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978-0-521-71414-3 - The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature

Edited by Gregory Claeys

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
UTOPIAN LITERATURE

Since the publication of Thomas More's genre-defining work *Utopia* in 1516, the field of utopian literature has evolved into an ever-expanding domain. This *Companion* presents an extensive historical survey of the development of utopianism, from the publication of *Utopia* to today's dark and despairing tendency towards dystopian pessimism, epitomized by works such as George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Chapters address the difficult definition of the concept of utopia, and consider its relation to science fiction and other literary genres. The volume takes an innovative approach to the major themes predominating within the utopian and dystopian literary tradition, including feminism, romance and ecology, and explores in detail the vexed question of the purportedly 'western' nature of the concept of utopia. The reader is provided with a balanced overview of the evolution and current state of a long-standing, rich tradition of historical, political and literary scholarship.

GREGORY CLAEYS is Professor of the History of Political Thought at Royal Holloway, University of London. He has edited *Utopias of the British Enlightenment* (1994), *Modern British Utopias, 1700–1850* (8 vols., 1997), *Restoration and Augustan British Utopias* (2000), *Late Victorian Utopias* (6 vols., 2008) and other works. He has written several studies of aspects of the Owenite socialist movement, of the French Revolution debate in Britain and of Thomas Paine's thought. His most recent book is *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850–1920* (Cambridge, 2010).

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book

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J. C. DAVIS is the author of a major study of early modern utopian writing, *Utopia and the Ideal Society 1516 to 1700* (Cambridge, 1981/1983). His publications also include essays exploring the relationship between utopia and history, science and social science. Most recently, he has published an essay on travel as a theme within utopian writing. In addition, he has written studies of individual utopian writers such as James Harrington, Gerrard Winstanley and Thomas More. He is also well known for his work on religious and political radicalism in the period of the English Revolution and is currently working on a book on English political discourse in that period. He is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of East Anglia.

JACQUELINE DUTTON lectures in French Studies at the University of Melbourne, Australia. She has published widely on utopianism in French literature and thought, including a monograph in French on the utopian writings of the 2008 Nobel Laureate in Literature, *Le Chercheur d'or et d'ailleurs: L'Utopie de J. M. G. Le Clézio* (2003). Her research interests range from travel writing and contemporary world literature in French to comparative utopias and Japanese imaginaries of the ideal. She is currently completing a book-length study of French visions of Australia as utopia, and editing volumes on representations of time in postcolonial and Francophone travel writing, and on comparative utopian studies.

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PETER FITTING is an Emeritus Professor of French at the University of Toronto and the former Director of the Cinema Studies Program. He is the author of more than fifty articles on science fiction, fantasy and utopia – from critical analyses of the works of various SF and utopian writers (from P. K. Dick to Marge Piercy); to theoretical examinations of the reading effect in utopian fiction, the problem of the right-wing utopia, or gender and reading; to overviews of cyberpunk and of the turn from utopia in the 1990s, on the Golden Age and the foreclosure of utopian discourse in the 1950s; as well as articles on SF and utopian film and architecture, and the work of Fredric Jameson. He has recently completed a critical anthology of subterranean world fiction and is at work on a collection of his writing on science fiction.

ALESSA JOHNS is Associate Professor of English at the University of California, Davis. She has published *Women's Utopias of the Eighteenth Century* (2003) and edited *Dreadful Visitations: Confronting Natural Catastrophe in the Age of Enlightenment* (1999). She is currently completing a book on Anglo-German exchange in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and is serving as Reviews Editor for *Eighteenth-Century Studies*.

PATRICK PARRINDER grew up in London and north-west Kent and has had a lifelong interest in H. G. Wells and his literary contemporaries. He is a past chairman of the H. G. Wells Society, and his books on Wells include *Shadows of the Future* (1995). More recently he has been general editor of the Wells texts published in Penguin Classics. He has written on science fiction and many other topics in modern literature, and is the author of *Nation and Novel: The English Novel From Its Origins to the Present Day* (2006). He is also General Editor of the forthcoming *Oxford History of the Novel in English*. He is an Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Reading.

NICOLE POHL is Senior Lecturer in English at Oxford Brookes University. She has published and edited books on women's utopian writing in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, European salons and epistolarity, and is currently editing the complete letters of Sarah Scott. Her publications include *Women, Space and Utopia, 1600–1800* (2006); with Brenda Tooley (eds.), *Gender and Utopia in the Eighteenth Century: Essays in English and French Utopian Writing* (2007); with Betty Schellenberg (eds.), *Reconsidering the Bluestockings* (2002); with Rebecca D'Monté (eds.), *Female Communities 1600–1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities* (2000).

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KENNETH M. ROEMER, an Academy of Distinguished Teachers and Academy of Distinguished Scholars Professor at the University of Texas at Arlington, has received four NEH grants to direct Summer Seminars, has co-chaired a utopias seminar at the European Alpbach Forum, and has been a Visiting Professor in Japan and a Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Fellow, a guest lecturer at Harvard and a lecturer in Vienna, Lisbon, Brazil and Turkey. He is the author of four books on utopian literature: *The Obsolete Necessity* (1976, nominated for a Pulitzer in American history); *America as Utopia* (ed., 1981); *Build Your Own Utopia* (1981) and *Utopian Audiences: How Readers Locate Nowhere* (2003). He is a past President of the Society for Utopian Studies and founding editor of *Utopus Discovered*.

LYMAN TOWER SARGENT is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and a Visiting Research Fellow, Centre for Political Ideologies, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford. He has also been a visiting professor and research fellow in Europe, New Zealand and the United States. He was the founding editor of *Utopian Studies* (1990–2004), and is author of *British and American Utopian Literature, 1516–1985: An Annotated, Chronological Bibliography* (1988); *Contemporary Political Ideologies: A Comparative Analysis* (14th edn, 2009); co-author with Lucy Sargisson of *Living in Utopia: Intentional Communities in New Zealand* (2004) and author or editor of other books and over 100 articles, mostly on aspects of utopianism.

BRIAN STABLEFORD has published more than sixty SF novels, twelve short-story collections, twenty non-fiction books and twenty-five volumes of translation from the French. He is currently translating a series of classics of French scientific romance, including works by Maurice Renard, Albert Robida, Theo Varlet, Jean de la Hire and J. H. Rosny, all of which are published by Black Coat Press, which also issued one of his recent novels, *Sherlock Holmes and the Vampires of Eternity*. Other recent fiction, including the novels *The Dragon Man* and *The Moment of Truth*, has been published by Borgo Press, which also issued his essay collection, *Heterocosms*, and his non-fiction book, *The Devil's Party: A History of Satanic Abuse*.

FÁTIMA VIEIRA is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Oporto, where she has been teaching since 1986. She is currently the director of the Department of Anglo-American Studies of that Faculty and the Chairperson of the Utopian Studies Society/Europe. She is the co-ordinator

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of two research projects on utopianism funded by the Portuguese Ministry of Education: 'Literary Utopias and Utopianism: Portuguese Culture and the Western Intellectual Tradition' and 'Mapping Dreams: British and North-American Utopianism'. She is the director of the collection 'Biblioteca das Utopias', of the Portuguese publishing house 'Quasi' and the director of *E-topia*, an electronic journal on Portuguese utopianism, as well as of *Spaces of Utopia*, a transdisciplinary electronic journal on utopia written in English.

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PREFACE

Although its notional point of departure is often Thomas More's genre-defining work, *Utopia*, published in 1516, the field of utopian literature today encompasses a far wider and ever-expanding domain. Platonism, classical mythology, golden ages both eastern and western, ideals of lost worlds, fantastic voyages, inhabited moons and planets, imaginary social and political experiments, nations, empires and ideal commonwealths, and satires upon all of these, jostle besides an enormous outpouring of later fictional and science-fiction works, a plethora of actually existing communitarian experiments across the ages, and a dark, despairing tendency, arising in the past century, towards dystopian or anti-utopian pessimism and the fear that all utopianism somehow eventuates in totalitarianism of one form or another. Utopia, often conceived after More's pun to be both a 'good place' and 'nowhere', seems paradoxically to be equally potentially a very dismal place found practically everywhere, and less a sanctuary of holiness than an emptying out of the evils of Pandora's box, in which hope alone remained restrained.

Whether taken as a branch of intellectual history concerned chiefly with the 'ideal commonwealth', as a literary genre, as a reflection of the history of religious consciousness or of an essential psychological aspiration of hope for a better state of existence in this life or elsewhere, notably in the form of the quest for 'community', the field of utopian studies has come to reflect discussions about the progressive or regressive aspects of historical development in microcosm. Modernity's endorsement of the ideal of progress has been counterbalanced by its disenchantment with the fruits of 'development' and 'growth'. Yet in a process of constant dialectical interaction, the angst of later modernity, generated by confronting genocide, nuclear war and ecological catastrophe, has been met with renewed visions of possible solutions. Though it has been intertwined with religion throughout their long collective histories, utopianism is not now usually assumed to involve salvation, perfectibility or the millennium, so much as the imagined, improved reordering

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of society in this world, and the more harmonious reconstitution of human relations and of attitudes towards nature. This, centrally, is the tradition of the ideal commonwealth most commonly identified with Thomas More, and with various revolutionary movements from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries. But as wavering faith in science produced the scientific dystopia, so faltering faith in political engineering engendered the modern political dystopia of totalitarianism. With the collapse of the greatest of modern utopian political ideals, Marxism, came the triumphalist proclamation of an end of both history and utopia, a culmination of human desire, effort and progress in the liberal-democratic, capitalist worldview and the plenitude provided by a self-rectifying market mechanism. But this perspective, too, now rings hollow, as the spectres of global economic crisis and, far worse, environmental destruction, loom once again over us. New dystopian threats swarm upon us, to be met in due course, perhaps, by renewed efforts to imaginatively rework our concepts of other possible, alternate futures. To witness the juxtaposition of these bleakly negative and richly positive images is to see, yet again, how utopia and its negation have served so centrally as foci of human aspiration throughout the ages.

The volume

This collection of eleven essays aims to explore utopian literature, and to a lesser degree utopian thought and communitarian experimentation, in the western and, more briefly, non-western traditions. It is divided into two sections, the first more historical, the second more contemporary and thematic. Part I commences with an overview of some of the conceptual and theoretical issues associated with the utopian tradition. It then examines the definitive text which both gives its name to the tradition and radically exemplifies the rich ambiguity of many of its exemplars, Thomas More's *Utopia*. Subsequent essays in this section move forwards through the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, exploring the mutation and proliferation of the various sub-genres of utopia, satire, Robinsonade, Gulliveriana, and so on, and concluding with a re-examination of the 'turn' towards dystopianism in the latter epoch. In Part II the most important leading controversies in modern utopian studies are extensively explored, including the relationships between utopias, romance and science fiction; the contribution of feminist writers and thought; colonial, postcolonial and non-western utopian literature, and the bearing of ecological themes on utopian writing. The essays are thus intended to give a balanced sense of the evolution and current state of a long-standing, rich tradition of historical, political and literary scholarship, and how this tradition has been

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reconstructed, and what the chief intellectual disputes which have dominated it have been. Once confined to a relatively narrow range of texts, the interpretation of an ever-increasing number of works and proliferation of sub-genres has made the study of the subject more complex and contentious, as the actual movement of history has shifted our perspectives on how the past should be viewed. The contributors here, collectively, hope the volume's readers will agree at least that utopian writing remains nonetheless a challenging, exciting and provocative take on the human condition.

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF KEY WORKS
 OF UTOPIAN LITERATURE AND THOUGHT

c. 370–360 BC	Plato, <i>The Republic</i>
c. 100	Plutarch, <i>Life of Lycurgus</i>
1516	Thomas More, <i>Utopia</i>
c. 1605	Joseph Hall, <i>Mundus Alter et Idem</i>
1619	Johann Valentin Andreae, <i>Christianopolis</i>
1623	Tommaso Campanella, <i>The City of the Sun</i>
1626	Francis Bacon, <i>New Atlantis</i>
1638	Francis Godwin, <i>The Man in the Moone</i>
1641	Samuel Hartlib, <i>A Description of the Famous Kingdom of Macaria</i>
1648	Samuel Gott, <i>Nova Solyma</i>
1652	Gerrard Winstanley, <i>The Law of Freedom in a Platform: Or True Magistracie Restored</i>
1653–94	François Rabelais, <i>Gargantua and Pantagruel</i>
1656	James Harrington, <i>The Commonwealth of Oceana</i>
1657	Cyrano de Bergerac, <i>Histoire Comique Contenant les États et Empires de la Lune</i>
1666	Margaret Cavendish, <i>The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World</i>
1668	Henry Neville, <i>The Isle of Pines</i>
1675	Denis Vairasse, <i>The History of the Sevarites or Sevarambi</i>
1676	Gabriel de Foigny, <i>The Southern Land Known</i>
1699	François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon, <i>The Adventures of Telemachus</i>
1719	Daniel Defoe, <i>Robinson Crusoe</i>
1726	Jonathan Swift, <i>Gulliver's Travels</i>
1737	Simon Berington, <i>The Adventures of Sig. Gaudentio di Lucca</i>
1751	Robert Paltock, <i>The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins</i>
1756	Edmund Burke, <i>A Vindication of Natural Society</i>

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- 1759 Samuel Johnson, *Rasselas*
 1762 Sarah Scott, *Millenium Hall*
 1764 [James Burgh], *An Account of the First Settlement ... of the Cessares*
 1771 Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred*
 1772 Denis Diderot, *Supplement to Bougainville's 'Voyage'*
 1793 William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*
 1795 Thomas Spence, *Description of Spensonia*
 1798 Thomas Robert Malthus, *Essay on Population*
 1808 Charles Fourier, *Theory of the Four Movements*
 1811 James Henry Lawrence, *The Empire of the Nairs*
 1818 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
 1826 Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*
 1827 Charles Fourier, *The New Industrial World*
 1836–44 Robert Owen, *The Book of the New Moral World*
 1840 Etienne Cabet, *Voyage en Icarie*
 1848 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*
 1852 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*
 1864 Jules Verne, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*
 1871 Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming Race*
 1872 Samuel Butler, *Erewhon*
 1880 Mary Bradley Lane, *Mizora*
 1888 Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward 2000–1887*
 1890 Theodor Hetzka, *Freiland*
 1890 William Morris, *News from Nowhere*
 1890 Ignatius Donnelly, *Caesar's Column*
 1895 H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine*
 1896 H. G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*
 1898 H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*
 1901 H. G. Wells, *The First Men in the Moon*
 1905 H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia*
 1905 Gabriel Tarde, *Underground Man*
 1908 Jack London, *The Iron Heel*
 1915 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*
 1916 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *With Her in Ourland*
 1923 H. G. Wells, *Men Like Gods*
 1924 Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*
 1930 Olaf Stapledon, *Last and First Men*
 1932 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

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1933	H. G. Wells, <i>The Shape of Things to Come</i>
1937	Katharine Burdekin, <i>Swastika Night</i>
1948	B. F. Skinner, <i>Walden Two</i>
1949	George Orwell, <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i>
1953	Ray Bradbury, <i>Fahrenheit 451</i>
1954	William Golding, <i>The Lord of the Flies</i>
1958	Aldous Huxley, <i>Brave New World Revisited</i>
1962	Aldous Huxley, <i>Island</i>
1962	Anthony Burgess, <i>A Clockwork Orange</i>
1970	Ira Levin, <i>This Perfect Day</i>
1974	Ursula Le Guin, <i>The Dispossessed</i>
1975	Joanna Russ, <i>The Female Man</i>
1975	Ernest Callenbach, <i>Ecotopia</i>
1976	Marge Piercy, <i>Woman on the Edge of Time</i>
1986	Margaret Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
1987	Iain M. Banks, <i>Consider Phlebas</i>
1992–6	Kim Stanley Robinson, <i>The Mars Trilogy</i>
1996	Jack Halperin, <i>The Truth Machine</i>
1997	Ronald Wright, <i>A Scientific Romance</i>
2000	Brian Aldiss, <i>White Mars</i>
2003	Margaret Atwood, <i>Oryx and Crake</i>
2005	Kazuo Ishiguru, <i>Never Let Me Go</i>
2007	Chuck Palahniuk, <i>Rant</i>
2009	Margaret Atwood, <i>The Year of the Flood</i>