

UTOPIA & ANTI-UTOPIA in Modern Times



KRISHAN KUMAR

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KRISHAN KUMAR

Basil Blackwell

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First published 1987

Basil Blackwell Ltd
108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JF, UK

Basil Blackwell Inc.
432 Park Avenue South, Suite 1503,
New York, NY 10016, USA

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Kumar, Krishan, 1942–
Utopia and anti-utopia in modern times.
1. Fiction—History and criticism
2. Utopias in literature
I. Title
823'.009'358 PN3352.U8
ISBN 0-631-14873-6

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Kumar, Krishan.
Utopia and anti-utopia in modern times.
Bibliography: p.
Includes index.
1. Utopias. 2. Utopias in literature. I. Title.
HX806.K86 1986 335'.02 86-17101
ISBN 0-631-14873-6

Typeset by Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, Gloucester
Printed in Great Britain by T.J. Press Ltd, Padstow

Preface

This is a book about books. Worse, it is mostly about some very well-known books, such as Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. What can be the justification of yet another treatment of these works – and at such length?

There are several good histories of utopias. And there are many individual studies of particular utopian texts. It is rarer, though, to find a combination of the approaches of both, which seeks to add the advantage of historical narrative and context to that of the detailed consideration of particular texts. This is what this book tries to do. Inevitably, such a combination lengthens the treatment – whether justifiably or not the reader alone will judge.

Histories of utopian thought generally have all the interest of a telephone directory. A string of names – of books and authors – unfolds, accompanied by capsule summaries of the books' contents. The net effect is indigestion, or boredom. One is bounced through the ancients – the biblical prophets, Plato and the Greeks; hurried throughout the Middle Ages, with a glance at Augustine; served up More, Campanella and Bacon as a substantial dish; then finished off with the nineteenth-century socialists: often with a coda which proclaims or laments the death of utopia in our own century. An old and respected text, Joyce Oramel Hertzler's *The History of Utopian Thought* (1923), can stand as a convenient example – not only because the author is dead and beyond hurt, but also because, as one of the earliest histories, it seems to have established the pattern of most later accounts.

That these books – and I include Hertzler's – have their uses is undeniable; just how much will be clear particularly in the earlier chapters of this one. Moreover, I too have felt the need to run through the familiar story. The bulk of this book is about English and American utopias and anti-utopias of the period from the 1880s to the 1950s. But some context, some setting of these works within the intellectual and literary tradition of utopia, is clearly necessary. This is the object of the chapters in part I. I look there at the classical and Christian inheritance of the modern utopia, and seek to distinguish these intellectual

antecedents from the utopia proper invented by More. I next consider in some detail the socialist and especially Marxist utopias of nineteenth-century Europe, as the essential historical and ideological background to the works studied in part II. America gets a separate chapter, both because of its own important role in the utopian tradition – America as utopia – and as the home of the experimental utopian community. America is also where, it is sometimes surprising to recall, the first fully realized socialist utopia was produced: Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. Lastly in part I I discuss the anti-utopia, as a form related to but distinct from the traditional utopia. Anti-utopia is, in essence, a relatively recent invention, a reaction largely to the socialist utopia of the nineteenth century and certain socialist practices of the twentieth century. Since two of my studies – and two of the best-known works – are anti-utopias, I have felt the need to examine the main themes and preoccupations of the anti-utopia as the general intellectual background to Huxley and Orwell in particular.

In all this I am indebted to the standard histories of utopia, as I hope I have made sufficiently clear in the notes. So far as these chapters go, I make no claim to any originality of treatment or particularly of thought. But I should have felt guilty of just the very fault I have complained of in the standard accounts if I had then gone on to deal with the particular period I have chosen in the same discursive way. It seemed to me important, both as a means of stimulating the interest of the reader and of saying something substantial and significant about the works themselves, to avoid the standard narrative approach. This, with its listing of 'influences' and requirement of something like a comprehensive coverage of works produced in the period, seemed to be the road to literary and intellectual congestion. At the same time, I did not wish to write isolated studies of literary texts, in the traditional manner of literary critics and some historians of political thought. I wanted the detail that would come from concentrating on a few texts, but I also wanted to show that there was a distinct intellectual tradition linking the texts, and that this strand was in its turn subsumed in a larger tradition of social thought. The relationship between part I and part II is therefore reciprocal, even though the treatments are very different.

The selection of works for detailed study in part II is to some extent arbitrary. I should have liked, for instance, to include William Morris's *News from Nowhere* and Evgeny Zamyatin's *We*. Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, too, seems a key text of the period. But, for reasons of space, there had to be some choice; and I chose works which, at the time or subsequently, most seem to have caught the public imagination. I also wanted to balance utopia against anti-utopia, as far as I could. So utopias of socialism and science – Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and Wells's *A Modern Utopia* – are matched by anti-utopias of science and socialism – Huxley's *Brave New World* and, to an extent at least, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. These four also have the advantage of being tightly linked in an intricate pattern of challenge and response. Skinner's *Walden Two* stands somewhat outside this tradition, although it is partly an answer to *Brave New World*. But it is important both as a prime example of the experimental utopia, the chief legacy of the American utopian tradition, and as signalling a renewal of the utopian impulse in the West.

In all cases I have discussed my chosen texts in relation to the writer's work and thought as a whole, and to other writers. But I have not been much concerned with the specifically literary quality of the works. All utopias and anti-utopias are, by definition, fictions. Strictly speaking, the literary utopia – as opposed, say, to the political treatise – is the only utopia. All the utopias of part II are novels, imaginative works of fiction. Therefore, they can be, and sometimes have been, treated according to the conventional canons of literary criticism. But not only do I not feel particularly competent to do this, I also feel that not much is to be gained by doing so. On the whole, utopias are not very distinguished for their aesthetic qualities as works of literature. More's *Utopia* and Morris's *News from Nowhere* are perhaps the principal exceptions. But one would not go to *Looking Backward* or *Walden Two* for the pleasure of their prose. What is interesting about them, and what I have concentrated on, is the nature and quality of their ideas about individuals and societies. It is chiefly as contributions to social thought that I consider them.

That this leaves out certain other important aspects of these works is something I am regretfully conscious of. The limitation probably does not matter so much in the case of the utopias I discuss, with the exception perhaps of *A Modern Utopia*. But it possibly matters more with the anti-utopias, *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, both of which are complex works of fiction where the literary devices can make meanings uncertain and open to varying interpretations. It does indeed seem the general rule that the anti-utopia, at least in modern times, has been more effective than the utopia in evoking literary qualities of a vivid and compelling kind. This is borne out not just by other examples such as Zamyatin's *We* and Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, but in the well-known contrast between the literary power of Wells's early anti-utopian fables and the more hackneyed quality of his later utopian writing. To say that this is yet another case of the devil's having all the best tunes is, of course, to prejudge the question of just who are the angels and who the devils in the conflict between utopia and anti-utopia.

The single chapter of part III, finally, is by way of an epilogue. It summarizes the situation of utopia and anti-utopia in the first half of the twentieth century; and it goes on to consider the fate of both in the second half of the century. Is utopia now dead, as so often pronounced, and as appeared the case at least in the earlier part of the century? Or has it survived the battering of the anti-utopia? What are its current forms, and what place might it have in current thinking about the future of Western or world society? The outlook for utopia seems uncertain, to put it no stronger than that. But it would be odd indeed if a type of thought which has flourished in one form or another for at least three thousand years should now cease altogether to perform its historic function of clarifying the choices before us through the presentation of the most varied pictures of a fulfilled and happy humanity.

One meets many people on a journey through utopia. For simply an encouraging wave, or more substantial help, I should particularly like to thank: Chimen Abramsky, Bernard Crick, Jean Jackson, Ruth Levitas, Steven Lukes, David McLellan, Frank Parkin, Patrick Parrinder, Steven Rose, Peter Singer,

Quentin Skinner, Howard Smokler, Brian Stableford. I am grateful also to the American Council of Learned Societies for awarding me a Fellowship, and to Daniel Bell and the Sociology Department of Harvard University for providing so congenial an environment in which to hold it.

Krishan Kumar
Canterbury, Kent

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PART I

1

Utopianism Ancient and Modern

Utopian ideas and fantasies, like all ideas and fantasies, grow out of the society to which they are a response. Neither the ancient world nor the modern world is an unchanging entity, and any analysis of Utopian thinking which neglects social changes in the course of the history of either antiquity or modern times is likely at some point to go badly wrong.

M. I. Finley, 'Utopianism Ancient and Modern', in K. H. Wolff and Barrington Moore, Jr. (eds), *The Critical Spirit: Essays in Honor of Herbert Marcuse* (1967)

GREEKS AND ROMANS

George Orwell wrote of 'the dream of a just society which seems to haunt the human imagination ineradicably and in all ages, whether it is called the Kingdom of Heaven or the classless society, or whether it is thought of as a Golden Age which once existed in the past and from which we have degenerated'.¹ Orwell points to the constancy and consistency of the utopian vision. As a structure of the imagination, says another student of utopias, 'it has barely changed in the last four and a half centuries.'² Even that sounds too modest: should we not rather say, the last *twenty-four* and a half centuries? Is it not a persuasive view, a commonplace even, that all utopias of the past two and a half thousand years have been merely footnotes to Plato's *Republic*?³ What are Wells's Samurai, Huxley's Controllers, the Inner Party of Orwell's Oceania, but the recognizable and legitimate descendants of Plato's Guardians? How frequently in later utopias do we not meet the characteristic features of the Platonic utopia: the 'reign of reason' in the threefold hierarchy of philosopher-kings, executive agents, and ordinary producers and artisans; the elevation of public over private life, and the pervasive control and regulation of daily life; the communism of property, wives and children, and the eugenic approach to reproduction; even the 'noble lie'?

Certainly we would be doing violence to both popular and scholarly usage to dismiss out of hand the idea that there was a classical utopia; even that there was a Christian utopia, although that has always been more controversial. I do

in fact want to argue that, although classical and Christian influences on utopia have been and remain profound, there is not, properly speaking, either a classical or a Christian utopia. The modern utopia – the modern western⁴ utopia invented in the Europe of the Renaissance – is the only utopia. It inherits classical and Christian forms and themes, but it transforms them into a distinctive novelty, a distinctive literary genre carrying a distinctive social philosophy. But in order to show that, we clearly need to consider, however briefly, the classical and Christian background to the idea of utopia.

Plato in fact comes in rather late, if we focus first on the world of classical antiquity. Utopian themes reach back to the earliest Greek writings. From Hesiod's *Works and Days*, of the early seventh century BC, came the canonical depiction of the Golden Age, the bitterly-lamented vanished age of Kronos' reign: when men 'lived as if they were gods, their hearts free from all sorrow, and without hard work or pain'; when 'the fruitful earth yielded its abundant harvest to them of its own accord, and they lived in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things.' Reworked by Virgil and Ovid as the lost age of Saturn (the Roman Kronos), the pastoral perfection of the Golden Age reappeared as the classic Arcadia, a time and a place of rustic simplicity and felicity. Virgil's Fourth *Eclogue* foretells the return of 'the reign of Saturn', an age of peace and prosperity, where nature is abundant, and men's wants moderate and easily satisfied without excessive toil. Ovid's portrayal of the Golden Age in Book One of the *Metamorphoses*, 'the definitive form in which the myth was infused into utopian thought',⁵ scales more extravagant heights:

Golden was that first age, which, with no one to compel, without a law, of its own will, kept faith and did the right. . . . There was no need at all of armed men, for nations, secure from war's alarms, passed the years in gentle ease. The earth herself, without compulsion, untouched by hoe or ploughshare, of herself gave all things needful. . . . The spring was everlasting, and gentle zephyrs with warm breath played with the flowers that sprang unplanted. Anon the earth, untilled, brought forth her store of grains, and the fields, though unfallowed, grew white with the heavy, bearded wheat. Streams of milk and streams of sweet nectar flowed, and yellow honey was distilled from the verdant oak.

The long arm of the Arcadian idyll is apparent in the anti-urban (and later anti-industrial) fantasies of scores of later writers up to our own time, most notoriously perhaps in England. As a serious ingredient of utopian thought it had its final fling in the eighteenth century. Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* was the stern Arcadian counterpart to the revels of French courtiers playing at shepherds and shepherdesses in the gardens of Versailles. Before that, Arcadia as a vision of utopia was sufficiently familiar to educated Europeans for Shakespeare to be able to mock it, as in Gonzalo's fanciful utopian endeavours 't'excel the golden age' in *The Tempest*:

I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,

And use of service, none. . . .
 All things in common nature should produce
 Without sweat or endeavour; treason, felony,
 Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
 Would I not have; but nature should bring forth
 Of its own kind, all foison, all abundance,
 To feed my innocent people.⁶

Montaigne, on the other hand, in his influential essay 'Of Cannibals', praised the simple life of savages for a more important reason than their abundant leisure and peaceable equality: 'they are moreover happy in this, that they only covet so much as their natural necessities require: all beyond that is superfluous to them. . . . they have no lack of anything necessary, nor yet lack of that great thing, the knowledge of how to be happy in the enjoyment of their condition, and to be content with it.' So long as Arcadia persisted as an element in the western utopia – and the discovery of the New World in the sixteenth century gave it a renewed lease of life – its hallmark was the harmony between man and nature, based on moderate 'natural' needs, uncomplicated and uncorrupted by 'civilization'. Arcadia, as the myth of the Golden Age indicated, might exist in the past. But that did not prevent its being willed into existence, in some future time, as the conscious product of a utopian design. 'The Golden Age of the human species is not behind us, it is before us', declared Henri Saint-Simon in a typical utopian pronouncement of the early nineteenth century.

Interestingly, Montaigne deliberately set his Arcadian vision against the classical utopian tradition represented by Plato, which he accused of the over-elaborate contrivance typical of philosophers. It shows the fertility of invention in the ancient world that it could both throw up the Golden Age and Arcadia as objects of man's longing, and at the same time inaugurate an alternative, almost antithetical, tradition which was nevertheless equally utopian: the utopian project of the ideal city. If Arcadia showed man living within, and according to, nature, the Hellenic ideal city represented human mastery over nature, the triumph of reason and artifice over the amoral and chaotic realm of nature. Hence the importance, in the ideal city tradition, of those who gave the law and made the rational order of human society: the founders and framers of cities and constitutions, the philosopher-kings, the architect-planners. An early Greek tradition already venerated the semi-mythical figures of Solon of Athens and Lycurgus of Sparta as the founders and law-givers of their respective city-states. This idealization, common throughout the classical period, was boosted by Plutarch's *Lives* (first century AD), which made of Solon and Lycurgus virtually the creators of utopian societies. As received in Europe through various translations in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the *Lives*, eked out with such celebrated set-pieces as Pericles' funeral oration from Thucydides' *History*, set before European thinkers two sharply contrasting utopian models. There was Athens: democratic, tolerant, boisterous, given over to a cultivated hedonism; and there was Sparta: authoritarian, ascetic, communistic. European utopian writers, along with most other kinds, were clearly fascinated by the alternative possibilities suggested by

these two great exemplars of the ancient world. Right up to the French Revolution and beyond, one way of classifying utopias was as 'Athenian' or 'Spartan', with Sparta predictably the favourite not simply for matching more closely the utopian preference for a tightly regulated communal order, but as much for its status as the putative model of the most admired ancient utopia, Plato's *Republic*.

Solon and Lysurgus, the ideal law-givers, were the prototype of later utopian *nomothetai*: King Utopus in Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, Sol in Campanella's *City of the Sun*, King Solamona in Bacon's *New Atlantis*. The Pythagorean communities of southern Italy (Magna Graecia), 'the most famous utopian experiment of the ancient world',⁷ provided a modification within the ideal city tradition. Here were model communities, set up in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, which were governed by aristocratic clubs (*hetaireiai*) of philosophically and religiously trained followers of Pythagoras. The mystical and mathematical mixture of their Pythagorean philosophy itself suggests a line of connection with Plato's similarly inclined philosopher-kings, the Guardians of his *Republic*. But more important was the aristocratic form of the Pythagorean ideal community. This implied that a founder-law-giver might well be necessary at the beginning – Pythagoras himself had in fact fulfilled this role – but that the continuation of the community depended upon a rigorously trained and disciplined aristocratic caste. Such at any rate seems to have been Plato's inference from the Pythagorean experiment, whose legendary communal order seems to have influenced him considerably in his own utopian construction. The influence persisted in the aristocratic ideal which Plato's pupils at the Academy carried with them as constitutional advisers throughout the Hellenic world in the fourth century, and which thereby in time reached practically every corner of the ancient world. The best society would be the society ruled by the best, those most fitted by training and temperament for the most difficult of all arts, the art of government. The philosophers, having left the cave in pursuit of the light, had a duty to return to it, to give the benefit of their illumination to the ordinary mortals still chained with their faces to the wall.

It was of course through Plato's *Republic*, rediscovered along with other Greek writings in the European Renaissance, that the Hellenic ideal city most influenced the western utopia. More saw his own *Utopia* as partly a continuation of the *Republic*, fulfilling Socrates' desire in the *Timaeus* to see the abstract Republic in action actualized (a task barely begun in the fragmentary *Critias*). And four hundred years later, H. G. Wells was still constructing his 'modern utopia' according to Platonic example, and largely along Platonic lines. But in some ways the most direct Platonic influence was to be found in the architectural utopia. Architecture has always been the most utopian of all the arts. It has a longstanding concern with the marriage of mathematical and human forms, the finding of a harmony and correspondence between the mathematical relations of the cosmos and the forms and functions of the human body. Between the cosmic order of nature and the corporeal structure of man it interposes the ideal city, as the rationally designed mediator and link between the macrocosmic and the microcosmic spheres. Lewis Mumford has said that 'the first utopia was the city itself',⁸ since the city expressed in its very form and

conception an escape from nature, and an attempt at human and rational mastery over it. The city is a work of art, an artifice. It is a machine for living in. The design of that machine, the task of the architect-planner, is critical for the quality of life lived. The good life needs not just the ideal social and political environment but also, perhaps more so, the ideal physical environment.

Certainly the Renaissance architects seemed incapable of conceiving their task in anything but utopian terms. In the ambitious urban plans of Alberti, Filarete, Patrizi, Francesco di Giorgio and Leonardo, the writings of the Roman architect Vitruvius were fused with Platonic conceptions to produce a physical replica of the Republic: Plato realized in stone. 'The architect-planner was the high-priest of the ideal.'⁹ The centralized, circular, radial plan of the Renaissance *città felice*, with its specialized and differentiated quarters for the different classes and occupations, was a precise physical realization of the aristocratic Platonic Republic. Its influence was clear even in those contemporary utopias which shared Plato's communism but pushed it in a more radically egalitarian direction. Andreae's *Christianopolis* has the perfect symmetry of the Renaissance ideal city. 'Its shape is a square, whose side is seven hundred feet, well fortified with four towers and a wall. It looks, therefore, towards the four quarters of the earth. . . .' Orderly rows of buildings, all of the same height and material, are cut by a main thoroughfare which converges on the circular temple, the spiritual as well as the physical centre of the city. The city is minutely and exhaustively divided into a multitude of quarters, each functionally specialized for the performance of different economic and social activities; those whose work requires the greatest skill and ability are placed nearest the centre of the city. In a similar fashion, Campanella's *City of the Sun* is divided into seven concentric circles, through which four broad streets radiate out to the four gates from the great temple at the centre, the seat of all political and spiritual power. Each circle marks off and segregates the different arts and occupations practised within the city, so that it is only when they are considered together, as an organic whole, that the seven circles can be seen as a repository of all the skills and materials needed for the life of the city. Moreover, all human knowledge is physically represented, in words and paintings, on the walls dividing up the seven circles. Thus the city is itself, as a physical entity, a compendium of all knowledge. It is the physical embodiment of all the arts and sciences, all that is needed for the cultivation of the good life.

Campanella's extraordinary vision of the city as knowledge or science incorporated shows that the architectural utopia aspired, in some ways, to out-Plato Plato himself. Plato had aimed at the immutability of his Republic, but could see no way to prevent corruption and decay from seeping in, such being the nature of men and society. But he had paid almost no attention to the physical environment of his ideal society. Might not stone, which visibly – especially in Italy – outlived the laws and institutions of men, form the essential determining framework of the ideal society? Might not the 'frozen music' of architecture continue to exert its harmonizing influence when corruption threatened to dissolve the social fabric of the city? Something of this utopian belief has continued to haunt architects and planners right up to the present

day. It is to be found in L'Enfant's plan, steeped in Enlightenment classicism and rationalism, for the new city of Washington, the capital of the new American nation: itself a revolutionary creation, a utopia. It is there in the 'City Beautiful' movement of late nineteenth-century America, and in the contemporaneous 'garden city' movement of Patrick Geddes and Ebenezer Howard. And it is explicit and extreme in Le Corbusier's writings and designs for 'the city of tomorrow', *la ville radieuse*: perhaps the most utopian of all architectural schemes, and in its integrative and organic aspiration to create 'a single society, united in belief and action', the most purely Platonic in spirit.¹⁰

The classical world bequeathed one further important element to the later utopian tradition: the 'Cokaygne utopia', the popular or folk utopia. The happy Land of Cokaygne, a land of abundance, idleness and instant and unrestrained gratification, is to be found in practically all folk cultures. It is probably pre-classical as well as pre-Christian. Of all the components of utopia, it contains the strongest element of pure fantasy and wish-fulfilment. This is a fair reflection of the fact that it is 'the poor man's heaven', the dream of the labouring classes of all ages, to be free from toil and drudgery. Such a characteristic comes out clearly in two well-known American versions of Cokaygne, *The Big Rock Candy Mountains* and *Poor Man's Heaven*. These folk songs not only tell of the place and the time when

We'll eat all we please
Of ham and egg trees,
That grow by the lake full of beer

but also of the determination

to stay where they sleep all day,
Where they hung the Turk that invented work,
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.¹¹

But Cokaygne would probably not have entered the realm of utopia proper had it not also been elaborated by classical authors. Ironically, this they did largely as part of a satirical mocking of the myth of the Golden Age. Teleclides, writing in the fifth century BC, was probably drawing on familiar folk images of pleasure and plenty – so amazingly and exactly alike are the same images centuries later, in folk song and fairy tale – when he thus satirized the literature of the Golden Age:

First there was peace among all things like water covering one's hands. And the earth bore neither fear nor disease, but all needed things appeared of their own accord. For every stream flowed with wine, and barley cakes fought with wheat cakes to enter the mouths of men. . . . And fishes, coming to men's houses and baking themselves, would serve themselves upon the tables . . . and roasted thrushes with milk cakes flew down one's gullet.¹²

The satirists might ridicule Cloudeuckooland; but in doing so they delineated a hedonistic paradise that might very easily be taken over by popular

tradition as something to dream about and, in popular carnivals such as the Saturnalia or Feast of Fools, something actually to live, for a drunken day or two at least. This seems to have happened to the comedies of Aristophanes, many of which were aimed at the Greek utopian tradition generally, and some at Plato's *Republic* specifically. In the *Ecclesiazusae* Praxagora leads a revolution of women which abolishes private property and institutes a reign of equality and plenty:

All pressure from want will be o'er.
Now each will have all that a man can desire.
Cakes, barley-loaves, chestnuts, abundant attire,
Wine, garlands, and fish. . . .

Law courts are converted to banqueting halls, and 'all women and men will be common and free/No marriage or other restraint there will be.' Everyone, men and women, old and young, beautiful and ugly, will be able to satisfy their desires without toil or effort (there are slaves to do the work). In *The Birds*, the Birds too, before their corruption by power-hungry politicians, lead happy and carefree lives, 'like a perpetual wedding day'. They do without money, and spend their 'idle mornings with banqueting and collations in the gardens, with poppy-seeds and myrrh'.

Aristophanes was much admired in the Renaissance, but Lucian was even more important in transmitting the Cokayne utopia into the mainstream of utopian thought. His *True History* was a popular text throughout the Roman period, and when it was brought to the west from Constantinople in the fifteenth century it quickly became a firm favourite with Renaissance humanists such as Erasmus and More (his Utopians are 'captivated by the wit and pleasantry of Lucian'). In his caricatured portrait of the Island of the Blessed, Lucian parodied the whole Greek utopian tradition by treating it as a dream of the popular imagination. He describes the 'marvellous air, like scent', of the island, whose flowery fragrance hovers over the 'crystal rivers flowing placidly to the sea'. There is no day or night, but perpetual 'morning twilight', no seasons, but 'perpetual spring'. The music of a children's chorus fills the air, to which is added a choir of singing swans, swallows and nightingales, while 'sweet zephyrs just stir the woods with their breath, and bring whispering melody.' The heroes and philosophers who inhabit the isle never die, and while away their time in laughter and pleasure. Lovemaking takes place openly, without shame. The trees always bear ripe fruit. There are even 'glass trees', which, instead of bearing fruit, 'bear cups of all shapes and sizes. When anyone comes to table he picks one or two of the cups and puts them at his place. These fill with wine at once.'

Cokayne obviously overlaps Arcadia or the Golden Age somewhat (all utopian categories overlap one another). But it differs characteristically from Arcadia in being a utopia of excess and superabundance rather than one of moderation and restraint. Arcadia gives a more than decent sufficiency to its inhabitants, who are governed by the modest needs implanted by nature. Cokayne is there to satisfy all needs and desires, however multiplied or inflated, however greedy or gross. In this it shows the continuing influence of popular culture. Echoes of the classical Cokayne can be found in many

modern utopias, but what kept it alive in the utopian tradition were the frequent injections of earthy themes and images from more popular sources. Shakespeare put it in the portly knight Sir John Falstaff. Rabelais drew on it for the society of happy debtors in *Pantagruel*, and the utopian society of the Abbey of Thélémè, with its motto 'Do what you will', in *Gargantua*. Brueghel painted it in a picture which shows roofs made of cake, a roast pig running round with a knife in its side, a mountain of dumplings, and citizens lying back at their ease waiting for all the good things to drop into their mouths. But probably the most remarkable, and certainly one of the most complete, renderings of the Cokaygne utopia is the eponymous fourteenth-century English poem, *The Land of Cokaygne*. Like Aristophanes and Lucian, the poet comes to mock gluttony, licentiousness and idleness – especially as practised in the monasteries – but like these he ends up painting his earthly paradise in such glowing colours that the satire is overwhelmed by the utopia. Cokaygne is fairer than Paradise itself, 'for what is there in Paradise/But grass and flowers and greeneries'? What but water to drink and fruit to eat? Whereas in Cokaygne:

There are rivers broad and fine
Of oil, milk, honey and of wine;
Water serveth there no thing
But for sight and for washing.

Ah, those chambers and those halls!
All of pasties stand the walls,
Of fish and flesh and all rich meat,
The tastiest that men can eat.
Wheaten cakes the shingles all,
Of church, of cloister, bower and hall.
The pinnacles are fat puddings,
Good food for princes or for kings.
Every man takes what he will,
As of right, to eat his fill.
All is common to young and old,
To stout and strong, to meek and bold.

Yet this wonder add to it –
That geese fly roasted on the spit,
As God's my witness, to that spot,
Crying out, 'Geese, all hot, all hot!'
Every goose in garlic drest,
Of all the food the seemliest
And the larks that are so couth
Fly right down into man's mouth,
Smothered in stew, and thereupon
Piles of powdered cinnamon.
Every man may drink his fill
And needn't sweat to pay the bill.¹³