way that a potential harmonization of ideas between the individualizing trend of today's computer technology and the utopian ideas of Ivan Illich expressed most notably in his famous essay *Deschooling Society* 1971 continues to be open as a tantalizing option for 21st century educators.

Ivan Illich anticipated the world wide web by almost two decades when he proposed the replacement of schools by community-driven "opportunity webs" enabling learners to be in control of their own learning and teachers to offer their services in an entrepreneurial fashion. Although these ideas were largely dismissed by the educational establishment of the time the power of individualized learning and exploration was active among many of the early pioneers of the internet and its culture. The founder of the highly influential Whole Earth Catalog, Stewart Brand for example after witnessing the first demonstration of an early form of the internet--(ARPA net) 1968 was immediately struck with how the new form of communication offered the individual the power "to conduct his own education, find his own inspiration, shape his own environment, and share his adventure with whoever is interested." While there was some early excitement about the potential golden age for education that arrived with the advent of the personal computer, unlike any other sector, banking, retail and travel for example, traditional schooling has proven itself highly resistant to any sort of radical disruption. However, more recently with the creation of online universities such as edX, Udacity and a host of other enterprises most notably the Khan Academy and the powerful demonstrations of self organized learning by the Indian educator Sugatra Mitra, there is now a genuine question as to whether schools can survive in their present form in the age of the Web. This paper explores the utopian possibilities contained in such a future and what will be needed in terms of the way the de-schooling ideas as proposed by Ivan Illich need to be brought into harmony with the promise of individualized computing.

Keywords: Deschooling, Individualized, Learning

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Utopia might be considered doubly social. Utopian visions and desires are products of their social contexts. At the same time utopias critically reflect on or seek to intervene in the dominant constitution of society as they explore better ways of being and rearrange established ways of living. Sociology is foundationally concerned with understanding the social and yet, as Ruth Levitas has shown, the discipline has tended to disregard or dismiss utopia both as an object of concern and a way of apprehending the world.

After *Utopia as Method* there have been multiple calls for sociology to adopt a utopian method or otherwise welcome utopianism (back) into its theoretical accounts and empirical investigations of the social; to work with utopia ontologically, epistemologically and politically. But if the conversation between utopia and sociology is to be valuable, it will need to be two-sided. Levitas's (and Bauman's) invaluable contributions notwithstanding, sociology *per se* has not always been a very lively or audible voice in the interdisciplinary harmonies (and disharmonies) of utopian studies. Contributions from the social sciences have come from community studies and geography rather than from sociology.

In this paper I consider what sociology might have to offer utopian studies. I start from my own position as a sociologist with interests in cultural studies, critical theory, feminist epistemologies, environmental sociology and science studies. Drawing on resources from these diverse fields, I ask what contemporary sociological theorising can contribute to the framework of utopian thought. In particular, I look at the flipside of Levitas's call for a utopian sociology and consider instead what a sophisticated sociology *of* utopia might have to offer today.

Keywords: Sociology, Theory, Method.

“The Harem Hoisted The Standard of Revolt” : Utopian Novel as Emancipatory Lever

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Pierre Louÿs' *Adventures of King Pausole* (*Les Aventures du Roi Pausole*, 1901) could be considered as a classic utopian novel despite the author's final warning regarding its nature, style and content. Hence, Louÿs concludes his novel cautioning the potential readers to «avoid mistaking Fantasy for Dreams, Tryphemia for Utopia, King Pausole for Perfect Being.»

As a visual artist, I am working on the poetic rewording of passages of this story as this half utopian - half erotic novel reveals in a stunning way how the utopian impulse can also be characterized by a set of conservative logics based on normative grounding. I aim to highlight that the re-shaping of a classic narrative has a strong effect on the harmony between members of a society, architecture and social organization or scenery and power. Nonetheless, the kingdom of Tryphemia is organised following rules and topics that also could be usable as emancipatory levers regarding contemporary social structure and organisation, and gender differences.

This novel already gained a second life in the early thirties, as Alexis Granowsky and Arthur Honneger respectively adapted it for cinema (1933) and lyrical ballet (1929-1930). Here, we can see that the narrative has been slightly transformed not only through the impact of 1917's Russian revolution and WWI but also by industrial and capitalistic views on bodies and representation of movement, as some spectacle productions could be considered as utopian themselves (cabaret can-can dancers and Tiller Girls, Hollywoodian bathing beauties).

This contribution will expose the benefits of writing anew the passage where “the harem hoisted the standard of revolt”. Here, it will be a way of proposing a critical reading on history and the thinking of feminine body as ornament through movements of revolt within the very core of the utopian palace.

This communication will be based on visual and textual examples, both from Louÿs novel, Granovski film and my own work.

Keywords: *The Adventures of King Pausole*, Utopian novel rewording, Women revolt

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Dwelling “in a perpetual utopia of its own” (William Hazlitt), poetry, like utopia, is interested in its self-definition, which is not to say, obviously, that a meta-lingual (metapoetic) function of poetry has much to do with the frequency of writing poems on utopia. The frequency seems independent of any logically induced factors. Paradoxically, whereas random collections of utopian poems written by the Internet users steadily expand, the topos does not seem prevalent among eminent world poets. Apart from Wisława Szymborska’s “Utopia” – a well-known poetic text written by a recipient of the 1996 Nobel Prize in Literature – poems depicting radically better or worse worlds are difficult (though not impossible) to find. This paper will focus on the uses of the topos of utopia by seven recognized contemporary poets representing different cultural milieux. I will argue that the scope and variety of utopian/dystopian visions developed in the analysed texts call for a serious study and bibliography of utopian poetry.

Keywords: Utopia, Dystopia, Utopian poetry, Fan poetry, Poetic space

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Utopia remains the most resonant and multivalent political, philosophical, and literary concept of our time. *Topos*, the Greek word for place, initially confines utopia to the depiction of a spatial entity. However, with the completion of geological discovery, utopia tends to have a temporal dimension as well. Our imagination of this elsewhere can be a mixture of memory, nostalgia, and an ardent social dreaming of the yet to come. It is notable that dystopia has been more prominent of the two in contemporary speculative narrative, as it is better suited to articulate the human existential anxieties exacerbated by an increased sense of environmental and technological risk. Also, the setting of a fictive dystopic future in Asia has gained increased popularity since the 1980s. In my survey of contemporary American speculative fiction, techno-Orientalist representation in the form of technological nightmares and environmental disasters are projected in futuristic Asian metropolises. These trends are very well exemplified in Paolo Bacigalupi's 2009 award-winning novel *The Windup Girl*, a dystopian sci-fi that seeks to envision the utopian harmony in the future where biogenetic technology brings about unintended consequences, Thai nationalism resists globalization, and the earth resources are severely depleted. In the presentation, I will examine the utopian impulse at the center of these futuristic and dystopian envisioning of the city Bangkok, which constitutes the desire for harmonies on multiple scale in the narrative - between the human and the posthuman, between the nation and the globe, and between the human and the environment.

Keywords: Utopia, Dystopian novel, Techno-Orientalism.

Lived Utopianism: Everyday Life and Intentional Communities

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Utopias seek to imagine a good life and members of intentional communities attempt to live a harmonious life together. This paper identifies a phenomenon of 'lived utopianism', which we observe at work inside intentional communities. In the paper we ask, 'What happens when people try to live a good life together?' and 'Is it possible to live a utopia?' These questions raise difficult issues about the relationship between utopian thinking and practice.

Utopianism stems from discontent with one's society. This discontent typically manifests as a critical narrative about the values, norms and/or conceptual cornerstones of the society. Utopian critique is thus always context specific. From this critical perspective, the utopian thinker seeks out better alternatives. Taking the key values and practices identified in their critique as their starting place, utopians begin to imagine a better society in which these things are re-valued and practiced differently. Lived utopianism is the attempt to take this sort of utopian thinking a step further. Lived utopianism is people trying to realize their ideas and dreams of a better way of life, in the here and now. Lived utopianism involves living daily life in a way that reflects shared criticisms of social norms and a (broadly) shared vision of a good life.

Examining this phenomenon at work (and play) in two ubiquitous themes of food and housework, we argue that attention to the role of the everyday is crucial. Everyday lived utopianism can embed radical change but at the same time it reveals the deep-seated tensions involved in the enterprise of trying to live a better life together. The paper calls for a new research agenda that undertakes wide and systematic examination of this transformative phenomenon.

Keywords: Lived utopianism, Intentional communities, Theory and practice

From the Criticism of Everyday Life to Utopia. The World and the Subject Within the Spanish Countercultural Transition (1968-1986)

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On the last few years, the dominant narrative of the Spanish transition has been subjected to a scrutinizing academic and social edit. This has encouraged the emergency of research studies focused on many invisible social actors and the reconstruction of the alternative futures they imagined. My PhD thesis, framed on the HISTOPIA project, is based on this framework and I intend to present its interim results in the XIX Conference of the USS-E.

Moreover, the purpose of this communication intends to address the social imagery of the Spanish transitional counterculture, understood as an all-embracing, heterogeneous and reactive phenomenon. This way, on the one hand I will address the continuity that these actors gave to the project of criticism of everyday life inherited from situational postulates; on the other hand, I will try to create an idea of the conception of the world, the subject and the relation between them that finally shaped communal, ecologist, feminist and deeply antiauthoritarian imaginaries, meaning it would be an opportunity to reflect on the harmony that this Conference is willing to discuss.

According to these social actors' approaches, both theory and practice should be considered as a set of ideas. Thus my communication will not only examine the ideological precepts that lay on their graffities, fanzines, songs and other primary sources, but also the different utopian political actions that these precepts made possible. Focusing on everyday life transformation, utopia will abandon the future dimension to be urgently constructed in the present one, creating what Gianni Vattimo would call "hypermodern" subjectivities.

In the end I would like to retrieve, through my written statement, the utopian surplus of defeated subjects whom today, in a possible anti-utopian present, may have allowed us to discern alternative ways of conceiving our subjectivities and our relation with a world of an increasingly dystopian facade.

Keywords: Counterculture, Spanish transition, Social imageries

Aging in Utopia: The Mixed Message from Utopian Literature and Intentional Communities

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The treatment of aging in utopianism is an interesting example of the way that it reflects current conditions. Historically, the aging, elderly, or senior citizens (note that we tend to avoid the word “old”) were considered important members of the community, treated well, integrated into community life through sharing their experience and, whenever possible, continuing to work, and cared for as needed. While versions of the earlier approach still exist, much of the literature reflects ageism, which was apparently coined in 1969 by Robert Neil Butler, the first Director of the National Institute on Aging, to parallel such words as “racism” and “sexism” and referred to discrimination against seniors. The old are treated not as a resource but as a problem and, in some case, a problem to be eliminated. In the intentional community movement, on the other hand, still reflects the earlier model.

Keywords: Aging, Intentional communities, Ageism

Seceding in Utopian Literature: Eutopian and Dystopian Versions of Secession

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Given our location in Catalonia, it seems appropriate to consider a tension in utopian literature, that between amalgamation and secession. I focus on the latter, but given that H. G. Wells, probably the greatest utopian of the last 125 years and many other utopians, put a world state at the center of his utopia, I start there. Then turn to my theme, secession, which has a long history politically as well as in utopian literature. Of the many countries that could be included, I look particularly at Canada, the U. K., which appears to have produced the most literature, and the U. S., all of which have experienced amalgamation with a regular if not constant tendency to have parts break away.

Keywords: Secession, Amalgamation, Canada, UK, US

On Wells and the state, see W. Warren Wagar, *H.G. Wells and the Modern State*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961.