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UTOPIA AND SOLIDARITY

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THESES ON UTOPIA

Eight and a half theses on utopia

SZYMON WRÓBEL

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Abstract

This text constitutes an intellectual exercise of sorts whereby the author is expected to assume a certain position on the issue of utopia and, consequently, adopts a new way to see the concept of “utopia”. Instead of offering a historical account of the concept, the author has decided to articulate the principal theses underlying it, which so far have often been veiled in unnecessary erudition and “over-burdened” with excessive details about the genealogy of the concept. The author proposes eight theses concerning utopia and falsifies them successively. However, the task of the article is not purely destructive and polemical, for every falsification makes it possible to formulate a positive thesis on utopia as an instrument of thought. Therefore, the article is not a purely analytical or sophistic exercise, nor is it intended as an empty intellectual game. The study bears the title of “Eight and a half theses on utopia”, mainly because the author regards the last thesis as unfinished and conflicted within.

Key words

alienation, chimera, desire, knowledge, literary genre, messianism, method, practice, real utopia, solidarity, story.

Osiem i pół tezy o utopii

Abstrakt

Artykuł stanowi swoiste ćwiczenie intelektualne, w ramach którego autor stawia przed sobą zadanie ustosunkowania się do zagadnienia utopii i w rezultacie przyjmuje pewien sposób rozumienia pojęcia „utopii”. Autor podjął decyzję, by nie przedstawiać zarysu historii pojęcia utopii, w zamian za to sformułować główne tezy dotyczące utopii, które dotychczasowy stan badań przesłaniał erudycyjnością oraz zbyt dużym ładunkiem wiadomości na temat genealogii konceptu. Autor stawia osiem tez na temat utopii, które następnie dezawuuje. Jednakże zadanie, jakiego się podejmuje nie jest czysto destruktywnej i polemicznej natury, bowiem każda falsyfikacja pozwala autorowi sformułować tezę pozytywną dotyczącą utopii jako narzędzia myślowego. Zatem artykuł nie jest czysto analitycznym lub sofistycznym ćwiczeniem, ani też nie jest pustą zabawą intelektualną. Studium zatytułowane jest „Osiem i pół tezy na temat utopii” głównie z tego względu, że ostatnia teza wysunięta przez autora wydaje mu się niedokończona oraz sprzeczna wewnętrznie.

Słowa kluczowe

alienacja, chimera, pragnienie, wiedza, gatunek literacki, mesjanizm, metoda, praktyka, realna utopia, solidarność, opowiadanie

In its long history, utopia, as a concept, has served a variety of purposes. It suffices to mention entertainment, escape from reality, materialization of desire to be elsewhere, journey in fantasy and fantasy in journey, expression of human hope, comfort in the times of no hope; yet, it also served as a warning against totalitarian cataclysm and the emergence of ambiguous political regimes leading to the establishment of ultimate rationality. In what follows I will reflect on utopia as a tool of social thought.

It is a gaffe, perhaps, to question the notion of utopia at the time when it has become synonymous with the dream of a return of human solidarity, and equally so to present to the reader a long philosophical argument about our ignorance in this regard. However, I need to commit this gaffe. Is there any justification or excuse for making such a blunder? I can think

of but one. When questioning the notion of utopia, I will not be asking what utopia is or is not, but above all, how it works in our imagination and whether or not it is still able to fire our ability to think. In fact, the question: How does utopia liaise and cooperate with thinking? – is a question of what it is in solidarity with. Regrettably, in most cases, I will be talking about the kinds of solidarity utopia denies itself, i.e. about what it is not in solidarity with.

Richard Rorty, many years ago, in voicing his praise of solidarity and expressing reprimand or condemnation of philosophy in the well-known book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), limited the notion of solidarity to purely human subjects. Today, one may wonder whether the notion of solidarity should perhaps extend to non-human subjects or in-human subjects such as places, animals, tools, mutilated nature, nameless victims of history, cities or even streets. It is, therefore, imperative to ask: what and who is utopia in solidarity with? Allow me from the onset to entertain the following answer: utopia is in solidarity with thinking imagination and places which are, perhaps, difficult to imagine, nevertheless real.

Today, political imagination remains in a state of immobilization or discontinuity. Many years ago Samuel Beckett became an apologist of dead imagination, when he wrote: “No trace anywhere of life, you say, pah, no difficulty there, imagination not dead yet, yes, dead, good, imagination dead, imagine” (Beckett 1965). Imagination is dead, because it does not allow us to conjure up any other politics or history. In turn, Martin Heidegger, when interpreting the subject of transcendental imagination in Kant’s thought, wrote: “The transcendental power of imagination is homeless” (Heidegger 1997). Imagination is homeless and so are utopia and solidarity. And it is only this homelessness which gives us hope and an opportunity for both utopia and thinking. Only that which is homeless is not yet defrauded.

Again, Beckett in *The Unnamable* writes: “[...] there could be no things but nameless things, no names but thingless names”

(Beckett 1951). There is no thing, only unnamable things, and there are no names, only thingless names – all because there is no transcendental principle that would associate names, places, and things. It is homelessness, and not belonging, which is the principle of utopia.

What I am attempting here is a kind of an intellectual exercise, in the course of which I will come to a stance on “utopia”, the first step being the redefinition of its very notion. In this endeavour, allow me to proceed slowly but systematically, in order to falsify and reject consecutive hypotheses concerning utopia which I have myself come across in my studies on this concept. I do hope such an approach permits little analytical and sophistic style. The title of this short study – “Eight and a half theses on utopia” – presages eight discernible theses and one that seems to me yet incomplete or, perhaps, permanently fractured and conflicted within.

1. Firstly, utopia is not a chimera, by which I mean that it is not a fantasy, nor a mere image or picture. The meaning of utopia in popular discourse as an irrelevant fantasy or a malevolent nightmare leading to totalitarianism is of course false (Gray 2007). This anti-utopian understanding of the notion equates utopia with a blueprint producing violence and terror, which gives rise to the politics of quiescent subordination to the dictates of capitalist markets. Nor is utopia a phantasm, not even in the noble sense, notably such as is used in psychoanalysis.

The term “phantasm” often refers to the state of dissatisfaction and hallucinatory reaction to this state. What we really need is indeed not a phantasm but an “idea” of utopia (a concept, *Vorstellung*), which provides our desires with material coordinates, i.e. which provides a script, according to which a subject can achieve fulfilment not as a postulate but also as a “citizen” or a “subject” of particular place and time (Žižek 2008).

Hence, the “idea” constitutes here the possibility of rewriting and retranslating the symbolic dimension of our dreams into

the material dimension. I claim that the phantasm of utopia has proved to be too weak for such a translation to be made. We need not so much a utopia conceived as an “image” – detached from its symbolic and the material component – but a real utopia which would map out the material conditions or rations sufficient for the installation of utopian architecture in the material world.

Let me repeat: utopia is not a chimera as is often erroneously claimed. It is only in everyday speech that we may, not without good reason, identify some utopias with “chimeras”. This said, concrete utopias certainly do not belong here. Utopian imagination, and in particular its tendency to include in one project the entirety of social otherness, involves presenting people in the way they should be instead of what they really are. In other words, utopias are “chimeric” in so far as they stem from the desire for logical, consistent, transparent society and the belief that social life can be freely transformed and rationalized. Well, it is simply beyond possible.

What we call a “real utopia” is not a representation of our longing for a perfect society or complete rationality, nor is it a satire on existing society. “Real utopia” is an incentive for inventing “other spaces”, “other forms of life”, “other forms of community organization” and putting them into action by incorporating “conceptual realities” into real and material political order.

2. Secondly, utopia is not a desire. Ruth Levitas claims, for example, that the core of utopia is the desire for being otherwise, individually and collectively, subjectively and objectively. Its expressions explore and bring to debate the potential contents and contexts of human flourishing. Utopia, in a sense, is the expression of the desire for a better way of being or living, and as such it is entwined in human culture (Levitas 2013).

Of course, the definition of utopia in terms of desire is analytic rather than descriptive but this is not the point I am trying to make. Here, I have serious doubts concerning not so much the combination of utopia and desire but the very con-

cept of desire. Desire is neither a “need” nor a “pursuit”. According to Hegel, Freud and Lacan, desire is always mediated. The prerequisite for desire to emerge is the request or demand made to the Other to recognize and fulfil the need for recognition (*Anerkennung*¹).

Just as necessity is part of the biological order (continuity), so is request part of the language order (discontinuity), whereas desire mediates between the two. Above all, desire needs to break away from the will of conservative Freudian death drive, which it – by default– wants to preserve and reiterate. Ego drives are self-preservative, and as such they are at the service of the death drive. Thus, the main task of utopian thought is to go beyond the domination of death drive and to leave the kingdom of idle repetition.

Speaking of utopia in the context of human desire we should not ask: “What perverse request does utopia address to us?” – for if we knew the answer to this question, we could not think of it in a more “in-depth” manner. What we need to know is what utopia wants from us and what it wants us to do. It makes little sense to ask which of our frustrated desires utopia wants to phantasmatically materialize, since such a question is always at the service of self-defence. In short, I suggest replacing the language of desire by the language of will. It is the will, and not desire, that speaks through utopia.

3. Thirdly, utopia is not a story about some non-existent place. Utopia is not a story, because every story becomes a mythical speech. It is said that there is no *logos* without *mythos* (Nancy 1986). Let us bear in mind that myth and utopia are their own opposites. While myth involves the paralysis of time and space, utopia involves dismantling it. Utopia operates with fragmentary sentences and its speech moves between stuttering and exalted pattern, whereas myth entails a seductive language of melodic and coherent narrative.

¹ Hegel’s concept of *Annerkenung* can be first found in the Iena period of the years 1802-1806.

The language of utopia is by no means metaphorical; it is metonymic. It has nothing to do with the sedative, hypnotic and dreamy language of prenatal paradise. Above all, however, the language of utopia is the language of anxiety. Anxiety anticipates an unknown future.

Lyman Tower Sargent construes utopia as a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space (Sargent 2000). Russell Jacoby makes a distinction between “iconoclastic utopias” which express the dream of a better life but resist its precise definition and which articulate “a longing that cannot be uttered”, and “blueprint utopias” which “map out the future in inches and minutes” (Jacoby 2005: 113, xiv). Miguel Abensour differentiates between “heuristic utopias”, which are best understood as exploratory hypotheses, and “systematic utopias” intended as literal plans (Abensour 2000).

Regretfully, the above distinctions provide little to no help in the effort to apprehend the “place of utopia”, i.e. the position that it occupies in our speech. Yet, we need to understand the strange relationship among three elements – the “subject of speaking”, its place in utopia and its own speech. In utopia, the act of speaking is the very place where speech is liberated from the constraints of communication.

Utopias are necessarily the product of the conditions and concerns of the society generating them, which makes irrelevant the question whether they are placed elsewhere or in the future, since what they cater to is substantially always the present. Yet, it is this relation to the present of political utopia that concerns me most.

For if Utopia is not to be a mere fiction, it must be devised as a real place. Michel Foucault had this premonition when he wrote: “First there are the Utopias. Utopias are sites (*emplacements*) with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society” (Foucault 1998). After utopias there come heterotopias. Heterotopias are real places (*lieux*) determined by their social and political organization which resemble counter-sites (*contre-*

emplacements). Heterotopias are the effectively enacted Utopias; they are not “abstractions” subject to “imaginary order”, but instead, they do have a “real agenda” and are, therefore, a sort of “effectively played utopia”. Heterotopias are reversed and realised abstractions. Let me draw a general conclusion: heterotopias are simply real utopias.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau ([1761] 1997) depicts heterotopia in *The New Heloise*. The Clarens community presented by Rousseau lives “invented tradition” and “naturalized culture”. The protagonists, Wolmar and Julie, celebrate a bountiful grape harvest and live in the eternal feast day. In a choir singing in unison, there are no leaders – everyone is equal, everyone sings on their own, but in one voice, which enables them to forget about their loneliness. Utopia is played out “univocally” and “unanimously”.

4. For this reason, fourthly, utopia is not merely a literary genre. Some commentators strive to restrict utopia yet further to a largely self-conscious literary genre, typically beginning with Thomas More. Although in principle, descriptive definitions make possible a separation between utopian and non-utopian texts in terms of content and literary form, in practice, such a division is not that simple.

The Polish writer Bruno Schulz suggested that story-telling is itself a utopian practice, and that a narrative is in itself an intrinsically utopian expression (1998: 271-272). Utopia, however, is not a literary genre in the sense that a novel is, nor is it a short story, a fairy tale, an epic, a legend or a satire. If utopia was to be “building a city with words” – to use Plato’s expression – it would be at its best an impotent linguistic project, a mirage of hypothetical life. What we need is something more than just an “impotent linguistic project”. The true sense of utopia, however, is the challenging of the very opposition between the project and its execution, between a dream or an idea and their embodiments. We need a new rule for the arrangement of places that allow for another presence of brave speech (*parrhesia*).

What Bronisław Baczko, in his fascinating book *Lumières de l'utopie* (1978), called a “utopian pact” is the linking of words, action and place. The “utopian pact” is an attempt to reorganize speech through place and place through speech. Our key word literally translates to “not-place” (Greek *ου-τόπος*), but it may well stand for “good-place” (Greek *ευ-τόπος*), if not in fact “best-place” or “best-state” imaginable, which in More’s rendering eclipses that of Plato’s. In short, utopia is an attempt to use space potentiality in the most effective way. This is nothing but a search for a situation in which the potential and action are one, and the virtual and the real become one.

It seems possible to conclude that the best political community, even if conceivable, is set nowhere else but in human imagination and is a derivative product of knowledge. In this interpretation, utopia does not represent reality but nonetheless it comes into existence upon being conceived and founded in the text. It is this liaison of the foundational text and both geographic and ontological reality of a given space-spot that constitutes “the utopian pact”.

5. Fifth, utopia is not and may not be rendered as a sociological or philosophical method. Utopia is not a method to study “social facts” or “society” in its real, imaginary or symbolic sense. I question, in a polemical discussion with Ruth Levitas, her claim that utopia is allegedly better understood as a method than as a goal. For Levitas, utopia is a method elaborated as the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society. The method entails construction of integrated accounts of possible or impossible social systems as a kind of speculative sociology (Levitas 2010, 2013).

Levitas argues that the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society is not the invention of a method for social analysis, social science or social reconstruction. It only identifies processes that are already involved in utopian speculation, in utopian scholarship and in transformative politics, and also in social theory. There are certainly several advantages of thinking of utopia in terms of a method. For one, it is holistic – unlike political phi-

losophy and political theory, which have been more open to normative approaches than sociology. Here, holism finds its expression at the level of concrete social institutions and processes. Nonetheless, utopia falls short of being a method in any known sense of the term. Utopia is rather a coalesced utterance and action, a kind of intervention, a kind of “act”, which contradicts a method.

However it is defined – regardless of its disguise of a “heuristic method” as opposed to “algorithmic method”, a “humanistic method” based on meaning as opposed to “explanatory method” based on causality, interpreting as opposed to determining – a method must always assume a certain “order research”, of “inspecting”, “investigation”, “determination”, “verification” or “falsification”. From René Descartes’s *Discours de la méthode* (2004 [1637]) through Gadamer’s *Wahrheit und Methode* (2004 [1960]) up to the times of the “third scientific culture” pronounced by John Brockman in his milestone work *Culture: Leading Scientists Explore Societies, Art, Power, and Technology* published in 2011, where the author breaks the opposition of science and the humanities (Eagleton 2003), we are constantly being encouraged to enter into a dispute about the method. However, in the post-theoretical culture of ours, the lure of the dispute over the method must be replaced with a dispute about the proper practice of the potentials in our lives. It is not a method that we should now obsessively seek for but ways we can do, live and dwell without a method.

6. Would, therefore, utopia be a way of practising an alternative life, a life that we have been denied? There is a huge temptation to recognize in “utopia” the attempt not just to imagine but to make the world differently. Within utopian studies, the focus has primarily been on intentional communities which create alternative enclaves, although some clearly intend the prefiguration or instantiation of a transformed world.

André Gorz, for example, argued that “[...] it is the function of utopias, in the sense the term has assumed in the work of Ernst Bloch or Paul Ricoeur, to provide us with the distance

from the existing state of affairs which allows us to judge what we *are* doing in the light of what we *could* or *should* do” (1999: 113). A practice, however, necessitates someone or something to be practiced. Practice cannot be simulated, as it cannot have no object to practice.

In a sense, utopia imposes a new concept of practice. This new concept of practice cannot be perceived as a *habitus*, as a collection of internalized and repetitive subconscious identifications (internalisations) of power structures. Practice is not the opposite of theory and reflections. Neither can practice depend on pure repetition of behavioural dispositions or subordination allowing to accept external authority. Practice is not a simple set of habits, which, as Pierre Bourdieu indicates, “can be collectively orchestrated” without being the product of “the organizing action of a conductor” (Bourdieu 1977). Utopian practice is rather insatiable imagination for new forms of action, a practice similar to drifting, oscillating in tune with the spirit and rhythm of time and place. Utopian practice is always a situational practice, a practice of the present tense. Utopian practice is, finally, a kind of continuous falling and falling apart, merging and dissolving; an activity, which is forced to constantly search for the principle of its unity. Utopian practice is paradoxical, in the sense that it simultaneously liberates itself from its manner and is in continuous search for it.

What would, therefore, the utopian practice be? Utopia is a protest against the practices of life of the “last man” (Fukuyama 1992) who is engaged in lifeless rituals of everyday life such as arranging flowers or sipping tea. Utopia is a practice of avoiding the desire to become a snob.

7. Utopia, in our seventh thesis, is not knowledge or even an order of knowledge. Perhaps the power of utopia stems from the fact that it also exposes the power of truth against the existing order of knowledge. Theodor W. Adorno presents us with the “utopia of knowledge” embodying the will to reach sensuality without resorting to a conceptual framework, without the

help of concepts (Adorno 1966/1973). Fredric Jameson addresses utopia in terms of the “dialectics of identity and difference” being the source of dynamics which eventually turns any given utopia into a “program” or “impulse” in three distinct areas – those of the body, time and community (Jameson 2005). We also have Ernst Bloch’s approach, wherein utopia is cast as “the principle of hope” embracing all life domains to such an extent that “being” either becomes utopia or blends with it (Bloch 2000 [1918]). All of these ideas on utopia express the same conviction: utopia is not knowledge, it does not belong to the “knowledge society”, nor does it belong within proliferation of knowledge.

Utopia, in point of fact, is a kind of non-knowledge. Giorgio Agamben aptly reminds us of the etymology of the Latin verb *ignoscere*, which in fact means “to forgive”, and not, as it is often confused, “not to know” (*ignorare*). To articulate a zone of non-knowledge – or better, of a-knowledge (*ignoscenza*) – means in this sense not simply to let something be, but to leave something outside of being, to render it unsaveable (Agamben 2004).

Utopian thinking goes back to the idea of scepticism in the classical, not modern sense of the term. The ancient sceptic is not limited to opposing aphasia and speaking, silence and the voice, but let us say, it changes the language mode from judging to announcing or reporting, a mode of pure presentation, in which there is no more place for indicative mood. In *Life and the views of the famous philosophers* by Diogenes Laertios (2013), we find the formula *ou mallon*, translated as “not rather” or “not rather than”. *Ou mallon* is a Greek term by which sceptics express their characteristic feeling: *epoche*, the state of suspension. Utopia demands from the subject of thinking constant suspension of the temptation to judge. Utopia is a permanent state of emergency, but only in the sense that it permanently suspends judgement.

8. Utopia – and this is our eighth thesis – is not a disguised or explicit messianism. Utopia is not waiting for the messianic

banquet of the righteous on the Last Day. Utopia is not the anticipation of the Messiah, for utopia cannot condemn itself to passive inactivity.

Here, I depart from Walter Benjamin (1986) and Giorgio Agamben (2004). Even though according to the rabbinic tradition, the righteous at the end of the world are never dead at all – on the contrary, as representatives of the remnant (*resto*; also “rest”, “remainder”) of Israel/Humanity, they are still alive at the moment of the Messiah’s coming – the stake of non-messianistic utopia is not the salvation of the world, but finding for each event, each organic and inorganic being a proper place to be.

In utopia, there nothing is left without a place. That is why the architecture and geography are the privileged disciplines in utopian thinking. A world where even a single life is left without its place is not a world of utopia. Utopia is not messianism, for utopia reminds us that in the world, the problem is neither truth nor justice, but the place. The world, in the light of utopia, does not require salvation or uttering some categorical truth, instead, it requires the order of things, in which everything is in its appropriate place.

In fact, the notion of time for utopian thinking may appear as important as the notion of place and space. Sometimes, utopia thinks a seemingly finite time. What does it mean? It means that utopia avoids thinking in terms of circular time, in which things constantly recur in the cycle securing the “immortality of the track” as well as in terms of the absolute end of all things, which presupposes the ultimate destruction or restoration (salvation) of everything. Utopian time is the end of time understood as a constantly escaping horizon of all events. Here, the only time frame is the present. Perhaps, utopia carries the hope of a time constantly renewed in the present, a time that finds its “place” in the present; in the fountain of all time. The apparent finality of time stems from our false conviction that everything is lost in the present, while in fact, everything is postponed in the present. The present is the guarantee of infinite time.

8½. Is, therefore, our “eighth and a half” (almost “ninth”) thesis, in which we claim that utopia is another name for alienation (*Verfremdung*), for building a strangeness to any notion of history and geography, the way of constructing anxiety to what we are now? The assumed postulate of non-identification with oneself? A dismantling of all false unities? A step beyond the phantasm of peace, unity and synthesis? Does utopia need to remain that of “non-identity” as long as the world creates the conditions for further alienation?

Maybe we should be asking exactly the opposite: Does utopia seek the conditions of its destruction and no longer allows for alienation of anything of this world? Will utopia, regardless of all its provisional names, always remain a great movement of raising dust in the wind and in time? Will utopia remain a dismantling of history and geography rather than its apparent assembly? Finally, is utopia simply another name for Revolution?

Myself, I would not hesitate to admit that “there is no alternative to utopia”. Paraphrasing Ernst Bloch, the promise of happiness, the expectation of a kingdom to come, and our hope for dreams come true, though all unthinkable, are formally admissible and, in fact, compulsory; we must persist and categorically request utopia. Utopia is real – it manifests human will and as such it is a kind of “protean investments” and “political practice”. Perhaps utopia today is an attempt to take a stand against time and space. Utopia is the art of positioning and the art of resistance.

Today, when talking about the relationship of utopia with solidarity, it would seem appropriate to emphasize the solidarity of a dwelling place with its resident subject rather than the mere solidarity between people, i.e., purely human beings. Martin Heidegger in the classic text *Building. Dwelling. Thinking* claims that “Bauen originally means to dwell. Where the word bauen still speaks in its original sense it also says how far the nature of dwelling reaches. That is, bauen, buan, bhu, beo are our word bin in the versions: ich bin, I am, du bist, you are, the imperative form bis, be”. Heidegger adds that

space never confronts man. Space is neither an external object nor inner experience. Particular locations tend to open up by the sheer fact that man dwells in them. In other words, the locations are determined by the things and people occupying them. They are not the naked geometrical and homogeneous space that science tells us about. Things which, as locations, allow a site Heidegger calls buildings (Heidegger 1971).

The crisis of solidarity is above all a crisis of dwelling. The crisis of utopia is a crisis of solidarity in dwelling and things occupying a dwelling place. Home no longer protects or makes a living for either its dwellers or newcomers. Houses are neither shelters nor hostels. Spaces do not allow pure flows. We are no longer able to dwell because we have lost the power of building. We are unable to travel, since we have lost faith in other dwelling places. Instead of the freedom of dwelling and traveling, we choose, guided by fear, the inability to separate and being alone. This separation does not allow us either to dwell or to travel. It prevents both the ethics of hospitality and the ethics of solidarity with dwelling places.

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SOLIDARITY, REVOLUTION
AND UTOPIA IN LITERATURE
AND CINEMA

**Socialist and feminist dream-narratives
of solidarity at the end of 19th century
(Morris and Corbett)***

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Abstract

The Victorian *fin de siècle* exhibits not only a double quality but also the ambivalence of modernity with the appearance of ‘new’ ideas in the ‘old’ age. The unique perspective is especially evident in the so-called ‘dream-narratives’ written in the last decades of the 19th century, for instance, in Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward 2000-1887* (1888) and William Morris’s *News from Nowhere* (1890). In my paper, I will juxtapose the Morrisian British socialist utopia and Elizabeth Corbett’s feminist utopia, *New Amazonia* (1889), focusing on communal solidarity, emancipation and gender equality in the works. I will also highlight the importance of the ideal reader who is effectively addressed in both utopias.

Key words

dream, socialism, feminism, hope, community

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**Socjalistyczne i feministyczne narracje oniryczne
o solidarności z końca dziewiętnastego wieku
(Morris i Corbett)**

Abstrakt

Wiktoriański *fin de siècle* wykazuje nie tylko podwójną przynależność, ale również ambiwalencję współczesności wraz z pojawianiem się ‘nowych’ idei w odchodzącym w przeszłość (‘starym’) wieku. Unikatowa perspektywa jest szczególnie wyraźna w tzw. onirycznych narracjach pisanych w ostatnich dekadach XIX wieku, na przykład, w powieści Edwarda Bellamy’ego *Looking Backward 2000-1887* (1888) i w *News from Nowhere* (1890) Williama Morrisa. W artykule przeciwstawiam Morrisowską brytyjską utopię socjalistyczną feministycznej utopii Elizabeth Corbett pt. *New Amazonia* (1889), koncentrując się na problematyce społecznej solidarności, emancypacji oraz równości płci w obu utworach, podkreślając także istotną rolę idealnego czytelnika, do którego adresowane są obie utopie.

Słowa kluczowe

sen, socjalizm, feminizm, nadzieja, społeczność

When Adam delved and Eve span,
who was then the gentleman?
(John Ball)¹

The context of the present paper is provided by my research on the philosophy of female education and the questions of female *Bildung* in the 18th and 19th centuries. I have been studying not only works of educational and philosophical concern (for instance, Mary Wollstonecraft’s and John Stuart Mill’s writ-

¹ The 14th century rebellious priest John Ball, who was a Lollard, is said to utter this question. I quote here the modernised version of the statement as to show that it speaks of not only social but also of gender equality. The historical character is also important for Morris since in his *The Dream of John Ball* (1888) the medieval and “proto-socialist” priest time travels and faces the situation in the 19th century England.

ings), but also literary works such as the *Bildungsromans* written in the related period. Utopias are significant, and though, as Mathew Beaumont claims, the genre “remained the almost exclusive preserve of male authors” till the late-Victorian period (Beaumont 2009: 106), female, or rather feminist utopias appeared from the 1870s. Besides Elizabeth Corbett’s *New Amazonia* (1889), we can mention such socialist-feminist works as Jane Hume Clapperton’s *Margaret Dunmore, or, A Socialist Home* (1888), Lady Florence Dixie’s *Gloriana* (1890), Isabella Ford’s *On the Threshold* (1895), and Olive Schreiner’s *Dreams* (1890). While the novels of upbringing display the process of individual development, female utopias are to show the possibility of social development, being strongly contextualised in their historical present.²

In the transitional age of the late Victorian period, while “the dialectic between de- and regeneration was played out on a broad scale” (Ledger and Luckhurst 2000: xxiii), strong utopianism could not escape the expectancy and the frustration which had become dominant characteristics. Matthew Beaumont, in his remarkable *Utopia Ltd.*, convincingly analyses the complexity of the *fin de siècle* utopian praxis, emphasising the importance of the apprehension of perspective: “Utopian fiction attempted to historicise the present from the perspective of a fantastical future. [...] Utopia provides [...] a meta-perspective – from which the present appears in its approximate proportions” (Beaumont 2009: 33). The meta-perspective is especially emphatic in the so-called “dream-narratives” written in the last decades of the 19th century; such works as Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward 2000-1887*, William Morris’s *News from Nowhere* (1890) or William Henry Hudson’s *The Crystal Age* (1887). Not only male writers published “romances

² Sally Ledger, in her thorough work titled *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle*, surveys the political and literary tendencies of the period, paying special attention to the changing of the meanings of the utopian concept, “the New Woman” itself. I greatly rely on her rather politico-feminist chapter, “The New Woman and Socialism” (1997: 35-61). Unfortunately, she does not analyse Corbett’s utopia in her study.

of the future” but also female authors were concerned about “social dreaming” (Sargent 1994: 4).

Having given the intellectual framework of the period, I will analyse the Morrisian British socialist ‘pastoral’ utopia and Corbett’s feminist utopia, *New Amazonia* (1889), focusing on the issues of communal solidarity, gender roles and emancipation. I will also put special emphasis on the importance of the implied reader, whose solidarity is to be evoked and counted on in both utopias. Beaumont even calls Corbett’s writing a “meta-utopia” (2009: 125), a protest of a strong voice, since the future world in *New Amazonia* itself presents the hope of human regeneration that is to be achieved by solidary and active female communities. Meanwhile, Morris’s Guest also believes that his narrative (as a meta-narrative) promises the victory of socialist solidarity being heralded in his dream vision. Morris’s novel is a “utopian romance” as the second subtitle informs; the first one is “An epoch of rest”.

Bellamy’s American romance had an immense influence in the decades following its publication: *Looking Backward* was a best-seller (while *Equality* was less widely known and discussed). Bellamy societies and clubs were established worldwide, and the novel contributed to the extension of the Nationalist Movement; however, *Looking Backward* was also harshly criticised and mocked, for instance, in William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*. The overtly socialist Morris was greatly disappointed, having read Bellamy’s work, and he published a review in the English *Commonweal* in 1889. Here, he mainly attacks the author’s “middle-class” socialism, the evolutionary process of national centralisation, and the machinery of the industrial army. He thinks that Bellamy’s Utopia should be regarded as “the expression of the temperament of the author”, and he contends that “this [temperament] may be called the unmixed modern one, unhistoric and unartistic” (Morris 2004: 354). If the twenty-first-century Boston is regarded as the prototype of the industrial urban utopia, Morris’s version of London in 2102 is, *par excellence*, the pastoral, the heavenly gar-

den on earth (Jameson 2005:143). The narrator, named William Guest, also awakes from a long sleep but he is easily able to get accustomed to the changes. The most important difference is that while Bellamy's narrator, West, joins the future world, Guest returns to the nineteenth century, as his vision of the future London turns out to be a dream. As he himself thinks, he has a mission, since he "was sent back" by the future comrades, his "neighbours", to "be happier for having seen [them], for having added a little hope to [the] struggle" (Morris 2004: 227).

However, the Morrisian utopia is not a straightforward 19th-century re-writing of More's humanistic work, and it offers more than advertising its author's socialist views. *News from Nowhere* presents us "our first Ecotopia" (Kumar 1993: 143). In the future England – more in the meaning of *now-here*, less of *no-where* – man lives in harmony with nature, there is no air pollution, the rivers are rich in fish (which makes one think of the dead Thames of the 19th century), and gardens and fields are fertile. For Morris, the utopia-to-come, his socialist welfare state, gives the promise of the nostalgic home-coming. As Ernst Bloch says, "utopia refers to what is missing" in our life, implying our faith and hope of its realization, which is, however, not without risk and dangers (Bloch 1988: 16).³ In *Nowhere*, a true socialist utopia is depicted as a society devoid of class, racial or gender inequality. People live happily in the countryside, in the green valley of the Thames, without electricity, cars, money, factories, or any political organisation. In the "epoch of rest", the Nowherians are to pursue artistic pleasures in their activities, even in work, and enjoy making, or more precisely, creating their own utensils, clothes and other objects (Morris 2004: 160).

Herbert George Wells, the father of English science-fiction, tends to cynically criticise Morris's utopia, recalling the nostal-

³ It is said by Ernst Bloch in a conversation with Adorno titled "Something's missing" in his 1988 essay collection published in English (*The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*).

gic and artistic vision of *Nowhere* and gladly stressing its futility; meanwhile, Wells is likely to mock Bellamy's metropolis as well. In *The Time Machine*, the Time Traveller, with the help of a fantastic and scientific equipment, 'lands' in the far away future, in the incredible year of 802,701, by when the Thames has turned into a rich garden, and people regressed to stupid and happy children. The description of the luxuriant beauty of the natural landscape and of man's careless idleness recalls the images of the lost golden age of mankind and incites the reader to ponder on "social paradise" and "Communism" (Wells 1980: 38, 35). It is rather easy to see elements of the Morissian vision in the decadently frail humanity – the Eloi who, being projected into the future, give Wells a chance to remind the readers of misleading utopian "wishful thinking". Contrasted with Morris's optimism, Wells, being influenced by Darwin's evolutionist ideas and Malthus's warning of overpopulation, displays "the sunset of mankind" (Wells 1980: 37): "For the first time I began to realize an odd consequence of the social effort in which we are at present engaged. [...] Strength is the outcome of need: security sets a premium on feebleness. [...] Things that are now mere dreams had become projects deliberately put in hand and carried forward" (Wells 1980: 37).⁴

Notwithstanding, Morris's *News from Nowhere* presents the reader with several, still current, problems: environmental pollution and protection, slow life, designing living spaces, human relationships, gender roles, child-rearing, communal and cooperative planning, and, quoting one of his favourite phrases, the contrast of "work" done with pleasure and dolorous "toil" (Preston 2010: 275-8). Morris really believed that sensible activity, that is, creative work, would shape the worker's mind, altering one's way of thinking. It is questionable whether in the future *Nowhere*, 150 years after the socialist revolution dated (and forecasted) to 1952, humanity will have been able to change so radically in body and in mind. Regarding the biolog-

⁴ In his other novel, *A Modern Utopia*, Wells also overtly criticises Morris's utopian dream-vision.

ical and genetic alterations, Morris approached Darwin's and Malthus's notions with some doubts; generally, he was influenced by the French Lamarck, who thought that our environment has a great role in evolution, since a living being could change its characteristics, adaptively reacting to its surrounding, and then pass those to the offspring. As Piers J. Hale sees Morris's Neo-Lamarckianism:

[...] we might also re-interpret [t]his enthusiasm [...] 'lifestylism' as a concerted effort to provide a cultural environment within which men and women could exercise their social(ist) faculties – mentally and spiritually – as well as engage in healthy and vigorous physical exercise – qualities that were slowly but surely being squeezed out of them by capitalist labour on the one hand and the commercialization of leisure on the other. (Hale 2010: 121)

Moreover, in the novel, there is a strong interrelatedness between healthy, life-promoting environment and pleasurable human well-being: the two mutually support each other. Sensible and artistic pleasures give satisfaction to people who strive to live in harmony with their surroundings, which makes them happy – it is Morris's aestheticised interpretation of the evolutionist and Lamarckian notions.

Perhaps, the reader may find that the Morrisian Nowhere is like a still picture, as if it existed in an eternal present, not having a future. The recurrent thoughts in the characters' conversations convivially frame Guest's excursions, or accompany the friends to their feast, sailing up the Thames. In accordance with the slow rhythm of the work, the reader is likely to sense that their optimistically satisfied accounts of the past lack dynamism; more exactly, they are without fervour that characterised the past efforts, being aimed at changing – at reaching freedom and equality to have Nowhere realised. Besides the good and smart personages, such as Clara, Dick, Annie, and Bob, Guest meets two subtle figures: the aged and relatively disappointed Hammond and the unique woman, Ellen. Hammond is a living memento of the past and its strug-

gles, while Ellen can be taken as the old man's spiritual successor who surprises Guest with her clever insights. When they are discussing the taste of the rich classes in the previous centuries, Ellen claims "that they were ugly in their life because they liked to be, and could have had beautiful things about them if they had chosen", adding, "just as a man or a body of men now may, if they please, make things more or less beautiful" (Morris 2004: 212).

The hope of future achievements and the potentiality of revival are attributed to the progressive thinking Ellen, while Old Hammond stands for the 'living' connection with the past, history of the country.⁵ Ellen is energetic, self-assured and strong, just like the other female characters in Morris's utopia, namely, Clara the adulteress, who is planning to be re-united with her husband, Dick, and Philippa, the head stone carver and a single mother. In *News from Nowhere*, we can find some radical moments about the declaration of free love-choice and free occupation-choice offered to women. As Old Hammond, the wise aged man, explains, all sentiments are real and universal in the future and "men have no longer any opportunity of tyrannizing over the women, or the women over the men; both of which things took place in those old times" (Morris 2004: 93). And he adds, "women do what they can do best, and what they like best, and the men are neither jealous of it or injured by it" (Morris 2004: 93).⁶

The character of Mistress Philippa's character appears in the last addition of the book, in the extra 26th chapter, titled "The obstinate refusers", which was added in 1891 and was

⁵ While Raymond Williams and Perry Anderson emphasise the nostalgic, dreaming quality of Morris's socialism, Tony Pinkney labels the Morissian Nowhere archaic, where, in order to live in "a relaxed, spacious, green garden-city", modern sciences, travelling, research, and technology should be sacrificed (2010: 105).

⁶ Although Sally Ledger welcomes Morris's "sexual politics" (Clara's infidelity is forgiven, not condemned), she criticises William Guest's "male gaze" and Hammond's "masculine account" (1997: 51). Well, we cannot forget that *Nowhere*, however far it is projected into the future, was written in the 1890s.

dedicated to John Ruskin. She is an ardent artist and the centre of the creative energy of the book. However, Philippa is not concerned with the visitor's questions; she is presented stone-carving and she "would not turn away from her beloved work" (Morris 2004: 197). Thus, *still*, Ellen is the intellectual centre of the novel and she shows better understanding of solidarity in the present society. She discerns that the striving for common well-being of the collective connects the people living after the Equality of Life (cf. the turning point in their history). She thinks that the knowledge of history is important, and she has a different sense of time as if she had an eye not only for the past but also for the future and its possibilities: "happy as we are, times may alter; we may be bitten with some impulse towards change, and many things may seem too wonderful for us to resist, too exciting not to catch at, if we do not know that they are but phases of what has been before; and withal ruinous, deceitful, and sordid" (Morris 2004: 214).

Returning to the concept of the well-being of the community, in the very last, really famous scene of *News from Nowhere*, when Guest finds himself lying in his bed back in the 19th century and meditating upon the message of his dream-vision, the final words are put in the mouth of the clever future-woman, Ellen:

No, it will not do; you cannot be of us; you belong so entirely to the unhappiness of the past that our happiness even would weary you. Go back again, now you have seen us, and your outward eyes have learned that in spite of all the infallible maxims of your day there is yet a time of rest in store for the world, when mastery has changed into fellowship – but not before. Go back again, then, and while you live you will see all round you people engaged in making others live lives which are not their own, while they themselves care nothing for their own real lives – men who hate life though they fear death. Go back and be the happier for having seen us, for having added a little hope to your struggle. Go on living while you may, striving, with whatsoever pain and labour needs must be, to build up little by little the new day of fellowship, and rest, and happiness. (Morris 2004: 228)

In Morris's utopia this "new day of fellowship" means solidarity that is being searched together with the apt readers. Ellen's prophetic words are projected by the narrator's wish (in his reading of her "mournful" facial expression), and his very last sentence – "Yes, surely! and if others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream" – underlines the importance of "real fellowship" of would-be, future readers (Latham 2010: 204-5). The question of emancipation is to be placed in the framework of Morris's ideas on education, since the author took the mission of liberating and educating all the working class – both men and women. Morris's main aim was to "produce workers who could not only bring socialism about, but live as equals within a socialist society once it was established" (Coleman 1994: 55). Meanwhile, his "education of desire", to quote E.P. Thompson's famous term, was not simply utopian, but "as a subversive educational device", showed the way for "its readers to cultivate their own imaginative resources". Indeed, he encouraged artistic activities in his works (Coleman 1994: 56).

The wishful thinking about the solidary readers who are able to promote utopian dreams is even more explicit in Elizabeth Corbett's *New Amazonia* (1889). As Matthew Beaumont points out, the female utopias are destined to "display the unconscious aspiration of all utopian fiction", as in these works, instead of "the abstract utopian hope for a perfect egalitarian society [...] the more concrete utopian hope [is] invested in an ideal fellowship of women readers" (Beaumont 2009: 91). Here, a female writer and a suffragist imagines an ideal world visited by a 19th century woman, our narrator, and a "hasheesh" taking man. Before their falling asleep and the 'actual' descriptions of their adventures in the future world of New Amazonia, we can read a political and critical prologue, attacking a group of Corbett's contemporary female-fellows who argued against the importance of getting the right to vote. Corbett mentions three "divisions" within "the feminine genus *homo*" (Corbett

2014: 28): there are the *ladies*, whose life is supported by their gentleman husbands; the middle-class, quite independent and self-conscious *women* and the poor working ones, the *slaves*. She thinks that the rich ladies – in their articles published in the *Nineteenth Century* – betray and work against the efforts of the strong-headed women and the rebellious slaves. Fortunately, another journal, the *Fortnightly Review* gives opportunities to the counter-protest initiated not only by women but also men – MEN, written in capital letters by Corbett, who attempts to mark thereby the signs of solidarity in both sexes, living in the same society (Corbett 2014: 31-2). The figure of the New Woman, articulated in the second half of the 19th century, “is a feminist in search of New Women” and believes in the “inter-subjective solidarity of the ideal collective” (Beaumont 2009: 97-8); consequently, she/it is strongly utopian (while the anti-feminist and sexist reactions are dystopian and satirical).⁷

In her slumber, the narrator / Corbett envisions New Amazonia, where the women are tall, strong, healthy-looking, and clever. In this place of “amazement”, “purity, peace, health, harmony, and comfort reigned [...], and presented a picture such as I had never hoped to gaze upon in this world” (Corbett 2014: 100). The petticoat government of women control the country that was originally Ireland, having colonised by the female. Due to the usage of electricity, healthy diet (they are vegetarian) and natural living, the citizens live longer and happier. And if they feel, they can have a rejuvenation which means that with the help of animalistic energy their strength and life-span is prolonged. Men also live a complete life in New Amazonia, though the high administrative offices are given to women as “masculine government has always held openings

⁷ Besides the list of already mentioned feminist utopias, we can mention men’s counter-action since Walter Besant not only wrote a utopia titled *The Rebel Queen* (1893) but also published a dystopia, *The Revolt of Man* (1882), discussing the future of feminism, while William Soleman satirized the possibilities of future female government in his *Caxtonia’s Cabinet* (1876). Quoting Gilbert and Gubar’s statement: “masculinist dystopias fuel feminist utopias” – and *vice versa* (Beaumont 2009: 111).

for the admission of corruption, injustice, immorality, and narrow-minded, self-glorifying bigotry”, while “the purity and wisdom of New Amazonian Government is proverbial” (Corbett 2014: 112). A woman can decide whether to have a family or dedicate herself to her profession; both ways are welcome. The narrator/Corbett meets a feminist man, Mr. Saville, who tends to lecture 19th century people on social equality of the sexes (169). While the female narrator/Corbett shows her talent as a speaker and as a writer, her companion, the man Augustus Fitz-Musicus behaves like a counterpart, the boasting male caricature, or “the embodiment of effete masculine decadence” (Lothian 2014: 14), who presents the 19th century social norms.

If we regard the ways of education and childrearing, we can say that, to some extent, it follows, or rather recalls More’s *Utopia*: in New Amazonia, all children belong to the State. The healthy body – either male or female – is well-built, exercised and sun tanned. The ideas of physical education and spending free time outdoors are shared with Morris as the people living in *Nowhere* are strong and natural looking. In Corbett’s dream, till the age of ten, the child should have a strict diet and receive only physical education (swimming, running, dancing, gymnastics) so as “to build up a perfect system” (Corbett 2014: 73). Moreover, (and rather in Swiftian manner) the crippled and malformed infants are not permitted to live so that the perfection of the race should be preserved in this eugenic ‘dystopia’, while Malthusian doctrines are also applied to devoid over-population. Corbett’s dream-world is “a eugenicist fantasy and a feminist one” (Corbett 2014: 124) though it is not gynocratic as sexual equality is advertised – ironically, in all fields, except in politics.

Let me quote again a famous exclamation from the book: in this place of “*amazement*”, “purity, peace, health, harmony, and comfort reigned [...], and presented a picture such as I had never hoped to gaze upon in this world” (Corbett 2014: 100). Interestingly enough, in the home of the Savilles, the

narrator looks at pictures on the walls and finds that somehow all are “out of perspective” and none of the images are “painted aright” (Corbett 2014: 151-2). The *futuristic* paintings show movements of animals, the living in motion, as if, says the narrator, the flying moments of life were captured in the style of Eadweard Muybridge, who made the very first “motion pictures” with his *zoopraxiscope*. The narrator gets used to “these pictorial oddities” and thinks that she may “introduce some of these notions” back in her 19th century context. The questions of ‘scope’, perspective and time shifts are very well presented in this episode. The frozen moments of the descriptions – in the paintings and in the novel – tend to come alive in the reaction and interpretation of the readers and this way present, past and future are connected in this virtual, filmlike ‘reality’.

By the 1870s, feminist utopias with their “gynotopic impulse” emerged as a new genre which blended “feminist and historical perspectives into entirely new forms of social interactions and gender relationships” (Beaumont 2009: 107), being stamped by the quest for solidary readership and fellowship in their historical context. As Florence S. Boos and William Boos claim, in his *News from Nowhere*, Morris got connected to the socialist debates about “the Woman Question” (which involved, for instance, Friedrich Engels, Eleanor Marx, Edward Aveling, August Bebel), even though his female characters did not discuss the issues of childrearing, distribution of female and male tasks, education, or gender norms. His future Ellen is to present women’s self-consciousness desired by the socialist-feminist ideal: “she *does* embody something of its *inner* consciousness [viz. of this ideal], that sense of harmony with nature and the cycles of life which evokes humankind’s deepest sense of recurrence and rebirth” (Boos 1990: 27). Moreover, with her love of nature – with “the passionate love of the earth” (Morris 2004: 225), being shared by all the members of the community, she also presents the new, global meaning of solidarity which is nowadays formulated in bioethics and ecofeminism.

Ernst Bloch says that beyond “wishful thinking”, “the utopian function is the unimpaired reason of a militant optimism” and its “imaginative gaze [is] loaded with hope” (Bloch 1988: 106-7). The utopian function is positively represented in ideas and “the *human culture in respect to its concrete utopian horizon*” (Bloch 1988: 107, italics in the original). Ruth Levitas also calls our attention to the “educative aspect” of utopia Bloch emphasises here. Utopia teaches us solidarity, and it is the genre that “enables people to work towards an understanding of what is necessary for human fulfilment, a broadening, deepening and raising of aspirations in terms quite different from those of their everyday life” (Levitas 1990: 122). Corbett’s utopia displays “the bifocal vision” of utopian feminism of the *fin de siècle* as it focuses “on personal change in the short term and social change in the long term” (Beaumont 2009: 103). And exactly, this question of focality and the duplicity – or rather the complexity – of the perspectives (here and now, in the 21st century) makes the 19th century dream-narratives rather performative and interactive. As Beaumont says about the meta-narrative feature of *New Amazonia*, it “dramatises a dream of social fellowship whose embryonic form is expressed in the bonds forged between writer, reader and a wider audience” (Beaumont 2009: 127). It is dedicated to the solidary readers of its own context in the present (now in the past) and tends to create a community in the future and this future can be our wishful thinking in the present – (a) still about the future.

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Utopian fictions: Before and after revolution

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Abstract

The paper explores the ways in which the ideal order is introduced in utopian fictions prior to and after the French Revolution. Despite an apparent variety of different methods, the key role is most often ascribed to the figure of the founding father who both designed and successfully implemented his plans for a radically better state and society. The fictional pattern is then compared to corresponding discursive practices of revolutions and revolution-like activities that have managed to overthrow the existing socio-political systems.

Key words

utopian fictions, utopianism, revolution

Literackie utopie sprzed i po rewolucji

Abstrakt

Artykuł omawia różne sposoby ustanawiania idealnego porządku społeczno-politycznego przedstawiane w utworach utopijnych przed i po Rewolucji Francuskiej. Pomimo pozornej wielości proponowanych metod, główną rolę odgrywa w nich postać ojca-założyciela, któ-

ry nie tylko zaplanował model radykalnie lepszego państwa i społeczeństwa, ale też wprowadził go z powodzeniem w życie. Dominujący w literaturze utopijnej model konstytuowania idealnego świata jest następnie skonfrontowany z praktykami dyskursywnymi ruchów rewolucyjnych i quasi-rewolucyjnych, którym udało się obalić istniejący porządek.

Słowa kluczowe

utopie literackie, utopianizm, rewolucja

What is the object of Revolution? Surely to make people happy. Revolution having brought its foredoomed change about, how can you prevent the counter-revolution from setting in except by making people happy?

(William Morris, *News from Nowhere*)

The question “what would happen on the Morrow of the Revolution” appearing in the opening paragraph of William Morris’s *News from Nowhere* (1890) perfectly embodies the relationship between utopia and revolution in utopian fictions. Seen from the perspective of utopian discourse, rather than empirical reality, revolution is simply one of the historically variable modes of instituting the ideal socio-political and economic order. In fact, as many as five basic models of implementing the utopian system can be distinguished:

- The supernatural intervention in human affairs.
- The founding father(s), and, especially, since the second half of the nineteenth century, the founding mothers.
- The exodus model: a group of people dissatisfied with the existing conditions decides to depart from their native country, or is forced to leave by the oppressive government or foreign invaders.
- The parliamentary way: the changes are effected by the existing parliament or especially appointed general assembly of elected representatives.

- The revolutionary way: the radical change is brought about by the masses, spontaneously, or inspired by a charismatic leader.

In actual practice, as shall be seen from what follows, these five types only very rarely appear in a pure form. In most cases, at least two of them appear side by side, so that supernatural intervention assists the founders, the parliament passes the laws suggested by an exceptionally wise leader, exodus is led by a future charismatic lawgiver etc.

1. The supernatural intervention

In *The History of the Sevarambians* the perfect order has supernatural origins, associated with the second creation of man and the relocation of Earthly Paradise followed by the establishment of an alternative world on the other side of the globe:

And because there was no man then fit to inhabit so blessed a place [Paradise after the expulsion of Adam and Eve], of the Sons of Noah, a new couple were formed, not out of the slimy Earth as the former, but out of a purer and more delicate substance, out of some Metal mixed with Gold and Silver: hence it is, that their bodies are so clean, pure, glorious, and splendid as you shall see. This couple, named Chericus and Salmoda, are the Parents of all the Sevarites; from their loins proceed the numbers of beautiful men and women, which you shall see on the other side of the River. They had an hundred Sons and as many Daughters, and lived, by our Records, two thousand years; afterwards he was buried in the City of Sevarinde, where you shall see his Sepulchre. When men and women began to increase, his eldest Son Sevarias appointed Laws for men to govern their actions, and to avoid all kind of confusion. These Laws we can shew you in our Registers, subscribed by all the men of those days. (*The History of the Sevarambians* 66–67)

In *The Adventures and Surprising Deliverances of James Du-bourdieu* an alternative creation of man and women also takes

place and the perfect world exhibiting all the characteristics of the biblical Earthly Paradise is reserved for those who preserved their original innocence and followed the dictates of reason:

God infus'd reason into man; who by that reason was likened to its divine cause, and has this difference from its body, that it never dies, but is eternal [...] This new made man having likewise a woman joyn'd unto him, begot their like; whose race for many years kept up to that purity and innocence in which they were first made, and which they preserved by keeping up to the directions of reason; but afterwards they began to neglect that duty, and follow the direction of their passions; which gaining head, soon depos'd reason, and with it lost all knowledge of God, and their own original. They lest their delicious abode, being driven out indeed by angels, or some ministers of the great spirit who made them, and from that time call'd them the children of wrath, but yet his children; and those who remain'd innocent, who were in all but four, he call'd the children of love; and to keep them from being reduced by the children of wrath, he sunk all the ground about this place, or happy abode, and surrounded it with vast unpassable waters; here they encreas'd to the number which you now find. (*The Adventures and Surprizing Deliverances of James Dubourdieu* 93)

On the other hand, the establishment of a new utopian Israel depicted in *Nova Solyma* is part of the realization of the divine plan, as it involves the conversion and the subsequent reunification of the Jewish nation, who at the time of action, are “very close on the fiftieth year since our long and widely scattered nation was restored to its present wonderful prosperity” resulting from conversion to Christianity:

Certainly that condition of the Jewish race has always been an assurance that the ardent desire that Christians have so long conceived for our return was not an impossibility, and gave them firm faith in its fulfilment, long before there were any signs of it. But when indeed, by the sudden flash of divine light, that stubborn mental darkness was removed, and, prompted by a heavenly

impulse, we acknowledged the true Messiah, and became His disciples with unwonted zeal, then it was that to us of that same race that had been sunk so long in the lowest depths of misery there came, as it were, life from the dead, and our exaltation to the highest by divine mercy. And as formerly we alone of all tribes of the earth followed after righteousness in the perfect fear of God, so now also we strive for the pre-eminence. (*Nova Solyma* 88-90)

Divine intervention in human affairs is also responsible for the miraculous introduction of Christianity to New Atlantis, marking the completion of ideal order:

About twenty years after the ascension of our Saviour, it came to pass, that there was seen by the people of Renfusa, (a city upon the eastern coast of our island,) within night, (the night was cloudy, and calm,) as it might be some mile into the sea, a great pillar of light; not sharp, but in form of a column, or cylinder, rising from the sea a great way up towards heaven; and on the top of it was seen a large cross of light, more bright and resplendent than the body of the pillar. (*New Atlantis* 159)

Obviously, the establishment of the ideal social and political system as a result of direct supernatural intervention practically eliminates the practical implications of the depicted models of utopian states as the inhabitants of the utopian state play no role in designing its shape and their efforts are reduced to strictly obeying the divine commands.

2. The founding fathers

The oldest and in many ways predominant model of instituting the ideal order in utopian fiction depicts it as the act of a single individual, the founding father, the planner and the chief executor of the all-encompassing change. Such is the method presented in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516):

But Utopus, who as the conqueror gave the island its name [...] and who brought the rude and rustic people to such a perfection

of culture and humanity as makes them now superior to almost all other mortals, gained a victory at his very first landing. He then ordered the excavation of fifteen miles on the side where the land was connected with the continent and caused the sea to flow around the land. He set to the task not only the natives but, to prevent them from thinking the labour a disgrace, his own soldiers also. (*Utopia* 113)

This short passage characterizes well the relationship between the individual initiating the change, the radical character of the change itself, and the status of the people actually implementing the change, who appear here as a barely mentioned instrument of accomplishing one person's designs. The ultimate agency of king Utopus is additionally emphasized by the symbolic act of renaming the island.

Perfect founding fathers proliferate in later utopias. The implementation of the ideal order in Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627) was initiated by King Solamona, who had "a large heart, inscrutable for good; and was wholly bent to make his kingdom and people happy", and having achieved this goal, decided "to give perpetuity to that which was in his time so happily established" (*New Atlantis* 166) by drastically restricting all contacts with the outside world.

James Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656) is dedicated to Oliver Cromwell, whose hoped-for future actions are performed by his fictional avatar Lord Archon, who deposes the parliament and, having been made "by the universal suffrage of the army [...] sole legislator of Oceana" (61), becomes, alongside Moses and Lycurgus, "the first legislator [...] to have introduced or erected an entire commonwealth at once" (*The Commonwealth of Oceana* 65).

At the opposite end of the political spectrum, the dedication to R.H.'s *New Atlantis. Begun by the Lord Verulam* (1660), a sequel to Bacon's *New Atlantis*, addressed to King Charles II, calls for the adoption of the proposed model and suggests the intended founding father of this utopia-come-true:

to whom more properly could this Atlantic Scheme of a well-composed Government make its Adresse, then to your self, the Fountain of all Law and chief Nomothetes in your Kingdoms? [...] Now, that You may really become out Solomona, our second Justinian and Restauratour of our almost-lost Laws and Liberties: to the re-enthroning your self in full Glories, the Re-establishment of our despised Church, and to the advance of the Publique Peace, welfare and prosperitie of all Your faithfull subjects [...]. (*New Atlantis. Begun by the Lord Verulam A4*)

The original law-giver of the ideal Pygmy kingdom in *Gerania* (1675), at first thought to be an Indian Brachman, turns out to be Homer himself who, apart from providing the natives with a detailed set of laws regulating all aspects of life, upon his departure back to Greece, prophesied the downfall of Heathen Gods and declared that “the true God manifesting himself to the World, should teach Men a way to serve him” (*Gerania* 58).

In *The Free State of Noland* (1696), the new superior order is initiated by “the Excellent Aristaus” who, having been elected the new king, refuses to accept the crown and successfully calls for the establishment of a parliamentary republic. Jacobus Veritas, the law-giver in *The Island of Veritas* (1790), having become “displeased with the vices of the people”, left Europe to find a different way of life. In the course of his voyages he landed upon an Island where, “from a superstitious custom of the people”, he was chosen their king:

Finding their manners simple, their tempers docile, their genius quick and inquisitive, he determined to put in force the scheme he had entertained from his youth; and on his Death-bed he had the satisfaction of knowing himself beloved by a nation, whose happiness was received from him. (*The Island of Veritas* 2)

In *Peter Wilkins* (1751) and *Crusoe Richard Davis* (1756), the ideal order based on the purified and simplified model of European civilization is introduced by two castaways, who impose it upon societies existing in the state of nature, literally in the latter case, as the feathered inhabitants of the Land of Ascen-

sion do not even possess a proper language. In Thomas Spence's *An History of the Rise and Progress of Learning In Lilliput*, sequel to *Gulliver's Travels*, the ideal order is instituted by two children, Billy Hiron and the king, who, with the co-operation and support of the people, manage to nationalise landed property, forests, mines, etc., all of which are taken over by parishes. The application of these measures leads to the institution of the perfect order:

New Liberty sprung up and displayed itself like the Tree of Life in Paradise; the Dews of Heaven came upon it, and the Earth offered all her Nourishments; its Trunk was reared in Strength and Beauty; its Branches spread over the Land, its Root was deep in Virtue, on its Leaves were the Sciences written, the People were happy also who dwelled under its Shade, and the Fruit of Glory dropped upon them. (*An History of the Rise and Progress of Learning In Lilliput* 39)

A similar revolution takes place in the country of Mercolia, adjacent to Lilliput. Here, Jurvilo, a boy of fourteen, manages to convince his countrymen to leave all their money in heaps, so that all the evil people will kill each other for it, and so open the way to the institution of the perfect system based on common property.

Karl Kautsky explains the predominant tendency of giving the task of inventing and implementing the ideal order to a single powerful individual by referring to the emerging alliance between post-feudal princes and kings and the rising bourgeoisie. He provides a more elaborate explanation when discussing Thomas More as a utopian socialist:

As yet there was no party, no class to champion Socialism; the decisive political power, on which the State seemed to depend, were the princes, then a young, and in a sense a revolutionary element, without defined traditions, why should not one of them be converted to Communism? If such a prince desired, he could enforce Communism. If no prince so desired, the poverty of the people was unalterable. So thought More, and from this standpoint

he was impelled to make an attempt to convert a prince. But he was by no means deceived as to the hopelessness of this task. He knew the princes of his time too well. (Kautsky 1927: 249)

Alternatively, however, the introduction of the figure of the founding father of the utopian state can be seen as a manifestation of the tendency, originated in the Renaissance, of constructing the second world as a fictional/hypothetical alternative to the existing one, as exemplified, for instance, by Robert Burton's "playing the part of the Creator" delineated in the preface of Democritus Junior to *The Anatomy of Melancholy*:

I will yet to satisfie & please my selfe, make an *Vtopia* of mine owne, a poetically commonwealth of mine owne, in which I will freely domineere, build citties, make lawes, statutes, as I list my selfe. And why may I not? *Pictoribus atque poetis, &c.* You knowe what liberty Poets haue euer had, and besides my predecessor *Democritus* was a Polititian, a Recorder of Abdera, a law maker, as some say, and why may not I presume as much as he did? Howsoever I wil aduenture. (*The Anatomy of Melancholy* 56)

A very similar position in relation to constructing utopian worlds was later adopted by Immanuel Kant:

It is certainly pleasant to think up state constitutions that correspond to the demands of reason (especially in matters of right). But it is inappropriate to propose them seriously, and it is punishable to incite the people to do away with an existing constitution. Plato's Atlantis, More's Utopia, Harrington's Oceana, and Al-lais's Sevarambia have all eventually been put on stage but have never been tried in reality (with the exception of Cromwell's failed monstrosity of a despotic republic). The creation of these states is much like the creation of the world: no one was present when it happened, nor could anyone be present, for otherwise he would have to have been his own creator. To hope that a state constitution of the kind of which we are speaking here could ever, after however much time, be completed, is a sweet dream. But to continually approach such a state is not only thinkable, but rather, to the extent that it is consistent with the moral law, a duty, not for

the citizen of the state, but for the head of the state. (Kant 2006: 161–162)

3. The exodus model

Very often closely connected with the key role of the founding father is the exodus model in which the origins of the utopian state replicate the motif of the flight from the sinful and oppressive world, patterned after the biblical narrative of Exodus.

The citizens of Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun* (1602) "came from India, many of them being philosophers, who fled before the depredations of the Tartars and other plunderers and tyrants, and they resolved to live in a philosophic community" (37–39). The ancestors of the inhabitants of Heliopolis described in *A Voyage to Tartary* (1689) left Athens after the death of Alexander, when his courtiers gained the power and began to govern contrary to his intentions. They took "their Families along with them, to settle themselves in some part of the World, which they could find more commodious for them, and there to live under Laws, of which themselves were the first Founders" (92–93), because they were unable to endure the Tyranny of the new rulers. The ideal community depicted in *The Island of Content* (1709) was established by:

a good old Gentleman, who forsook his native Country, with his Children, Friends, and Relations, to save their Lives in a Time of Rebellion and Cruelty, when their Prince was murder'd, the Constitution torn to Pieces, Religion made a Mock of, their Estates sequester'd into the Hands of Traytors [...] and rather chose to trust themselves to the Mercy of unbridl'd Winds, and the tempestuous Ocean, than to the ruder Malice and more ungovernable Rage of a poyson'd Rabble, and a fanatic Enemy, who were made the Instruments of God's Justice upon a sinful Nation. (*The Island of Content* 24).

New Athens visited by the protagonist of *A Voyage to New Athens* (1720) was established by refugees from Greece threatened

by the attacks of barbarians. They were led by a highly respected Demophilus, who persuaded one hundred thousand people to follow him in search of a new habitation. The Mezzoranians, headed by their ruler, abandoned their native Egypt to escape enslavement and extermination at the hands of the wicked invaders, and to established a utopian country in an unexplored part of Africa (*The Memoirs of Gaudentio di Lucca* [1738]). The country of the Cessares was established as a colony in South America by a group of Protestants, who left their native Holland fearing the Spanish invasion and persecution at the hands of the Roman Catholic clergy. The plan was initiated by two individuals who personally selected “150 poor laborious, and industrious families”, “some husbandmen, bricklayers, carpenters, and blacksmiths”, 200 orphans of both sexes and different ages, and two ministers, “persons of great piety, and extensive virtue, affable, and humble, of universal charity and benevolence” (*An Account of the First Settlement, Laws, Form of Government, and Police, of the Cessares, a People of South America*, [1764]: 22). The text presents the process of instituting the ideal order, including a detailed account of the proceedings of the original assembly which democratically adopted the constitution. The inhabitants of Soteria depicted in *The Capacity and Extent of the Human Understanding* (1745) came from the province of Xantung, near Korea. Converted to Christianity by the disciples of St John, persecuted by pagans, they abandoned their native country in search of a better place. The exodus was organised by a worthy Christian mandarin, Hiaa, who purchased twenty ships to carry three hundred families, two bishops, three presbyters, and one deacon. In a series of texts describing the country of Spensonia, the ideal republic is established by the sons of a rich merchant who wanted the people to live like brothers, sharing all property in common.

4. The parliamentary way

Although the parliamentary method of implementing the ideal order is far less common in utopian fiction, its use often foregrounds the pragmatic function by describing in detail the actual legislative process of passing the laws of the utopian state, which are presented *in extenso*, as in *A Voyage to Tartary*, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, *The Free State of Noland*, and *Memoirs of Planetes*.

In the author's preface to *Macaria*, an appeal is made to the English Parliament to adopt his proposals: "I humbly desire that this honourable Assembly will be pleased to make use of any thing therein contained, if it may stand with their pleasures, and to laugh at the rest, as a solace to my minde being enclined to doe good to the publick". Also, a part of the dialogue is devoted to the discussion of the ways in which England may take advantage of the superior laws and measures adopted in Macaria:

Traveller: Well, what will you doe towards the worke?

Scholar: I have told you before, I will publish it in my next Sermon, and I will use means that in all Visitations and Meetings of Divines, they may bee exhorted to doe the like.

Traveller: This would doe the feat, but that the Divines in England, having not he skill of Physic, are not so highly esteemed, nor beare so great a sway as they doe in Macaria.

Scholar: Well, what will you doe toward the worke?

Traveller: I will propound a book of Husbandry to the high Court of Parliament, whereby the Kingdome may maintain double the number of people, which it doth now, and in more plenty and prosperity than now they enjoy.

(*Macaria* 10–11)

Such is also the character of the political and economic transformation described in Thomas Spence's *A Supplement to the History of Robinson Crusoe*. When the island became very

densely populated, the laws of primogeniture and private property made it impossible for “the better Half of the rising Generation” to get a “vacant Spot to live on”, which led to serious disturbances, until the problem was solved by a general assembly of all inhabitants, who decided to abolish private property.

The proposed mode of implementing the ideal system by means of majority vote is, at least theoretically, applicable to the author’s world, contrary to the method suggested in the majority of other utopian texts, in which the ideal system is imposed “from above” by an enlightened ruler, or begins with the establishment of a small community by a group of refugees. Although the exodus model can be regarded as practicable, especially considering the rise of colonization in the early modern period, it ultimately produces an alienating effect, as it can hardly be applied to the existing European conditions, and the idea of a new beginning elsewhere appears, at best, as an opportunity for the select few.

5. Revolutionary model

Providing a critical account of utopian socialism in *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels (1969 [1848]: 32) maintain that it is a result of the undeveloped state of the class struggle. Consequently they “want to improve the condition of every member of society, even that of the most favoured” so they “habitually appeal to society at large, without the distinction of class; nay, by preference, to the ruling class”. The fantastic images of future society which they depict correspond to “the first instinctive yearnings” of emerging proletariat, but the main value of utopias consists in their critical element as they “attack every principle of existing society”, which contributes to “the enlightenment of the working class” (1969 [1848]: 33). However, all the practical measures proposed in them such as “the abolition of the distinction between town and country, of the family, [...] and of the wage system, the proclamation of

social harmony, the conversion of the function of the state into a mere superintendence of production”, which “point solely to the disappearance of class antagonisms which were, at that time, only just cropping up” (1969 [1848]: 33) are of a purely Utopian character.

The importance of utopias decreases with the development of class struggle, to the extent that “this fantastic standing apart from the contest, these fantastic attacks on it, lose all practical value and all theoretical justification” (1969 [1848]: 33). Consequently, even though “the originators of these systems were, in many respects, revolutionary, their disciples have, in every case, formed mere reactionary sects” (1969 [1848]: 33). Whilst Marx and Engels’s observations may well apply to actual experiments with intentional communities, they do not seem particularly relevant to many utopian fictions.

The first English text to present the utopian state brought about by a popular revolution is *Memoirs of Planetes* (1795). The work depicts the happy land of Makar in the aftermath of a revolution, overthrowing monarchy and aristocracy and introducing the republican system based on community of property. Here again the figure of the founding father appears as the indispensable leader of the revolution: Euthus, a man “whose purity of morals and uprightness of conduct can only be equalled by his judgment, experience, and sagacity” (*Memoirs of Planetes* 36), which qualities are reflected “in the lines of his countenance” revealing “the effects of deep study and penetrating discernment” as well as “that gravity in his demeanour that brought to my mind the inflexible Cato” (*Memoirs of Planetes* 40).

A strikingly different approach, echoing Marx’s and Engels’s views on the character of revolution, appears in many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century utopias, in which the introduction of the ideal order is presented as a result of a violent revolution, or a series of revolutions, occasioned by the acute awareness of the dispossessed social groups or classes

of their true position, without, however, associating it with any figure of the founding father or mother. Such is the case in the most important utopias of the period: William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, Mary E. Lane's *Mizora*, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, or Charlotte Gilman's *Herland*, although with the exception of Bellamy's book, the economic factors play at best a secondary role.

Paradoxically, in the self-descriptive discourses generated by real-life revolutions in the twentieth-century, the figure of the founding father returns with a vengeance, overshadowing Marxist theories, dialectical materialism, the predominance of mind over matter, the class struggle, the role of the masses, or the incompatibility of the base and the superstructure, so that we are ultimately left with Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Kim Il Sung, Fidel Castro, and a host of other *patres minores*.

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**Female and male solidarity
in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*:
Myths deconstructed**

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Abstract

The article investigates the myths of female and male solidarity as they are presented and deconstructed in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1915 utopian novel *Herland*. A claim is made that the sisterhood and motherhood are at the ideological core of *Herland*, and due to the introduction of the male narrator to the novel, the clash of strikingly different opinions on solidarity is presented as the major source of tensions between the characters. The eutopian, single-sex land of Herland is characterized by strong fellowship between the inhabitants, which is the source of the profound successfulness and prosperity of the country. However, as the three male explorers cross the natural barrier hitherto protecting the female land against the threats of hostile patriarchal civilizations, they question the non-competitive and supportive relations between the women, projecting onto them the expectations and stereotypical views they have acquired from their own world. For the travelers, the parthenogenetic model of reproduction and unified motherhood of Herland, along with the utter economic equality and the ability to sustain a highly developed civilization without men, are incomprehensible features of the female country, and as such they create a platform for dialogue about the traditional structures of societies. As the original male sol-

idity perishes with the progression of the novel, yet another myth on gendered solidarity is deconstructed.

Key words

solidarity, eutopia, female utopia, female solidarity, myth, Herland

Kobieca i męska solidarność w powieści *Herland* Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Obalone mity

Abstrakt

W artykule omówiono mity kobiecej i męskiej solidarności, które zostały opisane, a następnie obalone w utopijnej powieści *Herland* (1915) pióra Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Postawiono tezę, że ideologiczny rdzeń dzieła stanowią siostrzeństwo i macierzyństwo, zaś męski głos narratora powieści odpowiada za przedstawienie starcia skrajnie odmiennych poglądów na solidarność. Utopijna, jednopłciowa kraina Herland charakteryzuje się silnym poczuciem wspólnoty wśród mieszkanki, któremu państwo zawdzięcza swój powszechny dobrobyt. Gdy jednak trzech mężczyzn przybywają do Herland, przekraczając naturalną barierę, jaka dotychczas chroniła kraj przed wrogimi, patriarchalnymi cywilizacjami, kwestionują oni pozbawione rywalizacji, serdeczne relacje między kobietami, przenosząc na nie swe oczekiwania i stereotypowe poglądy, które nabyli we własnym świecie. Reprodukacja oparta na partenogenezie, zjednoczone macierzyństwo, a także całkowite równouprawnienie ekonomiczne oraz zdolność do utrzymania wysoce rozwiniętego kraju bez pomocy mężczyzn są dla podróżników zupełnie niezrozumiałymi cechami kobiecego państwa, i jako takie stanowią platformę dla dialogu o tradycyjnych strukturach społecznych. Gdy wraz z rozwojem fabuły początkowa męska solidarność ulega rozkładowi, obalony zostaje kolejny mit na temat solidarności przedstawicieli tej samej płci.

Słowa kluczowe

solidarność, utopia, kobieca utopia, kobieca solidarność, mit, Herland

The aim of this paper is to explore the myths of female and male solidarity as presented and deconstructed in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's utopian novel *Herland* (1915). The single-sex world of Herland is a eutopian land not dissimilar to the locations presented in most early utopian texts in terms of its accessibility, functioning, and the society's condition. Separated from the outer world by means of a virtually impenetrable natural barrier, the country of women is protected against the threats of hostile patriarchal civilizations, and the boundary serves, among other things, as a symbolic demarcation of a striking contrast between the ideas governing the outside and the inside. The self-sufficient female land is neither tormented by wars, nor does it suffer from any kind of poverty, and its profoundly successful existence is based on strong fellowship between the inhabitants. As the three male explorers enter the female country, they pose a threat to the whole community because they bring with themselves their unfair views on gender inequality. One of the most important examples of the clash of inhabitants' and travelers' opinions concerns the concept of solidarity. Indeed, solidarity itself constitutes a crucial ideological notion discussed in the novel, as it remains at the core of the value system of the female land.

Solidarity is frequently defined as a sociological phenomenon of "unity (as of a group or class) that produces or is based on community of interests, objectives and standards" (Merriam-Webster). It relies greatly on positive emotions such as empathy and a sense of community. Naturally, as every unity embedded in culture, solidarity is also characterized by the differentiation into 'us' and 'them', and in the novel such a differentiation is emphasized on multiple levels, e.g. by the fact that the society is all-female, hence it excludes men, or by the inaccessibility of the country, marked by the boundary which divides the world into 'our' Herland and what lies beyond it.

According to Mayhew (1971), an integrated solidary system is based on four notions: attraction, i.e. ties of affection between the group members; loyalty, i.e. a disposition to protect the shared goals and fellow members; the aforementioned

sense of membership or inclusion; and, finally, association, which refers, broadly speaking, to sharing a common cause. All of these foundations are referred to in the novel. Interestingly, neither Mayhew nor other scholars who specialize in categorizing solidary systems have discussed such systems in terms of gender. As noted by Bernard, up until the 1980s, solidarity had been studied as an almost exclusively male phenomenon. It can be argued that this was caused by the widespread myth that women are incapable of bonding (Bernard 1981: 362). *Herland*, published as early as in 1915, actively opposed this myth, presenting a notion of strong and fair female solidarity.¹

The utopian system in *Herland* is based on economic and social equality of its inhabitants, shared responsibility for the functioning of the country, and equal distribution of all the goods. Equality is expressed also on the emotional and psychological levels. The women of *Herland* are neither jealous nor competitive; they feel that it is their common goal to protect, develop, and enhance their motherland. Furthermore, they share strong mutual affection: they simply love each other. The concept of motherhood is not understood in the western terms, as the women of *Herland* cherish a shared, common motherhood, taking care of all the girls, not only their own, to such an extent their life is described as “the long cycle of motherhood” (Gilman 2015: 201). Moreover, no woman loves her own child (who is never called “daughter”) any more than the other children and adults. In fact, the motherhood – not limited to a specific family relationship – is presented as the value around which most of the inhabitants’ actions, relations and ideas revolve: “All their wide mutual love, all the subtle interplay of mutual friendship and service, the urge of progressive thought and invention, the deepest religious emotion, every feeling and every act was related to this great central Power, to the River of Life pouring through them, which made them the bearers of the very Spirit of God” (Gilman 2015: 261).

¹ The word *myth* is used in this essay in its basic meaning, that is, as a widely held belief, idea, or a conviction of some group of people.

In the discussion of the mutual affection governing Herland, it is vital to note that female solidarity described in the novel is connected not only with motherhood, but also with sisterhood, both of which are frequently mentioned as the sources of profound successfulness of the female land. Undoubtedly, in order to grasp the nature of solidarity of Herland, it is vital to understand the relations between motherhood and sisterhood. In the novel, the two concepts are first confronted with each other at the beginning of the travellers' expedition, when they speculate on the nature of the relations between the inhabitants of the female country.

"They would fight among themselves", Terry insisted. "Women always do. We mustn't look to find any sort of order and organization".

"You're dead wrong", Jeff told him. "It will be like a nunnery under an abbess—a peaceful, harmonious sisterhood". [...]

"Nuns, indeed! Your peaceful sisterhoods were all celibate, Jeff, and under vows of obedience. These are just women, and mothers, and where there's motherhood you don't find sisterhood—not much". (Gilman 2015: 163)

The explorers believe that motherhood and sisterhood preclude each other, as they associate motherhood with sexuality and sisterhood with celibacy. The sexualization of motherhood is certainly connected here with the idea of female competition for a male partner, whereas the origins of connoting sisterhood and continency and purity are not fully explained in the novel; it seems that the three men simply perceive sisterhood as the primary idea governing the lives of nuns in convents. Not surprisingly, though, the male beliefs on the sexualized motherhood and sexless sisterhood prove to be profoundly wrong when confronted with the reality of Herland.

The sexualization of motherhood, understandable while considering traditional societies with a sexual reproduction model, is not applicable in Herland. The asexual reproduction itself combines the concept of motherhood with the purity and celibacy which was originally viewed as tokens of sisterhood by

the travelers, thus drawing the two types of relationships closer to each other. Reflecting upon the history of the female country, the male narrator, one of the three travellers, first signals an incoherence of the male views on the mutual exclusiveness of sisterhood and motherhood: using the convent metaphor, he observes that after the miracle of parthenogenesis, the daughters and granddaughters of the First Mother lived “in an atmosphere of holy calm” and grew up “as a holy sisterhood”, but at the same time he admits that “the longed-for motherhood” was the highest value of the ancient society, a national ambition rather than personal joy (Gilman 2015: 200). Moreover, he realizes that motherhood and – by extension – family ties were crucial to the development of the modern Herland: “[T]his one family, five sisters, twenty-five first cousins, and a hundred and twenty-five second cousins, began a new race” (Gilman 2015: 200).

Furthermore, the explorers learn that contrary to their expectations, the sisterhood of Herland is so strong that even the possibility of returning to the sexual model of reproduction prompted by the arrival of the three men does not result in the emergence of jealousy and competition among the women. The narrator thus describes this disappointment and its background:

But I am sorry to say, when we were at last brought out and—exhibited (I hate to call it that, but that’s what it was), there was no rush of takers. Here was poor old Terry fondly imagining that at last he was free to stray in “a rosebud garden of girls”—and behold! the rosebuds were all with keen appraising eye, studying us.

They were interested, profoundly interested, but it was not the kind of interest we were looking for.

To get an idea of their attitude you have to hold in mind their extremely high sense of solidarity. They were not each choosing a lover; they hadn’t the faintest idea of love—sex-love, that is. These girls—to each of whom motherhood was a lodestar, and that motherhood exalted above a mere personal function, looked forward to as the highest social service, as the sacrament of a lifetime—were now confronted with an opportunity to make the great

step of changing their whole status, of reverting to their earlier bisexual order of nature. (Gilman 2015: 223)

Therefore, instead of competing with each other to win a lover, the women of Herland understand that the appearance of the travelers constitutes a chance to further, probably more efficient, reproduction. This understanding and the lack of jealousy testifies the genuineness of the sisterhood governing the female country, whereas the confirmation of the central position of motherhood as the main value links sisterhood with motherhood yet again.

As the narrator progresses in his understanding of the female land, he ceases to contrast sisterhood and motherhood, and ultimately acknowledges their equal status in the ideology of Herland, admitting at the same time that the realizations of these concepts are still quite unbelievable to the men: “The power of mother-love, that maternal instinct we so highly laud, was theirs of course, raised to its highest power; and a sister-love which, even while recognizing the actual relationship, we found it hard to credit” (Gilman 2015: 200). Thus the idea of sisterhood and motherhood as two equally important sources of female solidarity is indirectly expressed in the novel.

The sole affection of motherhood and sisterhood does not fully explain the nature of female solidarity of Herland, though. The narrator, trying to provide a more accurate definition of the relationships between the inhabitants of Herland, indicates that the solidarity is based on “limitless feeling of sisterhood, that wide unity in service, which was so difficult for us to grasp” (Gilman 2015: 208). The limitless, supportive sisterhood above all possible divisions is therefore accompanied by cooperation for a shared cause. The “service” referred to in the excerpt is understood rather widely throughout the novel, namely, as common work aimed at the wide-ranging development of the country: “a glad, eager growing-up to join the ranks of workers [...] and beyond that, the whole, free, wide range of sisterhood, the splendid service of the country, and friendships” (Gilman 2015: 229).

One of the most important objectives of the service is prolonging the successful existence of Herland by educating subsequent generations of its inhabitants. The notion of education is vital in the country of women, as it is presented as the very mission in which the women unite: “The Herland child was born [...] into the society of plentiful numbers of teachers, teachers born and trained, whose business it was to accompany the children along that, to us, impossible thing—the royal road to learning” (Gilman 2015: 237). At the same time, it is exactly this wise, well-planned education that enables the society of women to stay united in the future, its aim being described by the narrator as “laying the foundation for that close beautiful group feeling into which they grew so firmly with the years” (Gilman 2015: 238). The education of Herland, therefore, is a sort of perpetuum mobile: the shared service of teaching unites the women, and the results of the teaching process ensure further solidarity in the generations to come.

Female solidarity becomes visible in numerous events presented in the novel, a case in point being the united and strong condemnation expressed by all women of Herland in response to an attempted marital rape that one of the travelers, Terry, was found guilty of. However, less extreme examples are equally, if not more, telling. An interesting manifestation of the profound female unity is also presented in scenes depicting clashes of opinions between the narrator and Ellador, his wife from Herland. The woman, although always resolved to understand the viewpoint of her husband, is usually unable to consider problems without referring to the collective ideas, views and beliefs of her nation. At a certain point the man realizes this: “I hadn’t married the nation, and I told her so. But she only smiled at her own limitations and explained that she had to ‘think in we’s’” (Gilman 2015: 253). Not only are Ellador’s opinions determined by the shared set of values and worldviews: it appears that the female unity is crucial to her identity, as the mode of thinking about herself in the plural indicates the deep psychological bond between her and her female compatriots. Interestingly, although the institution of

marriage is re-introduced in Herland, the “we’s”, as Ellador puts it, are still related solely to female unions rather than male-female partnerships.

As shown above, fair and true female solidarity constitutes the foundation of the ideological system of Herland and ensures its proper functioning. However, this kind of solidarity is contrasted with the myths of female disability to form a solidary society, which are brought from the outer world by the narrator and his companions. Due to the introduction of three male characters, a male narrator included, *Herland* presents multiple, often contradictory convictions on gender roles, proper structures of societies, and varying physical and psychological abilities of men and women. Indeed, the male points of view shaped beyond Herland and tested against female points of view constitute the main source of tensions between the characters of the novel. This clash of strikingly different beliefs is crucial for the presentation of the story world and it propels the narration.

The male-centered worldview of the narrator and his friends affects their perception of the inhabitants of Herland. As the three explorers enter the female land, they automatically question the non-competitive and supportive relations between the women, projecting onto them the expectations and stereotypical views they have acquired in their own world. The variety of those expectations is enormous. One of the first myths described in the novel is concerned with an alleged inability of women to cope on their own, to build and sustain a highly developed country without men. The explorers naturally assume that men must live in Herland as well, and simultaneously they reduce the role of women they first encounter in the country to a purely sexual one. They reflect that the men “may live up in the mountains yonder and keep the women in this part of the country—sort of a national harem!” (Gilman 2015: 167). The fact that the women of Herland work hard in order to maintain their civilization is therefore highly surprising for the adventurers, who claim that beyond the utopian land women “would of course work for their children in the home; but the

world's work was different—that had to be done by men” (Gilman 2015: 202). As the story unveils, other myths are introduced, for example in relation to women's jealousy and organization skills: “We all know women can't organize—that they scrap like anything—are frightfully jealous” (Gilman 2015: 200). Similarly to the harem association, the notion of female jealousy is a projection of the male-dominated power structures.

Furthermore, for the explorers, the parthenogenetic model of reproduction and unified motherhood of Herland are utterly incomprehensible. Most importantly, though, the men exclude any possibility of female solidarity. At a certain point, the narrator thus describes his friend's views on that matter: “I remember how long Terry balked at the evident unanimity of these women—the most conspicuous feature of their whole culture. ‘It's impossible!’ he would insist. ‘Women cannot cooperate—it's against nature’” (Gilman 2015: 207). This myth in a way lays the foundation for all the other myths, as it is concerned with the very basic feature of female psyche. In the novel, it is debunked not in one particular scene or utterance, but rather throughout the progression, in the detailed description of the successful female country, its origins, history and functioning. To illustrate the deconstruction of the myths brought to Herland from the outer world, one may take a look at how the narrator eventually dissects the male expectations of the country:

We had expected them to be given over to what we called “feminine vanity” – “frills and furbelows”, and we found they had evolved a costume more perfect than the Chinese dress, richly beautiful when so desired, always useful, of unflinching dignity and good taste.

We had expected a dull submissive monotony, and found a daring social inventiveness far beyond our own, and a mechanical and scientific development fully equal to ours.

We had expected pettiness, and found a social consciousness besides which our nations looked like quarreling children – feeble-minded ones at that.

We had expected jealousy, and found a broad sisterly affection, a fair-minded intelligence, to which we could produce no parallel.

We had expected hysteria, and found a standard of health and vigor, a calmness of temper. (Gilman 2015: 216-17)

It is due to the solidarity, sisterhood and cooperation, which constitute the ideological core of the female society, that the country prospers. All in all, therefore, the myths brought from the outside are deconstructed in the course of the narration, as it turns out that the female country based on unity and equality does in fact function in a perfectly organized, successful way, and the narrator openly admits to notice the exquisiteness of the utopian land.

Ironically, simultaneously to deconstructing the male misconceptions concerning the other sex, the progression of the novel tests and exposes yet another myth: that of strong and unwavering solidarity of men. Upon arriving to Herland, the explorers are a solidary group, although they greatly differ from each other. The narrator, Van, is a sociologist, whose opinions on the structure of society and gender roles are traditional, but moderate, and who does not hesitate to change his mind once it turns out that some of his convictions were faulty. Jeff is a doctor and a botanist, and his attitude towards women is extremely romantic: he believes that they are to be protected and cherished. The longer he resides in Herland, the more “herlandized” he becomes, embracing all the rules of the female country and praising it as the best possible society. The last of the three friends, Terry, is a classic male chauvinist who believes that women should be “mastered” emotionally and physically by men, and that women actually need and enjoy such kind of treatment. His assumption of male superiority disables him to function properly in Herland. Despite considerable differences, however, the men seem to be solidary at the beginning of their journey. Their solidarity is based on the concept of brotherhood; they are loyal friends of the same background and they simply accept their differences, which in the patriarchal society of their homeland, the United States,

were not all that visible. It is in Herland that the divergences start to dissolve their unity, especially as Terry, in spite of obvious proof to the contrary, is not able to accept that women are not inferior to men. The narrator thus describes this dissolution:

I hated to admit to myself how much Terry had sunk in my esteem. Jeff felt it too [...]. At home we had measured him with other men, and, though we knew his failings, he was by no means an unusual type. We knew his virtues too, and they had always seemed more prominent than the faults. Measured among women—our women at home, I mean—he had always stood high. He was visibly popular. [...] But here, against the calm wisdom and quiet restrained humor of these women, with only that blessed Jeff and my inconspicuous self to compare with, Terry did stand out rather strong. (Gilman 2015: 212)

It can be argued that the male solidarity presented in the novel is not successful because, unlike the female solidarity governing Herland, it is based on certain wrong values. At the beginning of the novel, the men feel united in their sense of superiority above women, although each of them feels superior for a different reason. As it ultimately becomes clear that their attitude to the other sex is groundless, solidarity between them perishes: Van and Jeff are willing to accept the truth about Herland and its inhabitants, while Terry refuses to do so. The female solidarity, on the other hand, turns out much more unwavering and, thereby, successful. Faced with the visitors from the outer world, the women stick to their beliefs as well as to the positive perception of and attitudes toward other representatives of their own sex.

It is also worth noting that the male entry to the utopian land can be perceived as a threat to the female rule, especially if the reader shares some of the myths the male characters verbalize. The patriarchal myths defining gender roles and the characteristics of both sexes seemingly threaten the power of women in Herland. Eventually, however, the danger is averted since two of the three visitors change their views. Terry and

Van eventually leave the utopian land, and the one who stays, Jeff, joins the women in their understanding of the role of sisterhood.

As has already been pointed out, female solidarity as presented in *Herland* stems primarily from the affection the inhabitants feel towards each other, and also from positive valuation of the concepts of motherhood and sisterhood. Naturally, they are also solidary in response to the outer world, which is patriarchal, if not male chauvinist. Yet, it should be noted that the female utopia in *Herland* is not based on unity in suffering, but rather unity in happiness. Interestingly, in her realist short fiction, Charlotte Perkins Gilman usually presented a strikingly different form of female solidarity: the one based on negative emotions caused by the oppression of patriarchal society. The protagonists of her short stories usually feel united precisely because they share the same experiences of male dominance. This phenomenon can be found, among other stories, in a brilliant piece entitled *Turned*, whose plot revolves around three characters: a wife, a husband, and a maid. The two women are contrasted at the very beginning of the story, as the wife, Mrs Marroner, is an exquisitely educated woman, an active academic with a PhD, while the servant, Gerta, although beautiful and ever-obedient, is not too bright or ambitious. When the maid gets pregnant and it is revealed that Mr Marroner is the father, the wife, understandably, becomes furious. However, after some consideration, she comes to the conclusion that it is not Gerta that is to blame, but her husband, who took advantage of his position of power in order to rape or seduce the girl. Despite her original rage towards Gerta, having left the unfaithful husband, Mrs Marroner decides to take care of the mother and the baby. She additionally educates the maid, turning her into a conscious and self-confident woman. At the end of the story, the husband finds the women in their new house, but he is clearly not welcome, and as he enters, he is faced with a carefully constructed question, juxtaposing him to both women: "What have you to say to us?" (Gilman 2009: 181). Clearly, *Turned* – like many other short

stories by Gilman – pictures female solidarity based on shared suffering, as the husband symbolizes multiple variants of male oppression. Although he hurts the two women in different ways, yet in each case one may easily discern his disrespectful attitude toward the other sex and the excessive use of his privileged position in the patriarchal society. The female solidarity in *Turned* is, indeed, the solidarity above all divisions, in spite of vast differences between individuals. But most importantly – it is the solidarity based primarily on painful experiences. The different foundations of the female unity in *Herland* and in Gilman's realist fiction prove that the solidarity in *Herland* is yet another realization of utopian thinking presented in the novel. Part of the message conveyed by the work is that should the male oppression disappear, women would be solidary differently – joyfully rather than sorrowfully.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman recognized the contemporary myths concerning female and male solidarity and actively worked on debunking them. In her novel, she proposed a model of sisterhood and female solidarity, simultaneously challenging the concept of patriarchal brotherhood and exposing male nonuniformity. Her discussion on gender-related solidarity constitutes a vital part of the ideological, feminist overtone of the classical utopian text. Indeed, the profound solidarity which laid ground for the fictional world of *Herland* exceeded – and still exceeds – the real-life realizations of the concept. Gilman's utopian understanding of solidarity can be perceived as a part of her much broader project: fighting oppressive gender stereotypes and promoting feminist ideals.

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**The challenges of solidarity
in an anarchist utopia:
Margaret Killjoy's *A Country of Ghosts*
as a utopia of process**

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Abstract

The article discusses Margaret Killjoy's literary realization of an anarchist society in her 2014 novel *A Country of Ghosts*. Killjoy creates a vision of society which is highly decentralized, anti-authoritarian, and egalitarian. It is based on free association and voluntary participation, yet its success is dependent on solidarity, mutual aid, and acceptance of responsibility. The depicted social reality is examined as a utopia of process, namely one which is open-ended, dynamic, and also not perfect – the author identifies the challenges that the solidarity of such a utopian space would face: the clash between communal consensus and personal autonomy, the treatment of potential conflict, maladjustment and crime, the performance of the decentralized state in the face of global crisis. Finally, the novel is analyzed as a work of modern anarchism, insofar as it demonstrates the impact of other contemporary anti-authoritarian movements, the result being a novel that is not merely an anarchist utopia, but one which may also be perceived as a queer utopia, a feminist utopia or an ecotopia.

Key words

anarchism, utopianism, feminist utopia, queer utopia, ecotopia

**Wyzwania solidarności w anarchistycznej utopii:
A Country of Ghosts Margaret Killjoy
jako procesualna utopia**

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest analiza literackiej wizji społeczeństwa anarchistycznego ukazanego w powieści autorstwa Margaret Killjoy *A Country of Ghosts* (rok wyd. 2014). Killjoy opisuje społeczeństwo zdecentralizowane, egalitarne i nie uznające hierarchii, czy władzy zwierzchniej. Jest ono oparte na solidarności, wzajemnej pomocy i poczuciu odpowiedzialności. Przedstawiona rzeczywistość społeczna analizowana jest jako utopia dynamiczna i niedoskonała – autor ukazuje różnego rodzaju próby, jakim może być poddana solidarność takiej społeczności: zderzenie pomiędzy konsensusem społecznym a osobistą autonomią, konflikty, przestępczość, nieprzystosowanie społeczne, jak również kwestia funkcjonowania zdecentralizowanej społeczności w obliczu globalnego kryzysu. Powieść analizowana jest także jako tekst reprezentatywny dla nowoczesnego anarchizmu, ponieważ widać w niej wpływy innych współczesnych ruchów społecznych: powieść jest utopią nie tylko anarchistyczną, ale może też być postrzegana jako utopia feministyczna, ekologiczna, lub utopia queer.

Słowa kluczowe

anarchizm, utopianizm, utopia feministyczna, utopia ekologiczna, utopia queer

A Country of Ghosts by Margaret Killjoy is an explicitly anarchist utopian novel, published in 2014. Killjoy is a young and relatively unknown author, who describes herself as a modern nomad and a cultural creator. Her main preoccupations in-

clude writing, editing, publishing, print design, photography, and music. She is also an activist for environmental causes. However, first and foremost, Killjoy is a believer in anarchism and perceives it as her duty to encourage people to question the current political and social situation. She has worked towards this goal by writing articles on anarchist thought; she also published a collection of interviews with writers, including, among others, Ursula Le Guin, on the connection between the personal politics of authors and their works (*Mythmakers and Lawbreakers*, published in 2009).

Killjoy uses utopianism as a medium through which to voice her anarchist convictions. The feasibility of this endeavor may stem from the fact that anarchism and utopianism share many parallels. Both are strongly political in nature and aimed at reform. Also, one of anarchist strategies is the creation of intentional communities, which is closely aligned with utopian activism. Anarchism, like utopianism, interrogates the present and visualizes improved forms of existence. Moreover, both are characterized by an emancipatory impulse. Utopian thought experiments, like anarchist speculation, free us from the ruts of habitual acceptance of status quo and the conviction that our political system is the only possible one. Utopian thinking exposes the arbitrariness of dominant perceptions of reality and nudges us to consider other, alternative ways of being. Finally, both ideologies are notoriously misunderstood and misrepresented: they are unfairly criticized for being abstract and unrealistic. Utopianism is also often accused of being stagnant, which stems from the perfectionist nature of many literary utopias. However, such perceptions are misconstrued and result from a grossly oversimplified understanding of what these ideologies stand for.

As far as anarchism is concerned, it is typically defined as an anti-statist philosophy, which advocates the abolition of government and all the associated institutions. However, equating anarchism with the advocacy of statelessness is a conflation which is both incomplete and inaccurate. Anar-

chism means primarily “the negation of authority over anyone by anyone” (Sargent 2009: 211). Hence, anarchists oppose all forms of oppression, be it social, sexual or racial (Walter 2002: 48). Hence the links with workers’ movement, feminism, civil rights movement or, more recently, LGBT movement, as well as with environmental and anti-globalization activism. Twenty-first century anarchism is a heterogeneous phenomenon concerned with “religion, ethnicity, sex and sexuality, art and the environment” (Kinna and Prichard 2009: 271), and *A Country of Ghosts* reflects this variety.

As for utopianism, contrary to what is often assumed, it is neither escapist nor naively idealistic. Utopian visions are not examples of social dreaming, but of social theorizing and social criticism. Regarding the supposedly rigid and static character of utopias, in fact most modern utopias are anti-perfectionist and dynamic, and as such they are not compatible with end-state model of utopia, which presents a complete final vision (Davis 2009: 5, McKenna 2001: 51). Instead, they are examples of process model of utopia, which is open-ended and remains in the state of constant flux. Killjoy’s utopia fits this model as it is not a perfect finished product, but a work in progress – it is flexible and undergoes constant evolution and adjustment.

The depicted social reality is also egalitarian, decentralized and characterized by adherence to such core values as freedom, responsibility and solidarity. These characteristics hark back to Ursula Le Guin’s anarchist utopia, *The Dispossessed*. Killjoy, by her own admission, is greatly influenced both by Le Guin’s fiction and non-fiction on anarchism, particularly by Le Guin’s definition of an anarchist, whom she characterizes as “one who, choosing, accepts the responsibility of choice” (qtd. in Killjoy 2009: 8). The importance of personal responsibility in an anarchist society is emphasized in Killjoy’s novel. It shows a society which is based on free association and voluntary participation, yet its success is dependent on solidarity and mutual aid. For both Le Guin and Killjoy freedom and re-

sponsibility are tightly connected and mutually dependent (Le Guin, Killjoy 2010), as anarchist utopians need to work collectively and responsibly to ensure the continued existence of their world.

The novel has a typically utopian structure – it is narrated by a utopian visitor, Dimos Horacki, native to dystopian expansionist Borolia. Dimos is a journalist sent to the front as a war correspondent, yet various twists of the plot result in his prolonged stay in an anarchist country of Hron. Hron remains in stark contrast to his country of origin, whose various social problems are indicated at the beginning of the novel. The text thus conforms to the utopian/dystopian dichotomy that many such works follow in order to highlight the superiority of utopia, as opposed to an inferior counterpart. On perceiving the discrepancy, the narrator undergoes a surprisingly speedy and complete conversion to anarchist ways. This relatively seamless transformation, as well as the novel's occasionally explicitly didactic tone, are its weakest points. Still, even though the novel most certainly is not a masterpiece of the caliber of Le Guin's anarchist utopia, it makes for quite engaging reading and is successful in showcasing the author's anarchist views.

The text is set in an imaginary world, whose level of civilizational and scientific progress roughly corresponds to "a nineteenth-century alternate world" (Bright 2017). Killjoy justifies this choice of setting by her willingness to avoid the implication that she is trying to provide a blueprint for a perfect future society (Montgomery-Blinn 2014). It is meant solely as an example of a world in which self-determination and personal autonomy are given priority.

Hron is clearly a visualization of Killjoy's political and social philosophy, which she has expressed in her essays on what she calls "post-civilization". Killjoy defines this term as rejection of civilization, however, not in the sense of returning to the primitive state, which is advocated by anarcho-primitivists. Killjoy equates civilization with the domination of the state as well as with globalist attitudes which promote an imposed ho-

mogenized culture (Killjoy, "Take What You Need" 2010: 4). She also regards it as being defined primarily by non-egalitarianism, class division, and coercion (Killjoy, "Anarchism" 2010: 2). She perceives it as "a failed experiment", which has resulted in "genocide and ecocide" (Killjoy, "Take What You Need" 2010: 1). The author therefore advocates the establishment of a post-civilized culture, which would be the result of dismantling hierarchical systems of domination. This, according to Killjoy, is to be achieved by focusing on one's community and landbase and by adapting to the landscape. Recycling, scavenging and squatting are favored instead of exploiting resources and mass producing redundant items. In contrast to civilization, a post-civilized culture is sustainable because it is decentralized and organized from the bottom up. Killjoy writes that such society "would consist of smaller groups that retain their individual identities but are capable of working together for the common good" (Killjoy, "Take What You Need" 2010: 5). For this goal, cooperation, mutual aid and solidarity are indispensable.

Hron corresponds in many ways with Killjoy's idea of a post-civilized anarchist state. It can be described as a regional collective of smaller groups which are locally and loosely bound into towns, villages or smallholdings. Even in cities the area is "split loosely into various quarters, dominated by a different style of living, though each of the quarters bleeds into others" (Killjoy 2014: 146). Dimos is surprised to discover that the boundaries between communities and the people who inhabit them are not merely fluid, but almost non-existent. The social organization is a peculiar mixture of fragmentation and communal intermingling. Dimos observes that "Microcultures formed around all kinds of identities, from work preferences to sexual preferences, but I never met anyone [...] who belonged to only a single group or really came across as committed to the distinction between the groups" (Killjoy 2014: 146). As a result, there is no factionalism or animosities based on identification with one group or another. Instead, diversity and

sharing experiences are encouraged. Hron does not represent a single, homogenous monoculture, but it is a composite of diverse cultural groups acting in solidarity with one another. Hence, it follows that Hronians practice solidarity both within and between groups. They practice a sort of solidarity-in-difference, as differences are not suppressed, but encouraged. This diversity links Hron with postmodern anarchism, which emphasizes fluidity and heterogeneity. Ruth Kinna writes that this brand of anarchism has been influenced by Michel Foucault, Giles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard due to its “avoidance of totalizing systems” (Kinna 2012: 22), which are characterized by a high degree of formalization and standardization of people’s behavior. In contrast, postmodern anarchist ventures may be described as “a perpetual process of struggle that brings individuals together in complex networks of action, facilitating the expression of their differences rather than seeking finally to resolve them” (Kinna 2012: 22). Anarchists understand that equality does not entail sameness by precluding personal uniqueness. They perceive diversity as an empowering value, one which makes their cooperation possible. This conviction has also been expressed by Mikhail Bakunin: “thanks to this diversity, humanity is a collective whole in which the one individual complements all the others and needs them. As a result, this infinite diversity of human individuals is the fundamental cause and the very basis of their solidarity” (qtd. in Graham 2005: 222). In Hron diversity is a fact of life that goes without saying. While they do not celebrate diversity per se, they do celebrate freedom, which includes the liberty to be different. This is mostly seen in the lack of norms or standards that would regulate the lives of Hronians.

Hron is a post-capitalist state with no money and no paid labor. Food is shared and goods are exchanged based on a system of gift economy. It is not barter, as immediate compensation is not required, nor is the exchange regulated by any written agreements. The narrator introduces a glass maker who

explains that “it can’t work one-for-one” as “people only need windows every now and then, and I need food every day” (Killjoy 2014: 125). It is a matter of informal agreement within the community: the glass-maker is free to acquire his supplies in the town, whereas the people of the town can receive glass from him whenever such a need arises. On a larger scale, the redundancy of immediate reward can be seen in the practice of mutual aid between communities: when one or more communities are hit by crop failure, other communities aid them with food, knowing that the gesture will be reciprocated if they find themselves in similar circumstances.

Hron is also characterized by complete decentralization, which goes even further than in Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*, in which there does exist a coordinating unit that regulates the activities of inhabitants. Here, all problems are solved within communities and decisions are made independently “by individuals or small groups” (Killjoy 2014: 131). If a situation occurs which might affect other members of the community, a council is called. Such meetings are coordinated by a facilitator who is not supposed voice their opinions, but to guide the discussion. Decisions are reached by common consensus and the facilitator makes sure that everyone’s voice is heard, as well as that there are no objections or counter-proposals.

Participation in the communal decision-making process may be seen as a fundamental element of the anarchist model of utopia: “self-management is the key to achieving order without authority” (McKenna 2001: 52). Such a solution proves the point that anarchism is not against organization per se, but against organization which is hierarchical or coercive (Davis 2014: 219), and Hron is an example of a system that is organized in some way, however loose it may be, but it is completely free from domination. The decisions of the council are only binding to those who choose to abide by them – no one can impose their will on anyone else.

This is the first challenge that the solidarity of such a state would face. If obeying communally reached arrangements is

not obligatory, one might wonder what would entice anyone to adhere to them. Here, opponents of anarchism point to the potentialities of chaos and disorder that might occur in the wake of government abolition. However, Hronians mostly choose to abide by regulations because it ensures their status in this society. As one of the anarchists explains, “I get a hell of a lot out of being a part of society, and if I want to continue to do so, I probably am going to abide by most of the council’s decisions” (Killjoy 2014: 131).

There are also certain social forces in operation in Hron, which are not forcible, but which compel people to behave responsibly. A lack of acceptance for anti-social behavior is an instance of such social coercion. People’s behavior is not without consequences, as it contributes to the establishment of one’s reputation, which, in turn, defines where a person stands in the social consciousness. As one café caretaker explains, “In Hron, you are measured by reputation” (Killjoy 2014: 98); based on it the caretaker chooses who to give food to. The food, in turn, is provided to him by local farmers, who give it to him for exactly the same reason – his reputation: “they know [he] distribute[s] it fairly” (Killjoy 2014: 98). However, it has to be emphasized that since Hron is not a uniform state, but an assembly of free individuals, everyone is at liberty to make their own decisions regarding the reputations of others. Consequently, “a reputation might mean different things to different people” (Killjoy 2014: 98). This is an example of the fluidity of Hron, whose anarchist nature precludes any forms of rigid categorization: “like everything in Hron, [a reputation] is flexible, dynamic” (Killjoy 2014: 98). As a result of the fluidity of reputation, people must work for it all their lives.

Already as children Hronians learn the “social cost” (Killjoy 2014: 109) of, for example, stealing, since other children do not play with thieves. If a serious crime, like murder is committed, the perpetrator is expected to show contrition and to grant some sort of compensation to those affected. The community also decide if such a person deserves a second chance

or not, in which case they may be expelled. In one of her essays on anarchism, Killjoy describes such actions as “community responses to problems” (Killjoy, “Take What You Need” 2010: 7) and proposes that they should be the only way in which serious crimes are dealt with, foregoing the interference of law enforcement or such measures as imprisonment. Hronians believe that prisons are inhumane and pointless, as they deprive criminals of the chance to be with other people and in this way “come to understand the need for social behavior” (Killjoy 2014: 108).

However, Killjoy is aware that believing in everyone’s ability to act responsibly would be overly idealistic. Hence, the narrator learns that those truly remorseless are not given seconds chances: “If they are clearly a danger, like an unrepentant rapist or murderer, then we’ll probably kill them. If they aren’t, if they are just an asshole who doesn’t want to act socially with others, they can go to Karak, or out to the rest of the world” (Killjoy 2014: 110). Karak is a Hronian “town of the anti-social” (Killjoy 2014: 110). It is anarchist, insofar as it has no money, no government and no law, but it is “full of people who are too proud to apologize, who’d rather fight someone than talk things out, who don’t care how their actions affect their neighbors” (Killjoy 2014: 110). Killjoy uses Karak as a dystopian negative example – a clarification that anarchism is not just about rejecting government and hierarchy. The inhabitants of Karak have done that and they enjoy unlimited freedom, in which they perceive their superiority over Hronians, who, despite having no laws, respect certain principles which regulate their behavior to a certain degree. The people of Karak resent all regulation and therefore consider themselves freer, better anarchists. Karak is a place where even killing someone has no consequences. Killjoy clearly indicates that promoting absolute autonomy is not characteristic of anarchism, but rather of its perverted version. After Dimos has to spend two weeks with the people of Karak, he begins to truly understand the nature of anarchism: “Freedom, I think, isn’t enough. You need free-

dom and responsibility paired together. [...] freedom is a relationship between people, not an absolute and static state for an individual” (Killjoy 2014: 179). This is why Hron is a utopia of process – freedom is not something given – true freedom and true solidarity can only exist among people who recognize their value and who work to maintain them. Hronians emphasize their commitment to mutual aid and define themselves as “people who have each other’s backs, because having someone’s back means someone has yours and that’s a good way to live” (Killjoy 2014: 81).

Dimos quickly realizes that solidarity is a crucial feature of Hron. He observes that the adjectival form of the word “solidarity” is in constant use in their language, while his own native tongue does not even include it. This discovery is probably meant to trigger a similar realization in English-language readers, namely that English is characterized by the same lack. This may lead one to the conclusion that solidarity does not exist as a valid component of our reality and this lack is mirrored in the language. In accordance with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Killjoy might be suggesting that changing the way we describe social reality on the linguistic level may determine the manner in which we perceive social relations.

Solidarity and responsibility can also be seen as factors which guarantee that people perform various jobs, even though they are neither paid, nor required to do so. This is yet another challenge: if everyone is free to do what they want, how many people will actually work? In Hron almost everybody does. First of all, not being dependent on economic aspects, they volunteer to do jobs they truly enjoy. Secondly, working is a part of being a respectable community member. Hronians realize that by working they contribute not just to the community, but directly to their own welfare: “people work in Hron because it’s fulfilling to do something socially productive and because it’s necessary” (Killjoy 2014: 143). Work is defined as “doing things for ourselves and our communities” (Killjoy 2014: 90). Everyone is expected to clean after themselves after

using various facilities, for example wash the dishes in a café or clean bathrooms in a guest hall. Even children are taught the importance of making themselves useful by performing simple jobs like gate welcome or helping with field work.

Killjoy manages to avoid being obnoxiously idealistic by including characters who are not especially fond of work and who try to avoid it. Dimos meets a student of philosophy who describes herself as “a layabout” and scoffs at “labeling people based on their job preferences” (Killjoy 2014: 145). She contributes by occasionally performing odd jobs and studying philosophy. It seems that as long as there are those who believe that what she does can be even remotely thought of as useful, she will be fed. Thus, Killjoy acknowledges the fact that people are not only very different but also fallible and achieving perfect harmony in which all individuals operate like hinges in a machine is not possible. Hronians themselves admit the system is not perfect, but they see it as the best option considering the alternatives. The narrator also perceives this superiority, but is careful not to be overly enthusiastic, instead giving a realistic depiction of Hronians as real people with ordinary problems: “On the whole, people seemed happier in Hronople than Borol, but not staggeringly so. They worried about their relationships and their health, they worried about the war, they worried about mortality and the afterlife. They worried about everything I’d grown up worrying about, except work, bosses, and poverty” (Killjoy 2014: 147). The narrator points out that life in Hron is not perfect, but the fact that it is anarchist eliminates at least some of the problems that trouble those who live in a capitalist system.

The communal solidarity of Hron is put to trial, when it is attacked by the expansionist Borolians. Dimos seems to have doubts whether the war effort has a chance of success without any coordination from “a central decision-maker” (Killjoy 2014: 158). However, he finds out that the lack of hierarchy is empowering, as people who are not used to relying on a higher power for governance are more likely to take responsibility and

show initiative. In order to decide on a common course of action, a general council of war is announced. All the communities cooperate, and even Karak decides to join in. Most Hronians treat the threat of war seriously. And though most of them fear battle and are not trained soldiers, they consider it their responsibility to fight for their way of life. They manage to hold the enemy off, even though they are outnumbered. The reason why they succeed may be said to lie in their politics (Intellectus Speculativus n.d.) and the responsibility they take for each other and for their own actions. However, there are also those who decide not to participate, and they are not stigmatized for it – people's choices are never questioned in Hron.

A Country of Ghosts was designed as an anarchist utopia, but it displays features of other types of utopian visions, such as a queer utopia, a feminist utopia or an ecotopia. This can be attributed to the fact that modern anarchism demonstrates the impact of other contemporary anti-authoritarian movements, and the novel seems to reflect this.

Hron can be seen both as a feminist utopia and a queer utopia, primarily due to its non-binary character. Sexism and heteronormativity are non-existent. Men and women are equal and free to live exactly as they choose. There are no gender-based standards regulating appearance, behavior or job choices. Sexual orientation in Hron is a non-issue. The narrator himself is queer, and this fact is neither frowned upon nor even discussed in any way. Hronians are also tolerant of open relationships and casual sexual encounters, which is quite common in feminist utopias. It should come as no surprise that anarchists, who champion freedom in all spheres of life, should practice free love. In doing so, they reject relationships of power and achieve sexual liberation, which becomes symbolic of more broadly understood freedom. In accordance with the well-known feminist slogan, "the personal is political", the practice of free love becomes "an expression of anarchist politics and utopian desire" (Davis 2009: 4). Judy Greenway re-

marks that “anarchists, women especially, saw free love as the basis of a wider struggle around issues of sexuality and gender, central to a critique of an unjust and authoritarian society” (Greenway 2009: 160). Also marriage and parenthood in Hron are remodeled and bear strong resemblance to many feminist utopian solutions. Same-sex marriages are clearly not uncommon, and neither are children with two mothers.

Like many feminist utopias, Hron is also ecotopian – respect for the natural world is expressed by implementing eco-friendly solutions. They use thermal vents to harness volcanic energy, and worms to process waste from toilets. There are no factories or military production, as these would lead to atmosphere pollution. Hronians prefer to protect the environment even at the cost of being defenseless. Similarly to free love, eco-consciousness may be viewed in political terms, as green anarchists see the violation of the natural environment as connected with hierarchical domination within society. In Hron, practices which are not ecologically sound are believed to create “unhealthy spaces that deny the relationship of freedom between people” (Killjoy 2014: 151). The interconnection between society and the environment may thus be perceived as a mutual relation – social problems engender ecological disasters, and environmental degradation makes it impossible to practice freedom.

To sum up, Killjoy creates a vision of an anarchist society which is a process model of utopia as it is neither static nor perfect – it is flexible as the utopians face various challenges, both internal and external. The overarching themes in the novel are responsibility and solidarity, which are shown as the defining features of true anarchism and the necessary conditions of its continued existence, however challenging their fulfillment might be. As Erin McKenna notes, “freedom is not easily acquired or easily carried. Anarchy asks a great deal of people” (McKenna 2001: 53) and Killjoy’s depiction of a life in an anarchist society confirms this. Killjoy is careful to avoid rigidity and prescriptive politics. She has said that her vision

of an anarchist society can in no way be treated as a blueprint because “an anarchist society is one of self-determination, on an individual and community level, so it would never make sense to just copy another person’s ideas” (qtd. in Montgomery-Blinn 2014). Subtitled: “a book of The Anarchist Imagination”, it merely explores a possible alternative and opens a conceptual space for utopian and anarchist theorizing.

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**Canadian utopia in Poland:
How L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*
contributed to Polish Solidarity**

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Abstract

L. M. Montgomery's 1908 novel, *Anne of Green Gables*, about a young, socially-awkward Nova Scotian girl adopted by a family in Prince Edward Island, a novel that expresses the sentiments of the North American "New Woman" movement and markedly exhibits post-colonialist imperialism, has produced a young heroine who stands in solidarity with civil resistance in occupied Poland. Given that Montgomery was descendent of the white English/Scottish Protestant invader culture on PEI, complicit in the marginalization and deportation of French settlers and in the annihilation (literally and metaphorically) of the indigenous Mi'kmaq, the idealistic transformation of Montgomery's famous Anne character into a symbol of political defiance seems, to me, incredible. In this article, I illustrate the utopic vision that Montgomery, and indeed Anne herself, create on Prince Edward Island and examine how that isolated, island utopia, and Anne become transfixed into heroic visions in war-time Poland.

Key words

utopia, Canada, children's literature, Poland

**Kanadyjska utopia w Polsce:
Co Ania z Zielonego Wzgórza L. M. Montgomery
wniosła do polskiej solidarności**

Abstrakt

Powieść L. M. Montgomery z 1908 roku pt. *Ania z Zielonego Wzgórza* o małej krnąbrnej dziewczynce z Nowej Szkocji, adoptowanej przez rodzinę z Wyspy Księcia Edwarda – powieść, która wyraża sentymenty północnoamerykańskiego ruchu na rzecz „nowej kobiety” i uwypukla postkolonialistyczny imperializm – wykreowała młodziutką bohaterkę istotną z punktu widzenia ruchu oporu w okupowanej Polsce. Biorąc pod uwagę, że Montgomery była spadkobierczynią białej, angielskiej/szkockiej, protestanckiej kultury najeźdźców na Wyspę Księcia Edwarda, współodpowiedzialnej za marginalizację i deportację francuskich osadników oraz anihilację (dosłowną i w przenośni) natywnego plemienia Mi'kmaq, idealistyczna transformacja słynnej postaci Ani stworzonej przez Montgomery w symbol politycznego oporu wydaje mi się niewiarygodna. W artykule, pokazuję utopijną wizję, którą Montgomery, a w istocie sama Ania, kreują na Wyspie Księcia Edwarda oraz analizuję, jak ta odizolowana, wyspiarska utopia oraz Ania przemieniają się w heroiczne wizje w Polsce w czasach wojny i okupacji.

Słowa kluczowe

utopia, Kanada, literatura dziecięca, Polska

According to the Government of Prince Edward Island's "Island Information" webpage (2017), "In Poland, [L. M.] Montgomery was something of a hero in war time and later, becoming part of a thriving black-market trade for the Polish resistance". Carrell (2003: 370) adds that "[d]uring World War II, copies [of *Anne of Green Gables*] were issued to Polish troops". Further, Chilewska (2009: 112) indicates that the novel, first translated into Polish a mere six months after its original 1908 English publication, "enjoyed longevity in Polish translations and has become part of Poland's literary canon of children's literature"

as required reading for Polish children in Grade IV. Remarkably, *Anne of Green Gables*, a novel set in the tiniest Canadian province, a novel about a strange Nova Scotian orphan girl, a novel that expresses the progressive sentiments of the North American “New Woman” movement while it staunchly reinforces British post-colonial imperialism, stands in solidarity with civil resistance in occupied 1940s Poland. As an Islander who, as a child, was over-exposed to all things Anne, and as a French Acadian who recognizes Montgomery’s overt racism, I find this Polish connection surprising. Given that Montgomery and her family were part of the white English/Scottish invader culture on Prince Edward Island, complicit in the marginalization and deportation of Acadian settler-invaders in 1758, and in the near annihilation (literally and, in the novel, metaphorically) of the indigenous Mi’kmaq, the transformation of Montgomery’s persona, her literary endeavours, her famous Anne Shirley, and Prince Edward Island into symbols of political defiance seems, to me, unbelievable and, in fact, insulting.

Various academic positions on *Anne of Green Gable’s* popularity have, as Staten (2010: 167) notes, “not been entirely resolved”. However, when I consider the profound impact that the novel has had in Canada and around the world, particularly in Japan and Poland, my reservations yield to the positive aspects that Montgomery, the novel, and Anne illuminate, not only in the literary realm, but as part of Canada’s self-representation as a global peace-keeper, political ally, and cultural melting pot. The fictional Canadian utopia of the novel becomes, for the reader, a potential reality – a pastoral landscape that comes to life both as a fictive space of freedom and escapism, as an imaginative island gardenscape, and as a real geographical location far from any battlegrounds. It becomes a safe haven that, in the readers’ consciousness, actually exists in an exotic location hidden from the rest of the world. The idealization of Prince Edward Island, and its fictional and imaginary counterparts, in combination with the orphan pathos of early twentieth-century children’s literature and Anne’s

unlimited imaginative power, allow this Canadian utopia to function as a mindspace within which one can withstand displacement, social and political oppression, and national and personal despair. In addition, this argument for Montgomery's utopian vision of Prince Edward Island, and how that isolated island utopia and indeed Anne herself become transfixed into heroic visions in war-time Poland also involves how the Polish translations of the novel affect its reception.

However, I must first consider some of the disconcerting aspects of a nostalgic novel written by a British post-colonialist and set on an island that was aggressively depopulated twice. For me, the most problematic facet of Montgomery's novel is its consistent dehumanization of the Acadians and the obliteration of the Mi'kmaw First Nation on Prince Edward Island. The aboriginal peoples, who called the island Epekwitk, meaning "cradled by the ocean" (Island 2017), established their communities across the island at least one thousand years pre-Columbus. Since the 1573 arrival of Jacques Cartier, French settler-invaders – who may themselves have been deported from France – arrived (calling themselves Acadians), renaming the place Île Saint Jean and displacing the Mi'kmaq to limited designated regions of the island. British authorities forcibly deported the Acadians from the island and the remainder of the Canadian Maritimes (the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) in 1758. However, significant populations of Mi'kmaq and Acadians evaded exportation and remained, as unwelcome outsiders – illegal aliens – left to survive on the least agriculturally profitable areas of the island, the literal peripheries of PEI – the swamps and the coastal fishing villages. Because their tenuous relationship with the British continued well into the Canadian confederacy of 1867, both populations remained Othered well into the twentieth century, and, to some extent, this continues today. As Geissler and Cecil (2005: 199) have noted, "The absence of the Other – the Acadians and the Mi'kmaq – in Montgomery's writing reaffirms an established and authoritative British post-colonial presence on the real and the fictional PEI". Although this post-

colonial context is evident within eastern Canada, it is largely unrealized in western Canada and throughout the world – the marginalized peoples are invisible to outsiders.

Some critics justify Montgomery's post-colonialist attitude by commenting that the Mi'kmaq and Acadians were politically and culturally marginalized because of Canada's status as a British commonwealth country, lesser-peoples living on the island illegally, and because Montgomery's own family settled the Cavendish area (Montgomery's fictional Avonlea) – prime farmland surrounded by breathtaking beaches – for the Empire. Jones (2013: 133) writes, “[I]n the historical and social context in which [Montgomery] was writing, class and social standing had much to do with [...] the ‘naturally’ established order”. In other words, the suppression of the Other was part of Montgomery's British post-colonial upbringing in Cavendish. Consequently, Montgomery “constructs Anne's personal society as a set of concentric circles of [British] kinship”, as Geissler and Cecil (2005: 198) have argued. Those who are most like Anne are “Kindred Spirits”; the more unlike Anne, the further away they are kept, just as the Acadians and Mi'kmaq were kept at a geographical and legal distance.

Nevertheless, one might have hoped that a novel that ostensibly represents a Canadian ideal or hero would be more inclusive, resisting the exclusionist *status quo*. But there is no place – that is, literally, utopia – for the Other on Montgomery's Prince Edward Island. Sadly, there is no mention of the Mi'kmaq in the novel, and every reference to an Acadian is a racial slur. For example, when discussing the adoption of a boy to help on the farm, Marilla Cuthbert (Anne's adoptive mother) avers, “There's never anybody to be had but those stupid, half-grown little French boys” (Montgomery 2003 [1908]: 14). In the same passage, Marilla suggests that an Acadian boy is not a *real* Canadian. She says, “Give me a *native* born at least [...] I'll feel easier in my mind and sleep sounder at nights if we get a born *Canadian*” (my emphasis; Montgomery 2003 [1908]: 14). Ignorant of her prejudices, Marilla uses the words “native” and “Canadian” to exclude both the Mi'kmaq and the Acadians who are non-British, but, in

fact, born in Canada. British Canadians are the only real Canadians in Montgomery's PEI and in Anne's Avonlea. Since the Other is emphatically excluded, all perspectives in the novel, filtered through Montgomery's post-colonial lens, are those of British-Canadians and the reader is presented with a British-Canadian island colony – different from, but loyal to, its mother island. Hyphenated national identities (of all kinds) persist throughout Canada even now. Furthermore, through Anne's recolonization and Islanders' capitalistic exploitation of the novel, PEI has been robbed of its beauty, bounty, and multiculturalism.

Interestingly, Chilewska (2009: 198) indicates that a 1912 Polish translation of the novel softens Montgomery's racism. Originally, when Marilla tells Anne to throw away her anodyne-tainted cake, she says, "It isn't fit for any human to eat, not even Jerry Buote" (Montgomery 2003 [1908]: 178), their Acadian farm hand, who, in Marilla's mind is sub-human. The Polish version reads, "No human could swallow it" (Chilewska 2009: 198), removing the racial slur, not necessarily to purge racism from the novel, but more likely to remove a reference that would not be understood by a Polish reader with no historical knowledge about the real Prince Edward Island.

Another significant difficulty of the novel is Montgomery's failure to, or lack of interest in, subverting the Island's British post-colonial social structure. Every citizen of Anne's community is a Presbyterian whose station in life is fixed according to a British, God-fearing society. Everyone – that is, everyone of British descent – has a specific place and function in Avonlea and participates in communal activities with a shared cultural and religious background. Initially, Anne, whose spiritual, educational, and social development has been neglected by a series of uncaring foster parents in Nova Scotia, does not fit in, as exemplified by her peculiar behaviour, shabby appearance, and physical smallness. When Matthew Cuthbert (Anne's adoptive father) arrives at the train station to pick up Anne, Montgomery (2003 [1908]: 23) writes, "[T]he freckled witch was very different". I must point out that by "witch" Montgomery means someone who is bewitching, as Anne has certainly

charmed Matthew (who himself is considered odd in Avonlea) with her unusually bright spirit. Whitaker (1992: 12) suggests, "It is the queerness of Anne Shirley, both in physical appearance [...] and character [...] that catches the eye and ear of Avonlea and of the reader". In other words, it is Anne's lack of British Presbyterian upbringing that illuminates her difference from the Avonlea townspeople. Thus, I would argue that Montgomery's (2003 [1908]: 23) descriptor "very different" reflects Anne's Otherness that must be socialized out of her, or she will be left on the outside just as the solitary Matthew is. Indeed, Montgomery (2003 [1908]: 57) writes that on Anne's second night at Green Gables, "Marilla decided that Anne's religious training must begin at once. Plainly there was no time to be lost". Anne's indoctrination into the post-colonial Christian ideology in Avonlea is not only required, but urgent.

Despite Anne's initial strangeness – her dissimilarity to Avonlea folk – Montgomery qualifies her pathetic waif's description with an important caveat: "our discerning extraordinary observer might have concluded that no commonplace soul inhabited the body of this stray" (Montgomery 2003 [1908]: 19). Although dubious of Anne's upbringing so far, Marilla recognizes Anne's inherent goodness and likeness to the British post-colonialists in Avonlea, proven by the fact that Anne's deceased parents were good, British Nova Scotians. Indeed, Montgomery allows Anne to go as far as the cultural limitations imposed on an Island woman at the beginning of the twentieth-century *can* go. Anne, whose outspokenness must be reined in to meet Avonlea social approval, is intelligent and emotionally strong, and is essentially a good Christian. As an adult, she becomes the epitome of the North American "New Woman" – a post-colonial construction – marrying, having children, becoming a teacher, and independently deciding to delay her education to help Marilla, whose vision is deteriorating. But it is only because she is a British-born Canadian and from a Christian family, and because she readily conforms to Avonlea's rules – because she yearns to belong to *anyone* – that Anne has the potential to be reformed into a good person by Marilla's rigid post-colonial Presbyterian

standards (standards that, in Montgomery's world, simultaneously exclude the Mi'kmaq and Acadians). Marilla tells Anne that she must "try to be a good little girl and show [her]self as grateful" (Montgomery 2003 [1908]: 61), as if the poor child was herself responsible for her desperate situation and ought to be thankful that a Christian British-Canadian has taken her in. In the Polish translations, Anne's development along Marilla's determined course is appropriate in a different context, because, as Chilewska (2009: 198) indicates, the novel "is about a kind, intelligent, hard-working girl who takes pleasure in helping others and in bettering herself by means of education". Anne sets a good Christian example – Catholicized in Poland. However, Marilla's harsh character, the result perhaps of her romantic bitterness or the lack of experience with children, is softened by Polish translators. Chilewska (2009: 198) writes, "The portrayal of [Anne's] guardians is manipulated [...] to show them as good people, in fact, as better people than they are in Montgomery's book". Their kindness is one of more than the mere Christian duty Marilla stoically hides behind in her decision to keep Anne.

What these two troubling features of the novel amount to is the misrepresentation of PEI and of Canadian culture. Factually, a significant portion of Canada was of British descent in 1908; however, PEI has a unique multicultural identity that is at once Canadian and specifically Island. Geissler and Cecil (2006: 196) contend that "Montgomery's virtual exclusion and dismissal of Acadian and Mi'kmaw Islanders has compounded the creation of a false and biased representation of the island". Further, the popularity of the novel has "perpetuated the creation of a false cultural memory [...] [a skewed] international perception of Canadian identity" (Geissler and Cecil 2006: 200) as homogenously British. Perhaps, however, the misrepresentation of the real PEI is unimportant in the context of Polish acceptance of Anne as a hero and of her island as a utopia. For the novel need not be read as applying to an actual location any more than Anne Shirley be seen as an actual person (although her legendary status often makes her seem so). As a reader living in India, Gilmore (2005: 37) illustrates this

point stating, "For the longest time I didn't realize that the books were set in a place that was real". And although Europeans recognize Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver as "Canada", I suspect that the existence of Prince Edward Island, because of its small size and almost hidden location (in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence), is less well known, even in 2017. The Avonlea of *Anne of Green Gables* can still maintain its utopian guise as a beautiful island no place in which one finds safety and security.

Consequently, as both a classic of Canadian literature and of children's literature, *Anne of Green Gables* has remained attractive to readers for more than a hundred years, across the globe, spawning numerous critical analyses of its appeal. As a poetic example of early twentieth-century fiction for young girls, Montgomery's novel makes the most of the conventional and changing attributes of the genre, while taking her text in a new generic direction. Chilewska (2009: 43) explains that popular nineteenth-century children's novels (think now of Charles Dickens) "presented dying youth, tortured existence and children who exemplified all that is noble and good". Such texts were highly, and overtly, didactic. By the beginning of the twentieth century, children were being represented differently by novelists, as individuals capable of expressing positive and negative feelings and ideas (Chilewska 2009: 43). Montgomery contributes to this literary shift in her novel. When Anne is physically distanced from the abuse she experienced in Nova Scotia, and is safe and secure at Green Gables, where she imaginatively explores the landscape and takes her place in the close-knit prosperous community, she is able to verbalize the former Dickensian life she led as an orphan. As Anne laments her rejection by Marilla, Montgomery (2003 [1908]: 52) describes her wan face as showing "the misery of a helpless little creature who finds itself once more caught in the trap from which it had just escaped". Sympathetically, Marilla concludes, "What a starved, unloved life [Anne] had had – a life of drudgery and poverty and neglect" (Montgomery 2003 [1908]: 48). This is the turning point in Anne's life because Marilla's pity (and presumably the readers' as well) makes her respond

as a Christian woman should, and she decides to keep Anne at Green Gables. Marilla's decision (arguably) frees Anne from further oppression and abuse as an unwanted orphan, and allows her to develop into a strong, independent woman, albeit one who remains within the limits of British post-colonial and Christian respectability. Marilla's empathy following Anne's tragic orphan narrative surely makes *Anne of Green Gables* an emotionally appealing novel that reminds readers of their moral responsibility to others.

Unlike my interpretation of Montgomery's writing as literary (partial) racial purification of PEI, Devereux (2001: 21) claims that Montgomery's decision "to keep 'other racial origins' [...] out of the main narrative and at the margins" allows the novel to "mov[e] across cultural boundaries, becoming, in the process, a figure on other nations' iconography" (Devereux 2001: 28). Clement (2011) agrees, stating that "readers must embrace the opportunity to be empowered by their own identity". Indeed, this is what Anne does to survive her dismal life in Nova Scotia: she embraces an imagined powerful identity. Yet she is completely assimilated into the post-colonial ideology she has the power to supersede. Nevertheless, the lack of cultural specificity typical of a fictive utopian island allows readers to either accept that lack as an open, non-appropriated landscape, or as a place onto which their own experiences and desires can be transferred. Given the degree to which Montgomery, through Anne, describes the nature of Cavendish, as Avonlea, it is easy to envision it as a potential Garden of Eden into which any good Christian may enter. Nodelman (1992: 33) suggests, "Such a place offers the pleasures of nature without its wild savagery, and the pleasures of civilization without its urban constrictions". This safe, natural island – which now has been corrupted by Anne-ification – is the epitome of PEI's landscape in Montgomery's time.

However, Nodelman's (1992: 37) suggestion that Anne's development and her ability to remind adults of their youthful happiness moves Avonlea towards "a regressive world of perfect childlike innocence" is incorrect. Neither Anne nor her island are regressive or innocent. For several residents of

Avonlea, including Marilla, Anne assists in working past bitter memories and disappointed dreams toward a contentment in the present, almost serving as a sympathetic psychotherapist. Anne also encourages everyone to enjoy the simple pleasures that exist in nature on the lush green and red island surrounded by sparkling blue gulf waters, pleasures that are renewed daily when one takes the time to notice them. As Anne comments on her first sight of “The Avenue” leading to Green Gables, it is “the first thing I ever saw that couldn’t be improved upon by imagination” (Montgomery 2003 [1908]: 25). The beauty of the tiny isolated island fits in with Avonlea’s British Christian ideology; nature, this *particular* nature, is God’s finest work. As an Islander, I must agree.

But this utopia does not regress to childlike innocence. Montgomery forces her characters, especially the young but knowledgeable Anne, to recognize the harshest realities in life: even for a child, a good person, a Christian, a British-Canadian, poverty, loneliness, oppression, abuse, and tragedy are part of life. Anne repeatedly bemoans the fact that in her short eleven years, many people have rejected her, and when she arrives at Green Gables she knowingly exclaims to Marilla, “You don’t want me!” (Montgomery 2003 [1908]: 30). Indeed, it is Anne’s awareness of her horrific past and potentially terrible future that results in her most peculiar (to the people of Avonlea) yet endearing and vital character trait: her effective and prolific use of imagination. Weiss-Townsend (1992: 111) explains that Anne’s “use of imagination to make her world a better one may be described quite literally as wish-fulfilling fantasy, but it is a real power, precisely because Anne controls it [...] [to] help her to cope with the world as it is given to her [...] a power for the powerless”. Furthermore, what Avonlea residents consider as bizarre behaviour is crucial to Anne’s emotional survival. Czerny (2010: 150) writes, “The ‘lunacy’ that informs *Anne of Green Gables* is linked to expressions of emotional loss, where Anne, as a rejected orphan, possesses an ‘imaginative substance’ that sends up imitations and captures, through an attentive readiness, strength, and light-heartedness through non-human communication”. What the

conservative, no-nonsense Avonlea community cannot recognize is that Anne holds the key to her own emotional and personal success through her imaginative ability – an escape from the realities that threaten not only her happiness, but her very existence.

Readers, however, can understand, as Epperly (2013: 35) does, that through Anne, Montgomery is “teaching us about creativity itself and about possibilities for the human spirit”. Imagination, creativity, and art are important pieces of humanity’s enduring condition. And, as Suchacka *et al.* (2014: 223) remark, “In Poland, the need to adopt such a strategy of survival” can be found in Anne’s capacity for imaginative escapism and self-nurturing and in her way of envisioning her environment as a utopian landscape. Carrell (2003: 307) confirms that “During World War II, copies [of the novel] were issued to Polish troops at the battlefield, in an attempt to sharpen in their minds poignant images of the homes and families they were fighting for”. In other words, the novel was to inspire soldiers to *imagine* returning home to a peaceful existence, for as Anne asserts, “[W]hen you *are* imagining, you might as well imagine something worth while” (Montgomery 2003 [1908]: 21). Indeed, as Epperly (2013: 35) notes, Montgomery “taught millions how to create better pictures for themselves, pictures of a world they would like to live in and help to flourish”. And that is how Anne Shirley, *Anne of Green Gables*, and L. M. Montgomery contribute to Polish resistance: by elevating the universal human spirit and supplying a fictive escape on a Canadian island utopia with a magical imaginative presence in the form of a tiny female waif.

Thus, despite my initial disbelief in *Anne of Green Gables* to engage the Polish reader in a time of unspeakable despair, because of Montgomery’s blatant, and to me, offensive, exclusion of the Mi’kmaq and Acadians on Prince Edward Island, I concede that even without an accurate representation of PEI, the novel does present a utopian vision of peace and freedom in a tamed, yet charmed, natural landscape. The lack of multicultural specificity and the translators’ Polish cultural modifications make the novel accessible, enjoyable, and meaningful

beyond its Canadian and Island contexts. Most importantly, the character of Anne Shirley, the strange little orphan invader, provides the much needed coping strategy for the down-trodden that must have brought some glimmer of escapism or hopefulness to those struggling for their own survival, to see a possible “bend in the road” (Montgomery 2003 [1908]: 299) as Anne herself does when she realizes, at the end of the novel, that she has become a capable young woman whose imaginative powers helped her navigate the worst times of her life. Accepting her place in Avonlea, with her own imaginative utopian island available to her whenever she needs it, Anne concludes, “God’s in his heaven, all’s right with the world” (Montgomery 2003 [1908]: 306).

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Transhumanist desire and utopian tensions in David Cronenberg's *Crash*

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Abstract

Transhumanism, predicated on the desire to make the world and the individual better through the use of already existing or soon to be developed human enhancement technologies, may be seen as an inherently utopian project. The future, as Nick Bostrom claims in his "Letter from Utopia", is to bring as yet unknown pleasure and happiness. Transgressing the border between the human and the mechanical is the somewhat prophetic theme of David Cronenberg's 1996 film *Crash*, based on the 1973 novel by J. G. Ballard. Employing the conventions of pornography, Cronenberg shows the fusion of the organic and non-organic and the desire which finds – or fails to find – its fulfilment in the mechanically enhanced environment. This essay analyses how *Crash* problematises the quintessentially utopian transhumanist concept of the human, focusing on the tensions between the utopian and dystopian and the potential benefits and discontents of technology.

Key words

transhumanism, pornography, technology, the Ballardian

Transhumanistyczne pragnienie i utopijne napięcia w *Crash* Davida Cronenberga

Abstrakt

Oparty o pragnienie uczynienia świata i człowieka lepszym dzięki istniejącej bądź przyszłej technologii ulepszania ludzkiego ciała, transhumanizm może być uważany za projekt fundamentalnie utopijny. Przyszłość, jak twierdzi Nick Bostrom w swoim „Liście z utopii”, przyniesie nieznanne dotąd szczęście i przyjemności. Przekraczanie granic pomiędzy człowiekiem i maszyną stało się również proroczym tematem filmu Davida Cronenberga *Crash* (1996), będącego adaptacją powieści J. G. Ballarda (1973). Posługując się konwencją filmu pornograficznego, Cronenberg ukazuje fuzję organicznego z nieorganicznym i pragnienia, które znajdują – bądź nie – swoje spełnienie w mechanicznie ulepszonym środowisku. Esej analizuje, w jaki sposób *Crash* problematyzuje fundamentalnie utopijną transhumanistyczną wizję człowieka, skupiając się na napięciu pomiędzy utopią a dystopią, oraz na potencjalnych dobrodziejstwach i zagrożeniach technologii.

Słowa kluczowe

transhumanizm, pornografia, technologia, „ballardyjskość”

Directed by David Cronenberg and released in 1996, the film *Crash* is a notoriously infamous adaptation of the novel by J. G. Ballard published in 1973. The controversies surrounding its distribution, connected with the allegedly pornographic genre of the film or its potentially offensive treatment of people with disabilities, have circulated in the media of the 1990s, creating much of public sensation (cf. the opinions quoted in Brottman and Sharrett 2002: 131-132). The popular opinion of a stylised and weird porn film, however, seems not so much unjust as simply inadequate. Far from being an example of perverted hardcore pornography, *Crash* may be read instead as an abstraction and a hyperbolic representation of much

more profound anxieties connected with the enhancement and reshaping of the human body by technology or, broader still, with the way our human selves, both present and possibly future, interact with and are modified by technology. In this essay I would like to argue, first, that Cronenberg's film not only fails as a porn film but primarily does not aim to be one, and that the genre of pornography, with its extremely reductive and focused character, is used as a means rather than an aim in itself. Secondly, I will argue that this intentional reduction and stylisation allows the audience to focus on the role and importance of technology that shapes and transforms human existence. In so doing, *Crash* may be read both as a transhumanist film that shows a possible enhancement of human nature and thus its improvement and – possibly – utopian potential; and as a passionate warning against unreflective and passive acceptance of technology which transgresses the borders of the body, desire and communication of human beings.

1. A kinky movie

As Brottman and Sharrett observe, “Cronenberg's film does not fit well within the traditions of pornography” (Brottman and Sharrett 2002: 126) since, as they go on to explain, “sexual arousal in its audience is not the primary motive of the film, and, more significantly, none of the characters seem able to relate to one another in an emotional way” (Brottman and Sharrett 2002: 126). Admittedly, *Crash* does activate some of the conventions of the porn film defined as a cinematographic genre: it is based on the extreme reduction of plot, which in Cronenberg's film serves merely as a pretext for showing sexual relationships; it does reduce the construction of characters showing them solely as sex objects which represent – even physically – male and female sexual stereotypes¹; finally, like mainstream hardcore pornography, it does connect sexuality with violence. Simultaneously, however, *Crash* seems to un-

¹ For features of film pornography see Williams (2013: 150 and *passim*).

dermine and subvert its ostensibly pornographic frame by the manifested artificiality of acting and character relationships; by the over-staged, unnatural dialogues; by the slow speed of action and lack of tension between the characters and within the narrative itself, which does not seem to lead to any release or gratification of any desire; and finally by the cool colour scheme of the film (with greyish and bluish hues dominating visually) and the sombre, quasi-religious music that introduces a tone of gloom to the scenes which – at least potentially – could be interpreted as arousing. Thus, despite the employment of the structural features of the porn film: its theme, plot and character construction, the film does not succeed – or indeed does not even aim to succeed – at pornography's main goal, that is the arousal of passion and its release.

In light of the above strategies of subversion, it seems debatable, however, if *Crash*, despite its porn film stylisation, has ever aspired to the status of a kinky movie. Instead, I would suggest that the extreme reduction of the porn movie as a genre, with its distilled and condensed character, serve as a convenient vehicle to introduce an altogether different theme, of which sex is but one – though probably the most spectacular and thus selected one – manifestation. It is worth noticing that virtually all the sexual scenes shown in the film (starting with the opening shot introducing the main female character in an airplane hangar, long before the eponymous crash, which is traditionally interpreted as the traumatic moment triggering the connection between sex and cars – see Sage 2008: 46) involve some kind of technology or technological intervention in the body. This connection, in turn, draws attention not so much to the 'kinky' or technologically perverted nature of the sexuality of the characters shown in the film, as to the technology itself and the human interaction with it, of which sexuality is but one, conveniently glaring and shocking, and hence instructive example.

In his Gothic re-reading of both Ballard's and Cronenberg's *Crash*, Victor Sage claims that in the film, "the premise of sex-

ual initiation is consistently reversed and the pornographic story told the wrong way round” (Sage 2008: 46) by employing extreme stylization, skeletally linear narrative frame, statuesque pacing, whispered dialogue, derelict musical cadences and the alienated way of the camera movements (Sage 2008: 47). All this leads, in Sage’s opinion, to a Ballardian ‘abstraction’, i.e. to “the process of conversion of objects and bodies into conceptual analogy” (Sage 2008: 47). It seems that the abstraction arrived at in the film, via its extreme reduction of the plot to the body and its basic interactions, is that of the interaction with technology – not so much of the future but the one present already and often absorbed unreflectively. By abstracting from – or subtracting – all superfluous details, Cronenberg arrives at the ‘bare life’ – at the essence of human involvement with technology, back in the 1970s and 1990s aptly symbolised by the car, nowadays probably equally well including the Internet and social media.

2. Technological paradise

The technologies shown in Cronenberg’s film probably do not strike the viewer as particularly futuristic: they include mostly the car, apart from video players and cameras, recorders, telephones, petrol stations, car washes and road infrastructure. Thus, as Brottman and Sharrett convincingly argue, *Crash* is not a particularly futuristic or sci-fi movie; instead, as they observe, “it deals with the technology of the present rather than that of the future, and, in fact, is interested in the future only as a perspective from which to understand the current moment” (Brottman and Sharrett 2002: 126). This observation is additionally strengthened by the passage of time: watched well into the 21st century, Cronenberg’s *Crash* could hardly impress contemporary audiences with technological futuristic imagination as all the gadgets it shows have become by now either entirely domesticated or already outdated. Paradoxically, however, this out-datedness does not alter or diminish the

technological focus of the film, indirectly confirming its abstract and ideological rather than purely representational character. The technology employed is shown as an example of a larger phenomenon and, just as sex, allows the audience to focus its attention on the more abstract problem.

The intersection of technology and human existence in the film comprises two aspects: firstly, the interventions performed on the human body itself, and secondly, the modifications of human behaviour introduced by the presence of technology. *Crash* shows human bodies both mutilated and enhanced by technology: on the one hand, the bodies harmed and crippled by cars, disabled and reduced in their functions (e.g. the character of Gabrielle, who can barely walk) and yet paradoxically enhanced, as the various surgical and orthopaedic interventions, scars and wounds become unexpected, and so far unimagined, areas of exploration and adaptation, and of unknown – at least sexual – pleasures. Thus, the technological transformation of the body is shown as both a disabling and yet – possibly – empowering intervention, pointing to its latent beneficial potential. Likewise, the interaction with technology and the behavioural changes triggered by the latter's presence are claimed to be at least ambiguous, if not beneficial. In keeping with the adopted convention, they affect and are shown in the sphere of sexuality and sexual relationships, which function in the film as laboratory cases of more general processes. The impact of the car crash, the potential development and enhancing of sexual experience offered and made possible by the car, metonymically represent larger – and potentially expanding – possibilities of modifications of human experience due to technology. In the key moment of the film, Vaughan, the chief advocate and practitioner of technologically driven and modified sexuality, declares:

It's the future, Ballard, and you're already a part of it. You're beginning to see that there's a benevolent psychopathology that beckons towards us. For example the car crash is a fertilizing rather than destructive event. A liberation of sexual energy mediat-

ing the sexuality of those who died with an intensity that's impossible in any other form. To experience that, to live that – that's my project. (Cronenberg 1996)

In essence, this is a creed, a declaration of faith in the potentially beneficial intersection of human behaviour and technology, of a paradoxical release of imagination and energy by even such a normally destructive event as the car crash. The example chosen and illustrated by the film is obviously far-fetched and exaggerated: neither the type of sexuality portrayed, nor car crashes themselves, seem to be – and usually are not in actual experience – particularly fertilizing or inspiring events. Yet, consistently with the film's abstract rather than representational character, they imply a possibility of transformation of human behaviour in an unprecedented and unimagined direction.

3. Transhumanist desire

The belief that the interaction with technology and the technological enhancement of human body may improve human existence and raise it to unprecedented levels lies at the core of transhumanism. In one of the manifestoes of this trend, significantly entitled "Letter from Utopia", Nick Bostrom addresses his imaginary readers with pity and encouragement, pointing to the possibility of such transformation of human body and human life so as to make it a single, long-lasting moment of bliss (Bostrom 2008: 1). Eliminating illnesses, upgrading cognition and elevating well-being are possible due to the advancement and use of technology and are to improve human existence to the degree unimaginable yet to present human beings. Bostrom tries to convey this future bliss referring to the imperfect human imagination:

I am summoning the memory of your best experience [...] in the hope of kindling in you a desire to share my happiness. And yet, what you had in your best moment is not close to what I have now

– a beckoning scintilla at most. If the distance between base and apex for you is eight kilometres, then to reach my dwelling requires a million light-year ascent. The altitude is outside moon and planets and all the stars your eyes can see. Beyond dreams. Beyond imagination. (Bostrom 2008: 3)

The existence of the future transhumanist being that Bostrom describes is to be a single uninterrupted pleasure, unspoiled by illnesses or death, unbridled by a limited mind or plagued by sadness or pain. It is a vision of existence where human beings make use of their full potential, both physical and mental, and are not inhibited by accidental disruptions. Bostrom himself calls this state a utopia and indeed, the vision he projects is clearly utopian for at least two reasons: first, as it is predicated on a desire and belief in the possibility of improvement of human condition, and secondly, as the life he portrays seems convincingly utopian in its harmony, peace and happiness.

Bostrom's letter may strike one as naïve and simple; a dream rather than a realistic analysis of the possible impact of technology on human body and existence. Yet, in its simplicity, it succinctly encapsulates the hope invested in transhumanism and the transgression of human limitations by the use of various technologies. This hope lies at the foundations of all kinds of transhumanist reflection, which, as Michael Hauskeller observes, has strong utopian tendencies (Hauskeller 2014: 2) and "whose proponents and allies frequently and quite openly declare themselves to be motivated by a desire to create a better world or make this world a better place" (Hauskeller 2014: 2). Transhumanism, then, seems to be a quintessentially utopian project and its representation in Bostrom's letter, as simple and naïve as it may seem, is only an imaginative and playful exaggeration of the hopes connected with it.

This utopian desire, central to transhumanist thought, is believed to be realisable in the future due to the development of science, which is perceived as crucial in the process of

transgressing the borders of human body and its condition. As Hauskeller writes,

Transhumanists believe that the best chance we have to make this world a better place is through the use of already existing or soon to be developed human enhancement technologies. By gradually improving human capability we will eventually change into beings far superior to any human that has ever lived and hence can be seen, in this respect, as 'posthuman'. (Hauskeller 2014: 2)

Technology, then, is believed to set human beings free from the confines and limitations of the human condition and to allow them to explore and develop their potential so far only latent and dormant, waiting to be discovered and released. Interestingly, transhumanist theoreticians and advocates seem little worried about the potential dangers, problems or yet unpredictable side-effects triggered by the intervention of technology. As Hauskeller concludes, they "are optimists regarding the future of humanity. They look forward to what lies ahead of us, and embrace without much hesitation the technologies that are supposed to lead us there" (Hauskeller 2014: 4).

Read in this context, David Cronenberg's *Crash* seems to both project and simultaneously question the transhumanist dream of technologically enhanced human experience. On the one hand, just as transhumanists, it shows the importance and impact of technology, not to be ignored due to its omnipresence, and the enhancing potential it may bring. Choosing eroticism as its illustrative example, the film dramatises the potential of already available technologies for the transformation of human body and human sexuality, and suggests the unexplored areas of desire and satisfaction that the intersection of technology and human body might bring. Interestingly – as the hostile reviews of the film have suggested – the new perspectives opened by the fusion of the organic and the mechanical may seem perverted and unnatural to the still unchanged public. This rejection, however, paradoxically may be interpreted as emphasising a truly visionary and revelatory charac-

ter of the thus achieved experience which is shown as so entirely new as to be misinterpreted as sick and unpleasant.

Yet, the film itself does probably block such a simplistic interpretation. Far from being a transhumanist apology of technology, *Crash* both installs the utopian transhumanist reflection and undermines it at several levels.

4. Utopian tensions

Despite its focus on technology and the attention drawn to the transformative potential of cars and speed, David Cronenberg's film seems far from their enthusiastic glorification and takes a problematising rather than apologetic stance towards their utopian results. For one thing, the immediate object of quasi-transhumanist transformations – sexual life and satisfaction – seems hardly improved in the film. Despite many ingenious attempts dramatised in the plot, sexual life of the protagonists of the film seems hardly satisfactory or fulfilling; their openness to experimentation and technology mostly brings frustration, pain and mutilation rather than any kind of utopian bliss. If, then, sex in the film functions as a convenient example of more general phenomena, what it illustrates seems to be a failure of the transhumanist experiment with technology enhancing the spectrum of experience rather than its triumph. The last scene of the film emphatically points to the disappointment and frustration of the characters that invested their hopes in technologically enhanced sexual experiments, whose only conclusion is the resolution that perhaps they will work "next time" (Cronenberg 1996).

Secondly, the technologically developed and mediated life of the characters of *Crash* seems far removed from any visions projected in Bostrom's letter. The frames of the film showing motorways and fly-overs, parking lots, airports and roads, all de-personalised, empty, concrete-grey and dirty, hardly testify to any utopian paradise. More accurately, they provide a post-industrial setting for a story of restlessness, failed dreams and

frustrated desires rather than any harmonious and peaceful bliss. Using the typical 'Ballardian' setting, Cronenberg's film shows the anxieties of the present rather than a utopian future or utopian projection. Additionally, the cinematographic shape of *Crash* – the employed colour scheme, the musical score and the chosen shots – with their claustrophobia, hostile spaces and cold surfaces, all construct an overwhelming and depressing image of the represented world of the film. The cinematographic aesthetics selected for the story hardly matches that traditionally associated with utopias and instead, activates the connotations of dystopia.

Most importantly, however, the film does not seem to show the creation of any lasting community created around the technological enhancement. At first, the audience may have the impression that a small group of characters gathered around Vaughan – all car-accident victims and survivors – may serve as such a quasi-utopian community that develops an alternative life-style and whose members support each other, despite their unconventional pursuits. Yet, quite soon it turns out that this group is actually an accidental assembly of individuals driven by their egoistical aims and pleasures and hardly interested in any more communal or altruistic subjects. Their paths diverge and, after Vaughan's death, the group disintegrates, as never united by anything more than the ambitions and pursuits of its charismatic leader. Thus, the characters themselves never seem to be interested in creating anything like a utopian community and are focused on their individual desires and their gratification rather than on any larger-scale projects. Their utopian dreams – if the concept of utopia is applicable in this case at all – are of an individualist and hedonistic rather than communal and social character. Their failure once again points to the problematic aspects and anxieties surrounding the transhumanist desire to bring utopia via the means of technological enhancement of the human body and mind.

On closer inspection, then, David Cronenberg's *Crash* may be read not so much as a porn film and not quite as a film eulogising the possibilities of human interaction with technology. Though instrumentally using the former and clearly preoccupied with the latter, the film ultimately shows technology as a problematic potential rather than a simplistic and optimistic solution, and seems to draw attention not only to the enhancement it may bring, but also to its alienating effects and possible failures. *Crash*, then, oscillates between a transhumanist desire for a technologically mediated utopia and a post-industrial pessimism of the culture of inflation and excess, amused to death and yet constantly dissatisfied. Far from privileging any of these two options, it registers and expresses the tensions and anxieties connected with the development of technology and the human interaction with it, and does so with no delusions or easy optimism.

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**Investigating different aspects of solidarity:
Brook Farm in Adele Fasick's historical mystery
*A Death in Utopia***

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Abstract

The eponymous utopia in *A Death in Utopia* (2014) by Adele M. Fasick stands for The Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education, a famous intentional community set up by George and Sophia Ripley in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, in 1841. But for economic solidarity and the solidarity of ideas, Brook Farm would have never come into existence. The following article shows that Fasick's idea of inscribing the fictional investigation of a criminal conundrum into the life of Brook Farm has proved to be successful as far as "magnifying" the issue of solidarity is concerned. During her investigation Charlotte Edgerton, a Brook Farm member and an amateur sleuth, reveals not only the tragic circumstances concerning the crime but also the ideals and daily routines of the intentional community, a facet most probably intended by the author who has already explored the history of Brook Farm on a scholarly basis.

Key words

utopia, Brook Farm, intentional community, solidarity, historical mystery

**Solidarność pod lupą detektywa amatora:
Brook Farm w kryminale historycznym Adele Fasick
pt. *A Death in Utopia***

Abstrakt

Tytułowa utopia w kryminale historycznym *A Death in Utopia* (2014) autorstwa Adele M. Fasick odnosi się do słynnej wspólnoty, znanej pod nazwą Brook Farm, założonej przez George'a i Sophię Ripley'ów w West Roxbury w stanie Massachusetts w 1841 roku. Bez ducha solidarnościowego, obecnego nie tylko w aspekcie ideowym, ale również ekonomicznym, utworzenie wspólnotowego gospodarstwa zainspirowanego myślą transcendentalistów nie byłoby możliwe. W celu przekazania jak największej liczby informacji dotyczących historii początkowego okresu istnienia Brook Farm, Fasick splata intrygę kryminalną z prezentacją codziennego życia wspólnoty, ich lęków o przyszłość wspólnego przedsięwzięcia, ale przede wszystkim wiary w możliwość zreformowania świata. Niniejszy artykuł omawia różne aspekty solidarności, uwypuklone podczas amatorskiego śledztwa prowadzonego przez Charlotte Edgerton, nauczycielkę i członkinię Brook Farm.

Słowa kluczowe

utopia, Brook Farm, wspólnota, solidarność, kryminał historyczny

Regardless of differences in terms of their organization or in the way they attempt to achieve their goals, all intentional communities share one characteristic, i.e. the solidarity of their members. Not used per se, the notion of solidarity undeniably permeates Sargent's (2010) concise definition of the phenomena often referred to as intentional communities, practical utopias, communes, or utopian experiments. Nothing else but solidarity is the lifeblood of "a group of [people] [...] who have chosen to live together to enhance their shared values or for some other mutually agreed purpose" (Sargent 2010: 6). It is the solidarity of ideas frequently combined with economic

solidarity that enables intentional communities to put their visions of a better world into practice.

A Death in Utopia (2014) by Adele Fasick¹ is a historical mystery novel set in The Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education, established by the former Unitarian minister George Ripley and his wife, Sophia, in West Roxbury, Massachusetts. The fictional events described by Fasick, i.e. a mysterious death of a famous Bostonian minister visiting Brook Farm and the criminal investigation that follows take place during the second year of Ripley's endeavour, when the initial firm belief in the success of the community is being systematically weakened by poor crops and daunting financial problems. The narrative moves between two main focalisers: a Brook Farm member, Charlotte Edgerton, and an outsider, Daniel Gallagher, who is an Irish immigrant. Thus, the reader may not only observe the life of the agricultural cooperative Brook Farm from the perspective of its member but also get to understand the impression it made on people who were not familiar with the community's revolutionary ideas. The two young characters, whose ultimate goals differ considerably, unite their forces to discover the truth behind Winslow Hopewell's premature death.

Charlotte, a teacher in Brook Farm primary school, believes that the community will not only persevere but also set an example for other people to follow and eventually revolutionize the entire country, enhancing the idea of equality and cooperation for the benefit of all people. She is perfectly content to lead a communal life in which the chores of everyday existence are

¹ Adele Fasick, professor emerita of Library and Information Science who worked at the University of Toronto and San Jose State University. In 1992/93 Fasick was president of the Association for Library and Science Information Education (ALISE), a non-profit organization promoting research and excellence in the field of library and information science education. Prior to trying her hand at writing cozies Fasick published *An Uncommon Woman* (2012), a biography of Margaret Fuller, a famous Bostonian writer and journalist and one of the initiators of the Brook Farm experiment. Fasick's *A Death in Utopia* is the first novel in the Charlotte Edgerton mystery series. For more information concerning Adele Fasick and her writing, see her blog entitled "Teacups and Tyrants".

evenly shared. She wants to believe that her decision to join Ripley's experiment provides her with a place where she can "[feel] safe among friends" (Fasick 2014: 29).

Daniel Gallagher's ambitions are quite different: it is not safety he craves but affluence, coming as an award for excellence in journalism, which he hopes to develop over the course of time. The shocking news of Hopewell's mysterious death does not leave any scar on his visions of a better world. On the contrary, it fills him with the hope that his long-term dream of becoming a journalist may come true. Daniel decided to leave Ireland and come to the United States of America in order to make a better life for himself. He focuses his mind on obtaining a position in a newspaper and earning enough money to "bring his mothers and sisters over to a new country. How surprised they'd be when they saw him in a suit and wearing a cravat – a respected newspaper man" (Fasick 2014: 56). He has a premonition that writing an article on the reverend's death, whose circumstances are more than dubious, will help him to convince Mr. Cabot, the owner of the Bostonian *Transcript*, to employ him. "This is my chance", Daniel explained eagerly. "No one will ever give me a newspaper job unless I prove I can find a spectacular story and write it up faster than anyone else" (Fasick 2014: 32).

Winslow Hopewell is found dead in the vicinity of Brook Farm very early in the morning. "He [has] a big cut in his forehead and the blood [has] oozed down onto his eyes" (Fasick 2014: 27). The wound looks suspicious as if Hopewell got the fatal blow with a heavy and sharp object. All Brook Farm members are shocked, since nothing of the kind has ever happened to any of them or to the people who paid visits to their community, just as the deceased did. While they are reluctant to blame anybody, one of the Brook Farm neighbours, Mr. Platt, remembers that he saw some tramp "sneaking in his barn early this morning" (Fasick 2014: 30). It quickly turns out that this is the very same man from whom Daniel Gallagher learned the story of the calamitous incident. Daniel is

more than sure that Mr. Platt is not only wrong but also accuses the penniless Irish tramp on the basis of his prejudices against immigrants.

“I am going to find out the truth”, [Daniel] answered, frowning. “The man Mr. Platt saw must have been the fellow I met in Boston – Rory O’Connor his name was. He didn’t look or talk like a killer. He’s poor and ignorant. They may lock him up before he knows what’s happening to him. [...]”. (Fasick 2014: 32)

Although initially Charlotte worries that the articles in newspapers may discredit her community, she decides to get involved in investigating Hopewell’s homicide in order to help the poor man whom, like Daniel, she cannot believe to be the culprit. She regards it as unfair to accuse a person of committing such a hideous crime only because he is in poverty and looks shabby. Besides, she suspects that Mr. Platt, who is highly critical of the Brook Farmers’ lifestyle, may be equally disapproving of immigrants, treating them as a burden to his country. In this way the endeavour to reveal the mystery of Winslow Hopewell’s homicide ceases to be “a stroke of luck” (Fasick 2014: 21) for Daniel and a tragic event that may incriminate her community for Charlotte but becomes a common goal for both amateur sleuths. Solidarity with the man whom also the sheriff is quick to find guilty galvanizes Daniel and Charlotte into action.

Following the tracks of the two novices in sleuthing, the reader of *A Death in Utopia* gains the impression that Fasick deliberately impedes and decelerates the progress of their investigation in order to reflect the slow pace of life in nineteenth-century America. Neither Charlotte nor Daniel can afford to devote their entire time to solving the criminal conundrum since above all they have to make their living. Apart from having classes with primary school children, Charlotte is obliged to help with the housework; Daniel copies documents for the sheriff and struggles hard to be able to pay for the room

he rents and, most importantly, not to end up working in the docks like most Irish immigrants.

Charlotte and Daniel keep writing letters to inform each other about any discovery they have made or any new ideas concerning the methods of investigation. Meetings on an everyday basis are out of the question, since the distance from Boston, where Daniel resides, to Brook Farm is about 9 miles (14 kilometers), and it has to be covered either on foot or, if they are lucky (or have some spare money), in a horse cart. Since winter is approaching, the struggle of the two amateur detectives is also affected by the weather. All the obstacles that Fasick puts to the foreground may exasperate avid readers of mysteries, who are prepared to follow or anticipate the reasoning of the sleuth rather than watch him treading on a muddy road from Boston to West Roxbury, or the other way round. However, Fasick's idea to adjust the pace of the investigation to the pace of life in the first half of the 19th century allows the reader to explore more thoroughly the problems of the multinational country as well as the daily life of Brook Farm, with a special focus on different aspects of solidarity. Thus, once the readers adapt to the slow pace of life presented in the novel, so natural for Daniel and Charlotte, they are able to appreciate the vivid pictures of 19th century America that Fasick has in stock.

The way Charlotte perceives the Brook Farmers' system of education – undoubtedly, their greatest achievement – is congruent with the opinions of the former students of Brook Farm schools or those who visited them out of sheer curiosity.

Orestes Browson, though he had ideological differences with Brook Farm, called its school “the best school I ever saw” [...]. For the youngest children, a teacher took two or three, and work with them for an hour or so then let them play. They never had to sit still and do nothing and so suffered none of the “bad physical or moral effects of confinement”. As a result, they learned more than in “ordinary schools” and did not become “troublesome” to others. (Kesten 1993: 135)

Charlotte, an innovative and dedicated teacher, fosters students' interest in literature, music and science. She frequently takes her restless pupils out to let them learn through observation and experiment. Aesop's fables and carefully chosen songs and ballads are meant not only to entertain the children but also to "teach [them] the ethics of human relationships" (Kesten 1993: 136). In short, neither the curriculum nor the teaching methods applied in the schooling system of Brook Farm resemble a "conventional school where [Charlotte] would endlessly teach children to memorize Bible verses and pious maxims" (Fasick 2014: 3).

In *A Death in Utopia* frequent encounters and conversations with historical figures, e.g. George and Sophia Ripley, Charles Dana, Lydia Maria Child, Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, and Elisabeth Peabody, add authenticity not only to the fictional account of the communal life but also to the criminal investigation presented from the perspective of literary characters.

The visit of Reverend Winslow Hopewell, the victim, is nothing extraordinary, since many celebrities from Boston come to Brook Farm to learn more about Ripley's experiment. Although few people decide to join the community for good, they are still eager to experience the communal life for a week or so.

Brook Farm was from its earliest days always something of a Mecca for the hordes of friends, well-wishers, and the merely curious who showed up [...] invariably expecting a welcome reception and perhaps a cup of tea as well. No other antebellum American community – and eighty-four were in existence, at one moment or another, during the 1840s – attracted so many visitors. (Delano 2004: 52)

Some of the visitors promise financial support, yet, unfortunately, not too many keep their word. It appears that talking about solidarity and common goals very rarely inspires people to sacrifice their particular interests in order to alter the world they are, at least in theory, dissatisfied with. The words below

uttered by one of the Brook Farmers sound like an appeal which is doomed to remain unanswered.

“We certainly need people to join us”, Fanny muttered. “Too many people are leaving and outsiders who say they support us just slither away without doing a thing. Why don’t they understand that the kind of community we are building is going to change the whole country?” (Fasick 2014: 17)

Nathaniel Hawthorne was among those famous people who decided not only to invest in Ripley’s experiment but also to live and work in Brook Farm. Although he was a founding member of the community, he managed to endure staying there only for about six months in the first year of the existence of Brook Farm. In his study entitled *Brook Farm: The Dark Side of Utopia*, Sterling F. Delano states that Hawthorne’s reasons for coming to West Roxbury were more pragmatic than idealistic. “[He expected] to have time and quietude to concentrate on his fiction, and he hoped that the new colony would provide a home for him and Sofia [Peabody] once they were married” (Delano 2004: 55). However, it quickly turns out that the physical labour is so strenuous and time-consuming that Hawthorne feels deprived of any energy to get down to writing, which remains his ultimate goal. “He was especially disheartened by [the task of spreading around the farm] the mounds of manure – which Ripley kept cheerfully referring to as the “gold mine” [...]” (Delano 2004: 56). It appears that although initially enthusiastic about physical work and almost mesmerized by Ripley’s zeal to achieve success, also in financial terms, Hawthorne very quickly ceases to believe that “in the utopian economy, waste does have to turn to gold in a more literal, less ironic way” (Francis 2010: 85). Ten years after leaving Brook Farm, Hawthorne writes *The Blithedale Romance*, which is inspired by his stay with the community. In his introduction to *The Blithedale Romance*, Arlin Turner (1958: 14) states that

[Hawthorne] wrote about ideas, usually ideas with a moral tincture and with bearing on human conduct and human character. The inclusive idea of *The Blithedale Romance* is brotherhood; and what the author had observed at Brook Farm, including his own activities and thoughts and feelings, simply furnished the paraphernalia for handling and displaying that idea.

The events described in *A Death in Utopia* take place when Hawthorne is no longer a Brook Farm member, and so Fasick does not include him into the “cast” of the historical figures who people the pages of her novel. However, she does not omit to refer to the disillusion with the famous persona the community must have experienced, once he resolved not only to abandon their common dream but also to sue them for the money he had invested. In her letter to Sophia Ripley, Fanny Grey comments on Hawthorne’s lack of solidarity with other members of the group, who used to be so proud to have him in their ranks².

[Nathaniel Hawthorne] said he needed solitude to work at his art and to build a home for the woman he hoped to marry. It was sad to see him go, but when he compounded that treachery by suing dear Mr. Ripley and the Community to get back the money he had invested in buying shares, I believe the action was not only insulting but almost criminal. (Fasick 2014: 212)

Fasick alludes to the mutual disappointment experienced by Hawthorne and the community, yet regardless of the problematic financial matters, invariably analyzed by scholars writing on Hawthorne and Brook Farm, it is undeniable that by writing *The Blithedale Romance*, he contributed to the everlasting fame of Brook Farm, since his book has a well-established position among the classics of American literature.

² Delano mentions that Sophia Ripley described Hawthorne as “our prince – prince in everything” and a man “to reverence [and] admire” (Delano 2004: 51).

The constant struggle for financial stability does not mean that the community is oblivious to the problems the whole country is haunted by. They invite numerous influential people who give speeches on ideas which, like the abolition of slavery, are considered not only revolutionary but also potentially dangerous. On the evening preceding Reverend Hopewell's homicide, Brook Farm is visited by Lydia Maria Child, a writer and activist fighting for the equality of all people, regardless of the colour of their skin.

Her book advocating the immediate freeing of slaves in the Southern states was so explosive the Boston Athenaeum took away her library privileges. She was exactly the type of speaker Brook Farmers prided themselves on inviting to visit their community. Scaring the local farmers with visions of radical social changes was part of their plan to change the world. (Fasick 2014: 7)

While listening to Lydia Maria Child, condemning the law "by which marriage between persons of different color is pronounced illegal" (Fasick 2014: 9), Charlotte gauges various reactions of people attending the meeting with the writer. Students from the Brook Farm boarding school are enthusiastic about the anti-slavery movement and immediately shower George Ripley with questions such as: "What can we do here at Brook Farm?" or "Why don't we have any members who are former slaves?" (Fasick 2014: 10). Unlike the sympathetic students a group of farmers, neighbours of the community, are appalled by Child's radical ideas because they firmly believe that "People like to live with others of their kind", and that "Mixing the races together brings nothing but trouble" (Fasick 2014: 12).

Most of the "true" farmers living in the vicinity of Brook Farm are hidebound about all revolutionary changes, considering them either illogical or unhealthy. Their attitude towards Ripley's experiment of communal living is a blend of bias and a sense of superiority, which does not mean that they put the old saying: "good fences make good neighbours", into practice.

On the contrary, knowing that the Brook Farmers' knowledge of cultivating land or husbandry of livestock is very limited, not to say non-existent, many locals do their best to help. In some cases, solidarity between neighbours, who share nothing but problems, such as another year of poor crops, appears to be stronger and more reliable than common views and ideals which create a bond only for a short period of animated discussion.

“Not farmers indeed!” Mr. Platt [the local farmer] exploded. “Do you know that no one on the place will slaughter the pig for themselves, though they're happy enough to eat pork? They don't even like to wring the neck of the chicken. Humph! My ten-year-old boy can do that much!” [...] “Everyone should milk their cows in the morning and then go off and write a book for the rest of the day they say. That's nonsense!” [...]

“Why do you help the Brook Farmers then?”

“They are neighbours. Can't let them starve. Besides, they pay me for the use of my wagon and tools. Or they used to. Now they are short of money [...]”. (Fasick 2014: 56-57)

Despite their firm conviction that Ripley's weird dream about “a life that would balance intellectual efforts with manual labour” (Fasick 2014: 2) is doomed to failure, the local farmers eagerly come to listen to famous people invited to Brook Farm. One of the guests, whose speech is presented at great length in the novel, is Margaret Fuller. She comes to Brook Farm four days after the mysterious death of Reverend Hopewell, and right after the only suspect – an Irish tramp, initially locked up by the sheriff – has been released from prison. The man is proved innocent by Charlotte and Daniel, who evidence that he could not have committed the crime. As it turns out during the meeting, the sheriff is not the only one inclined to put all the blame on the Irish tramp seen in the vicinity of Brook Farm. When Margaret Fuller, befriended with Hopewell, starts her talk pondering over the tragic event and asking “What could have brought such evil into our world?”, she unintentionally

ignites an explosion of venomous remarks about Irish immigrants. “It’s all the outsiders we’re letting into the neighbourhood”, interrupted the [local] farmer. “It was one of those Irish tramps that killed the reverend. [...] They’re lazy, shiftless people who would rather lie than tell the honest truth” (Fasick 2014: 59). Margaret Fuller’s reaction does not leave any doubts that her fight for equality of all people is not limited to advocating women’s rights – she can equally forcefully speak for anybody subjected to social injustice.

“If only the Irish were welcomed here, not to work merely, but to find intelligent sympathy as they struggle patiently and ardently for the education of their children! No sympathy could be better deserved, no efforts better timed. [...] You are short-sighted; you do not look to the future; [...]” (Fasick 2014: 60)

Fuller’s tirade against the discrimination of the Irish not only silences farmers, who seem inclined to seek the cause of their problems in immigrants coming to the United States in search of a better future, but also encourages those who employ Irish servants to teach them “to read and write and to act like Americans” (Fasick 2014: 60).

In *A Death in Utopia*, the spirit of solidarity among the Brook Farm members affects each phase of the classical detective formula. Charlotte, in her attempts to follow in Auguste Dupin’s footsteps, summons up his investigative methods described in Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, and returns to the crime scene in the hope of “[discovering] something if she looked hard enough at the place Winslow Hopewell has been found” (Fasick 2014: 33). However, unlike the famous detective created by Poe, Charlotte has strong bonds with the people, on whose land the murder was committed. Therefore, on account of her firm belief in the revolutionary, yet totally peaceful mission of the community she belongs to, Charlotte mistakenly excludes the Brook Farm members from the range of suspects. This decision has far-reaching consequences, not only for the development of Charlotte and Daniel’s investiga-

tion, but also for the way Brook Farm is portrayed throughout the narrative. In *A Death in Utopia*, the members of the community are presented as realizing their common dream of “[t]heir new way of life [which] could satisfy all human needs through moderate, dignified work, and could allow everyone to enjoy the fruits of brotherhood and peace” (Kesten 1993: 5).

The importance of brotherhood is not only taught to students of the Brook Farm school but also put into practice by the residents, working in the field and sharing different domestic chores. For Charlotte, like for many female members of Brook Farm, the communal life where everybody is equally respected, regardless of their sex, religion or social background, “sound[s] like heaven on earth” (Fasick 2014: 211). In the first half of the nineteenth-century male-dominated world, women were not considered fully-fledged citizens and, therefore, most females were totally dependent on the good will of their fathers, husbands or other male relatives. While Charlotte perceives Brook Farm as a kind of shelter “from the tumult of life in England” (Fasick 2014: 29), Fanny Grey sees it as “the dearest dream of her life” and feels “honored to be able to invest in the Community and to be a part of it” (Fasick 2014: 211). Before joining Brook Farm, Fanny felt underappreciated and exploited. Treated like a servant by her father and brothers, she was found no longer useful after her father’s death. Abandoned by her male siblings who started their own families, she plunges herself into Ripley’s experiment. Although Fanny is only a secondary character, she, unlike Charlotte, is fully aware of the precarious financial condition of the community. Having learnt that Reverend Hopewell withdrew his support for the community, Fanny decides to confront him.

I am afraid that my anger overwhelmed me then. I could think of nothing except that he had told me he was giving us no money at all. This at a time when so many others had disappointed us. [...] Before I thought about it I had raised the hoe and struck out at him. [...] A red gash appeared on his forehead and then he fell. (Fasick 2014: 214)

It may seem that Fanny kills Hopewell out of solidarity with the group, whose future is put in jeopardy by the victim's decision not to invest in Brook Farm. However, the murder she commits should rather be classified as an act of despair or a crime of passion, since it is neither planned nor intended. Unable to convince the potential benefactor to change his mind, and well aware that her dream world is at the point of collapsing, Fanny gets carried away with intense emotions and, in consequence, kills Hopewell. Having realized that Charlotte and Daniel have finally discovered her dark secret, she escapes from Brook Farm, hoping to put all her efforts into another challenging project, i.e. "rescuing runaway Africans trying to get to Canada" (Fasick 2014: 214-215). Although Fanny becomes a murderer, she is never perceived by the community as a villain. On the contrary, her tragic fate evokes empathy in Brook Farm inhabitants. A couple of days later they find both Fanny and "a black African woman clutching a baby in her arms" dead (Fasick 2014: 229); they lost their way during a heavy snow storm and drowned in the Cow Island Pond in the vicinity of Brook Farm.

The final verdict was that it was "death by misadventure" for Fanny and for Lily Lawrence and her baby. The judge said he saw no reason for changing the verdict on Winslow Hopewell's death. That too remained "death by misadventure". That was really what it was. (Fasick 2014: 230)

Quite surprisingly, In Fasick's novel, both the perpetrator and the victim evoke understanding and compassion in those who knew them – the community, who unite in their grief at the two missing members. However, unlike in traditional detective novels, in Fasick's historical mystery, the narrative reconstruction of the criminal events neither "restores the disrupted social order [nor] reaffirms the validity of the system of norms" (Hühn 1987: 452). The tragic events the community has gone through do not designate its strength, on the contrary, they herald the eventual collapse of the utopian world, whose func-

tioning, according to egalitarian principles, has failed to withstand the harsh economic reality.

In his study *Utopian Episodes. Daily Life in Experimental Colonies Dedicated to Changing the World*, Seymour R. Kesten (1993: 7) voices his doubts concerning the cognitive aspect of numerous analyses, whose focus on the economic issues of intentional communities hinders a thorough understanding of the lives of people who had enough courage not to conform to the order of the world they happened to live in. Kesten believes that the only means of understanding “the utopian episodes” is their visualization through a thorough examination of different documents and letters left by the members of the communes as well as by their friends and foes. By providing a fictionalized account of everyday life at Brook Farm, wrapped up in the form of a mystery with a captivating, for paradoxical, title³, Fasick not only answers Kesten’s call but also makes a wider audience acquainted with the history of Brook Farm.

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³ Utopia is routinely associated with birth and rejuvenation rather than death.

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Utopian visions of solidarity in Polish cinema

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Abstract

The “Solidarity” movement, especially in the first period of its activity, that is, in the years 1980-1981, instigated numerous myths. Polish cinema contributed immensely to their creation and proliferation. The most important among those myths were: the myth of solidarity between all working people, the myth of solidarity between the genders, and – perhaps the most lasting of all – the myth of the alliance between workers and intellectuals. All these forms of solidarity really existed for a short period of time in 1980/1981, but each of them collapsed afterwards. Consequently, one can say that they bore the marks of beautiful utopias which in the long run were doomed to failure.

Key words

solidarity, “Solidarity”, Polish cinema, workers-intellectual alliance, women in “Solidarity”

Utopijne wizje solidarności w polskim kinie

Abstrakt

Ruch „Solidarności”, zwłaszcza w pierwszym okresie jego działalności (1980-1981), dostarczył wielu mitów, w rozpowszechnianiu których aktywnie uczestniczyło polskie kino. Najważniejsze z nich to mit solidarności wszystkich ludzi pracy, mit solidarności ponad podziałami płciowymi, a także może najtrwalszy z nich wszystkich mit sojuszu robotników z inteligentami. Każda z tych form solidarności rzeczywiście istniała w krótkim okresie „pierwszej Solidarności”, każda załamała się w okresie późniejszym. W tym sensie wszystkie nosiły znamiona pięknych utopii, które na dłuższą metę musiały przegrać z realiami życia.

Słowa kluczowe

Solidarność, „Solidarność”, kino polskie, sojusz robotników z inteligentami, kobiety w „Solidarności”

1. Solidarity, “Solidarity”, and the cinema

In his book *Evolutionary Psychology: The New Science of the Mind* (1998), David Buss, a renowned authority in the field of psychology, asks how altruism is possible in the world where – as evolutionary psychology assumes – human behavior is determined by the laws of evolution, and therefore the two main drives that govern humans are: the drive to save one’s own life and the drive to spread one’s genes. To answer his own question, Buss refers to William Donald Hamilton’s rule whose mathematical expression is as follows:

$$C < r \times B$$

where *C* is the cost in fitness to the agent (altruist);
r the genetic relatedness between the agent (altruist) and the recipient;

B is the fitness benefit to the recipient.

Fitness costs and benefits are measured in fecundity.

To illustrate this rule, Buss presents a hypothetical situation. Let's assume that a man at the river bank sees someone drowning. Is he going to jump into the water for rescue? It turns out that his reaction depends on the grade of genetic relatedness between the agent – that is the man at the river bank – and the recipient, the drowning person. When there is no genetic relatedness, the evolutionary logic is against rescuing, because in this case the man who risks his life has nothing to win. But what if there is a genetic relatedness, that is, if the drowning person is a sibling of the agent? The calculus of genes is still against him, as the agent who decides to risk his life, i.e. 100% of his genes, may save only 50% of his genes, which simply does not pay off. It takes at least three siblings to make a rescue mission viable. Now, what happens, if the drowning person is the agent's nephew or niece, sharing 25% of genes with him? When we know the rule, it is easier to count. The agent does not jump into the water until there are at least five of his nephews and nieces drowning. Then Buss passes to cousins, who share 12,5% of genes with the agent. How many cousins must be drowning to make the agent hasten to the rescue? At least nine. The argument is concluded with a confounding inference: It does not mean that people always behave that way, yet this is the logic of genes selection. Only the genes that fulfill conditions of the Hamilton law can evolve, all others are ruthlessly eliminated (Buss 2001: 251-253).

The image of nine cousins drowning in the river and their remote relative watching from the bank and calculating the percentage of genes before he takes any action seems profoundly absurd, but the logic which stands behind the situation described to prove the point is absolutely clear: altruism is contradictory to the evolutionary theory, and the genes which bear it must be ruthlessly eliminated in the process of evolution. Buss and Hamilton speak about altruism, but they could have used the word "solidarity" because it means basically the same: a selfless act on someone else's behalf. Buss and Hamil-

ton ascertain that we can act on someone else's behalf, only if we have our own interest in it, best, if the beneficiary bears our genes.

In view of the above, I would like to focus on representations of "Solidarność" (Polish Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity", founded in 1980) and gestures of solidarity in Polish feature films. Providing that films may be treated as a mirror of social psyche, I would like to consider the following questions: To what extent solidarity motivated "Solidarity"? How did filmic representations of solidarity between the members of "Solidarity" change in time?

If we want to understand the mechanisms steering "Solidarity", we must take into account the evolution of this movement, which consists of at least four stages:

- 1980-1981 – the initial period, when the name "Solidarność" ("Solidarity") was coined during the August strike. "Solidarity" (at present often called "The First Solidarity"), founded in 1980 and banned in 1982, was the first independent organization in the whole communist bloc since 1945, which brought together all forces opposing the communist system.
- 1982-1989 – the period of "heroic Solidarity", an underground organization which continued its struggle against the communist regime.
- 1989-1991 – the period of "triumphant Solidarity", a victorious political force whose representatives, acting on behalf of the Polish society, negotiated at the "Round Table Talks" the future of Poland with representatives of the communist government. After winning the parliamentary and presidential elections, "Solidarity" and its leaders gave a new shape to this country, leading it to the system of democracy and market economy.
- 1991-till now – the trade union with evident right wing leanings.

In each of these stages the relationship between "Solidarity" and solidarity was different.

A list of feature films concerning "Solidarity" comprises about a dozen of titles. It opens with Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Iron*, the winner of the Golden Palm in Cannes 1981, shot

partly at the site of the August Strike in Gdańsk Shipyard in the spring of 1981. Then, in the 1980s, after the imposition of the martial law on 13 December 1981, several films were made that either focused on “Solidarity”, or at least alluded to it. Some of them expressed the somber mood of the defeated, showing their despair. In this context, one has to mention *Wigilia '81* (Christmas Eve '81, 1982) by Leszek Wosiewicz, *Stan wewnętrzny* (Internal State, 1983) by Krzysztof Tchórzewski, and *Bez końca* (No End, 1984) by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Two films – *Godność* (Dignity, 1984) and *Czas nadziei* (Time of Hope, 1986), both directed by Roman Wionczek, clearly expressed the communist party view. “Solidarity” and the martial law were referred to and metaphorically represented in anti-utopian sci-fi films, for example, *Wojna światów. Ostatnie stulecie* (War of Worlds: The Last Century, 1982) by Piotr Szulkin and *Seksmisja* (Sexmission, 1984) by Juliusz Machulski. Near the end of the decade, when the communist system was collapsing, several films were made which alluded to the period marked by “Solidarity’s” activity, e.g. *Stan posiadania* (The State of Possession, 1989), dir. Krzysztof Zanussi, *Stan strachu* (The State of Fear, 1989), dir. Janusz Kijowski, *Ostatni prom* (The Last Ferry, 1989), dir. Waldemar Krzystek, *300 mil do nieba* (300 Miles to Heaven, 1989), dir. Maciej Dejczer, and *Ostatni dzwonek* (The Last Bell, 1989), dir. Magdalena Łazarkiewicz. None of these films was about the “Solidarity” movement, not to mention the August strike, but as their action took place either in the period of the so called “First Solidarity” (1980-1981) or during the martial law, they referred to the complexities of the political situation in Poland.

As many as three waves of films about “Solidarity” can be distinguished after 1989. The first wave covered the period between 1990 and 1995, bringing, unsurprisingly, a surge of comedies, e.g. *Rozmowy kontrolowane* (Supervised calls, 1991) by Sylwester Chęciński, *Człowiek z...* (Man of..., 1993) by Konrad Szolajski, *Zawrócony* (Returned, 1995) by Kazimierz Kutz. One has to add to this list an allegorical film *Ucieczka z kina*

wolność (An Escape from the Cinema “Freedom”, 1990) by Wojciech Marczewski and *Śmierć jak kromka chleba* (Death Like a Slice of Bread, 1994) by Kazimierz Kutz, in which the tragic mood predominated. Then in 2005/2006, during the second wave, two films were made in commemoration of “Solidarity’s” 25th anniversary: *Strajk*, (Strike, 2006) by Volker Schlöndorff and *Solidarność, Solidarność* (Solidarity, Solidarity, 2006), consisting of thirteen short stories, each made by a different director. The most recent wave includes *Popiełuszko. Wolność jest w nas* (Popiełuszko. Freedom Is in Us, 2009) by Rafał Wierczyński, *80 milionów* (80 Million, 2011) by Waldemar Krzystek and *Wałęsa. Człowiek z nadziei* (Wałęsa. Man of Hope, 2013) by Andrzej Wajda.

The list of filmic achievements from the period under discussion appears fairly long. It can become even longer, if we add some films, in which action develops independently in the period witnessing the plight of “Solidarity”, e.g. *Ile waży koń trojański?* (What is the Weight of the Trojan Horse?, 2008), dir. Juliusz Machulski, *Obywatel* (A Citizen, 2014), dir. Jerzy Stuhr, *Kret* (A Mole, 2010), dir. Rafał Lewandowski, *Psy* (Cops, 1991), dir. Władysław Pasikowski, and *Gracze* (Gamblers, 1995), dir. Ryszard Bugajski. The situation would change, however, if instead of representations of minor strikes, desperate living conditions, such as shortages of basic goods and long queues, or everyday struggle against communism, we were to make a list of films showing the actual political events, such as the August 1980 strike, the political activity of the Solidarity leaders, or the breakthrough of 1989. The list would seem much less impressive. The August strike that moved the wheels of history and the political activity of either the “Solidarity” leaders or real-life communist politicians make their appearance only in a handful of titles: two films by Andrzej Wajda, *Man of Iron* and *Wałęsa. Man of Hope*, *Strike* by Volker Schlöndorff, and a few shorts from *Solidarity, Solidarity*. In the case of the crucial events of 1989, the list of films is even shorter – one can even say, shamefully short. Only Andrzej

Wajda in his *Wałęsa. Man of Hope* refers to the events, such as the Round Table negotiations and their aftermath.

Discussing this paradoxical refusal to celebrate the victory on the screen, Krystyna Weiher-Sitkiewicz explains:

the problem is, perhaps, not that nobody wants to tell about this, but that we don't know how to do that. Brought up in a cult of martyrology and romanticism, we cherish the struggles in which we were doomed to failure, preferring to die rather than to surrender. The need to celebrate victories has not developed in our culture. Failures and defeats bring about such noble and beautiful descriptions. One can bask in pathos and resort to romantic mythology. Victory? It is so unPolish...". (Weiher-Sitkiewicz 2017: 208)

It can be claimed that this Polish tendency to celebrate failures and defeats rather than victories is responsible for the pessimistic tone prevailing in most films about "Solidarity". Many films, especially from the 1980s, introduce this tone of gloom and sadness by emphasizing that "Solidarity" is a lost case, the country is plunging into poverty and despair, there is no hope for a better future, and the only victory we can count on is a moral one. Ironically, also films made after 1989 most frequently express a sense of disappointment: the world is not like it was meant to be. Promises and hopes have not been fulfilled. And what seems to be particularly distressing is the acute crisis of solidarity. Undoubtedly, the higher the expectations concerning the national, social and trade union solidarity, the more disappointing the fall: Poles are no "one nation under God" any more, groups and individuals pursue their own particular aims, without caring about what happens to others.

What forms of solidarity were so strongly hoped for, only to end up as part of an unrealizable and unrealized utopia? I will discuss three forms of solidarity in connection with the "Solidarity" movement:

- (1) solidarity of all workers, regardless of their profession, type of employment, status in the company or place of living, giving a new life to the old Marxist slogan “Workers of the world, unite!”;
- (2) solidarity between the genders;
- (3) solidarity between workers and intellectuals.

2. Solidarity of workers

“Solidarity” as a name for the emerging, independent and self-governing trade union was adopted during the strike in August 1980. In point of fact, the name was first given to the news-sheets (underground newspaper) mimeographed and distributed among all striking workers and inhabitants of Gdańsk. The idea, however, stemmed from the course of events. The very fact that the strike, confined at that time only to Gdańsk Shipyard named after Lenin, was sparked by a layoff of a single female worker – Anna Walentynowicz, who had been fired by the management – justifies the use of “Solidarity” as the name for the developing movement. At first only three demands were put forward: the shipyard workers demanded reemployment of Walentynowicz, a considerable wage increase, and the permission to erect a monument to commemorate the workers killed by the police in December 1970. Within a couple of days other plants, firms and companies started to join the protest. A symbol of its expansion became Henryka Krzywonoś, a tram driver who stopped her tram on 15 August announcing that “The tram will go no farther. We’re joining the strike!”. The tram passengers who warmly applauded expressed their solidarity with those who had decided to go on strike. Solidarity manifested itself not only amongst workers, but also between the workers and the inhabitants of Gdańsk. Both forms of solidarity were given their symbolic, pictorial representations in documentary as well as feature films, in *Robotnicy 80* (Workers 80, 1981), dir. A. Chodakowski and A. Zajączkowski, and on a smaller scale in Andrzej Wajda’s *Man of Iron*. The solidarity of all workplaces and workers is inscribed into and symbolized

in both films by a big room dimmed with cigarette smoke and crowded with delegates from around 400 workplaces, which adjoined the smaller room where negotiations with the representatives of the government took place. The solidarity between the striking workers and the inhabitants of Gdańsk – which in itself was a synecdoche of the unity of the whole nation – was symbolized by the crowd which gathered at the Shipyard gate, at the square which bears the name of “Solidarity” now.

All of this could have failed, though, if gestures of solidarity had stopped too early. On 16 August, the people in power, aware of the growing popularity of the striking workers, decided to agree to their initial demands in order to quench the strike as soon as possible. The agreement was signed, the end of the strike was announced, the workers started to disperse, and then a few women raised the alarm – Henryka Krzywonos among them – crying out that the Shipyard workers betrayed the workers from other plants, whose protest in this situation would be easily crushed. In response to their appeal, Lech Wałęsa changed his mind and decided that the strike would be continued in solidarity with the other workers from Gdańsk. That decision gave a spark to the “proper” strike. Delegates from 350 workplaces gathered in the Shipyard building, 21 demands of historic importance were formulated, then negotiated with the Polish government representatives, and eventually signed.



Delegates from the striking workplaces.
A frame from *Workers 80*



Citizens of Gdańsk at the Shipyard gate.
A frame from *Man of Iron*

Andrzej Wajda's film *Wałęsa. Man of Hope* recreates the events mentioned above but as it is often the case with Wajda's films, certain more or less important facts are modified – the director does not seem to care much about the details. For example, the filmic tram does stop at the spot, where the actual tram stopped. Moreover the events of 15 and 16 August have been merged into one day, which produces a false impression that Henryka Krzywonos intervened in the strike's course right after she got off the tram. Other altered details stirred a fervent discussion, as they touched a deep and bitter split in contemporary Polish politics. In the film, Anna Walentynowicz stands next to Wałęsa and applauds his decision to finish the strike. Not until Henryka Krzywonos talks to her on the side, does she change her mind and try to prevent workers from leaving the shipyard. In reality, the paths of Anna Walentynowicz on the one hand and Lech Wałęsa and Henryka Krzywonos on the other diverged very soon after the August strike. Walentynowicz's adherents reproached Wajda for twisting the facts to fit his political objectives (Kornacki 2017: 87).

All these circumstances and discrepancies notwithstanding, it is evident that numerous scenes from the film bring the notion of solidarity to mind: first the Shipyard workers strike on behalf of Anna Walentynowicz; then the workers from other plants together with Gdańsk's inhabitants act on behalf of the Shipyard workers; then the Shipyards workers repay their support. At the end of the strike sequence we can see miners from the Silesia region and workers from all over Poland joining the strike. In face of such massive, unanimous front, the communist government decided to yield to the protester's demands.

All these filmic images of solidarity among working people have forged the myth of "Solidarity" and become the legacy of the movement and of that particular period in Polish history. True, one can perhaps doubt whether solidarity is an appropriate word for what motivated "Solidarity" members and supporters. Perhaps it was common interest rather than a sense of

solidarity that united all those people? Perhaps it was the common enemy? Anyway, whatever it was, it did not last long.

Even in the tumultuous period of the “First Solidarity” workers were less and less eager to go on strike on behalf of other workers or plants, and this form of solidarity ended up definitely after 1989 – after the introduction of market economy, when many plants went bankrupt and a hundred thousand people were laid off. A symbolic end of this form of solidarity transpired in 1994, when the miners in brown-coal mines of Bełchatów went on strike, resisting the establishment of a holding company to manage several money-losing mines. “Solidarity” called for a nationwide strike in support of the miners. In WSK Mielec, the aircraft manufacturing plant situated in another part of Poland, “Solidarity” members started to prepare for an imminent strike in solidarity with the miners. In David Ost’s account, local leaders:

Dutifully but without enthusiasm went about all preparations, informing members, preparing leaflets, arranging with management as to minimize disruption to the plant. Two days before the scheduled action, the miners abruptly settled. The national union was caught by surprise, but bigger damage ensued at the local level. Mielec activists and rank and file alike were furious to have been mobilized on behalf of others doing far better than them, only to be ungraciously “switched off” when the miners won theirs, leaving Mielec laborers in an even worse comparative position than before. (Ost 2006: 82-83)

3. Solidarity between the genders

The abovementioned scene from *Wałęsa. Man of Hope* brings into focus another meaning of solidarity – solidarity between the genders. It is significant that it was women who saved the strike and pushed it in the right direction, away from particular interests of a narrow group of the shipyard workers and towards the common good. Not less significant is the fact that despite its positive consequences, the women’s gesture of soli-

arity has not been sufficiently publicized. This act is mentioned neither in *Workers 80*, a documentary which captures the August strike on the spot, nor in the first feature film on these events, i.e. Andrzej Wajda's semidocumentary *Man of Iron*, nor in any other feature or documentary film that I know of.

For many years the history of "Solidarity" was presented as the history of men's struggle for a better future. Among the well-known names of the "Solidarity" leaders in the heroic times of this organization – Lech Wałęsa, Zbigniew Bujak, Władysław Frasyniuk, Andrzej Gwiazda – one cannot find women's names. Women did act in "Solidarity", and did many important things, but they were perceived and they perceived themselves as playing secondary and auxiliary roles of helpers rather than agents. As Agnieszka Graff concludes:

the fact that the history of "Solidarity" kicked off from laying off Anna Walentynowicz was in fact erased, held out somewhere in the background as an anecdote. The proper beginning of this story is the moment when the moustached Lech Wałęsa in a manly manner jumped over the fence. (Graff 2001: 26)

This suggestion can be corroborated by the fact that although most people do know that the immediate reason for the strike was the sacking of Anna Walentynowicz, barely anybody can say what she was laid off for. So, it took a considerably long time before Polish women recognized their distinct role in "Solidarity" and started to rewrite history, so that the women's contribution could be taken into account. And, significantly, this awareness of their devotion and active role was brought from the outside, by an American academic, Shana Penn, with her books: *Podziemie kobiet* (Women's Underground), published in Poland in 2003, and the highly acclaimed *Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland*, published in the States in 2005, and in Poland in 2014, and an English sociologist, Peggy Watson, who authored *The Rise of Masculinism in Eastern Europe* and *(Anti)feminism after com-*

munism. Polish researchers followed in their footsteps with films (Dzido, Śliwowski 2014) and books (Dzido 2016), which for the first time appreciated the role of women in the “Solidarity” movement. Also, the influence exerted by *Marzenia i tajemnice* (Dreams and Secrets) by Danuta Wałęsa, published in 2011, can’t be overestimated. In her book, Danuta Wałęsa, Lech Wałęsa’s wife, presents a woman’s look at the tumultuous time in Poland.

Andrzej Wajda, who was always a very perceptive observer of social life, could not have overlooked this trend. The difference between *Man of Iron* (1981) and *Wałęsa. Man of Hope* as far as the women’s role is concerned is meaningful. Agnieszka, who in *Man of Marble* was such a strong and independent woman¹, in *Man of Iron*, has lost her guts – she is just a Mother-Pole, a faithful and loyal supporter of her husband. What is even more striking, a historically memorable scene with women preventing workers from dispersing is not included in Wajda’s first artistic recapitulation of the events. Good at sewing armbands or preparing meals for their brave fighting men, the women in *Man of Iron* play only auxiliary roles. One shouldn’t overlook the implications of the very first scene from this film, in which some silly women that seem not to understand the situation give a radio interview, opposing the strike and supporting the existing political system. The misogynist tone of that scene is evident. *Man of Hope* is very different in this respect. Women are presented as strong and active agents. This concerns not only the brave women workers who did not let the strike end, but also Danuta Wałęsa, who, in a sensitive performance by Agnieszka Grochowska, is a flesh and blood person and virtually steals the film. Oriana Fallaci, played by Maria Rosaria Ommagio, from whom the film starts, becomes a real match for the figure of Wałęsa. Undoubtedly, the film owes this change of tone to the surge of gender interpretation of the “Solidarity” history.

¹ Agnieszka as a character displays so many masculine traits that many critics claim she is mentally a male.



The three women who saved the strike: Henryka Krzywonos (Dorota Wellman), Anna Walentynowicz (Ewa Kurylo) and Alina Pieńkowska (Anna Gryszkówna) in *Walesa: Man of Hope*.

However, it would be difficult to seriously ponder the utopian solidarity between the genders in “Solidarity”, because such a utopia has never taken on a definite shape. From the very beginning, this organization was regarded as a domain of males’ prestige and achievement, with women playing only secondary roles, which they readily, even if not quite consciously, accepted. In her interpretation of the “Solidarity” women’s role, Agnieszka Graff goes even further. In her view, this rebellious bid for freedom, which “Solidarity” undoubtedly was, on a symbolic plane reinstated the patriarchal order, previously upset by communism. Communism was regarded in Poland as the time of “degradation, domestication and symbolic castration of all men” who couldn’t act in public as this meant servility. Instead, they were confined to domestic spheres (traditionally regarded as feminine), where, as Graf puts it, “do it yourself” meant “do a kitchen unit”. At the same time women, responsible for feeding families, went “hunting” (viz. shopping). “In a profoundly patriarchal society”, Graff

writes, “which Polish society undoubtedly was and still is, a story about the trading of gender roles is the clearest possible metaphor of chaos” (Graff 2001: 23). Therefore, the rebellion against communism meant also the struggle for the restitution of the *status quo ante* – a natural (i.e. patriarchal) order.

Graff claims that this complex psycho-sociological syndrome has been best exemplified by the allegedly most popular Polish comedy of all times, *Seksmisja* (Sexmission). One has to admit, there is something to it. The film’s enormous popularity in Poland may have resulted not only from multiple references to the reverse roles the genders played under communism but also from nostalgia after the lost world of male values. *Sexmission*, a dystopian comedy, was produced during the martial law in Poland and contains many pictorial allusions to this time. What is more important, it depicts a totalitarian state inhabited only by women, as all males have become extinct in the aftermath of a nuclear war. In this world, two men, who had been hibernated before the war, wake up. The women in power decide to “normalize”, that is, castrate them, but they manage to escape assisted by one rebellious woman. They eventually succeed in reinstating the proper, natural order. The analogies are clear. The rulers of this totalitarian state, that is, women, represent communists, the two awakened rebels stand for the Solidarity movement (the more so as they form a worker-intellectual alliance, so characteristic of the “First Solidarity” – more about this further), and the main goal of their rebellion against women and the pending castration is to reconstitute the natural order, that is, the natural domination of males over females.

On a less symbolic and more down-to earth level, the utopian solidarity of the genders, which had never been more than a phantasmal phenomenon anyway, broke down decisively in the early years of the 1990s, during the transformation. According to David Ost, who carried out a thorough research on the subject, women were the first to be disposed of during the massive layoffs, especially in big plants. The trade union lead-

ers in the large state-run manufacturing firms of the early and mid-1990s – all men, obviously – thought that their firms employed too many female workers and that women ought to be laid off before men. They used to justify it on the ground of professional inadequacy saying that without prior technical training women were insufficiently qualified for the jobs, and therefore disposable. Sometimes the previous socio-political system was to be blamed. For example, in the big steel plant at Stalowa Wola, a Solidarity leader, asked whether there had been large-scale layoffs at his plant, answered equivocally at first: “Yes, sort of, but this was limited to people who had, let’s say, a ‘light’ attitude to work”. It turned out that the only reason he did not take layoffs seriously was that the majority of those affected were women.

The situation was this: a steel mill, metal plant – this is men’s work. But these men had wives, and in the 1960s something had to be done with these wives. Since there were no textile firms here, the factory took them on, just like a good mother. Administrative offices were built up, entirely unnecessary, without economic justification, and the women were hired. When the crisis came, naturally women were first to be fired. We didn’t object. (Ost 2006: 145)

4. Solidarity between workers and intellectuals

I have already mentioned the difference between Agnieszka from Andrzej Wajda’s *Man of Marble* and the same character from the sequel, *Man of Iron*, which can be interpreted in the context of gender. But another interpretation is also viable, especially if we focus on the class context. Agnieszka is a filmmaker, an artist, an intellectual; Birkut is a worker. Her submission stems from the respect that she, as an intellectual, pays to the worker. In David Ost’s words, she realizes that “her struggles are nothing compared to those of average worker. The intellectual gives up her craft to become a wife to the Gdańsk shipworker valiantly fighting for social justice” (Ost

2006: 39). This refers to another form of solidarity, highly publicized, belonging to the core of the “Solidarity” myth and legend: the solidarity between workers and intellectuals.

The event which laid a solid foundation for this kind of solidarity took place on 22 August, on the ninth day of the strike. Two opposition intellectuals from Warsaw, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the future prime minister, and Bronisław Geremek, the future minister of foreign affairs, brought a letter of support, signed by 64 intellectuals, to the shipyard. The striking workers asked them whether they could help, by organizing a team of advisers, to which they agreed. In a documentary film *Workers 80*, Wałęsa, Mazowiecki and Geremek give an account of this crucial moment. Two days later, on 24 August, the team of advisers, consisting of about ten intellectuals, mostly academics, was officially appointed and started its work. They advised the Inter-Enterprise Striking Committee, prepared projects for a future agreement, negotiating the particular points with the experts from the government side. All of this is presented in *Workers 80*.

The decision to co-operate must be put in a wider context of relationships between intellectuals and “ordinary people” in Polish culture. Our romantic poets promoted the idea of alliance between common people and noblemen, which is best epitomized in a famous quote by Zygmunt Krasiński: “Jeden, jeden tylko cud, z polską szlachcią polski lud” [There’s only one miracle: Polish peasantry and Polish nobility acting as one]. The quote is sometimes considered to be a prophetic vision of the “Solidarity” movement. Krasiński assumed that Poland might regain independence only on the condition that lower-class people, whom he regarded as a dangerous mob – the ignorant rabble, would ally with the nobility and act under supervision and direction of aristocracy. In the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth centuries, some eminent Polish writers who exerted a great influence on Polish national mentality, e.g. Stefan Żeromski or Eliza Orzeszkowa, claimed that the educated have moral obligation to support and spread cul-

ture and education among the poor and the uneducated. Simultaneously another important trend appeared, called “chłopomania” (peasant-mania), depicted superbly by Stanisław Wyspiański in his groundbreaking masterpiece of Polish literature, *Wesele* (A Wedding). “Chłopomania” signifies admiration of simple people, predominantly peasants, by artists and intellectuals fascinated by simple people’s vitality. Under communism workers were worshipped, officially at least, as “the ruling class”, and “the salt of the earth”, whereas intellectuals were downgraded. The phrase used very often by communist propaganda was that the communist party rules on behalf of all working people, namely, “workers, peasants and *working intelligentsia*”, which implied that some part of intelligentsia avoids work, living a parasitic life at the cost of others. Apparently, the relationship between “simple people” and intellectuals was in fact a power relation, and it was never easy, fluctuating from fear and contempt, through a condescending sense of moral obligation toward the less able, to admiration and worship. It is amazing how all of these attitudes surfaced in “Solidarity”.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that the rise of “Solidarity” was preceded by a number of important events that paved the way to the August strike and also constituted the basis for the “Solidarity’s” self-awareness – the movement’s identity. The Polish 1968 political crisis, also known as “March events”, when students in several Polish cities, e.g. Warsaw, Łódź or Gdańsk, protested against political restrictions, opens the list. A complaint, which is often voiced in connection with these protests, is that the working class did not support the students. Two years later, in December 1970, there was a workers’ protest, which ended in bloodshed – this time students did not join in. In June 1976, the workers in Radom, a middle-size Polish town, went on strike, protesting against the rise in food prices. This protest was violently stifled, the participants were persecuted. In response, opposition intellectuals from Warsaw established the Workers’ Defense Committee (KOR), which

gave financial and legal aid to the persecuted workers and their families. A widely held view is that KOR laid a foundation under the alliance between Polish workers and intellectuals, which proved to be so effective during the August strike. This evolution of a sense of solidarity, from initial mutual indifference and lack of understanding between workers and intellectuals to successful co-operation in the name of the common good belongs, as I have already pointed out, to the core ingredients of the “Solidarity’s” identity, and are alluded to or overtly depicted in many films.

The close alliance between workers and intellectuals after 1989 proceeded in several stages, and was not limited to the Advisers’ Board. As David Ost reminds us:

intellectuals travelled to the workplaces to form solidarity with workers and worked with them in strike committees and union offices. Polish academics even abandoned the union they had formed soon after the strike in Gdańsk in order to join Solidarity, before the latter became the powerhouse it would become. Intellectuals established multiple venues of direct contact with workers and maintained them for the sixteen months of legal Solidarity. (Ost 2006: 39)

During this period artists and intellectuals gave concerts and lectures, produced films, participated in discussions with the working class, treating its representatives as partners in a national dialogue and/or the target audience. This is well depicted in *80 Million* by Waldemar Krzystek. The film opens with a scene which takes place in a depot in Wrocław, on 31 August, the day when the agreement in Gdańsk was signed. Workers in the depot, who were on solidarity strike, watch the moment of singing the agreement on television. Suddenly a bus comes in, from which musicians from the Philharmonic Orchestra get out. They take out the instruments and the conductor addresses the surprised workers: “Gentlemen, this is for you from all of us. Dworzak – ‘Symphony of the New World’”. A small, improvised concerto ensues.



A concerto at the depot. *80 Millions*

Intellectuals held workers in such a high esteem that David Ost called it “a deferential exaltation that was positively Maoist in its self-flagellation”, citing examples: a film director, Janusz Kijowski, who “vowed to abandon his subtle films in favor of “anti-films” and documentaries”, for “the subtlety of the intellectuals needed to be replaced by the forthrightness of the workers”; Musia Sierotwińska, a teacher from Kraków, who said:

I used to think that books and culture were the important things. But it turned out that these were completely marginal. It's the factories, economics, the workers who are important. Their issues are the crucial ones. [...] In intellectual circles, we all got along. The oppositionist and party secretary meet and we're all polite with each other. But for the worker, everything's clear: that one's a red! And that's that. The nuts-and-bolts wisdom of the working

man is the healthiest thing. They alone knew how to judge what's true and what's false. (Ost 2006: 39)

In one of the memorable scenes from *Wałęsa. Man of Hope*, workers want to talk to the Shipyard director, but his assistant does not let them in, dismissing them as “robols”. This Polish word is a derogatory term for a worker, presenting him or her as a brute, primitive person, who sees no further than the end of his/her nose. One of the reasons of the aforementioned “deferential exaltation” was that workers ceased to be “robols”, that they saw further ahead, that they did care not only about their own interests, but also about the well-being of the whole country, and not only about economic welfare, but also about such abstract values as freedom and human rights.

This romance between workers and Solidarity did not last long – perhaps it couldn't have lasted long. David Ost notes that during the “heroic” period of illegal “Solidarity”, somewhere around mid 1980s, intellectuals gradually changed their attitude. This tendency could be observed in the writings of Adam Michnik, “the most influential member of the liberal intellectual opposition”, as Ost dubs him. One can read there that “labor activism is a main danger to democracy”, and “the rational intellectual elite would have to take the place of workers in the ‘Solidarity’ leadership if the organization was truly to be the agent of democratic society” (Ost 2006: 41). And this is what happened. The representatives of “Solidarity” in the Round Table negotiations were mainly liberal intellectuals from the circles of the former advisers, so were the “Solidarity” candidates for the semi-democratic parliamentary elections in 1989, and members of Tadeusz Mazowiecki's first non-communist government. Very harsh market-oriented reforms which were implemented, hit the working class in the first place, bringing about mass unemployment, a phenomenon unknown in communist Poland, and enormous reduction of spending power. Mutual admiration was replaced by bitterness and reproach. Intellectuals were accused of betrayal, of “making careers” on the workers' shoulders, of caring only about

their own class interests, of not listening to common people. David Ost seems to voice a view that this intellectual-workers alliance was detrimental to the latter from the very beginning, because it prevented the working class from forging its own, class-oriented language and focus.

A lot has been written about whether the union was created by workers or intellectuals, but posing the question this way misses the point. Solidarity was undoubtedly created by workers, who went on strike in August 1980 and stayed on strike until the authorities acquiesced to the existence of an independent union, something intellectuals thought the Party would never allow. But once the union was created, it quickly lost its labor locus. It was not a working-class trade union but a universalist political movement, always emphasizing civil rights over labor conditions. Ideologically and politically, Solidarity followed the path laid out by opposition intellectuals, pushing for an open civil society, not for labor empowerment. (Ost 2006: 126)

Strangely enough, the above reproach hits exactly the same point which previously was the reason for pride. Workers used to be praised for going beyond their class interests, for pushing for an open, civil society. Now, it turns out, at least in David Ost's account, that this was their mistake, because they should have talked, as Ost points out elsewhere, "of forced overtime, the erosion of wages by inflation, declining safety conditions, deteriorating health care, or the continued inability of young workers to find housing" (Ost 2006: 126). The question is, however, whether we could still talk about solidarity between "Solidarity" members and supporters if that was the case. All in all, this hard-won alliance failed – this form of solidarity turned out to be nothing more than another utopia (viz. mirage).

5. Conclusions

To sum up, the three forms of solidarity discussed here – solidarity of the working class, solidarity between the sexes, solidarity between workers and intellectuals – have not endured the test of time. Perhaps David Buss was right after all: human behavior is usually framed by the logic or interests, and not by selfless desire to aid other people. That, however, does not invalidate the idea of solidarity. On the contrary, it makes it more precious. Utopias are beautiful dreams that from time to time, for a short period of time, come true. And let it stay this way.

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