

The Post-Critical Utopia

Abstract

Taking Yanis Varoufakis's novel *Another Now* as a case study, this article introduces and makes an argument for a new concept in utopian studies: the post-critical utopia. It begins by making four claims: (1) that Varoufakis has written a utopian socialist novel; (2) that this represents a retrieval of a historical form of literature; (3) that the utopia at its centre takes the form of a utopian blueprint; and (4) that two objections to this utopia, posed by one of its main characters, complicate our understanding of *Another Now*, with implications for how we ought to classify it. It is then argued that *Another Now*'s combination of a systematic utopian blueprint with insights drawn from the tradition of the critical utopia qualifies it as a post-critical utopia. The latter concept is then considered in the context of utopian studies scholarship.

Introduction

It is a commonplace of modern intellectual history that during the course of the twentieth century there was a decisive and widespread loss of faith in grand utopian schemes for social transformation. The anti-utopian tenor of the century's latter decades, as well as of the early 2000s, is well captured by John Gray's observation that as humanity entered the new millennium it did so in a world 'littered with the debris of utopian projects' and in which secular utopian hope seemed to be giving way to a resurgence of rival fundamentalisms (Gray 2007, 1). Within the academy, this trend was both registered and resisted by numerous scholars who attempted to reformulate utopia in such a way that it would not be open to the sorts of criticisms levelled at the failed utopian ventures of the previous decades. In different ways, Ruth Levitas (2011), Tom Moylan (2014), Samuel R. Delany (1978), Stuart Hall (2021), Raymond Williams (1989), and Fredric Jameson (2005), among others, all pursued ways of thinking utopia differently so as to make it more democratic, more pluralistic, and less liable to authoritarianism. While tending to moderate and soften some of utopia's more sweeping and programmatic ambitions, their efforts were salutary insofar as they significantly extended the

range of the utopian imagination and pointed to ways of overcoming some of the inherent limitations of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century forms of utopian thought and practice.

Since the global economic recession that occurred between 2007 and 2010, however, and in the wake of the various major social, political, and ecological challenges of the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the alternative conceptions of utopia that arose between the late 1960s and the early 2000s have come to seem less suited to the current moment. One reason for this is that, as many commentators have noted, there is a widely shared sense that what is needed today is change of a fundamental and systematic kind – precisely the kind of change envisaged, in fact, in the sorts of utopian fiction which ceased to be written during the previous century and which were generally viewed as inflexible and oppressive by those writers and scholars who sought to democratise and decentralise utopia from the 1970s onwards.

One prominent public intellectual who has consistently made the case in recent years for a renewal of an older and more ambitious form of utopianism is the economist and former Greek Minister of Finance, Yanis Varoufakis. A former academic who previously taught at the University of Essex, the University of East Anglia, and Cambridge University, Varoufakis presided over the negotiation of Greece's debt with the troika (the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund) as part of Alexis Tsipras's Syriza government during 2015 in an attempt to limit austerity measures which had been imposed on the country. Having observed the humanitarian crisis in Greece that resulted from austerity, Varoufakis was well positioned to comment on the shortcomings of contemporary capitalism in his subsequent writings. Published in 2020, *Another Now: Dispatches from an Alternative Present* (Varoufakis 2020a) is the latest in a series of popular and widely read books by Varoufakis on economics and current affairs. Unlike his previous work in this vein – *The Global Minotaur* (Varoufakis 2011), *Talking to My Daughter About the Economy* (Varoufakis 2013), *And the Weak Suffer What They Must?* (Varoufakis 2016), and *Adults in the Room*

(Varoufakis 2017) – *Another Now* takes the form of a novel – more specifically, a science fiction novel. One reason for this switch from nonfiction to fiction is the book’s focus on the future. Whereas Varoufakis’s previous books had generally been concerned with the present and recent past, *Another Now* describes events taking place in the near future: between 2025 and 2035.

Drawing partly on the conventions of alternate history, the novel portrays two different realities: our own world in the very near future, and what is called the ‘Other Now’. While identical to our world in every other respect, the ‘Other Now’ is a world in which recent history has unfolded very differently, leading to immense social change. The timelines of the two worlds diverge from one another in the year 2008. Whereas in ‘Our Now’, the financial crisis of 2007–8 was met with unprecedented bank bailouts followed by a return to business as usual, in the Other Now the crisis led to a peaceful global revolution and a transition to a post-capitalist economic system (2020a, 67–84). In the Other Now, capitalism has given way to what Varoufakis provocatively calls ‘corpo-syndicalism’: an economic model in which corporations are remodelled along anarcho-syndicalist lines (2020a, 42–46). At the heart of corpo-syndicalism is the simple yet radical principle of ‘one-employee-one-share-one-vote’ (2020a, 46–53). Each employee owns a single share in their firm, which entitles them to a single vote on any decisions it makes. Crucially, these shares are non-tradeable, meaning that share markets and disproportionately influential shareholders do not exist in the Other Now. Combined with a range of other policies, the one-employee-one-share-one-vote system results in a horizontal style of worker-led management that eliminates hierarchies and facilitates democratic decision-making. As well as being allocated a state trust fund when they come of age, people in the Other Now are maintained by two incomes: their corpo-syndicalist earnings and a government payment called ‘universal basic dividend’ (2020a, 54–57). Unlike a universal basic income, which is paid for out of general taxation (and which Varoufakis has elsewhere

been critical of for this reason), the basic dividend is funded through a tax on the raw revenues of the corpo-syndicalist firms. Along with public ownership and leasing of land, the corporation tax eliminates the need for income or sales taxes on individuals. Meanwhile, a new international tax system minimises trade deficits while also reallocating funds to the global south and to investment in green energy.

In imagining the Other Now, Varoufakis wishes to describe, then, an alternative to capitalism which remains empirically grounded in the world as it exists today. By taking corporate decision-making out of the hands of unaccountable shareholders, instituting the universal basic dividend, and passing laws to force corporations to equitably contribute to the social good, the revolutionaries of the Other Now lay the foundations for a life beyond capitalism. The result is one possible construction of a socialist utopia: a society in which *political* freedom is matched by *economic* freedom. In the present article, a case is made for viewing Varoufakis's novel as an example of a new literary form: the 'post-critical utopia', that is, a text that combines a systematic utopian blueprint with insights drawn from the tradition of the critical utopia. The first half of the article consists of an analysis of *Another Now*; the second half situates the concept of the post-critical utopia in the context of existing utopian studies scholarship.

Retrieving the Utopian Socialist Novel

While some of the social and economic policies that define Varoufakis's utopia are comparatively new – international trade is conducted via a bespoke digital currency, for example – the novel in which it is embedded represents a retrieval of an older kind of literature: namely, the nineteenth-century utopian socialist novel.

Another Now's most obvious precursors in this regard are *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy (Bellamy 2009), *News from Nowhere* by William Morris (Morris 2009), *A*

Modern Utopia by H. G. Wells (Wells 2005), *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (Gilman 2015), and Oscar Wilde's speculative essay 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' (Wilde 2011). As well as incorporating twenty-first-century social and scientific developments, *Another Now* draws extensively on tropes and conventions familiar from these late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century utopian works. Like some of these texts, *Another Now* relies on a fantastic conceit to facilitate access to the Other Now. Whereas in Bellamy's *Looking Backward* the protagonist falls into a hypnosis-induced sleep for 113 years and in Wells's *A Modern Utopia* the lead characters are instantaneously transported to an alien world uncannily like Earth, in *Another Now* a wormhole to a parallel world is opened by malfunctioning experimental technology (2020a, 29–40). Like its precursors, however, the novel shows little interest in this founding conceit: in the words of H. G. Wells, 'the living interest' lies in its 'non-fantastic elements and not in the invention itself' (Wells 2017, 13).

As Matthew Beaumont has shown, the period from 1870 to 1914 – that is, from the initial stirrings of the Paris Commune to the onset of the First World War – witnessed 'a veritable discursive explosion' of utopian fiction and speculation (Beaumont 2009, 1). It was during this period that the utopian socialist novel flourished, before going into a rapid and apparently permanent decline. From 1918 onwards, utopias decisively gave way to dystopias: whereas novels like *Looking Backward* and *News from Nowhere* had offered visions of a liberated future, dystopias such as Rose Macaulay's *What Not* (Macaulay 2019), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (Huxley 2007), Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night* (Constantine 2016), and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Orwell 2000) offered much more pessimistic social commentaries and forecasts. From the publication of Gilman's *Herland* in 1915 to the wave of new utopian fiction of the late 1960s and 1970s, conventional utopias were rare and took eccentric forms when they did appear, as in B. F. Skinner's behaviourist thought

experiment *Walden Two* (Skinner 2005) or Aldous Huxley's mystical counter-cultural novel *Island* (Huxley 2005).

The utopias of the following period – which may be dated roughly from the publication of Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* in 1969 (Le Guin, 2017) to the publication of Samuel Delany's *Trouble on Triton* (1976) and Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* in 1978 (Gearhart 1985) – saw the rise of what Tom Moylan and others have characterised as the 'critical utopia' (Moylan 2014). This is a form of utopian fiction which, on Moylan's account, leaves behind and sometimes explicitly criticises the attempt to offer a comprehensive plan of utopia while retaining utopia's critical relation to the present and its expression of a utopian desire for a better world. Strikingly, in at least one key respect, *Another Now* more closely resembles the classical or pre-critical utopia than it does the critical utopia of the 1970s. This is because, like the former and unlike the latter, it centres on precisely the kind of comprehensive utopian programme that the critical utopia defined itself against. In its structure and format, then, Varoufakis's *Other Now* more closely resembles the literary utopias of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than those of the last fifty years.

The specific features of *Another Now* which would seem to define it as a classical utopia are as follows. Firstly, the majority of the novel consists of a detailed account of specific social and economic policies. As in the utopian tradition inaugurated by Thomas More and which perhaps reached its point of exhaustion in the work of H. G. Wells, there is relatively little emphasis on plot or characterisation in Varoufakis's novel, and almost no investment in the kind of worldbuilding associated with the critical utopia. Rather than showing us what life is like in the *Other Now*, we are simply told by two of its inhabitants how their society is organised. As in Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, these pronouncements are sometimes met with questions by characters from *Our Now*, but these are primarily a means for Varoufakis to expand on finer points in his economic argument. The account offered of the *Other Now* is

thus, in experiential terms, fairly thin: whereas in, say, Le Guin's utopias we are given an extremely rich and immersive sense of how life goes on in her invented societies, we come away from Varoufakis's novel with lots of *information* about how an alternative to capitalism could work, but with less of a sense of the *experience* of the Other Now. Likewise, while Varoufakis's characters are somewhat more fully rendered than those of Bellamy, Morris, or Wells, they nevertheless serve mainly as placeholders for differing economic perspectives.

In saying this, our intention is not to impugn the artistic merits of the book or to suggest that there are right and wrong ways to go about writing a utopian novel. On a charitable reading, the emphasis of *Another Now* on arguments over novelistic detail reflects a particular approach to utopian writing, one with its own strengths and weaknesses. This approach is, however, highly rationalistic: Varoufakis is less concerned to *immerse* us in his utopia than to *argue* us into granting the superiority of corpo-syndicalism to capitalism. Again, in this regard *Another Now* bears a clear resemblance to works like *Looking Backward*, *News from Nowhere*, and *Herland*, which are generally much closer in form to arguments than they are to narratives.

A Critical Utopia?

Like its utopian socialist precursors, *Another Now* also contains characters who voice reservations about the Other Now from the vantage of the world of the reader. Just as Bellamy's, Morris's, and Gilman's protagonists are at times sceptical, incredulous, or suspicious of what they learn of utopia, so the characters from Our Now in Varoufakis's novel do not merely accept what they are told about the Other Now but point out potential shortcomings and raise questions about gaps in the explanations they receive in return.

Two of the objections made to the Other Now are particularly serious, however, pointing to a difference between *Another Now* and a novel like *News from Nowhere*, and indicating its indebtedness to the critical utopias of the 1970s. These are voiced by Iris, a

socialist feminist from Our Now who recognises the Other Now's appeal but ultimately comes to reject it (2020a, 157–180). Her objections, it should be noted, are treated without any of the irony or derision directed at characters like the old man in *News from Nowhere* who nostalgically longs for the age of capitalism or the macho adventurer in *Herland* who insists on the naturalness of patriarchy in the face of all evidence to the contrary. Iris's critique is portrayed, rather, as posing a serious political and ethical challenge to the world of the Other Now.

Iris's first objection to the Other Now has to do with gender politics. Patriarchy still exists in the Other Now, as is evidenced by the misogynistic murder of the leader of a prominent revolutionary feminist group, and the broader failure to end violence against women and advance women's liberation in line with the progress made in other areas of society. It is initially for this reason that Iris sees the Other Now as failing to deliver on its ostensibly utopian promise (2020a, 157–170). Iris's second objection targets the basic premise of the Other Now. As Varoufakis makes clear throughout the book, the Other Now's economic model is a form of market socialism. Capitalism may have been abolished, but markets remain the means by which goods and services are exchanged (2020a, 113–155). As a result, human relations are still organised around what Iris calls 'conditional reciprocity': the principle that people do things for each other because it is economically advantageous to them (2020a, 178–80). By abolishing the inequality, injustices, and wastefulness of capitalism while retaining its transactional ethos, the architects of the Other Now have in effect, Iris argues, merely further postponed humanity's true liberation. For Iris, nothing less than the abolition of conditional reciprocity and the realisation of what one of her friends gently mocks as '*Star Trek* abundance communism' will suffice (2020a, 217). Her critique, unlike those of the naysayers of earlier utopian socialist novels, is thus *ultra*-utopian rather than *anti*-utopian: an achieved utopia is found wanting from the point of view of a further, perhaps unattainable utopia.

Given the faults Iris finds with the Other Now, and the prominence these are given in the final chapter of the book, it may seem that Varoufakis has constructed a critical utopia after all, with his book simultaneously depicting a utopia and undercutting it by insisting on its limitations. It can nevertheless be argued that *Another Now* resists this classification. In an essay written for the *Guardian* as well as a series of interviews given about the book, Varoufakis explicitly endorses the main economic proposals that form the basis of the Other Now. While acknowledging that he harbours doubts about his utopia's 'unresolved arguments', Varoufakis clearly sees something very much like corpo-syndicalism as the logical successor to capitalism (Varoufakis 2020b).

There is also the fact that, as discussed earlier, the Other Now takes the form of a utopian blueprint, of a sort scarcely seen for over a century. Given its author's endorsement of the policies it embodies, this feature of the text would seem to set it apart from the utopian literature of the 1970s. Classifying *Another Now* is therefore not easy: it is seemingly not quite a classical utopia nor yet a critical utopia but something else yet to be determined. Here the term 'post-critical utopia' suggests itself as a potentially informative designation for this kind of writing. By 'post-critical utopia', what is meant is two things. Firstly, the post-critical utopia is 'critical' in the sense that it has clearly learnt from and internalised the critical utopia's response to the classical utopia. As we have seen, rather than pretending to have arrived at solutions to every problem raised in the text, *Another Now* highlights some of the limitations of the utopia it describes and implicitly invites readers to engage with these in order to start to think through how they might be overcome. Secondly, the post-critical utopia is 'post-' critical in the sense that it moves beyond the critical utopia by *retrieving* an earlier, predominantly nineteenth-century style of utopian blueprint while at the same time *retaining* the critical utopia's awareness of tension, ambiguity, and contradiction. It thereby combines a realistic sense of limitation, fallibility, and unavoidable conflict with a comprehensive and highly

ambitious utopian programme. In the remainder of this article, we shall consider the post-critical utopia further in the context of existing utopian studies scholarship.

The Post-Critical Utopia and Utopian Studies

One common assumption within utopian studies that *Another Now* helps to call into question is that of the opposition between the utopian blueprint, on the one hand, and a more indeterminate utopian desire, on the other. While these categories and the relationship between them have sometimes been reconsidered and revised since the establishment of the field in the 1970s, it remains the case that some form of this opposition underlies a great deal of utopian scholarship. In an otherwise innovative study from 2019, for example, *Radical Utopianism and Cultural Studies*, John Storey takes it as axiomatic that utopianism falls into two distinct and opposing modes, which he terms blueprint utopianism and radical utopianism (Storey 2019, 1). The former is associated with static, inflexible models of utopia that Storey regards as both incapable of effecting real-world social change and politically undesirable, whereas the latter serves the more indirect utopian goals of defamiliarizing existing society and expressing desire for a better world (Storey 2019, i-xii). While Storey's championing of radical utopianism and his rejection of blueprint utopianism are somewhat more conclusive and clear-cut than that of other figures within the field, his position is arguably only a more explicit articulation of a fairly widespread critical tendency.

In a passage that has gone on to become the most widely adopted definition of the critical utopia within utopian studies, and which clearly informs many scholars' understanding of the utopia as blueprint vs. utopia as desire opposition, Tom Moylan writes in his classic 1986 study, *Demand the Impossible*:

A central concern in the critical utopia is the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition, so that these texts reject utopia as blueprint while preserving it as dream. Furthermore, the novels dwell on the conflict between the ordinary world and the utopian society opposed to it so that the process of social change is more directly

articulated. Finally, the novels focus on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection within utopian society itself and thus render more recognizable and dynamic alternatives. (Moylan 2014, 10)

In light of our discussion of *Another Now*, it is clear that most of the features that Moylan attributes to the critical utopia are to be found in Varoufakis's novel: the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition is apparent in Iris's hyper-utopian critique of the Other Now; the conflict between the originary world and the utopian society opposed to it takes the form of the mass social and political struggle between the opponents and the defenders of the global capitalist system, as well as the lingering tensions that remain in the wake of the revolution; and the continuing presence of difference and imperfection is conveyed by the problems that Iris identifies and by the acknowledgment on the part of the inhabitants of the Other Now that corpo-syndicalism has not resolved every outstanding economic issue in a manner that is satisfactory to all. In each of these ways, both at the level of content and of form, *Another Now* fulfils Moylan's definition and thus bears a resemblance to the works by Joanna Russ, Ursula Le Guin, Marge Piercy, and Samuel Delany analysed in his study.¹

There is one element of Moylan's definition, however, which cannot be extended to cover *Another Now*. This is the specification that 'these texts reject utopia as blueprint while preserving it as dream.' The relationship between, in Moylan's terms, utopia as blueprint and utopia as dream in *Another Now* is not a straightforward matter: as in More's *Utopia* (More 1992), with its numerous layers of textual irony and ambiguity, how the reader ought to resolve the tensions between Varoufakis's authorial commendation of his utopia and the critical perspective introduced by Iris is an open question likely to be answered in different ways by different readers. It remains the case, however, that the core of the text is a meticulously elaborated and argumentatively resourceful blueprint for a new socioeconomic paradigm, one which has coalesced over the course of decades through Varoufakis's own academic research in the field of political economy. If *Another Now* is in part a utopian dream in Moylan's sense

of the word, it is more obviously and for the most part a utopian blueprint. Again, this is a blueprint – a systematic and, crucially, prescriptive, outline of a possible way of organising social life – that is framed and partially qualified by a number of critical considerations and unresolved problems, which the text openly draws attention to. Unlike the critical utopia as conceived of by Moylan, however, the presence of this critical frame does not mean that the text elevates utopian dreams *at the expense of* utopian blueprints, nor does it negate, deconstruct, ironise, or place under erasure the utopia as its centre. Rather, Varoufakis's utopia is sincerely intended as a viable alternative to global capitalism, even if it remains incomplete and subject to difficulties it may be unable to address in the form in which it is presented. This delicate balancing of two very different forms of utopianism helps to show how preserving utopia as dream need not entail the rejection of utopia as blueprint, however well-established this critical opposition may be and however unfashionable the utopian blueprint may have become during the second half of the twentieth century.²

While it is phrased in a very different vocabulary and subject to many subtle modulations, a related conceptual opposition can be found at work in the highly influential writings of Fredric Jameson on utopia. In *Archaeologies of the Future*, Jameson characterises his approach to utopia as a 'Utopian formalism', in which the ostensible content of the utopian text – social and political policies, new institutions, concrete proposals for change, etc – is bracketed or at least strongly downplayed, and critical attention is focused instead on either the formal mechanisms by means of which utopia is envisaged – narrative closure or openness, the use of genre conventions, the dialogic structure of the classical utopian text, etc – or the role of utopias as expressions of social desire which cannot be satisfied under capitalism (2005, xi–xvi). This approach, Jameson claims, 'has the merit of shifting the discussion of Utopia from content to representation as such' – perhaps the decisive move on Jameson's part, whereby utopia as blueprint is relegated to second place (2005, xiii). In a later discussion, Jameson

observes of what he terms his ‘perversely formalist approach’, that it ‘has led us to substitute the question, What difficulties must be overcome in imagining or representing Utopia? for the seemingly more urgent investigation of the nature of Utopian desire and the substance of its hope’ (2005, 85). For Jameson, ‘the most reliable political test [of the utopian text] lies not in any judgment on the individual work in question so much as in its capacity to generate new ones...’ (2005, xv). It is as a means of articulating an interminable utopian longing, in other words, that utopian texts fulfil their true vocation, not as blueprints for real-world social change. It is partly for this reason that Jameson concludes his introduction to *Archaeologies* by suggesting that for the contemporary left, ‘the slogan of anti-anti-Utopianism might well offer the best working strategy’ – that is, not full-fledged proposals or modelling of positive utopian alternatives, but rather an investment in countering the anti-utopian sensibility of late capitalism through the more indirect path of the negation of the negation of utopia (2005, xvi).

For the most part, Jameson’s interventions in the study of utopia are directed toward how we ought to conceive of the utopian genre and its cultural function, rather than toward any actionable objectives articulated within utopian texts themselves. Given the professed formalism of this approach, it is no less viable as a way of reading Varoufakis’s *Another Now* than of reading earlier works from the utopian tradition. In the case of *Another Now*, however, there would seem to be a *prima facie* tension between such an approach and the nature and purpose of the text in question. While there is nothing illegitimate about abstracting away from the novel’s content in order to consider it either as an expression of an unfulfillable desire for something wholly different or as a means of negating utopia’s negation under late capitalism, there is arguably something unsuitable or inappropriate in so doing, a sense of doing significant hermeneutic violence to a text whose value seems so clearly to lie in its contribution to current debates about how humanity might realistically start to move beyond capitalism. Literary texts cannot, of course, dictate the terms in which they are discussed; how we describe them and the

uses to which we put them are, to a considerable extent, up to us. Given this inherently creative dimension to the act of reading, however, and given the fateful conjuncture to which global capitalism has brought us, there is a case to be made for setting aside prevailing critical orthodoxy and reading *Another Now* as an important contribution to an initial blueprint, and not merely a dream, of a post-capitalist utopia. This utopia is, to be sure, one that has learnt vital lessons from the critical utopias of the 1970s, not least in its commitment to democratic decision-making and its opposition to top-down organisation.³ By incorporating these insights into a remarkably ambitious, systematic, and robustly defended account of a radical alternative to capitalism, however, *Another Now* may represent the advent of a new form of utopian literature: the post-critical utopia.

¹ In his 2020 study, *Invoking Hope*, Phillip Wegner considerably extends Moylan's account of the critical utopia, characterising the whole of utopian fiction since Aldous Huxley's *Island* as a series of variations on the form of the critical utopia (Wegner 2020, 205–6). Indeed, for Wegner, even More's *Utopia* functions as a kind of proto-critical utopia: 'I would like to suggest that the utopia in *Utopia* is to be found not in Utopia, the island figure presented in Book Two.... Rather, utopia is to be located in *Utopia*, More's book itself, and most particularly in the figure of a dialogue it offers us' (Wegner 2020, 84).

² In the decades since the publication of *Demand the Impossible*, Moylan has continued to refine and develop his thinking about utopia, including his views on the relationship between utopian dreaming and more programmatic utopian social and political policy. Much of this work has been collected in revised form in his important recent study, *Becoming Utopian*. In this text, Moylan agrees with Jameson that utopianism today must start out from a negation of the anti-utopian present: ‘Only from this negative standpoint, only by deploying a transformative interpretive critique, can we begin to articulate the negation of the negation...’ (Moylan 2020, 3). On the other hand, while accepting Jameson’s strictures against any immediate connection between utopian literature and politics, Moylan contends that ‘imaginative explorations of the political process are nevertheless central to the utopian vocation’ and that utopian texts can ‘feed and enliven the political imagination’ (2020, 32). Moylan later offers a more pointed criticism of Jameson’s position: ‘if one lingers at the negative and focuses only on the break, one could well be trapped in some contemporary version of Zeno’s paradox and thereby neglect expression that register tremors of emergent political movement’ (2020, 112–113). These remarks, along with many others of a similar nature, suggest that Moylan would be sympathetic to the more programmatic and propositional form of utopian fiction represented by *Another Now*. This impression is undercut, however, by his unequivocal rejection of utopian blueprints: ‘becoming utopian’, he writes, is ‘not a matter of a top-down imposition of a plan or blueprint by a designing authority but rather a dynamic amalgam of experiences by which many break with the existing world...and work together toward a utopian horizon’ (Moylan 2020, 14). Here and elsewhere in the text, it is clear that blueprints continue to carry anti-democratic and authoritarian associations for Moylan. The notion of a democratic, and hence genuinely utopian, blueprint is thus ruled out.

³ In making the case for the concept of the post-critical utopia, the question inevitably arises of which other existing texts, if any, it might be applied to. While this question cannot be

adequately addressed here and would need to be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis, one author whose work suggests itself in this connection is Kim Stanley Robinson. In *Becoming Utopian*, Moylan claims that Robinson's novels have 'adapted utopian sf in a way that concretizes it even more than the critical utopias...so that their explorations grow out of the material conditions and contradictions of their alternative worlds and are not delivered as abstract agendas or answers' (2020, 123). In this way, Robinson has developed an approach to the literary utopia that is 'simultaneously pragmatic and utopian' (2020, 135). While Moylan is clear that he does not read Robinson's novels as offering direct proposals for political intervention or social planning – they are 'not to be reduced to the closure implied in a representational mode' (2020, 137) – his emphasis on their concrete and pragmatic character is redolent of aspects of *Another Now*. Although it was published too late to be considered in Moylan's study, Robinson's innovative recent novel, *The Ministry for the Future* (Robinson 2020), which combines an emphasis on conflicting perspectives and an almost journalistic realism with the articulation of a systematic solution to global warming, may be the Robinson text that best fulfils our definition of the post-critical utopia. For an argument that Robinson's recent novels ought, rather, to be seen as an updating of the more familiar template of the critical utopia, however, see Wegner's *Invoking Hope* (Wegner 2020, 203–6).

References

- Beaumont, Matthew. *Utopia, Ltd.: Ideologies for Social Dreaming in England, 1870–1900*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009.
- Bellamy, Edward. *Looking Backward, 2000–1887* [1888]. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Constantine, Murray [Katharine Burdekin]. *Swastika Night* [1937]. London: Gollancz, 2016.
- Delany, Samuel R. *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction*. New York: Berkley Windhover Books, 1978.
- Delany, Samuel R. *Trouble on Triton*. New York: Bantam Books, 1976.
- Gearhart, Sally Miller. *The Wanderground*. London: The Women's Press, 1985.
- Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Herland* [1915]. London: Vintage, 2015.
- Gray, John. *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).
- Hall, Stuart. *Selected Writings on Marxism*. Edited by Gregor McLennan. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2021.
- Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World* [1932]. London: Vintage, 2007.
- Huxley, Aldous. *Island* [1962]. London: Vintage, 2005.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Archaeologies of the Future*. London: Verso, 2005.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Left Hand of Darkness* [1969]. London: Gollancz, 2017.
- Levitas, Ruth. *The Concept of Utopia*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011.
- Macaulay, Rose. *What Not* [1918]. Bath: Handheld Press, 2019.
- More, Thomas. *Utopia* [1516] (London: Everyman, 1992).
- Morris, William. *News From Nowhere* [1890]. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Moylan, Tom. *Becoming Utopian: The Culture and Politics of Radical Transformation*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020.
- Moylan, Tom. *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* [1986] Bern: Peter Lang, 2014.

- Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* [1949]. London: Penguin, 2000.
- Robinson, Kim Stanley. *The Ministry for the Future*. London: Orbit, 2020.
- Skinner, B. F. *Walden Two* [1948]. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2005.
- Wegner, Phillip E. *Invoking Hope: Theory and Utopia in Dark Times*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020.
- Wells, H. G. *A Modern Utopia* [1905]. London: Penguin, 2005.
- Wells, H. G. ‘Preface to *The Scientific Romances*.’ In *Science Fiction Criticism*, edited by Rob Latham, 13–16. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.
- Wilde, Oscar. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism and Selected Critical Prose*. London: Penguin, 2011.
- Williams, Raymond. *Resources of Hope*. London: Verso, 1989.
- Varoufakis, Yanis. *Adults in the Room*. London: Bodley Head, 2017.
- Varoufakis, Yanis. *Another Now: Dispatches from an Alternative Present*. London: Bodley Head, 2020a.
- Varoufakis, Yanis. “Capitalism Isn’t Working. Here’s an Alternative.” *The Guardian* (4th September 2020b). <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/sep/04/yanis-varoufakis-capitalism-isnt-working-heres-an-alternative>
- Varoufakis, Yanis. *The Global Minotaur: America, Europe, and the Future of the Global Economy*. London: Zed Books, 2011.
- Varoufakis, Yanis. *Talking to My Daughter About the Economy*. London: Bodley Head, 2013.
- Varoufakis, Yanis. *And the Weak Suffer What They Must?* London: Vintage, 2016.