Book Section:
Morgan, D (2023) Utopia and Architecture. In: Shrank, C and Withington, P, (eds.) The Oxford Handbook of Thomas More's Utopia. Oxford University Press , Oxford, UK , pp. 614-633. ISBN 9780198881018

https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198881018.013.36

Utopia and Architecture

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> In the classical utopias architecture serves an essentially narrative purpose. As such what is required of it is an efficient functionality as far as the distribution of space, hygiene, solidity comfort, etc are concerned. Its image simply participates in the crystallisation of the laws of the new city, and no other stylistic search is necessary […] *The architectonic or decorative dimension has no importance in More's narrative*. It would even have damaged the equality of the treatment of individuals: the fifty-four cities which cover the island are 'built according to same plan and have the same aspect where the site permits'. (Rouillard 2006: 10, my translation, italics added)

> The home of the Utopian impulse was architecture rather than painting or sculpture. Painting can make us happy, but building is the art we live in; it is the social art par excellence, the carapace of political fantasy, the exoskeleton of one's economic dreams. It is also the one art nobody can escape. (Hughes 1980, 164)

> Utopian practice is an architectonic, an art of systems, but it is a hidden art of which explicit utopias only manifest monograms. Each one of them is the 'figurative' product of the possible architectural production. (Marin 1973: 25)

For over five hundred years Utopia (the text and the idea) has provoked discussions about where we are heading to (if anywhere at all). As we know by now, Utopia might not be an actual destination we can or even want to reach as such[1]. To make the situation even more disorienting, yet also tantalising and provocative, Immanuel Kant tells us that ideas *per se* are 'concept[s] of reason whose object can be met with nowhere in experience' (1977a: §3; cf. Caygill 1995: 236)[2]. Yet, in the very face of such complex ambiguity, we still have to begin somewhere, 'from some point or another' (Mendelson 2017: 42). Often standard accounts of *Utopia* and architecture begin and end with a minimal, and therefore ultimately meaningless, account of Book Two, as is evident in the above citation from Dominique Rouillard. Despite citing Hythloday's highly significant afterword ('where the site permits'), which drastically qualifies any idea of an imposed and fixed uniformity, Rouillard seems all too confident about knowing the lay-out of Utopia.[3] This is also the case of Ruth Eaton's *Ideal Cities* which locks

[1] See Wilde's famous statement about the importance of utopia as an endless and restless journeying in search of what we could call, following the filmmaker, Luis Bunuel, 'an obscure object of desire' (Wilde 1986, 34).

[2] Immanuel Kant's philosophy greatly informs Marin's *Utopiques*.

[3] Louis Marin's attentive reading of More's apparently straightforward description of Utopia reveals the non-congruence of its blocks (quartier), streets and districts, the conspicuous absence of its central

More's description of architecture to a transhistorical search for an ideal urban 'model' to then raise the issues of the dangers of standardisation, the suppression of individualism, and the dominance of surveillance society, all deemed to be 'characteristics of utopian worlds' (2001: 16-17). In *Architecture and Utopia,* it only takes Franco Borsi a few lines before he is evoking 'concentration-camp repression' and a few pages for King Utopus, 'the ideal leader', to 'prefigur[e] Hitler's *Mein Kampf* [sic]' (Borsi 1997: 7, 25). Both Eaton's and Borsi's books strike the eye as they are crammed full of fascinating images of a wide range of architectural forms from various periods, all more or less related to a largely misguided search for 'perfection' that is characterised as often 'arrogant' and 'megalomaniac' (Eaton 2001: 239, 241; cf. Coleman 2001: 8). Both end with a reflection on the need for a scaling-down of ambition, adoption of modesty, engagement with 'the human dimension', and environmental protection, both at the local and global level. These conclusions might be fair enough, but we will have to ask ourselves whether, despite themselves, they are not in effect presenting an argument for the need of 'utopianism', rather than 'proving' why we should stay of clear of it. Mind you, the nature of the 'it', of 'utopia' is far from being clear in More's inaugural text. He certainly does not provide us with a simple definition of the term. We are instead provoked to debate what it might be and do. What is clear is that, due to their sweeping surveys, neither Eaton nor Borsi can adequately address the complexities and playfulness of More's text despite at times, and almost symptomatically in the case of Eaton, registering that Utopia's cities were only 'quasi-identical' and that More's text had a historical context (Eaton 2001: 14, 240). Both texts confirm Louis Marin's claim, in his indispensible *Utopiques: jeux d'espaces*, that such readings reduce what are nonconceptual 'utopic figures' to static, 'complete' images of a supposed 'model' of 'social ideality, imaginary revery or political project' to then judge the ideas according to their 'possibility or impossibility of realisation' (Marin 1973: 251-2). They fix the elaborate play of spaces, wiping out any playfulness (21; cf. Marin 1984: xvi).

For Robert Hughes the natural 'home' for the 'utopian impulse' was in architecture (1980: 164). If Hughes was right (and he was surely wrong about so many things), there had to be a chapter on utopia and architecture in this collection of essays on the afterlives of More's text. Yet, for Hughes (as for many others concerned with architecture) the 'utopian impulse' is situated in the past. For these writers and thinkers, something went seriously wrong.: 'The

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markets and of the Prince's palace. Marin thereby destabilises the stereotypical view, held by Rouillard (and Eaton), of the city's predetermined lay-out (Marin 1973: 27, 163-184).

culture of the twentieth century is littered with utopian schemes' (Hughes 1980: 164). Hughes highlights what he sees as the failure of modernist architecture by shifting to the word 'building', signalling that not much of what we live in, and with, actually qualifies as 'architecture'. For modernist thinkers such as Ernst Bloch, architecture as a 'social creation' stands out from other artforms (Bloch 1996: 2.737). Architecture is largely concerned with realising actual buildings, but lamentably many buildings do not qualify to be considered architectural works of art. They are lacking the requisite aesthetic qualities; they fail to please, charm, stimulate, enhance our daily lives let alone inspire us to search for something better. Compared to other artforms, architecture has especially onerous responsibilities as it is so omnipresent, impinging on all aspects of our public and private lives. We could even say that it is the built environment that gives society its various forms. We construct structures and systems of all sorts, in our heads but also in the physical world, so as to spatialise and conceptualise (conferring meaning on the world around us) by organising and arranging it according to our needs and desires. We naturally invest in the spaces around us, wishing them to provide us with the best possible places for feeling good, at ease, safe and comfortable in. It can easily be argued that architecture is the artform which is most vitally entwined with what it is for us humans to be alive on this planet. And yet, in Hughes' eyes, under dogmatic modernism, architecture, far from being life-enhancing and dream-fulfilling, became a living nightmare that one desperately wanted to escape from[4]. 'The utopian buck stops here,' he says when describing the planned city of Brasilia (1980: 211). Brasilia stands for him as the 'emblematic' indictment of those 'who design for an imagined Future'. For Hughes, back in 1980, what seemed 'obvious' was that: 'It is better to recycle what exists, to avoid mortgaging a workable past to a nonexistent Future, and to think small. In the life of cities, only conservatism is sanity.'

It is interesting to consider Hughes' words forty years on. He is not entirely wrong. Recycling what exists does not necessarily mean making do with the world as it is. Recycling can be creative, restorative, and to an extent transformative. In this context we could consider Patrick Geddes' remarks on the re-erection of Crosby Hall in Chelsea as a university hall of

[4] Abensour writes that dogma is: 'what seems good and appropriate and that therefore goes without saying, what escapes all interrogation, all questioning, all examination, *a fortiori* all critique, because the order such as it is, as it presents itself, as it situates itself, as it produces and reproduces itself falls far short of all problematicity' (Abensour 2013: 24). Utopia is an escape from this 'order'. 'It ignores time and space' (ibid : 25-6, Abensour is citing Michelet on the 'revolutionary festival' of 1789, see similarly Marin on 1968 below (1973 : 15).

residence, interestingly on the site of More's own garden[5]. Geddes considers this project to be 'no mere act of archaeological piety, still less of mere "restoration", but one of renewal; it is a purposeful symbol, a renewed initiative, Utopian and local, civic and academic in one' (2012: 374; cf. 369-73 for other references to More's influence). This type of architectural praxis is certainly one feasible and positive way of intervening in this world and helping to build a better 'civic spirit'. But is it 'utopian'? Does it really change the world? Is it not a tinkering on the surface? Are not such initiatives easily recuperated within our ideologically enclosed system, when something more radical is needed? Marin also raised doubts about whether social institutions are ultimately impervious to fundamental change. He begins *Utopiques* with a wonderfully inspiring account of his experiences of 1968 at Nanterre university: it was 'a liberating explosion and an extratemporal moment of overthrow [*renversement*]; it was also the seizure of every opportunity to speak […T]hose who spoke […] found themselves beyond themselves, beyond what they thought or believed' (Marin 1973: 15). However, very soon thereafter he is bluntly telling us that this 'revolutionary festival' was ultimately a failure, that the institutionalised university cannot be catalyst for change (ibid: 17). Whilst recognising Marin's political engagement at that time and respecting the fact that his disillusionment arose from his lived experience, we might nevertheless want to protest by retorting that, even if the ultimate outcome of such 'utopian' commitment is failure, such bids for change are still worthwhile, even most necessary, as pure expressions of the refusal of what is presented as the *status quo*, as things as they supposedly are (and have to be). The 'No!' surely has to be taken as a rebellious sign of dissent with what is happening. We might want go yet further and bring in Fredric Jameson's provocative remark that failure is in itself crucially important as 'a way to encourage the analysis of our own situation and in particular its crippling effects on our sense of history and of the future' (Jameson in Moylan 1998: 74-7).

To return to the thread of our discussion of recycling in architecture: despite any discussion to be had as to its ultimate impact on society- does refusing that plastic bag help offset the ecological crisis?- Hughes is surely right to suggest that wasting resources is a sure sign of

[5] I turn to Patrick Geddes (1854-1932) at this point partly as a way of reminding us of the significance of More's 'where the site permits' mentioned earlier. Geddes (1854-1932) was, amongst many other things, a passionate advocate for the 'survey', as indispensable to any form of urban planning. His unconventional and inspiring *Cities in Evolution* well conveys the rich definition he gives to this term which goes far beyond any simply mapping out of a terrain prior to construction. Geddes also features at several points later on in this chapter.

insanity. Here he could have found support in the key utopian texts by Bellamy and Morris who loudly protest against the tragic stupidity and injustice of waste, wasted resources, wasted opportunities, wasted energy, wasted lives, sheer wastefulness (Bellamy 1986: 166-78; 226-9; Morris 2004: 285-306; see also Geddes 2012: 72). Interestingly for us as readers of More, David Harvey also notes:

> I always thought that the purpose of More's *Utopia* was not to provide a blueprint for some future but to hold up for inspection the ridiculous waste and foolishness of his times, to insist that things could and must be better' (2000: 281).

Hughes is similarly far from being content with the world as it presented itself to him back then, in the late 1970s. He characterises his age as one of 'ideological cramp and historicist narrowness', 'constriction' (1980: 406). He laments the 'appalling commercialism of the art world, its flight into corporate ethics and strategies' (409). We could readily agree with him now and relate these concerns to architecture, whose relation to economics is most ambivalent and often highly compromising. Bloch, writing twenty years earlier, during the aftermath of the Second World War and the Nazi reign of terror, would not have been able to console Hughes. Ernst Bloch had grave doubts whether architecture could ever flourish in the 'hollow space of late capitalism': 'Only the beginnings of another society will make genuine architecture possible again' he stated (Bloch 1996: 737; cf. Coleman 2013: 135-166). Nevertheless, a glimmer of hope can be detected in Hughes's text: he ends up regretting how dogmatic modernism rejects 'the benefits of the modernist spirit', its 'anxious and open discourse', its search for 'more ways' to 'act as a transformer between the self and nonself'. Something positive was going on during the 'utopian' period of early modernism after all. All the more reason to return to More's book and to hold onto the idea.

We began this essay by alerting ourselves to the dangers of fixing More's *Utopia* in an image of a *topos*, that of the 'ideal city' which unsurprisingly turns out to be far from perfect. Like Rouillard *et al.*, I too will venture into the text, but not to Book Two. Instead, I will head to what looks like another identifiable place, a garden, one nominally situated in Antwerp. Far from being a non-essential place of pleasure, gardens can be sites for addressing many urgent and conflictual global issues facing us today such as, to cite T.D Demos:

> the corporate financialization of nature, realized by the patenting of genetically modified seeds by agriculture and pharmaceutical corporations; the production of greenhouse gas emissions, via a monoculture- and export-based agribusiness reliant on the fossil-fuelled transportation industry and chemical fertilizers; and the destruction of unions and small-scale farmers, displaced by the mechanization and monopoly ownership of the means of production' (Demos 2012).

As well as its possible existence as an actual site, the garden could instead function as an 'imaginary focus' to get us started with our analysis of Utopia and Architecture, but we would in this case have to guard ourselves against the risk of deluding ourselves that this 'place' does or could really exists and that it is somehow better, more 'ideal' than others. As defined by Immanuel Kant, such a *focus imaginarius* lies outside the bounds of experience (Kant 1998: B672). It is a heuristic device for generating interest in 'maintaining the whole', that is, some sort of commonality which does not yet exist as such (Kant 1994: 51).[6] Although in this sense illusory, it could nonetheless be necessary for us as a means of extending our vision beyond experience, to then return us differently to this world, tracing 'new lines of flight' towards 'an other non-place' [*vers un non-lieu autre*] (Abensour 2000: 26). Such a garden might also permit us discuss the implications of what Marin calls 'utopian practice' defined as: this play in space, 'as an *a priori* form of external sensibility' (1973: 23). When Marin tells us that 'utopian practice is an architectonic, an art of systems' (see epigraph), he is drawing on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* where we are told that:

> This schematism of our understanding with regard to appearances and their mere form is a hidden art in the depths of the human souls, whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes *only with difficulty'* (1998: B181).

How can we understand this passage in our terms, those relating to architecture and utopia? In this world we orientate ourselves at the level of images; these are produced 'through' and 'in accordance with' schemas which are 'as it were a monogram of pure *a priori* imagination' (Kant ibid). Images have to be connected with concepts 'to which they are in themselves never fully congruent' (ibid). Schemas can never by captured by images. Images re-present: they tend to produce more or less what is around us or what could possibly be around us.

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[6] For a discussion of this Kantian transcendental utopia as a 'frame for thought' versus a more Deleuzian immanent model, see Buchanan's analysis of Jameson (Buchanan 1998: 21).

Marin envisages Utopia as a ‘performative force’, akin to a ‘schema of transcendental imagination’ which frees us from the clutches of ideological reproduction: ‘in utopia we read the unfigurable figure of Infinite Liberty’ (Marin 1993: 16). As Marin says:

> *Utopia is not a topography but a topique*; not an imaginary place, as one often says, but an indeterminate place, or more precisely, the indetermination itself of place’ (1973: 152).

As such utopia presents a crucial problem for figuration. We want our ideas to be able to take on an evident shape and be clearly representable in this world so that they mean something tangible. However, this doggèd search for meaning might be misplaced. George Bataille for one warns us that we are wrong to take even a dictionary as an authoritative source of meanings. He suggests that, despite our assumptions, a dictionary's function is far from being that of giving us clear precise, well-formed and handy definitions of what things are. Instead he disconcertingly writes: ‘[a] dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks’ (1994: 31). By implication he seems to be suggesting to us, as thinkers and would-be practitioners of utopia, that we need to accept a degree of ‘formlessness’. Maybe we should indeed follow his lead and see More’s ‘Utopia', not so much as a meaningful 'thing', but rather as being what ‘serves to bring things down in the world, requiring that each thing have it form’ (Bataille ibid). We do so much want ‘Utopia’ to ‘take shape’ and we resist attempts such as More’s and Bataille’s to declassify the categories and terms with which we build and rebuild our customary world. Yet Marin insists that such displacements are the conditions of possibility for clearing a space for playful (more creative and freer) thought. This essay therefore responds to the challenge of figuring Utopia by resisting form. Like Hythloday, it wanders; like *Utopia,* it is conversational in tone. Within it I interject jarring comments which draw attention to the unavoidable, but possibly productive, stressing and straining involved in holding together in a relation what is usually considered to be a literary text- though More's work is also sometimes shelved under Philosophy or Politics- utopian theory, and considerations about architectural theory and practice. Thinking about ‘stress and strain’ when it comes to architecture can even lead us directly to ‘utopian’ approaches to the world such as those of the visionary engineer Buckminster Fuller. His writings on tensegrity (defined as continuous tension and discontinuous compression) destabilise our conventional ideas about how our world is constructed (1972: 133-152; 1999:

103, 394, 510-12).[7] Whereas we tend to think of tension as something to be reduced or even eliminated especially when building structures (but also in human relations), and to favour what is more compact, solid, and apparently stronger, therefore more dependable, Fuller positivises the former. He therefore defies centuries of building tradition which is primarily based on compression, the gradual amassing of blocks of material, regarding this cumbersome**,** ecologically unfriendly building method as indicative of antiquated 'solid thinking'.

Architecture is indeed conventionally tied to solid, grounded concerns in ways that the other arts are not. It is for this reason Jameson says that easier for literature to be distanced from ideological constraints and to engage more freely in intellectual speculation than architecture, which tends to be pushed towards a different and more compromising form of speculation, that of property (1997: 259). However, even in the 'literary' world there are still constraints. An instance presents itself here, in this very volume. In an ideal – a Eutopic – world I would have had numerous lengthy footnotes which could have served as a homage to the extensive paratexts that supplement- complement, compliment, add to and fill in, imitate and further ironise- More's Ur-text. These paratexts signal that Utopia is a collective endeavour to create a space whose form is sufficiently accommodating for the airing of 'no less instructive than delightful' ideas that are still in the process of being shaped (More 2020: 3)[8]. Such discursive notes would have signalled the collaborative nature of this essay, the way that it is in dialogue with other writers. They would have captured a sense of More's short, but immensely complex, multi-layered, proliferating, and accumulative text. They would have required readers to flit between two places on the same page, just as More's *Utopia* demands that we move between spaces (here, there; now, then). Nevertheless, given Marin's powerful analysis

[7] Fuller's works are rich in utopian ideas which merit exploration. For instance, all too often islands such as More's are criticised for their isolationism, their detachment from the rest of the world. Fuller encourages a different approach to islands (and by implication to ourselves) when discussing "atoll-incubated humans". One-island models, of which individualism is an example, are 'optically illusory "unitary" system[s]', purporting to be solid compressional entities for whom emanating lines of 'tension play […] only a redundant and secondary part': the reality is that the 'compression-island's mass' is actually produced 'by comprehensive continuous tension'; we are interrelated amongst ourselves as humans but also with other life forms (1972: 133-52; 1999: 103, 394, 510-12). Relating these ideas to More's *Utopia* and engaging with nissological theory (see the work of International Small Islands Studies Association) would be productive. Nissology is defined by Grant McCall as 'the study of islands on their own terms' (Baldacchino 1994: 37).

[8] Similarly architecture is a collective venture (not the oeuvre of a single author); it should also make a contribution to the improvement of society by opening up life-enhancing spaces (not closing space down into a predetermined set form). See Piano 1985.

of the political potential of utopian playfulness and how it can be easily be closed down by all forms of institutionalised formalisation which tends to definitively place things, people, ideas (Marin 1973: 16-7), maybe the restrictive formatting – imposed by the form of the published volume, which eschews numerous long footnotes – is highly apposite, nay symbolic. After all Morus advises Hythloday in Book One that an indirect' or 'oblique' approach, that we could understand as a form of pragmatic compromise, is necessary in the world-as-it-is (More 2020: 66). But we might yet still balk at such restriction, as does Hythloday. He adamently disagrees with Morus and with the state of things. He will not resignedly conform at any price!

Let us resume our tracing of the 'figure' of the garden. It is hard to address – conceptualise? visualise? – this nonplace behind every place, especially in 'architectural' form. Another risk with my 'garden' is that it that might not amount to anything different from all the other gardens one can imagine, and/or that it is just my own personal foible.[9] The best I can do is to propose not entering the garden as part of the narrative flow in Book One, but to start off by relocating it: by somehow placing it between the two books. After all, it is in the middle where connections are made (Deleuze 1991: 106; Buchanan 1998: 20-1). Thus resituated in the middle, it would not be completely conflatable with the garden evoked in Book One. It would need to be radically transformed, although the demands placed on it might reveal it to be inadequately adaptable. It can longer be the garden of a king's emissary (as it happens Morus'); it can no longer be a walled-in enclosure with only one way out or in. Despite being distinct and secluded, both necessary characteristics for conferring on it a certain exceptionality, we could say that it has swinging doors, reminiscent of the Utopians' houses (More 2020: 81) so as to invite easy comings and goings across the two books. By so doing I am attempting to acknowledge the extensive scholarly debates about how to read, how to enter into, More's densely complex text.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of, and even more visualise the already transformed garden in this new location (between the two books). How can one insert such a site there where one has only the end of Book One on one page and the opening sentences of Book Two on the next? Will it magically emerge from the folds that lead to the spine of the volume? Or what if in our particular edition we only have one side of a page which marks the

[9] For how fear of the simulacra and of projection ('social determination') haunt utopian thinking and how 'failure' is therefore necessary for marking the necessity of a space beyond the limits of what seems imaginatively possible from the standpoint of our now, see Jameson e.g 2005: 289, 293; Buchanan 1998: 22.

end of Book One and straightaway, on turning overleaf, we find ourselves already at the beginning of Book Two? Does this not further reduce our chances of constructing this place? If this is our case, there does not seem to be any room for manoeuvre at all. This is a dilemma that has already confronted us: that of the relation between the ideas in a text (here literary) and their 'figurative representations [*bildliche Vorstellungen*]'. For Aristotle in *De Anima* 'the soul never thinks without an image' (3.7, 431a, 14-17). According to Kant, this 'image-neediness' underpins our (human) discursive understanding [*unser* […] *diskursiver der Bilder bedürftiger Verstand (intellectus ectypus)*] (1987: §77, 293). In his 'What is Orientation in Thinking?', a text that is not just about getting by in this world but also about getting to another world, one that promotes 'freedom of thought' in a 'community of others', he writes:

> However exalted we may wish our concepts to be, and however abstract we may make them in realm of the senses, they will continue to be associated with figurative representations [*Vorstellungen*]' (1994: 247, 237).

That is to say, we expect visual forms and need them so as to make 'use of [what are otherwise abstract concepts] in the experiential world' (237). We are evidently faced with a problem: we rely on forms, we are form-making, but how can we shape what does not yet exist, whose form is hopefully radically different from anything that we have hitherto experienced?

Buckminster Fuller, for whom utopianism was fundamental, said 'Form is a verb', i.e. form does things; it has an immediate impact on this world (1999: 162-3);[10] for Nathaniel Coleman, utopia gives to architecture and the city 'a sense of purpose in improving the lot of individuals and groups' (2011: 21). But how can our customary forms of orientation suffice for finding our way to and thereby building a radically transformed and improved world? There is no pathway leading to utopia. As Jameson says, the function of utopian thought is the revelation of: 'The utopian leap, the gap between our empirical present and the utopian arrangements of this imaginary future' (2004 n.p). It is difficult to apply these ideas to the real-world of architectural praxis. Architectural projects are determined by so many imperatives, a major one being that time is money (and architecture requires a lot of both). An architectural project is such a complex combination, series, coordination of so many operations involving various

[10] For Fuller as 'anticipatory' in Bloch's sense, see Fuller 1999: 15.

teams of workers that finding time for ‘thinking space’ [*Denkraum*] is difficult. Here I am referring to Aby Warburg’s notion of *Denkraum* which, as Roland Recht explains, is a distancing between oneself and one’s world that enables one to orientate oneself in relation to it. Recht draws our attention to Warburg’s maybe voluntary lapsus on the eve of his death. Warburg wrote: ‘Kant: what is orientation in space (incorrect title)?’ (2012: 19). The space we are offered by More’s text and paratexts and as encountered after 500 years of historical reflection, we see ‘through a glass, darkly’. We are obliged to consider future conditions of possibility for orientation both in thinking and in space: ‘for we know in part’ but cannot ‘prophesy in part’ (1 Corinthians 13).

As a way of holding back the crushing weight of real-life imperatives that bear down on our topic ‘Utopia and Architecture’, as a means of clearing a more open space for reflection (*Denkraum*), I return to my more speculative mode. We again conjure up the phantasmatic presence of the garden between the two books. Were we to visualise it, but somehow without latching onto images, it would emit special effects both backwards into Book One where they can rebound to traverse the whole text as an ostensible linear narrative, as well as in the other direction, into Book Two, where they can remain captured at the end if readers prefer. Some do. Equally possible is that, once they arrive at the end of Book Two, they make the long journey backwards, maybe bouncing off various points on the way, even remaining permanently at sea, as it were, free to circulate all over the place, never entirely settling down. To my mind, in More’s short *Utopia* there is something akin to the epic ‘ring composition’ as described by Daniel Mendelsohn in relation to Homer’s *Odyssey* (Mendelsohn 2017: 31-3). Of course, Hythloday – like Odysseus – is ‘polytropos’: a man ‘of many turns’. All the elements are there in this most labile of texts to facilitate these various ways of reading and hence spatialising the text, so as to create variable relations with its ideas, and here August Blanqui's intriguing proposition that ‘[o]nly the chapter of bifurcations remains open to hope’ (2013: 147; cf. Abensour 2000: 437) springs to mind. The structure of More's text is fluid or floating, not grounded: ‘Sometimes it’s as if you’re on familiar territory; sometimes you feel at sea, adrift in a featureless liquid void with no landmarks in sight’ (Mendelsohn 2017: 41). All the more reason for locating the starting point for my analysis in the *phantasmatic* presence of the Antwerpener garden, in a temporary or atemporal interstitial space (that does not exclude others). It might be a good idea.

Not just a good idea. If it were to exist, this place might be a potentially 'good' one if that is what we are looking for. We hardly need reminding, but More's neologism 'utopia' is taken to be a wordplay between ou- (not) and eu- (good) place. The garden would be a good place where people could come together to express themselves peacefully, despite their differences, with a view to improving society. Here Kant would surely correct our hesitant prevarication: 'if it were to exist'. For Kant, such a garden is a 'necessary idea' that indicates to us 'what ought to be done' (1998: B373- 5). He is discussing Plato's *Republic* at this point and disputes the unfeasibility of the figure of the philosopher-king. Kant says that utopian 'dreams', like More's, should not be dismissed out of hand for the very reason that they have not actually been properly tried out in practice; they are therefore conceivable; moreover, it is 'the duty of the head of state (not of the citizens)' to 'continually approach such a state' (Kant 1994: 188).

Eutopia was a central concern for the town planner Patrick Geddes. He thought that the 'good place' was not only not nowhere but also latently already there, all around us:

> Eutopia lies in the city around us; and it must be planned and realised, here or nowhere, by us as its citizens – each citizen of both the actual and the ideal city seen increasingly as one. (2012: vii; also cited in Sullivan 2011: 167)

Maybe Geddes was right, we do not need to look much further. Maybe it is indeed a question of cultivating the 'upgrowth' that is already in our world, so that it brings forth 'varied flower and fruit'; in garden cities (Geddes 2012: vi). Geddes was writing amidst the destruction of the First World War, which compounded the desolation of the 'paleotechnic age' with its 'predatory finance', mere 'money-wealth', and 'wasteful industry'. By contrast, garden cities represented an alternative, more peaceful, more cooperative way of life, a way of putting an end to slum dwellings, the creation of real 'wealth and leisure', 'the bettering of man and his environment together' (Geddes 2012: 73). Gardens were seen by him as providing a 'wholesome and delightful contribution to the sustenance of their inhabitants'[11]. The realisation of such good places relied on a thorough exploration and keen sense of the site's geographical and historical situation to be acquired by surveying. Geddes elaborated a rich definition of surveying. The process was concerned with 'the whole situation and life and community in past and present' and its function was [to] prepar[e] for the planning scheme

[11] We note that More's Utopians are equally devoted to their gardens' (2020: 81).

which is to forecast, indeed largely decide its material future'. The survey was to resonate with 'civic feeling' (2012: 346) and as such starkly contrasts with those other all too heavy-handed impositions of town-planning that give utopianism such a bad reputation. Geddes' sectional representations, rather than a bird's eye views, of 'utopian' cities (including More's) have the ability to change our perspective and thereby our assumptions about what architectural forms might be imaginable. Sectional representation reveals 'civic potential as "a drama in time"' (Sullivan 2011: 173, citing Geddes)[12]. Capturing such dramas permit a synoptic 'visualis[sation] and depict[ion of] the city from its smallest beginnings, in its immediate and wider setting…'. The 'minuteness' of such details was important for Geddes (2012: 360-1). Let us however bear in mind Jameson's point throughout – and this is the juggling act of this essay – about how the function of utopian texts is:

> *to bring home, in local and determinate way, and with a fullness of concrete detail, our constitutional inability to imagine utopia itself,* and this, not owing to any individual failure of imagination but as the result of the systemic, cultural and ideological closure of which we are all in one way or another prisoners. (2005: 289; italics added)

Within utopian thinking, including Geddes', the garden is a powerful symbol so it feels right to focus on this figure in More's text, but we have also to try to hold onto the point being made here by Jameson, about the unimaginability of utopia.

In the narrative itself the garden, a form of heterotopia (a world within a world, refracting that outside world), provides the occasion for an encounter which could in time possibly produce radical social and political transformation, for who is to know yet what the future has in store hopefully for us (along with others)? Such an unexpected, yet for many long-awaited, rupture with an apparent *status quo* – an extraction from an all-too-overbearing here-and-now, this way out of our submergence in the midst of unsatisfactory things – would defy the grave reservations of 'Morus', 'Giles', and Hythloday, who were actually at the scene. Indeed, the promising, yet so fragile, vision of the archetypal garden runs the risk of dissolving before our eyes when we read the closing lines of the whole book. Behind Hythloday's back, as it were, betraying his function as the objective describer of an historical event, or, more accurately as

[12] In *Utopia* there are many detectable traces of 'dramas in time', for instance, see Marin's chapter on the Utopians' rich cultural history which problematises greatly the myth of their insularity. They are also still living in the aftermath of a devastating epidemic (mentioned below).

Book Two is concerned, as the simple, self-effacing transcriber of Hythloday's actual words, Morus jettisons any pretence at neutrality and passes on to us his judgment on what he has heard recounted: it appears to him that 'not a few of the practices which arose from Utopian laws and customs and laws were patently absurd' (More 2020: 169). The central issue of 'their life in common without money' is deemed by Morus to 'utterly subvert[…] what are 'the proper ornaments of any commonwealth', namely 'nobility, magnificence, splendour and majesty' (170). To our bewilderment we discover that we have not been in safe hands after all: it would seem that this person Morus is a committed defender of the establishment, who is therefore completely out of sympathy with Hythloday's radical stance on wealth, property, and social injustice. Yet apparenty, according to Jameson (and Abensour) such 'bewilderment' is an integral aspect of the utopian function, namely:

> …to produce some fruitful bewilderment, and to jar the mind into some heightened but unconceptualizable consciousness of its own powers, functions, aims, and structural limits' (Jameson 1977: 11; also cited in Moylan 1998: 6).

These destabilising revelations about Morus confounds our impressions gathered from Book One where he explicitly solicited Hythloday to enter into political life in order to advise those in power how to improve society. Nevertheless, despite his solid social standing as ambassador, as a representative of the state, and as the host of the interlude in the garden, Morus' personal insecurities are also revealed. He is not that sure of himself. For instance, once Hythloday has finished speaking towards the end of Book Two, Morus does not venture to express his objections there and then. He refrains from comment, not just because Hythloday is tired and prickly (Morus tells us that it 'wasn't clear […] whether he would tolerate a contrary view'), but also because he fears being associated with those individuals Hythloday has 'rebuked' who, not having any ideas of their own, resort by default to criticising those of others, just for the sake of having something to say (More 2020: 170). It could be that he senses his own vacuity. He therefore takes Hythloday by the hand to lead him into the house where supper has been prepared behind the scenes (by servants). This gesture is friendly enough, a fitting testimony to the interesting and pleasant time – despite the evident differences of opinion – spent in one another's company. Nevertheless, the vision of the garden at the end of a long afternoon appears dimmer, less vibrant.

And yet there were so many further issues that needed raising! When it comes down to it, nothing has been properly discussed. Definitely no decisions were made; on the contrary, many unresolved contradictions came to light. Marin is helpful here for understanding what is maybe going on in the text. For him the text sets up differences which it then holds apart in the form of a 'neutralisation' thereby maintaining what he calls the 'distance of contradictions [*l'écart des contradictoires*]' (1973: 20-1, 34). Here Marin is drawing on Kant's 'Attempt to introduce the concept of negative magnitudes into philosophy' (Kant 1977B: 779-819; 2002: 203-241). In this essay Kant suggests that there is a form of 'negativity' which arises from the non-resolution of issues and that is nevertheless not to be seen as a lack, a defect or an omission, but instead as a powerfully suggestive 'robbing" or 'privation' of reconciliatory closure, an intense holding-open of a 'real opposition' which flags up the issues and stakes of a particular situation (1977b: 792-3; 2002: 220-221). Hence the non-resolution of, for example, the important question raised in More's text about whether those in power can be positively influenced by experienced and socially engaged 'utopian' thinkers, should not be regarded as a failure. Or better still, we should reassess our assumptions about what we take 'failure' to mean. Jameson for one encourages us to regard failure as something productive, even necessary. In a discussion of the utopian dimension of Science Fiction, he proposes that: 'By force of its failure we are returned all the more intensely to the real' (cited in Buchanan 1998: 21). But maybe we are overstating the sense of 'failure' at the end of More's text? Maybe the vision of the garden scene is fading fast only because here, when located at the end of the book, night is already closing in and it is a good time to head indoors?[13]

After all, not all is lost. Before they left the garden behind them to disappear into the house, Morus did suggest postpone ng the discussion for another day, hopefully sooner rather than later. He has also muttered to us, rather confusingly, that he cannot agree with everything that Hythloday said, yet that he wishes that 'many features' could be adopted in 'our own cities', namely in England, but he doubts that they will be (More 2020: 170). We maybe do not quite

[13] The fading light at the end of More's text compares weakly with the far more spectacular and energetic moments of utopian eruption or explosion evoked elsewhere. For example, Marin refers to a 'flash of lightning' (1973: 21) and Jameson to 'fireworks dissolving back into the night sky' (1977: 21; also 2005: 94, referring to Adorno; also cited by Wegner 1998: 63). 'Fading light' also fails to capture the 'overshooting' qualities of fireworks and lightning. In a footnote to his *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse defines his use of the terms 'transcend' and 'transcendence' as: 'tendencies in theory and practice which in a given society "overshoot" the established universe of discourse and action towards its historical alternatives (real possibilities)' (1964: xi). In order to tap into such 'overshooting' aspects of More's text, we reiterate that due attention has to be paid to its convoluted complexities which extend into the labyrinthine paratexts and all the other commentaries it has propagated.

know where that leaves us, but we might have the lingering feeling that at least nothing has been written-off quite yet, that there does seem to have been agreement that the issues raised merit further deliberation. The garden might still be a befittingly promising place to return to and as such fulfil Ian Buchanan's definition of utopia's form:

> What is by virtue of being not yet? Utopia, I want to suggest, takes the form of a promise, or better a promising-machine (Buchanan 1998: 22-3).

Of course, the story does not begin in the garden. It began in Bruges: there is a diplomatic and trading crisis, 'over matters that were far from trifling', going on between Spain and England (More 2020: 27). As ever when it is a question of alliances and power politics, this situation needs sorting out as it could escalate into armed conflict. That is often the risk. As an agreement has not yet been reached, negotiations have been suspended, hopefully momentarily, so that the representatives of the Spanish prince can go to Brussels to consult with him. There does not seem to be any particular reason for concern. Talks have not exactly broken down. One assumes that there is mutual respect. At least as far as Morus is concerned, they are all ‘men of high standing’ (More 2020: 27). He praises the head of the Spanish delegation, Georges de Themsecke, in particular for his eloquence, skill, talent, and long experience. If one wants a *topos,* one can well imagine the fine and impressive building and attendant ceremonial trappings that shaped and coloured their meeting; no doubt they had sumptuous meals in a banqueting hall to facilitate the digestion of the various difficult issues that had to be worked through. So, although agreement has not as yet been successfully reached, overall it seems to have gone well enough, so far. So, apparently not feeling especially anxious, Morus consequently takes time away from business, evading or interrupting the established order: the exiting from being which is the precondition for the utopian conversion (Abensour 2013: 27, 275, on Levinas).[14] For the time being, then, Morus is at leisure. He heads to Antwerp where his friend ‘Giles’ resides. The friends happen to meet up when Morus comes out of the Gothic cathedral Notre Dame. But right here, in front of Notre Dame, we will have to pause. There is too much interference for the narrative to carry on right now.

[14] For the idea of conversion within Utopia, cf. Zurcher in this volume.

The figure of the Gothic cathedral resonates too loudly within utopian thought not to be remarked upon. My convoluted sentence with its 'not to be remarked upon' attempts to recognise the importance of litotes (affirmative statements that use ostensibly negative constructions) in More's text. Dominic Baker-Smith (following Elizabeth McCutcheon) tells us that there are 140 of them in his Latin text (including the opening statement of Book One that Henry VIII's differences with Charles V were of 'no slight importance' [*non exigui momenti*]).[15] Litotes are a means of 'pointing up tensions and contrasts which makes us pause, and equally to avoid blunt assertions' (Baker-Smith 2014: 499). The act of pausing, of interrupting a smooth narrative, is politically important as it gives us critical distance, critical time to reflect and reorientate ourselves: another interstice, like the gap between Books One and Two, that makes space for *Denkraum*.

The cathedral is identified by Ernst Bloch as a residual 'guiding space' for architecture, (along with the Egyptian pyramid, described as 'the crystal of death as foreseen perfection, cosmomorphically reproduced') (1996: 723, 733). To take just few examples from utopian texts: for William Morris, it epitomises 'a harmonious co-operative work of art', 'organic', built by the 'gildsmen of the Free Cities' (2004: 331, 337, 339); for Ernst Bloch, it symbolises 'buoyancy and jubilation', the 'attempted construction of the depictiveness of a perfect space […] of the organic excelsior with tree of life and community' (1996: 724, 726). The Gothic cathedral was similarly important for German Expressionist architects in the early twentieth century. The architect Bruno Taut (1880-1938) proclaimed that:

> The Gothic cathedral encompassed all artists, who, suffused with wonderful unity, found in the architectural structure of the cathedral a resounding collective rhythm' (Taut in Washton-Long 1993: 123).

Antwerp's Notre Dame also has its own history to tell. Buildings shape, colour, and influence people's lives and are themselves caught up in disaster and conflict. Morus' passing comment that this edifice is 'the most handsome and most frequented church in Antwerp' inadvertently opens a breach for historicising commentary, which interrupts the apparent natural flow (2020: 28). More was beheaded in 1535, so he might have known about this cathedral being gutted by fire in 1533. The building was seriously damaged by Protestant iconoclasts in 1566

[15] Cf. Zurcher in this volume.

and then again later in 1794 by French revolutionaries. It was not always beautiful nor popular. In More's time it might well have provided a setting for, and organised, key aspects of the city's social life, but nowadays this is maybe less the case. Cities change as do their buildings and population. All these details could be important for deepening our sense of the place of architecture in our lives and they may encourage us to think critically about the quality of our public and private spaces today. And this 'today' needs qualifying as for well over a year now, at the time of writing, we have largely been deprived of public spaces as a public health response to COVID-19: an epidemic that will no doubt leave as much of a cultural mark as the two deadly epidemics that so traumatised the Utopians that they have been left anxious about their population levels ever since (More 2020: 92). Our customary spatio-temporal points of orientation have definitely been radically destabilised by COVID-19; many lives have been 'reduced' to a besieged sense of basic survival. What will this lead to? Here I note that Jameson analyses the sort of 'world reduction' he finds in much Science Fiction as a form of 'destruction and sweeping away' of many aspects of the pre-existing society which leads to the emergence of an 'effort to find a way to begin imaging Utopia to begin with' (Jameson 1994: 90; cf. Jameson 2005: 272). But we will return to this proposition in our concluding remarks.

The lively and appealing C16th cathedral scene – the congregation dispersed into little groups across the square, engaging in conversation with the occasional passer-by joining in – exemplifies what Geddes calls 'the city's pageant' (an integral aspect of its 'drama in time' mentioned above), that he deems very important to reconstruct as part of the 'synoptic' vision needed to build eutopian garden cities: 'to assure such utopias we have to know our ground,' he says (2012: 282, 320, 362).[16]

We resume our narrative. It is here, in front of the cathedral, where Morus is almost fortuitously introduced to Hythloday, who had already struck his eye as a fascinatingly rugged

[16] Geddes' 'synoptic' principle 'seek[s] as far as may be to recognise and utilise all points of view and so to be preparing for the Encyclopaedia Civica of the future' (2012: 320). Surveying- in Geddes' sense- obliges us to engage at multiple levels with a particular, site, territory, with land, with the earth. Today we are aware that transhumanists, such as the apparently almost omnipotent and omniscient- though not as yet immortal as far as I know- Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk, are envisaging a colonialization of outer space, a sure sign of their disassociation from the need to find a 'common orientation' on this planet given the ecological crisis (Latour 2018: 11). The counter-response advocated by Bruno Latour, that in effect endorses Geddes' notion of surveying as 'knowing our ground', is engage in a highly politicised and socially crucial process of coming back 'down to earth' (Latour 2018).

character and whom he rightly surmises is a well-travelled sailor. We can imagine the encounter in its shaped context. The fictional text stages many such architectural scenes (often unacknowledged by commentators, as is evident in the epigraph taken from Rouillard and the critical neglect of architectural spaces outside of Book Two). In fact, we almost run the risk of being overwhelmed by images, our 'neediness' for images producing a situation where we are crowded out by them and totally absorbed by the details they represent: a 'risk of being caught up in the given content' that is especially prevalent when teaching utopian studies, as it is details which often intrigue and engage us (Moylan 1998: 2). Take the distracting detail found in the paratextual letter 'Peter Giles to Busleyden' which both corroborates More's retelling of Hythloday's tale and undermines it: according to Giles, the discussion about Utopia was carried on over dinner and others were present. We know that More's servants were there as one of them, not necessarily John Clement, whispered in More's ear at the crucial moment when the location of Utopia was named. But servants would not be seated. There was at least one other person at the table: the 'one of the company' with a bad cold, maybe caught on shipboard, so presumably an acquaintance of Hythloday (2020: 20). This person would also have been also seated at the table and party to the conversation. We are far from getting the full story. There is overt, even excessive, textual playfulness, but it lends itself all too willingly to L.C. Knights' 'how many children hath Lady Macbeth?' exercise, thereby raising the annoying suspicion that we are being distracted by details – and details that elude us to boot – from the major issues that came to light back in that garden.[17] This tactic might just mean that we become all the more determined to return to them as we maybe do not like being fobbed off in this way, but we also hopefully beginning to see the political stakes at play in this text very clearly (albeit 'through a glass darkly')…

But let us step back. We are not yet at the dinner table. Let us consequently proceed from the cathedral to the garden of More's temporary lodgings. It would be easy to visualise the type of house in Antwerp at that time: it is surely quite grand and comfortable as befits his status, but he is not entirely at home there; he has temporarily set up shop, as it were. It is here that he gets to know Hythloday first-hand, once they are all seated on a bench that is strangely covered by a layer of turf. This landscaping detail is also conspicuous: a bit like 'the most handsome and frequented church in Antwerp', but more disconcerting. It pokes through the smooth, modest description from outside as if the author cannot resist registering his own

[17] For potential distracting details, cf. Zurcher in this volume on 'miscellaneity'.

predilection for a particular form of garden furniture. It complements what Baker-Smith so aptly describes as a 'leaking' effect of the paratexts whereby the fiction leaves its own world and 'appears to engage the real one, rather like those pictures in which a limb or a garment protrudes over the frame' (2014: 492). It necessitates another break.

I find not only the turf strange: I have to confess that I am also unsettled by the seating of three people on one bench for a conversation. Is Hythloday in the middle? In which case, Morus and 'Giles' are obliged to position themselves obliquely, twisting their bodies so as to see and converse with him. It is certainly a pleasantly informal, even intimate, arrangement as there is presumably not much room for them all; they might well have to squeeze themselves to all fit on (and Morus and Hythloday have only just met), but it hardly suggests a comfortable arrangement, although the woodcut from Johannes Froben's 1518 Latin editions (fig. ??) allays some of my worries as it depicts an L-shaped or curved bench. Despite apparent frivolity, this scene raises an important issue. The organisation of space is no minor issue when it comes to political debate; indeed, it can make or break chances for a positive outcome. Peace-workers know the importance of creating safe but 'open', comfortable, and warm spaces for giving the time it takes to discuss what are difficult and sometimes traumatic issues (Lederach 2005). War, conflict, suffering is the background to More's text, i.e., the *why* which necessitates what could be considered the central concern of the text, namely *how* to construct a different (better) society? What sort of space needs to be created for people to feel safe and/or at home? More's Utopians are apparently 'everywhere at home'; wherever they go they are 'warmly received' (More 2020: 98). By contrast Hythloday, who is more in our world, wanders restlessly. He cannot find peace. It is surmised by some that he did return home at one point but 'found the habits of his countrymen intolerable' (20). The text can be understood at this level of 'architectural' intervention: as a debate about what spatial arrangements would need to be put in place, given a space, so that this better world, hopefully radically different from this one, where people can feel at home and live peacefully together, becomes possible.

We resume the narrative. All three are seated, one hopes more or less comfortably. Hythloday, the restless traveller, who could be a kinsman of Ulysses, having accepted Morus' offer of hospitality, has also (like Morus himself, and maybe 'Giles') taken time out of his

activities to recount his experiences.[18] We have already noted the importance of ‘taking time’ (‘evading’) as well as ‘making space’ (Dikeç *et al.* 2009). The garden is the space which offers this *epoché*, or produces a suspension of judgment. The adjacent house permitted easy serving of the welcoming lunch, which must have greatly contributed to a shared sense of well-being before the narration began and, as we know already, the supper served later helped round off the storytelling in a nonconflictual way by diverting attention away from the possibly contentious discussion. It is the garden that makes such discussion possible by giving it a place, but we would in turn have to stay there for longer, or return on another occasion, for any resolutions to be reached.

The garden thus gives a place for initial discussion, a place that is denied in the court, the real locus of political power and where a form of violence dominates and distorts relations. This important point requires further consolidation. I suggest turning to Abensour’s writing on ‘compacity’ in totalitarian architecture that creates a ‘mass society’ and thereby suppresses politics (1997: 50-3, drawing on Arendt). Compact buildings are to be compared to more ‘porous’ architectural forms, such as those Benjamin celebrates in Naples. He writes:

> Buildings and actions interpenetrate in the courtyards, arcades and stairways. In everything, they preserve the scope [*Spielraum*, playspace] to become the theatre of new, unforeseen constellations (2004: 416).

We will remember that the houses of More’s Utopians have swinging doors ('that yield to a touch of the hand'), that open 'both onto the street and into the garden', thereby permitting 'anyone to enter' (2020: 81). There would be more 'room to play’ in such a set-up. The architecture lends itself propitiously to agreeable sociable encounters. It encourages lively exchanges. By contrast, the exchanges possible at court are far from fluid. Morus duly states:

> In a discussion among friends this sort of academic philosophy isn’t without its appeal, but in the councils of princes where major issues are debated with great authority, it’s quite out of place (2020: 65).

[18] For analyses of hospitality see Schérer 1993, 2004; Derrida 1997, 2001.

Hythloday's response is unreservedly corroborative: ‘Exactly my point […] philosophy has no place among princes’. The problem is that the debate ‘among friends’ has no political force in the real world as it constructed and the more pragmatic ‘indirect’ or 'oblique' approach (*ductus obliquus*) advocated by Morus is unacceptable to Hythloday as we have already noted (More 66; cf. Abensour 2000: e.g. 47-8, 69-71). Morus’ advised diplomacy is for Hythloday a compromising form of dissimulation, bordering on lying, that reneges on the responsibility to express clearly what one thinks is right and wrong. Commenting on Hythloday’s bleak description of political discussions in the institutions of power, Baker-Smith writes:

> How can idealism intrude on scenes like these? The effect is to give a wholly new turn to the old debate about action and retirement, *negotium* and *otium*: given the power of custom to construct the moral imagination (a point More returns to several times) and given that society is founded on custom, how can you introduce alternative values into such a closed system? (2014: 499)

Again, this is, or rather should be, a central debate in architectural theory and praxis: 'how to introduce alternative values into a closed system?' Nathaniel Coleman convincingly suggests that even 'great architects'- such as Santiago Calatrava and Daniel Libeskind- can be ‘fully ensnared within the logic of late capitalism’ and as a consequence be branded, meaning that their architectural *oeuvres* are turned into prized commodities, akin to the Louis Vuitton bag, recognisable by its signatured design (2013: 149; 153). Be that as it may, rather than seeing the 'oblique approach' as an unavoidable compromise with a given system that ultimately recuperates and defuses the force of alternatives, is it at all possible to radically reformulate our understanding of its potentiality so that it can destabilise conventional forms of thinking and doing? Such attempts were made by Claude Parent and Paul Virilio. In their collaborative projects in the 1960s, for example their church, Sainte Bernadette du Banlay, Nevers (1963-66), they highlighted the critical function of the oblique in architecture, often employing ‘utopian’ vocabulary. Parent intriguingly and inspiringly proclaimed that:

> the oblique function has a past […] imagine in the past this archaeology of the future […] ONE MUST READ THE PAST AS A FUTURE TO DISCOVER (Parent 2004: 5).

In Parent's (and Virilio's) radically oblique analysis of temporality, the past, often taken to be a firm ground under our feet on which we are to continue to build more or less traditionally,

i.e. according to what Baker-Smith calls 'custom', erupts into as yet explored potentiality. We are shaken in our assumptions and obliged not to conform as we no longer quite know where we stand. As Parent says:

> The oblique function is the ARCHITECTURE OF EFFORT that wakes up and catalyses the human. It is the opposite of the enervating comfort that puts him to sleep and leads his mind to its death' (47).[19]

Parent and Virilio were surely right to insist that we need to wake up from such lethargy, otherwise we remain trapped, imprisoned, enclosed in an ideological system (Jameson 2004 n.p.; Abensour 2000: 113-14, discussing Benjamin). Certainly, lethargy seems alien to More's Utopians, who are always on the move, busy learning, keenly alert to the pleasures of sound, sight, and smell, and the shape and loveliness of the universe, fully enjoying the joys of life. No wonder, they sleep a good, sound eight hours (More 2020: 85, 110, 119). The significance of the sleeping-waking balance to Utopian thought – from More through Edward Bellamy and William Morris to contemporary thinkers such as Abensour and Harvey – gives us a lively sense of the cultural resonance of More's text through time. Given our 24/7 'culture', that keeps us on an often unproductive stand-by, the vision of a Golden Age arriving when we may finally hope "to say good-bye to fear, tension, anxiety, overwork and sleepless nights"' seems particularly appealing (Harvey 2000: 281, see also Crary 2014).

Hence a good night's sleep followed by vigorous waking-up is needed for 'custom', or what we could also call 'ideological closure', to be disrupted so that the lively forms of utopian practice can take place. Utopianism is about creating such a 'space', but how? What sort of 'space' can and should be built and how would it engage in 'praxis', that is, actually engage with this world? Again, what could be a more fundamental, 'grounded' question and we might think, *grounding* question, in the sense of generating an impotent sense of not knowing 'how'? These are impossible questions to answer. Not encouragingly, when asked to comment on possible critique of the architectural system, Abensour point-blank responded:

> I will not be engaged in answering the difficult and real question about the relations between utopia and architecture'! (2013: 266).

[19] For a discussion of various 'architectural' attempts (including Parent's and Virilio's) to convert a closed-down, defensive 'bunker mentality', see Morgan 2015.

Such questions should nevertheless be asked. Having now done so, we will hastily retreat to the garden!

The garden scene is divided up into several episodes. I suggest the following breakdown: 1. the arrival in the garden (from the cathedral); 2. the sitting-down and initial discussion which reveals fundamental differences of opinion (including the so-called 'Debate of Counsel'); 3. the exiting of the garden and entry into the house (the break for lunch); 4. the return from lunch and, not the resumption of the previous discussion, but Hythloday's account of Utopia; 5. finally, the exiting of the garden for supper. It is almost not the same garden before and after lunch. It no longer hosts discussion. We have Hythloday's monologue; the other two just listen. When he has finished, 'Giles' says nothing and Morus does not care, or dare, to express his reservations about what he has heard. Instead, he hospitably, as well as diplomatically, escorts his guest into the house 'having praised [the Utopians'] way of life and his exposition' (More 2020: 170). He also suggests they organise another occasion sometime for proper discussion, intimating that Morus intended to find other topics of conversations for discussion over the evening meal, although this turns out not to be exactly the case as is revealed by Giles in his letter to Busleiden, discussed above (20). So what did the garden become in episode 4? Its different state has to some extent been prepared for: they have had a good meal; they return to their by-now familiar places (on that turf-covered bench); they will not be disturbed (the servants have their orders). Hythloday has promised to relate his experience. They show themselves to be suitably attentive, then: 'He sat silent and thoughtful a moment, and then began as follows' (More 1992: 30)[20]. We then move into Book Two. Episode 4 in fact comprises four parts, stretched out over both books: 4a. the return from lunch and getting settled; 4b. the putting into place of a state of attentive anticipation, what we can identify as a 'moment'; 4c. Hythloday's monologue; and 4d. the polite after-remarks, as well as Morus' private mutterings (addressed to us). So what is happening in and to time and space in the isolated 'moment' (4b) before Hythloday actually starts his monologue (in Book Two)?

For Marin this precise 'moment', just before Hythloday begins to speak, is 'an intensity-sign', an 'exiting out of the series', and we have duly located in the narrative the sequence of micro-details leading up to this extra-ordinary 'event' that 'presents' itself as a rupture from what

[20] At this point I prefer Adams' translation as he explicitly uses the word 'moment': it does feature in Baker-Smith's but implicitly. He writes: 'he sat briefly in silent thought and then began as follows'.

has gone before (Marin 1984: xxiv). This ‘moment’ cannot be entirely catered for and predicted. This ‘moment’ is suspended in time and space. This ‘moment’, an ‘instance of pure difference’, creates a ‘scene’ (ibid.). It is a strange sort of ‘a scene’ as we have left ‘actors’ behind and, even if we are still supposed to be in the garden, it has become strangely irrelevant, a ‘place outside of place’ [*un lieu hors lieu*] (Marin 1973: 20). This ‘scene’ is the wherein and whereby the very ‘instant of pure difference’ emerges which marks and registers (and here Marin is referring to Bloch): ‘the signal of the imminence of a fracture, an imminence which is immanence. It is present, but of an already arrived future’ (Marin 1984: xxiv). It is a ‘moment’ that seems to promise potentially momentous effects. But Marin suggests that its significance comes before what is said. It does not even rely on the substance of Hythloday’s ensuing account of the Utopians in 4c, or on the personality and credentials of the speaker. Marin writes that as regards this moment it is ‘no matter what he says or how surprising is More’s description of him’ (ibid). This ‘moment’ is an ‘unsettling wound’ in the text, that the text subsequently must do its best to account for, by ‘covering’ it, maybe so that we as readers do not lose our sense of bearings altogether. Following on from this moment, possibly anything could happen, or not. Our grounded sense of ‘permanence’, of being situated in a here-and-now that can be represented, has fallen away.

Of course, we should, in a chapter on "Utopia and Architecture", leave the phantasmatic, ‘schematic’ garden and head off again into Book Two to systematically track Hythloday’s ‘architectural’ description of the island of Utopia and the active life of its happy citizens. Once that was fully accounted for we then should have gone back to Book One to compare what we have seen in Utopia with the desolate landscape of Tudor England, with its monstrous, rampant sheep who devour humans, pillage and destroy houses, cities, fields, and occupy churches, and the equally insatiable gluttonous rich in their luxurious palaces isolated in an apocalyptic wasteland across which we can detect roaming figures in desperate search for shelter, and make out others raucously inebriating and obscenely gorging themselves in taverns, frenetically fornicating in brothels (More 2020: 42-44). Nevertheless, it seems to me that it is more important to hold on to this empty, yet pregnant ‘moment’. We should not forget this hiatus that presents itself as a straining of our imagination and that is so full of promise. It is the ‘promise’ behind the promise mentioned at the end of Book One (74). It is the precondition for change; it cannot be completely catered for, though some architectural arrangements can be put in place so that it is not pre-empted from the start. Twenty years ago, Jameson described the utopian moment as follows:

> We need, then, to posit a peculiar suspension of the political […] it is this suspension, this separation of the political – in all its unchangeable immobility – from daily life and even from the lived and the existential, this externality that serves as the calm before the storm, the stillness the centre of the hurricane; and that allows us to take hitherto unimaginable mental liberties with structures whose actual modification or abolition scarcely seem on the cards. (2004 n.p).

These COVID-induced times hardly feel 'calm' or 'still', despite the weight of immobility, and we would certainly be hard pressed to compare them to the extratemporal 'revolutionary festival' of 1968 as described by Marin (1973: 15). Yet is there maybe nevertheless something akin to the 'utopian political process' as described by Jameson that we could identify: 'The reduction of all of us to that psychic gap or lack in which we all as subjects consist, but that we all expend a good deal of energy on trying to conceal from ourselves' (2004: n.p)?[21] Whilst I am ill at ease with Jameson's universalising 'we' here – especially as I am about to latch on to it opportunistically for my final sentences (I imagine that many people live 'reduction' every day and feel 'ideological closure' most acutely) – is there any way that our current situation might be turned into a moment 'portentous of great changes' (Bellamy, cited in Harvey 2000: 281)? The 'moment' for radically rethinking and restructuring the world we have built for ourselves?

[21] I note that the Utopians, though they might for us be deemed to be a statistical, anonymous population, have no word for the supposingly universalising 'man in general' (More 2020: 107).