

Feminism and utopianism

Feminists have joined in celebrating and critiquing utopianism. On the one hand they have profited from the socio-political changes that visions of better societies have impelled; on the other, they have called into question utopias that depict static perfection – societies so ideal that they have nowhere to go, rely on rigid hierarchies and use coercion to maintain their perfect order. Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) epitomizes the traditional version: it is fully mapped, boasting uniform towns that are geometrically organized with a centrally located seat of power from which the sovereign can conduct surveillance. Infrastructure supports the discipline of inhabitants; architecture and institutions encourage certain behaviours and discourage others. Ancient books, repeated rituals, pervasive symbols and signs ground authority in the traditional utopia. Clothing is issued and regulated. Dissenters are expelled or incarcerated. Such traditional utopias have also been called 'classical', 'blueprint', or 'end-state' utopias, and many critics have concurred that, even though inhabitants are provided for, such visions are distasteful. Despite readers' admiration for the wit and inventiveness of More's *Utopia*, few would want to live there. Women in particular have fared poorly in traditional blueprint utopias, where they have been forced to labour endlessly and bow to humourless patriarchs.

Consequently feminist utopian authors and critics have generally side-stepped the blueprint form to privilege instead a 'process' or 'reproductive' or 'critical' model.¹ What is surprising, and what will be explored here, is that this form of process-oriented feminist utopianism is not new. I will argue that it is not merely the product of what is called the first-, second- and third-wave feminism of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Instead, process-oriented utopianism characterizes a large part of feminist utopian writing beginning in the late middle ages and continuing to today – from Christine de Pizan to Sarah Scott to Ursula K. Le Guin – and it appears emphatically in Enlightenment Britain: that is, *before* what is considered the modern women's movement. Such trans-historical persistence

does not imply any essential female psychology; instead, it suggests continuity in many feminists' reactions to socio-cultural arrangements in the Anglo-American world (and arguably in the West in general) that have remained deeply patriarchal despite significant political and economic changes over time.

Before I address the tenacity and salient characteristics of process-oriented feminist utopianism, it will be well to consider more generally why the utopian imagination has been crucial for feminists even though classic works in the genre have treated women so poorly. Three reasons stand out. First, gender equality has never fully existed, so it must be imagined if it is to become a subject of conscious thought and discussion. According to Anne Mellor, 'Those seeking a viable model of a non-sexist society must ... look to the future; their model must be constructed first as a utopia.'² Second, given the limited political, economic and social clout of feminists, they have sought out cultural modes, especially artistic and literary representations, as the most eligible means of making a different future comprehensible to the largest possible audience. The utopian literary mode, so open to imaginative construction and unhindered theorizing, has therefore always appeared useful to feminist authors. However, the fully mapped, blueprint variety has never been obligatory even if it has been the most prominent, and part of what is prized even in the traditional utopia is the flair with which an author conceives of unexpected cultural practices. Utopia as thought-experiment has consistently offered ways of altering people's perceptions, of making the familiar seem strange. Consequently, third, veering from the traditional utopia has given feminists a socially viable course of discursive and ideological deviance. As Darby Lewes has written of the late nineteenth century, 'the dialectical and ambiguous genre of lost outsiders in disorienting worlds mirrored women's own situation' in a society where on the one hand they were told they were central to human existence and morally accountable yet, on the other hand, lived lives in which they were legally without status, politically voiceless and domestically subordinated.³

Therefore utopia has long been a fitting and crucial vehicle for women's critique. One of the few modes available for feminist theorizing and the articulation of alternatives, it became particularly helpful when increasing literacy, wealth and access to books opened the literary marketplace to European women in the eighteenth century. It is consequently no surprise that, after a lull in the production of utopian literature in the early nineteenth century, modern feminists returned to utopian visions to express their desires for a more just and equitable society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that the liberation movements of the 1970s gave rise to another flowering of feminist utopianism.

Still, some feminist theorists today wonder whether the idea of utopia retains resonance. Sally Kitch has recently proposed ‘post-utopian approaches to feminist thought’ that favour what she calls realism over imagined improvements. ‘Without utopianism feminism can more readily recognize contingent truths, inevitable conflicts, and complex motivations and loyalties, as it addresses the problems it can name. Realistic feminist thought can embrace the serendipity and vagaries of human life, identity, relationships, and institutions.’⁴ Others suggest that the pressures of our plural world and of socio-cultural emphases on differences in nationality, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability and religion as well as gender all underscore the complexities of our transnational world and raise the question whether feminism itself, with its origins in well-to-do, white, western culture, remains a feasible political force. Given the enormous concerns of today, old forms of feminist agitation appear to some to make little sense, and the depiction of alternative worlds through interventions in utopian writing appears to them wholly ineffectual. However, countering such pessimism are others who suggest that feminists today need utopian ideas more than ever. Strategies for empowering women and subaltern groups, they argue, are constantly thwarted by reactionary political and social forces, and feminists, men as well as women, need to ‘take time out to dream’; they insist that utopian literature facilitates the imaginative speculation necessary for generating new liberating strategies in a globalized world.

Anglo-American feminism is therefore at a crossroads in the early twenty-first century. I will side with the hopeful to suggest that a look at the utopian visions of feminist authors through the centuries shows not only how the idea of utopia can and should remain useful, but also how early authors actually address some of the very reservations raised by current critics. Feminist writers of the past reacted creatively and imaginatively to substantial pressures under complicated circumstances of their own, and the surprising historical continuities at the heart of their concerns led to representations, intelligent and sensitive, from which we can glean courage and learn.

Utopia resists classification because the very idea is so vast, spanning not only literary works but also experimental communities, political programmes and psychological proclivities. However, creating categories helps to counter hasty dismissals of the literature – sometimes denigrated as sub-literary precisely because of its perceived amorphousness – by offering conceptual frameworks that allow us profitably to analyse and evaluate it. In considering the categories below we need to keep in mind that distinctions in feminist utopias sometimes constitute shifts away from the traditional model rather than stark oppositions, that not all feminist utopias necessarily

reveal all characteristics and that some traditional utopias display ‘process’ characteristics too. It is useful to avoid thinking in terms of opposed sets of texts and to envisage instead continua created by a series of points on a graph. The horizontal axis would chart generic *form*, moving from the static, blueprint variety on the left to the process-oriented form on the right; the vertical axis would consider *content* and chart its way from patriarchal or sexist representations at the bottom to feminist ones at the top. On such a graph the texts I discuss below would be the plotted points clustered with significant density at the top right area. There would of course be a few outlying texts that, though containing feminist traits, landed short of the top right corner by virtue of following a static model, as some critics have suggested concerning Margaret Cavendish’s *Blazing World*, Mary Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* or Sheri Tepper’s *Gate to Women’s Country*. And there would likely be some that, though containing process traits, would not be plotted as feminist, for instance William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*. Such a graph would also reveal some process-oriented feminist utopias to be male-authored (for example Samuel Delany’s *Triton* or Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Pacific Edge*). Envisioning such a diagram helps us to fathom the complexity and variety of this vast literature while highlighting meaningful trends.

To attempt to do justice to the variety of texts, I offer numerous examples from different historical periods; at the same time I hope to explain how works respond to specific historical contexts even as they demonstrate trans-historical continuities. I focus necessarily on a few prominent texts and consider the four main periods of greatest feminist utopian output: first, the late middle ages and beginning of the early modern period, when the *querelle des femmes*, the debate over women, encouraged Christine de Pizan to compose *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1404–5) and its sequel, *The Book of the Three Virtues* (1405); second, the ‘long eighteenth century’, when increasing wealth due to colonialism and trade spurred debates about luxury and the meaning of the good life, as in Mary Astell’s *Serious Proposal* (1694) and Sarah Scott’s *Millenium Hall* (1762); third, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when socialist ideas and the end of the Civil War in the United States brought about vast political shifts and women, along with freed slaves, sought suffrage and greater sway, lending impetus to Frances Harper’s *Iola Leroy* (1892) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915); and fourth, the 1970s, when feminists wished to give shape to their needs and desires after the New Left failed adequately to press for women’s rights, traceable in works such as Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* (1974) and Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976).⁵

The most prominent distinction characterizing feminists’ utopian expression, as I have suggested, is that it has generally favoured process-oriented

utopianism instead of adhering to the better-known ‘classic’, ‘blueprint’, ‘end-state’ model.⁶ But why have so many feminists preferred this mode, and in what does such utopianism consist? Five features seem most salient in lending to feminist utopias their process-oriented character: (1) Feminist utopias see education and intellectual development as central to the individual and to women’s empowerment; (2) they embrace a view of human nature as malleable and social rather than determined, fallen and individualist; (3) they favour a gradualist approach to change, a cumulative approach to history and a shared approach to power; (4) they view the non-human natural world as dynamic rather than as an inert receiver of human impulses; and (5) they are usually pragmatic. These features, I suggest, follow from an author’s viewing issues from the perspective of female subjection and from a knowledge that change cannot be undertaken alone; what allows for trans-historical continuity in spite of historical and other significant differences between writers is the feminists’ shared commitment to exposing and undoing injustices experienced by women and subalterns in patriarchy.

1. Centrality of education

The most common thread in feminist utopian writing is the emphasis on education. Though this theme appears also in traditional utopias, education tends there to remain tangential, whereas it becomes the fulcrum in feminists’ works all the way into the twentieth century. Through most of western history, women have had far less access to education than men, and they have seen this lack as key to their subordinate status. Viewing female history and the accomplishments of celebrated women, feminists often ask: since it is clear women are educable and their minds are as keen as their brothers’, why are they denied access to the means of developing their intellects? Feminist utopias therefore pay enormous attention to education of all types.

Some feminist utopian authors approach education through *institutions*, which are often described in great detail, including buildings, subjects of instruction and timetables. Mary Astell’s *Serious Proposal to the Ladies* calls for the establishment of a female monastery where women attend to the cultivation of their souls as they study theology and philosophy and develop significant friendships. In Sarah Scott’s *Sir George Ellison* (1766) the Millenium Hall women generously set up a school system for girls of all classes, though they less liberally ensure that the girls remain planted in those classes: ‘third-rank’ women who are to become servants or ‘wives to men in small trades’ learn writing and accounts, washing, baking, brewing and milking; ‘second-rank’ girls with ‘no prospect of considerable fortunes’

study economics, sewing, cooking and drawing; and ‘first rank’ girls follow an ambitious academic curriculum including music, arithmetic, science, history, geography, languages, religion, ‘the less abstruse parts of astronomy, natural philosophy, ethics, and the rational parts of metaphysics’.⁷ Unlike later utopias, early feminist visions often reinforce class hierarchies, even though they insist that *all* women are to gain substantial freedoms and that society as a whole is to profit: witness Clara Reeve’s *Plans of Education* (1792), which suggests that institutions of learning, including girls’ academies, will help Britain approach the ideal of ‘Utopia ... where every order is kept in its proper state, and none is allowed to encroach upon, or oppress another’.⁸ In the same year, however, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* appeared from the pen of the radical Mary Wollstonecraft; it is a text no less concerned than Reeve’s to create a productive populace and it also takes the servant class for granted, but it critiques the aristocracy viciously, arguing that virtue is most likely to reside in the middle ranks. *A Vindication* calls for public co-education of girls and boys, suggesting that this would lead to rational relationships between the sexes, encourage early marriages, and make women more attentive mothers, better companions and more involved citizens.⁹

Wollstonecraft’s ideas made their way to America. Frances Wright, influenced by Wollstonecraft as well as by Robert Owen, saw schools as a way to ‘perfect the free institutions of America’ in 1829: ‘a nation to be strong, must be united; to be united, must be equal in condition; to be equal in condition, must be similar in habits and in feeling; to be similar in habits and in feeling, *must be raised in national institutions, as the children of a common family, and citizens of a common country*’.¹⁰ In Mary Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* (1880–1) the narrator sees the virtues of the Mizoran women’s education and resolves that ‘it is the duty of every government to make its schools and colleges, and everything appertaining to education – FREE’.¹¹ In the nineteenth century economic and political shifts spurred more far-reaching discussions not only of the interconnections among class, gender and nation but also race. African American author Frances Harper in *Iola Leroy* views education as the means for uplifting former slaves and thereby demonstrates its double efficacy in empowering not only the female sex (‘every woman ought to know how to earn her own living’) but also freed blacks. Her biracial protagonist Iola refuses to pass for white, and, finding family members and bringing them together into a utopian community after the Civil War, works to teach blacks self-reliance in the American south.¹²

In other feminist utopias education is portrayed through *reading*, either casual, formally interpreted in group settings, or prescribed in syllabi. Thus in the utopic girls’ school of Sarah Fielding’s *The Governess* (1749) education

occurs through proctored discussions of didactic stories. Mary Hamilton offers reading lists in the *Duchess de Crui* (1777) and builds an octagonal library at the centre of her utopian *Munster Village* (1778). She addresses explicitly the issue of process or the reproductive power of education, which, she argues, 'is productive of infinite advantages, extending its influence to society, and may operate upon posterity to the end of the world'.¹³ In Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* the protagonist Shevek, a physicist and inhabitant of the egalitarian, anarchistic moon Anarres, is handed a book by his mentor and directed to teach himself the Iotic language of the rival planet Urras through solitary study. He is also told to keep his knowledge a secret, which perplexes him since it is 'a situation so new to him and morally so confusing that he had not yet worked it out'.¹⁴ Knowledge is to be shared; the idea of intellectual property appears oxymoronic. On Anarres females receive the same educational opportunities as men do, but on Urras, Shevek is startled to find, the huge University is 'exclusively male ... and [is] not organized federatively but hierarchically, from the top down' (65).

Despite women's increasing access to education and libraries through the twentieth century, feminists have not left off insisting on the continued relevance of reading, though the ways the issue is framed have changed in a world shaped by new media. In a dystopian work such as Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986) the dangers of digitization are depicted in the fundamentalist Republic of Gilead, where people's identities are stolen electronically and books outlawed and burned. The female narrator Offred, desperately greedy for the intellectual stimulation of words, devours even a shabby, antiquated issue of *Vogue* magazine illicitly acquired through her Commander. Together they play a furtive game of Scrabble.

Education in feminist utopias is also fostered through *conversation*, which can train girls in current affairs, language and critical thinking. In her *Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (1696) Judith Drake suggests that girls were in fact more adept socially than boys because they participated in discussions of books rather than pursuing a classical education, which emphasized Latin and Greek.¹⁵ The popularity of eighteenth-century salons and bluestocking gatherings underscored the profit of conversation, as Hannah More put it in her poem *The Bas-Bleu, or Conversation* (1787):

Ah! wherefore wise, if none must hear?
Our intellectual ore must shine,
Not slumber idly in the mine.
Let education's moral mint
The noblest images imprint;
Let taste her curious touchstone hold,
To try if standard be the gold;

But 'tis thy commerce, Conversation,
Must give it use by circulation;
That noblest commerce of mankind,
Whose precious merchandize is MIND!¹⁶

Britain's increasingly commercial and imperial economy offered a certain momentum for feminists, even as feminists themselves sometimes noted how their position paralleled that of ruthlessly colonized subalterns. Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication* laments: 'Is sugar always to be produced by vital blood? Is one half of the human species, like the poor African slaves, to be subject to prejudices that brutalize them ...? Is not this indirectly to deny woman reason?'¹⁷ Recognizing the costs of British prosperity, feminists nonetheless also saw that coffee houses, tea tables and salon gatherings could become utopian spaces in which women moved, conversed and increased their knowledge alongside men.

Even later, after national plans of schooling were drawn up in Britain and the United States, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* stressed that in the utopia education is 'our highest art', the source of citizens' 'real growth'.¹⁸ Herlanders attend lectures as a public benefit, in stark contrast to citizens of Thomas More's Utopia who, wishing to gain learning, attend talks in their 'spare time ... before daybreak' so as not to waste work hours, and they engage in conversations merely to 'amuse themselves' rather than to profit intellectually;¹⁹ brain work is reserved for a hand-selected elite. Shevek's education in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* occurs through animated conversations with friends as he is growing up and with mentors as he is developing his professional interests. He keeps his theories about time in his head, discussing them casually at gatherings, while Urrasti physicists assume that what is crucial must be written down and therefore clear his computer to get at his ideas. Looking to women's traditions, feminist authors have recognized the significant extent to which knowledge has been passed on orally; the dialogue that dominates utopian writing dovetails conveniently with feminists' hope that the power of spoken words will influence people, expand knowledge and increase women's freedoms.

Finally, education appears in feminist utopias occurring through *example*, allowing women to become empowered by following dynamic models. Pizan, in *The Book of the City of Ladies*, shapes her legendary into an allegorical utopian city filled with all of history's good women, thereby creating a place where a mother sets 'a good example of integrity and learnedness' for her daughter and all are encouraged 'to cultivate virtue, to flee vice, to increase and multiply our City, and to rejoice and act well'.²⁰ Participating in the *querelle des femmes*, Pizan sought to revise and thereby lend a feminist impulse to Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (*On Famous Women*). The

main theme of Mary Astell's *Serious Proposal* is also imitation, in particular the imitation of Christ. Astell wishes women of the female monastery to copy the pious, Christ-like behaviour of those around them, to improve their souls through a 'holy emulation which a continual view of the brightest and most exemplary Lives will excite in us'.²¹ While it has been argued that Thomas More, also inspired by the monastic model, sought to curtail social emulation in Utopia as a way of combating the sin of pride, feminists have used the idea of imitation from an optimistic viewpoint: copying positive models will increase the amount and range of ethical behaviour and enhance women's lives and their chances for salvation. Harper contrasts the examples of Iola Leroy's employers Mr Cohen and Mr Cloten to show how a businessman should model the equitable treatment of his black employees in order to create fair working conditions,²² while in *The Female Man* (1975) Joanna Russ uses as negative examples the despicable behaviour of men in the different worlds she describes – a New York party host and a Manlander boss who insult and make passes at women – in order to expose misogyny and justify the violent attacks they then suffer from Janet and Jael.²³

From the middle ages to today feminists of various ideological bents have been aware of the benefits of education and sought to further knowledge on all levels. Learned ladies were in the past often socially derided – as Rectitude puts it in Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies*, 'many foolish men have claimed [that it is bad for women to be educated] because it displeased them that women knew more than they did'²⁴ – but feminists have not allowed this prejudice to impede study in their utopian visions, where they imagine access to knowledge that happens openly, avidly and regularly, and is seen to encompass all aspects of life. Feminists repeatedly argue that women will become better mothers and friends, more productive citizens and more devout believers if they are given access to books and training. Often women are depicted as instructors, and the implication is that their teaching will replicate itself as students, male as well as female, become tutors themselves, furthering virtue and happiness. The perpetuation and extension of knowledge is a crucial part of the reproductive utopian process.

2. Human nature adaptable and social

In keeping with the belief that people can be educated, most feminist utopian authors suggest that human psychology can be amended. Where Thomas More saw human nature as fallen, as likely to give way to sin unless checked by institutions and surveillance, feminists have generally viewed human beings as at least partially alterable from within. Thus feminist utopias reveal a faith in behaviour modification, looking to stories, conversation, education

and play to teach new habits, goals and values. One could argue that this tendency emerges from a model of childrearing, and it certainly may be influenced by women's longstanding roles as mothers and nurturers; yet, in feminist utopias this process happens socially, in communities and tribes, rather than strictly within nuclear families. Feminists emphasize that inhabitants, instead of simply learning traditional family functions, absorb the aims of the society as a whole and muster the motivation to act morally.

Even before Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) feminists furthered the idea that individuals' experience shaped their development ('nurture versus nature'). Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies*, where models of virtue persuade readers to become models of virtue themselves, implies a view of human beings not only motivated by vanity and self-interest (they wish to stand out), but also capable of altering their actions. Astell in the seventeenth century similarly counts on such vanity as she wishes to 'decoy' women who lack sufficient 'Piety to read a Book for its Usefulness' into seeking the gratification of reading a book by a woman and unexpectedly being edified by it.²⁵ Sarah Scott in the eighteenth century builds games into her stories so that vain people will evolve into utopian subjects. Thus a coquettish wife is told to accompany her husband into the country and to read romances. These will stimulate desires she will then redirect towards her husband, making him her hero and curtailing her egotistic wishes to be desired by other men. After romances, 'more rational Studies were to succeed; that after being taught how to love, she might learn what was lovely, the better to place her Affections, and to deserve those of others'.²⁶ Even the marital relationship is to open out into social affinity. In Marge Piercy's utopian *Mattapoisett*, inhabitants seek to 'educate the senses, the imagination, the social being, the muscles, the nervous system, the intuition, the sense of beauty – as well as memory and intellect' to prevent individual isolation and to create instead 'a net of connecting'.²⁷ An important exception would appear to be the separatist communities from which men have been banished – as Scott's *Millenium Hall*, Gilman's *Herland*, or Gearhart's *Wanderground* (1979) – suggesting that men are irremediably power-hungry or violent and will insist on the reinstatement of patriarchal forms of dominance if allowed admittance. Yet, with a notable exception like Russ's *Female Man*, even in these works trustworthy men appear, for example D'Avora and the narrator in *Millenium Hall*, Jeff and Van in *Herland*, or the 'gentles' in *Wanderground*; these characters offer alternative versions of masculinity and sexuality and imply the possibility of new, egalitarian forms of interaction between the sexes.

Feminist utopian authors have drawn on their understanding of how women and underlings in general have persuaded people subtly when they

have had little power to command. In her *Book of the Three Virtues*, also called *The Treasure of the City of Ladies* (1405), Pizan acknowledges that a woman's power derives not from herself but from her rank; if she wishes to achieve her ends she needs to be an effective psychologist and able manager of those around her. The whole book offers advice to women of different ranks about how this can be accomplished. Pizan draws a remarkable conclusion that anticipates social contract theory; most people, even princes, are in fact in the same dependent situation and would do well to act accordingly: 'Although the prince may be lord and master of his subjects, the subjects nevertheless make the lord and not the lord the subjects ... he must necessarily keep their affections, not by harshness but in such a way that from this love comes fear, or otherwise his authority is in peril.'²⁸ This astute analysis of the derivation of power underscores how deeply even an early feminist assessed the subaltern's position of dependence and how central a topic to feminists has been the tiptoeing through different types of subjection. Sarah Fielding describes the pain of what was called the dependent 'toadeater', which is 'a Metaphor taken from a Mountebank's Boy's eating Toads, in order to shew his Master's Skill in expelling Poison ... And the Metaphor may be carried on yet farther, for most People have so much the Art of tormenting, that every time they have made the poor Creatures they have in their power *swallow a Toad*, they have given them something to expel it again, that they may be ready to swallow the next thing.'²⁹ To survive, the dependant must become a careful reader of personalities, knowing when and how to avoid manipulation but being able to exploit opportunities for improving a pitiful situation by appealing to the conscience or self-interest of superiors. Feminist utopian authors, conceiving their narratives by looking from the position of the underling, have no illusions about people's capacities for oppression, and yet they hold out a hope in the canny and persuasive strengths of the powerless: sometimes even those wielding authority will be educated to mercy or even taught the advantages of fully accepting utopian values.

Central to such utopian values, whether traditional or feminist, is the importance of the community. In traditional works the group does not attain the same level of intensity as it does in feminist ones, where not only comradeship but love, intimacy and spiritual connection characterize the ties between members. In Astell's *Serious Proposal* the women's community will offer the chance for sacred friendship:

We shall have opportunity of contracting the purest and noblest Friendship; a Blessing, the purchase of which were richly worth all the World besides! For she who possesses a worthy Person, has certainly obtain'd the richest Treasure. A Blessing that Monarchs may envy, and she who enjoys is happier than she

who fills a Throne! A Blessing, which next to the love of GOD, is the choicest Jewel in our Caelestial Diadem ... [I]f we cannot spare a hearty Good-will to one or two choice Persons, how can it ever be thought, that we shou'd well acquit our selves of that Charity which is due to all Mankind? For Friendship is nothing else but Charity contracted; it is ... a kind of revenging ourselves on the narrowness of our Faculties, by exemplifying that extraordinary Charity on one or two, which we are willing, but not able to exercise towards all.³⁰

Astell uses the attractive metaphors of jewels and crowns, speaking of purchase and possession, to persuade both her wealthy, worldly readers and the Princess to whom she dedicated this work that communal feeling, distilled into friendship, must be dearer than power and material acquisition. Sarah Fielding's *David Simple* (1744) is, in the words of the subtitle, about the protagonist's 'Search of a Real Friend'. After many trials he succeeds, and the novel ends with two weddings which form a community where all 'contribute to the Happiness of the others'.³¹ Fielding repeatedly depicts communities of shared property, work and emotion in order to counter the pervasive acquisitiveness of the early capitalism of her time. The narrator concludes: 'It is impossible for the most lively Imagination to form an Idea more pleasing than what this little Society enjoyed, in the true Proofs of each other's Love: And, as strong a Picture as this is of real Happiness, it is in the power of every Community to attain it.'³² The early twentieth-century American male visitor to Gilman's Herland likewise describes how the inhabitants 'thought in terms of the community';³³ 'all the surrendering devotion our [American] women have put into their private families, these women put into their country and race. All the loyalty and service men expect of wives, they gave, not singly to men, but collectively to one another.'³⁴ In Gearhart's *Wanderground* the hill women live pastorally without the trappings of industrialized society, and emotion moves as freely as wealth between the female members. In Russ's *Female Man*, Le Guin's *Dispossessed*, and Piercy's *Mattapoisett*, the inhabitants are sexually free from puberty onward, even if monogamy is sometimes chosen.

Feminist utopias offer varied approaches to sexuality and motherhood and parenting – in some, reproduction occurs through parthenogenesis, in some through heterosexual intercourse; in some, children are part of families, in others they become offspring of the entire community, and in others there is a combination of both approaches – and earlier visions are more likely than later nineteenth or twentieth-century ones to depict hierarchical social arrangements. Nonetheless, there is a strong overall tendency to revise the 'family' into an egalitarian unit, not based on sex or blood ties alone, in which love – more than mere allegiance or family identification – inspires people and binds the community. Gender roles are more visible in earlier

texts, but work is equally distributed and, crucially, feeling circulates in even exchange so that emotional needs and desires are satisfied.

3. Gradualist change, cumulative history, shared power

The dependant's perspective also dominates feminist utopian approaches to history, to change through time. Traditional utopias tend to rely on revolutionary substitution, abrupt regime change, for the origin of the society and then on a subsequent perpetuation of dictated social forms and rituals. The reader of More's *Utopia* finds out in a few sentences how 'Utopus ... conquered the country and gave it his name', overpowered the natives, quickly made the peninsula into an island, and subdued the 'neighboring peoples, who ... were struck with wonder and terror at his success'.³⁵ Power there is manifestly patriarchal: 'The oldest of every household ... is the ruler. Wives are subject to their husbands, children to their parents, and generally the younger to their elders.'³⁶ Rituals sustain the distribution of power by reinforcing social roles and hierarchies. Absolutist political power is the model for the early traditional utopia, where a divine-right sovereign demands blind obedience and has the authority to command by fiat.

By contrast, feminist utopias across the centuries tend to depict shared power and promote gradual reform and ongoing change. They avoid revolutionary shifts, build their societies piecemeal and adjust them little by little. Pizan's Reason tells the narrator of the *Book of the City of Ladies*: 'you will set the foundations deep to last all the longer, and then you will raise the walls so high that they will not fear anyone'; and after this Rectitude decides 'that our construction is quite well advanced, for the houses of the City of Ladies stand completed all along the wide streets ... It is therefore right that we start to people this noble City now'.³⁷ In *Millenium Hall* Scott shows how inhabitants appear there one by one, gradually forming the society which gains in residents until more houses need to be purchased: accommodation to circumstances expresses their attitude towards time and change. Hamilton's Munster Village is slowly created and inhabited. Harper's *Iola Leroy* first needs to find her family and then seeks to expand outward to create and educate a community. Gilman explains the evolving history of the Herlanders: 'their time-sense was not limited to the hopes and ambitions of an individual life'.³⁸ The mindset is long-term and geared to social adjustments. In Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* couples on Anarres wanting to live in partnership simply build a room onto an existing structure, 'and long, low, straggling buildings might thus be created room by room, called "partners' truck trains"'.³⁹ As a need arises, the inhabitants of utopia respond.

Adaptation to circumstances literally shapes the societies: form follows function. Instead of building identical cities simultaneously, feminist utopians fill one house or community and then settle another. No master plan governs; instead, one improvement leads to another and one event to the next. A recognition of contingency therefore characterizes much feminist utopian thought, and to respond effectively a decentralized, quasi-anarchistic form of government often emerges. Non-hierarchical decision-making characterizes the small communities that dominate feminist utopian writing. According to Joanna Russ, the general classlessness in 1970s feminist utopias fosters a dispersion of power and therefore the capacity for directing change through time. This classlessness is so ‘pervasive ... e.g., the informality of tone, the shifting of jobs from person to person, the free choice of jobs whenever possible – that the authors’ not discussing their worlds’ forms of government seems neither ignorance nor sloppiness’.⁴⁰ In *The Female Man* Russ, in the voice of Joanna, suggests that men have always been the history makers – ‘Men succeed. Women get married. Men fail. Women get married ... Men start wars. Women get married. Men stop them. Women get married. Dull, dull’ – so a woman must become a man if she is to achieve agency and self-determination, or, alternatively, she can remove herself, work towards and inhabit a lesbian separatist society like Janet’s Whileaway.⁴¹ Le Guin depicts Anarres as an anarchistic society, as does Piercy Mattapoisett. But even Scott’s eighteenth-century Millenium Hall, dominated by an oligarchy of high-ranking women, makes a point of emphasizing women’s self-determination: inhabitants should be free to decide how they spend their time; they should be at liberty to leave or withdraw when they wish. Women’s freedom begins with the right to come and go, to participate or not.

And the vision is so attractive it proliferates. Feminists imagine one utopia which then often spills over into another, so that utopia expands by replication. Pizan’s *Book of the City of Ladies* spills over into its sequel, the *Treasure*; Mary Astell’s *Serious Proposal* moves from Part I to Part II; Sarah Scott’s *Millenium Hall* begets *Sir George Ellison*. Readers want to know what happens to the society next, but whereas traditional utopias have reached their perfection, feminist utopias create a reproductive inner energy that leads naturally to multiplication. Their inner logic about how utopia is achieved piecemeal and then expanded through the cascading efforts of dependants concludes in an ongoing reproduction of ideal societies and literary sequels. In later texts new worlds expand into the future, with movement back and forth between the societies: Russ shuttles between the 1969 world and the future Whileaway; Le Guin moves between Anarres and Urras; Piercy shifts from modern-day New York to Mattapoisett and back again. Characters move beyond their world, often through time-travel, in

order to effect present and future change. Thus the message spreads through space and time, and the literary utopias operate on the level of form as well as content, opening out beyond their bounds rather than reinforcing a limited, traditional insularity.

Indeed the notion of proliferation, coming from the dependant's view of power and politics, shapes the feminist utopian view of history: it is not the traditional fantasy of suddenly summoning Eden. Instead it is a theory of history as accumulation, the combined power of many small, discrete events issuing in large impacts. According to Sarah Scott, 'Upon these common, and frequent acts, depends in great measure the happiness of those connected with us. Great injuries or great benefits are seldom in our power; the opportunities for either are few.'⁴² In Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* utopian Mattapoissett is only one of several futures that are possible, and even that future society turns out to be engaged in struggle against reactionary forces. Connie, the twentieth-century protagonist, is contacted to become involved in the future war. With courage gained through communication with Mattapoissett, she musters the resolve to rebel against the oppressive forces in the present, thereby weakening the reactionary powers of the cyborgs and tyrants against whom the Mattapoissettians of the future are fighting. Piercy thus emphasizes the importance of each individual's resolve in countering socio-political oppression. American works of the 1970s such as Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle*, Russ's *The Female Man* and Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* all 'favor ... a movement toward utopia in a journey of many small steps ... Change, they maintain, is ... the sum total of changes we ourselves create day by day in the process of living', in the words of Angelika Bammer.⁴³

Scott in the eighteenth century expressed this rationale to address the question of historiography on a national level. In her view,

what is looked upon by the public eye as the effects of national resentment for national injuries, and spreads the most extensive destruction, sometimes originally arises from the private views of the lowest officer in the monarch's service, as the greatest river has its source under ground; in its first appearance little more than a bubbling rivulet, scarcely perceptible, till uniting with every stream it meets in its progress, it swells gradually into a river, whose torrent at length destroys every thing that opposes its course.⁴⁴

Scott responded as a feminist utopian writer to new theories of philosophical history in her time, which argued that great movements, leaders and nations are what make history and that this is therefore what written histories should include. She countered that it is smaller forces, the collective acts of individuals that cause the wheels to turn; grand events are only the most visible manifestations of less conspicuous catalysts. She argued

with Samuel Johnson for the importance of *biographical* history: the virtuous example of an individual could have a social efficacy surpassing the story of two nations at odds; effective struggle against negative social forces depended on people's united ethical actions. Pizan anticipated Scott. Her medieval *Book of the City of Ladies* is populated with women from the ancient world, from legend, from the Bible and from the recent past in order to revise history so that women attain their deserved place. Modern feminists echo these views. In Gearhart's *Wanderground* Remember Rooms exist for the hill women to weave their various individual stories together into a grand narrative: 'from countless seemingly disconnected episodes the women had pieced together a larger picture' in order that the full story of women's experience can be witnessed.⁴⁵ In Le Guin's *Dispossessed*, Shevek proffers two images for the inscription of time, images which posit both the forward-moving actions of individuals and the meaning-conferring, enclosing shape of grand narrative: 'there is the arrow, the running river, without which there is no change, no progress, or direction or creation. And there is the circle or the cycle, without which there is chaos, meaningless succession of instants, a world without clocks or seasons or promises.'⁴⁶ The first is sequence, the second simultaneity, which Shevek struggles to reconcile in his General Theory of Time.

Feminists have suggested that this dual perspective is critical. Change must happen gradually through time, a 'succession of instants', but a clear picture of events, discernible at a glance, must direct the forward movement. To formulate a reasonable plan for the future a distinct understanding of history is necessary, but individual women's stories must be gathered together in order for the full scope of women's long oppression to be understood. Grand narratives depend on the individual stories of which they are composed, just as powerful princes depend on their various underlings, just as events are influenced by hidden causes: the two forms of understanding history, like the distribution of power between the sovereign and the subject, exist in dialectical relationship. To achieve a freer future, then, not only must images of the past motivate critical discernment in the present, but images of possible alternatives must also guide the steps to be taken.

4. Dynamic view of the environment

The work of modern feminists has often coincided with the values of environmentalism, and yet it is not only the modern feminist movement that has recognized how capitalism has affected the Earth's 'others'. Earlier utopian feminists shared this tendency; familiarity with the position of the dependant and the exploited sensitized authors to the plight of abused nature, and

the language used was often overtly political. In Scott's *Millenium Hall* the ladies create a landscape corresponding to eighteenth-century ideas about the English garden, with picturesque vistas, a grotto and a temple of solitude, but at the same time they seek to foster indigenous flora and fauna even when British colonizers eagerly displayed exotic species in their personal zoos and cabinets of curiosities. On the Millenium Hall estate 'the wood is well peopled with pheasants, wild turkies, squirrels and hares, who live so unmolested, that they seem to have forgot all fear, and rather to welcome than fly those who come amongst them. Man never appears there as a merciless destroyer; but the preserver, instead of the tyrant of the inferior part of the creation.'⁴⁷ In the early nineteenth century Mary Shelley probed the possibilities of man as 'merciless destroyer' in her dystopian science fictions *Frankenstein* (1818) and *The Last Man* (1826), which warn of the consequences of human culture failing adequately to accommodate non-human nature.

By the twentieth century technology appeared to offer not only dangers but also some irresistible advantages. The visitors to Herland admire the women's ingenious inventions; at the same time these women plant a variety of trees with 'due regard ... paid to seasonable crops' and follow a careful programme of composting wherein 'everything which came from the earth went back to it. The practical result was ... an increasingly valuable soil ... instead of the progressive impoverishment so often seen in the rest of the world.'⁴⁸ Mary Bradley Lane's *Mizora*, as an exception, sees technological development as benign; when the narrator observes that science allows the Mizorans 'to supercede Nature', her guide responds: 'By no means. It has only taught us how to make her obey us.'⁴⁹ This overriding optimism is uncommon in feminist works; the view is generally tempered by caveats. For example, in Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* the future society of Mattapoisett has developed a sophisticated means of reproducing human life in the laboratory and concomitantly become a rural village with meandering goats and chickens; Luciente explains that 'We of Mattapoisett are famous for our turtles and our geese. But our major proteins are plant proteins. Every region tries to be ownfed ... Self-sufficient as possible in proteins.'⁵⁰ By contrast Luciente time-travels to twentieth-century New York and is interested to see how a toilet works, fascinated to learn about garbage collection and shocked to find that the rumours about 'the Age of Greed and Waste' are true: 'to burn your compost! To pour your shit into the waters others downstream must drink! That fish must live in! Into rivers whose estuaries and marshes are links in the whole offshore food chain!'⁵¹ Technological innovation is matched by environmental awareness.

Late twentieth-century feminist utopian writers sometimes suggest a special connection of women to nature. According to Joanna Russ some authors 'go beyond the problems of living in the world without disturbing its ecological balance into presenting their characters as feeling a strong emotional connection to the natural world'.⁵² In Gearhart's *Wanderground* the hill women live in 'a green world'⁵³ without modern conveniences, surviving in a nature which speaks to them, where they themselves converse with trees and ride winds and life is based on natural rhythms. In Le Guin's *Dispossessed*, Takver's 'concern with landscapes and living creatures was passionate ... It was strange to see Takver take a leaf into her hand, or even a rock. She became an extension of it, it of her.'⁵⁴ Shevek himself looks over a Urras valley of green fields and hedgerows and trees bordered by hills, 'blue fold behind blue fold, soft and dark under the even, pale grey of the sky' and concludes that 'this is what a world is supposed to look like' (52–3). Ambassador Keng later points to the paradisaical qualities of Urras in order to expose how her land, Terra, is 'a ruin. A planet spoiled by the human species ... We controlled neither appetite nor violence; we did not adapt' (279). By contrasting dusty Anarres and ruined Terra with Urras's beautiful land but flawed society, Le Guin warns of environmental exploitation and pollution, emphasizes the need for careful stewarding of the natural world, and points to the unlikelihood of any culture's achieving full perfection; hence the book's subtitle of 'ambiguous utopia' and the importance of Anarres's 'ongoing revolution'. With her treatment of the environment and the socio-political effects on it, Le Guin, following the lead of feminist utopian authors before her, indicates the need for adaptability, for constant change, for self-control and never-ending evaluation: she sees this as a crucial part of the process towards utopia.

The process-oriented character of feminist environmentalism folds into its other concerns. Feminist utopian authors have from the beginning sought to 'speak for the trees', to use the phrase of Dr Seuss's Lorax, since the trees cannot speak for themselves. Though authors view the specifics of nature and its cultivation variously, the plant and animal world is generally represented not as a passive recipient of human endeavour, but as a powerful, dynamic, potentially dying or potentially deadly force that must be respected and that affects human actions even as human actions have an impact on it.

5. Pragmatism

Feminist utopians are 'nothing if not practical', as Gilman writes of the Herlanders.⁵⁵ In Russ's *Whiteaway*, the girls learn things that are 'heavily practical: how to run machines, how to get along without machines,

law, transportation, physical theory, and so on. They learn gymnastics and mechanics. They learn practical medicine. They learn how to swim and shoot.⁵⁶ While authors embrace the freedom to theorize offered by the utopian genre, they emphasize the material over the transcendent, the physical over the metaphysical, the action over the idea. Achieving utopia will, in their view, require industriousness and involvement, an energetic engagement with people, environment and things. Shevek confesses in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* that there is in Anarres actually no alternative: 'Our society is practical. Maybe too practical, too much concerned with survival only. What is idealistic about social cooperation, mutual aid, when it is the only means of staying alive?'⁵⁷ Feminists therefore come upon their pragmatism in a straightforward way, since only a collective effort can generate the socio-political changes necessary to improve women's lives.

Erin McKenna has in fact argued that the most useful feminist utopias dovetail with philosophical pragmatism to offer the most compelling method today of moving towards a freer global future, thereby attaining broader feminist ends. 'Intricately linked through business relations, environmental concerns, advances in technology, vulnerability to disease (such as AIDS), and fear of nuclear devastation, we need visions that take this connectedness into account and prepare people to cope with the multiplicity and complexity of possibilities the future may hold.'⁵⁸ In particular John Dewey's notion of the 'end-in-view', McKenna argues, will allow for difference and accommodate the need for experimentation and change: the 'end-in-view' is a provisional goal that derives from a critical understanding of the present – including 'an awareness of the relational nature of ourselves and our environment' – and from the development of expectations and desires for the future. 'We are finite developmental creatures who must grow and adapt to both our changing physical and changing social environments in order to survive. This means there can be no set goals, no predetermined unchanging goods or ends. Instead, there is a continuous chain of ends-in-view becoming means for new ends-in-view which become means for new ends-in-view' (85). McKenna suggests that process-oriented feminist utopias provide the critical foresight necessary for good ends-in-view to be discerned; the utopias are visions that help to organize and structure present experience and dissatisfaction towards a desirable, workable purpose in the future.

Other feminists agree. Drucilla Cornell suggests that freedom can only be attained through a universal access to 'the imaginary domain', of which utopia is a part. 'Utopianism has always been tied to the imagination, to visions of what is truly new. A world in which we could all share in life's glories would be one radically different from our own society. Yet what is possible always changes as we change with the transformations we try to realize.'⁵⁹ Angelika

Bammer argues that recent shifts of feminist utopian attention to questions of race and class reveal an 'anticipatory pragmatism ... able to accommodate the vagaries of change because it thinks of change in concrete and practical terms'; it is 'the concrete-utopia-in-process'.⁶⁰

This conception coincides with the view of utopia's most prominent theorist, Ernst Bloch. Bloch was a 'warm' Marxist who disagreed with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's disparagement of utopias as escapist and ineffectual. His idea of the 'not-yet' lines up significantly with Dewey's notion of the 'end-in-view' and with feminists' characterization of that goal as furthered by utopian writing. It is part of 'anticipatory consciousness', an awareness of possibilities that have not yet taken shape but that could one day be effected. Bloch focuses on the daydream, the way the individual's desires come to consciousness as visions, allowing people to organize their discontent with the present. He shows how art and culture capture the daydream and thereby serve the function of catalyzing hope and sketching a roadmap for achieving a better future. McKenna may discuss more specifically how process-model utopian writing in particular allows people to perceive the desirable 'end-in-view', but the notion is the same as Bloch's: of an ongoing mental process aided by art to understand and functionalize the otherwise inchoate quality of hopes and desires for a different and better future.⁶¹

The broad tendencies I have outlined from feminist utopian writing since the middle ages distinguish a process-oriented feminist utopian impulse different from the mainstream tradition. By looking at education, human psychology, epistemology, nature and method from the perspective of women's subordination, feminist utopian authors have conceived different worlds that seek to alter patriarchy and improve the lives of society's powerless. There has been both repetition and change. While I have pointed to recurring themes, it is also clear that in different historical periods adjustments have occurred. And given the positive changes in western women's lives over the past centuries it would be hard to deny that feminists have helped to transform those lives, not to mention lent strength to other movements of liberation for people of different races, ethnicities, sexualities and abilities. Pressure for public education, calls for women's independence and suffrage, demands for a women's history, movements to save the environment: all these endeavours have been furthered by and to that extent are indebted to images conceived in feminist utopian writing.

Critics rightly decry the many injustices and problems our societies face, from poverty to prejudice to war to global warming. The endless list of threats and dangers has spawned an increasing number of dystopian writings. A hopeless outlook is for many all too real today, in 2008, when the administration in Washington has instigated war, recklessly handled the

economy, squandered resources, reversed policies that existed to protect the environment, exacerbated social divisions and alienated allies. Because of these developments, commentators such as Seyla Benhabib, Jürgen Habermas, David Harvey, Fredric Jameson and Russell Jacoby have repeatedly called for a return to utopian imagining. Richard Rorty has asserted that utopian social hope remains ‘the noblest imaginative creation of which we have record’.⁶² And recent scholarship suggests that this hope has been no less prevalent in non-western societies than in western ones. Centuries of utopian writing demonstrate how feminists time and again have relied on utopia in order to posit a viable as opposed to an unattainable future. Their repeated contributions suggest that utopia will recur as a force for transforming discontent into critique and desire into practical political action.

NOTES

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- 1 Angelika Bammer emphasizes process in her study of 1970s utopianism, *Partial Visions: Feminism and Utopianism in the 1970s* (London: Routledge, 1991); Erin McKenna suggests the term ‘process model’ in *The Task of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Alessa Johns discusses the ‘reproductive utopian model’ in *Women’s Utopias of the Eighteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Tom Moylan speaks of ‘critical utopia’ in *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (New York: Methuen, 1986); and Peter Fitting employs the phrase ‘critical and utopian’ in ‘The Modern Anglo-American SF Novel: Utopian Longing and Capitalist Cooptation’, *Science-Fiction Studies* 6:1 (1979), 59–76. These scholars are not examining identical sets of utopian texts, so they are not covering exactly the same ground; however, all suggest that feminist interventions have precipitated such new terms and formulations. Nicole Pohl sees the seeds of the critical utopia in a sceptical tradition of Enlightenment thinking in “‘The Emperess of the World’: Gender and the Voyage Utopia”, in Nicole Pohl and Brenda Tooley (eds.), *Gender and Utopia in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 121–132. For expanded discussion of twentieth-century ‘critical’ utopias see Jennifer Burwell, *Notes on Nowhere: Feminism, Utopian Logic, and Social Transformation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Syracuse University Press, 1996); Lucy Sargisson, *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Frances Bartkowski, *Feminist Utopias* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).
- 2 Anne Mellor, ‘On Feminist Utopias’, *Women’s Studies* 9 (1982), 241–62, 243.
- 3 Darby Lewes, *Dream Revisionaries: Gender and Genre in Women’s Utopian Fiction 1870–1920* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995), p. 13.
- 4 Sally Kitch, *Higher Ground: From Utopianism to Realism in American Feminist Thought and Theory* (University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 12.

- 5 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1404–5), trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea, 1982) and *The Treasure of the City of Ladies, or The Book of the Three Virtues* (1405), trans. Sarah Lawson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985); Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), ed. Patricia Springborg (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2002); Sarah Scott, *A Description of Millenium Hall* (1762), ed. Gary Kelly (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 1995); Frances E. W. Harper, *Iola Leroy; or, Shadows Uplifted* (1892) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987); Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (1915), ed. Denise D. Knight (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999); Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (New York: Avon Books, 1974); Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (New York: Knopf, 1976).
- 6 More's *Utopia* will be the principal example of that model, since it is the foundational and best-known text, but there are others that could serve as well, e.g., Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Berington's *Sig. Gaudentio*, Paltock's *Peter Wilkins*, Griggs's *Imperium in Imperio*, Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and Wells's *A Modern Utopia*.
- 7 Sarah Scott, *History of Sir George Ellison* (1766), ed. Betty Rizzo (Lexington: KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), pp. 95–7.
- 8 Clara Reeve, *Plans of Education* (London: T. Hockham & J. Carpenter, 1792), p. 71.
- 9 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), ed. Carol H. Poston, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 1988).
- 10 Frances Wright, 'Of Existing Evils, and Their Remedy', in Susan S. Adams (ed.), *Reason, Religion, and Morals* (New York: Humanity Books, 2004), pp. 219, 209. Wright founded the biracial utopian community of Nashoba, Tennessee in 1825.
- 11 Mary E. Bradley Lane, *Mizora: A Prophecy* (1880–1) (Boston: Gregg Press, 1975), p. 32.
- 12 Frances E. W. Harper, *Iola Leroy; or, Shadows Uplifted* (1892) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), pp. 205, 210. For a discussion of this novel within a context of African American utopian writing, see M. Giulia Fabi, *Passing and the Rise of the African American Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), pp. 44–71.
- 13 Mary Hamilton, *Letters from the Duchess de Crui* (London: 1777), vol. 1, p. 42.
- 14 Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (New York: Avon Books, 1974), pp. 85, 89.
- 15 Judith Drake, *Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (London: S. Butler, 1696).
- 16 Hannah More, *The Bas-Bleu, or Conversation* (1787), in *Selected Writings of Hannah More*, ed. Robert Hole (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1995).
- 17 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), ed. Carol H. Poston, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 144–5.
- 18 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (1915), ed. Denise D. Knight (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), pp. 83, 61.
- 19 Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516) trans. and ed. Robert M. Adams, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 1992), pp. 37, 38.
- 20 Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, pp. 111, 257. Pizan's text, though written in French, first appeared in print in England and was translated into English by Bryan Anslay in 1521.

- 21 Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), ed. Patricia Springborg (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002), p. 35.
- 22 Harper, *Iola Leroy*, pp. 210–12.
- 23 Joanna Russ, *The Female Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1975).
- 24 Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, p. 154.
- 25 Mary Astell and John Norris, *Letters Concerning the Love of God*, ed. E. Derek Taylor and Melvyn New (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 66.
- 26 Sarah Scott, *Journey Through Every Stage of Life* (London: n.p., 1754), vol. 5, p. 67.
- 27 Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (New York: Knopf, 1976), p. 132.
- 28 Christine de Pizan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies, or The Book of the Three Virtues* (1405), trans. Sarah Lawson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 49.
- 29 Sarah Fielding, *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744), ed. Malcolm Kelsall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 113.
- 30 Astell, *A Serious Proposal*, pp. 35–6.
- 31 Fielding, *Adventures of David Simple*, p. 304.
- 32 *Ibid.*, pp. 304–5.
- 33 Gilman, *Herland*, p. 80.
- 34 *Ibid.*, pp. 95–6.
- 35 More, *Utopia*, pp. 31–2.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 37 Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, pp. 12, 116.
- 38 Gilman, *Herland*, p. 80.
- 39 Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, p. 89.
- 40 Joanna Russ, ‘Recent Feminist Utopias’, in *To Write Like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 137.
- 41 Russ, *The Female Man*, pp. 126, 203–4.
- 42 Sarah Scott, *History of Sir George Ellison* (1766), ed. Betty Rizzo (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), p. 91.
- 43 Bammer, *Partial Visions*, p. 104.
- 44 Sarah Scott, *History of Gustavus Ericson* (London: A. Millar, 1761), pp. v–vi.
- 45 Sally Miller Gearhart, *The Wanderground: Stories of the Hill Women* (Boston: Alyson, 1979), p. 23.
- 46 Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, p. 180.
- 47 Scott, *Millenium Hall*, p. 69.
- 48 Gilman, *Herland*, pp. 80–1.
- 49 Mary Bradley Lane, *Mizora: A Prophecy* (1880–1) (Boston: Gregg Press, 1975), p. 104.
- 50 Piercy, *Woman*, p. 62.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- 52 Russ, ‘Recent Feminist Utopias’, p. 137.
- 53 Gearhart, *Wanderground*, p. 125.
- 54 Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, p. 150.
- 55 Gilman, *Herland*, p. 114.
- 56 Russ, *The Female Man*, p. 50.
- 57 Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, p. 109.
- 58 McKenna, *The Task of Utopia*, p. 161.

- 59 Drucilla Cornell, *At the Heart of Freedom: Feminism, Sex, and Equality* (Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 8, 186.
- 60 Bammer, *Partial Visions*, pp. 161–2.
- 61 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (1959), trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight (3 vols., Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), vol. 1.
- 62 Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1992) and ‘Sexual Difference and Collective Identities: The New Global Constellation’, *Signs* 24:2 (1999), 335–61; Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991) and *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987); David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Russell Jacoby, *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy* (New York: Basic Books, 1999) and *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2007); Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), p. 277.

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