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978-0-521-00915-7 - Literature and Utopian Politics in Seventeenth-Century England

Robert Appelbaum

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LITERATURE AND UTOPIAN POLITICS IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

Hundreds of writers in the English-speaking world of the seventeenth century imagined alternative ideal societies. Sometimes they did so by exploring fanciful territories, such as the world in the moon or the nations of the Antipodes; but sometimes they composed serious disquisitions about the here and now, proposing how England or its nascent colonies could be conceived of as an “Oceana,” a New Jerusalem, a “City on a Hill.” *Literature and Utopian Politics* provides a comprehensive view of the operations of the utopian imagination in England and its nascent colonies from the accession of James VI and I in 1603 to the consolidation of the Restoration under Charles II in the late 1660s. Appealing to social theorists, literary critics, and political and cultural historians, this volume revises prevailing notions of the languages of hope and social dreaming in the making of British modernity during a century of political and intellectual upheaval.

ROBERT APPELBAUM is a post-doctoral Fellow in English at the University of San Diego. His articles have appeared in a number of journals, including *Shakespeare Quarterly*, *Modern Philology*, *Textual Practice*, *Prose Studies*, and *Utopian Studies*.

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*To the memory of Sandy Solomon,
a man who tried*

And to my loving and beloved mother

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Acknowledgments

The idea for this book was hatched one afternoon while I was in the midst of working an eighteen-hour shift, harried and cranky, as a limousine driver in the San Francisco Bay Area. The final draft but one was completed while I was unemployed, hopefully “between jobs,” and living on the dole in Cincinnati, Ohio. It has not been easy to complete this project. But along the way I have been the beneficiary of many, many kindnesses and a good deal of direct and indirect institutional support.

Early support for the project was supplied by a Bancroft Library Research Award, a Mellon Dissertation Fellowship, and Research and Dissertation Fellowship awards from the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley. Additional support was provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities. During my period of unemployment Russell Durst and Tom Leclair of the English Department of the University of Cincinnati made sure I had office space, a computer, and a printer to use; they provided, together with Wayne Hall and Stanley Corkin, much needed moral support as well. In this spirit, I think, I should also state, as this book is after all a study of the social and institutional determinants of civic life, that even with these grants and favors my work would not have been possible had I not been able to take advantage of the Direct Loan and other student loan programs sponsored by the Federal Government of the United States, as well as the unemployment compensation program administered by the State of Ohio. It turns out that Ohio is one state that did not (unlike, say, California) dramatically cut back its compensation program during the Bush and Reagan years of austerity for the poor, so that while I was “between jobs” and grants I was for a few months able to live and, living, to write.

I am grateful to people who probably hardly remember me, but who in doing their job made it possible for me to do what would come to be my job; these include Judith Breen, Geoffrey Greene, and Gib Robinson, who got me started as a literary critic, and also Steven Knapp, D. A.

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Acknowledgments

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have any chance at all of being published and circulated these days. I am grateful too to Rachel de Wachter and Jan Chapman for taking my amateurish manuscript in hand and making it into a professional book. In addition, I would like to thank Frank Cass Publishers for permission to reprint material from *Prose Studies* that now appears in chapter four. Some of the ideas that show up in chapter two originally appeared in the *George Herbert Journal*, and some of the ideas in chapter five in *Utopian Studies*.

If I could, I would like to conclude by noting once again the importance of the indifferent, impersonal, social domain of the institutional system in our lives, for it is the institution, for better or worse – the unemployment bureau, the foundation, the university, the publishing house – that nurtures our lives as creative workers. But I cannot. I have to conclude by expressing my deepest thanks to Terri Zucker and Meredith Appelbaum, the two loves and twin pillars of my life.