BA Thesis

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Mapping the ideal: The interpretational difficulties of the (literary) utopia

1. Introduction

In his 1891 essay "The Soul of Man under Socialism", Oscar Wilde wrote: 'A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias'.[1]

Wilde's remark is indicative of the enduring relevance of the 'metanarrative' called Utopia,[2] that has continued to provoke debates ever since its coinage by Thomas More (1478-1535) in his eponymous book, published in 1516. Part of its enduring appeal is the ambiguity inherent in the concept of 'utopia'.[3] [4] In her article on the origin (and subsequent modification) of the word 'utopia', Fatima Vieira succinctly describes the etymology of the word: 'In order to create his neologism, More resorted to two Greek words – *ouk* (that means 'not' and was reduced to *u*) and *topos* (place), to which he added the suffix *-ia,* indicating 'a place'. Etymologically, utopia is thus a place which is a non-place, simultaneously constituted by a movement of affirmation and denial'.[5] [6]

This ambiguity is central to my thesis, in which I will research the concept 'utopia' and its difficulties,

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[1] Wilde, Oscar. "The Soul of Man under Socialism". http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/wilde-oscar/soul-man/

[2] In Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition,* the word 'metanarrative' is used to denote an overarching grand narrative that manages to explain certain historical constellations, a narrative, moreover, that serves to bridge the gap between communities and ideologies. I reject Lyotard's central thesis, the disappearance of metanarratives as characteristic for the postmodern, for the enduring relevance and appeal of a term like 'utopia' proves that a certain narrative of envisioning an ideal(ized) place continues to be constructed. Moreover, in an ironical sense, Lyotard's thesis itself uses narrative components to explain the supposed disappearance of metanarratives; 'metanarrative' as such becomes a narrative itself.

[3] From now on, when referring to Thomas More's text, Utopia and its derivatives will be spelled with a capital letter. In other contexts, the word will not be capitalized ('utopia', 'utopian' and so on).

[4] Discussing 'utopia' as a philosophical *concept* does more justice to More's invention than treating it as a historical 'attitude' or 'disposition' in our thinking that continually varies and transforms. In *What is Philosophy?,* Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Félix Guattari (1930-1992) write: 'Although concepts are dated, signed, and baptized, they have their own way of not dying while remaining subject to constraints of renewal, replacement, and mutation (...)'. Thus, the concept possesses both a *conatus* (defined in part 3, proposition 5 of Spinoza's *Ethics* as a thing that 'strives to persevere its own being') and an adaptability to continually changing historical. The concept 'utopia', as I will try to make clear, possesses both some isolatable characteristics as well as a transformative disposition.
Deleuze, Gilles & Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* Verso, London/New York, 1994, p.8.

[5] Vieira, Fatima .'The Concept of Utopia,' in Gregory Claeys, (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* , Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, p. 3.

[6] As Viera notes, More had originally wanted to call his imaginary land 'Nusquama', which is Latin for 'nowhere', by which, as Viera argues, 'he would simply be denying the possibility of the existence of such a place'.Ibidem, p.4.

using *News from Nowhere, or, An Epoch of Rest* (1890) by William Morris (1834-1896) and *A Modern Utopia* (1905) by H.G. Wells (1866-1946) as case-studies.

These texts are fine examples of the intertextuality that is characteristic for utopia according to Fredric Jameson (1934): (…) 'what uniquely characterizes this genre is its explicit intertextuality: few other literary forms have so brazenly affirmed themselves as argument and counterargument'.[7]
These two texts will therefore be treated as an example of the intermediary (and, one could argue, also 'intertextual') position that utopia inhabits in our thinking towards subjects such as politics, ideology and idealism, both thought of as a 'good place' and a 'non-place'.

1.1. Structure and research questions

Structurally, my thesis will consist of four parts. In the first section, I will comment on the methodology and the conceptual apparatus I will employ. Firstly, I will strive to present a working definition of the concept of 'utopia' and its representational difficulties by drawing on texts by (among others) More, Jameson and Northrop Frye (1912-1991). I will strive to answer my main research question: What are the characteristics and complications of the concept of utopia in general and utopian literature in particular? Secondly, I will introduce my main concepts. I will base my analysis on Fredric Jameson's concept of 'cognitive mapping', described in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,* and the concept of the 'dialogic', or 'dialogism', as used by Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975). If Utopia is part of our 'map', as Wilde put it, this (in this case mainly literary) space deserves 'cognitive mapping'.[8] Next to a spatiotemporal and ideological inquiry into these primary texts via 'cognitive mapping', attention also needs to be directed towards the language employed by the characters, and the dialogic combinations between languages and ideologies constructed not only within the text, but also outside it. Various speakers (or, as Bakhtin puts it, 'ideologues') speak various 'languages', conceived here as an ideological orientation mediated ('betrayed') by speech, languages that become stratified and dialogized during their contact with each other. Bakhtin's conceptual apparatus, consisting of concepts such as 'heteroglossia' and the 'dialogic', will be discussed in this section. A comparative ('intertextual')[9] analysis, I would argue, also constitutes a construction of a dialogue between two texts, a dialogue, moreover, that is not only able to enrich the understanding of these two works in relation to each other, but also as a means of enriching our understanding of these texts within the field of utopian literature and within their spatiotemporal context. In the third section of my thesis, I will engage with my first primary text, *News from Nowhere.* Firstly, I will 'map' the ideal presented in *News from Nowhere* by discussing Morris and his precursors, such as John Ruskin (1819-1900) and Charles Fourier (1772-1837), in order to understand Morris's special version of

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[7] Jameson, Fredric. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire called Utopia and other Science Fictions,* Verso, London/New York, 2005, p. 2.
[8] Jameson echoes Wilde's remark in *Archaeologies of the Future:* 'I believe that we can begin from the proposition that Utopian space is an imaginary enclave within real social space, in other words, that the very possibility of Utopian space is itself a result of spatial and social differentiation'. Jameson, p. 15.
[9] It is worth noting that Julia Kristeva, who coined the concept of 'intertextuality' in 1966, derived a great part of her theory from the concepts developed by Bakhtin.

socialism, in which art, labour and eudaimonism converge. In this section, I will strive to answer the question: How is the ideal presented in *News from Nowhere,* and what roles do the dialogic relationships between the various characters/speakers play?

In the fourth section, I will analyse Wells's *A Modern Utopia* along the same lines. Firstly, I will point out several interpretational difficulties of the mixture between essay and narrative in *A Modern Utopia.* Secondly, I will devote attention to the way in which the 'ideal' is presented in *A Modern Utopia,* mainly by focusing on the role of language and intertextuality in the text.

In the fifth and final part, I will draw conclusions based on my analysis of the interpretational difficulties of (the literary) utopia in an attempt to answer my main research question, stated above. Lastly, I will shortly strive to define the enduring relevance of the concept of utopia, strive to answer my main research question, reflect on my research, and suggest issues that can be examined in future research.

2. Methodology and conceptual apparatus

Before confronting my two primary texts, it is useful to firstly define the term 'utopia', both in its formal and ideological meaning, and secondly, to present the conceptual apparatus that I will be using (and modifying) during my analysis. As I have made clear before, this apparatus will consist of terms derived from the works of Bakhtin (polyglossia, heteroglossia, ideologeme) and Jameson (cognitive mapping), used in the context of the utopian texts I have selected. I will strive to answer the question: What are the characteristics and complications of the concept of (the literary) utopia?

2.1 Utopia: Characteristics, interpretational difficulties

More's *Utopia* established a term that has continued to provoke the public imagination for centuries afterwards.[10] For a working definition of 'utopia', I will present some views on the term from a linguistic, structuralist and ideological point of view, in an attempt to isolate some defining characteristics and interpretational problems.

Etymologically (as I have pointed out previously) More's coinage is a clever pun, which lies at the heart of the interpretational difficulties and charm of the concept of 'utopia' and its derivatives up until the present day.

Structurally, the literary utopia has some overarching characteristics that have continually recurred throughout its history.[11] Northrop Frye has analyzed these recurring characteristics in his study of literary utopias, in which he describes the utopia as a 'speculative myth: it is designed to contain or provide a

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[10] We need to keep in mind, however, that the concept 'utopia' has also been used in the context of forerunners such as Plato's Republic and Virgil's Fourth Eclogue. Therefore, the term 'utopia' needs to be understood as a term that is retroactively and transhistorically applicable, instead of an authoritative term coined by More that has been applied and modified throughout the centuries following its publication in 1516. Nevertheless, I have argued before (footnote 4) that the concept possesses both a transformative quality ('adaptibility') and a self-sustaining perseverance (*conatus).*

[11] Of course these characteristics are in no way paradigmatic.

vision for one's social ideas, not to be a theory connecting social facts together'.[12] Frye identifies several typically (literary) utopian characteristics. Commonly, a person is introduced to a utopian society by a guide who is commonly identified with, and who therefore serves as a spokesperson of the society he lives in. The guide and guided enter into a dialogue in which the customs and rituals of the utopian society, that have at first glance struck the guided (and the reader) as irrational, gradually become rationalized.[13] Furthermore, according to Frye, this utopian rationality is frequently mirrored in the 'conscious design' of the utopia, exemplified by orderly cities and a city-dominated society, of which More's text is a great example.[14]

The confrontation between guide and guided could be seen as a confrontation between Self and Other. This dichotomy, in which the two poles gradually approximate or meet each other in a new *topos*, poses an interpretational problem within the context of the term 'utopia', characterized as 'a resonance, a mode, a perspective. Utopia … offers simultaneously a locus of possibilities for human development, as well as a sense that this conceptualization, being speculative, idealized or fictive, might be difficult or impossible to actualize in reality'.[15] Thus, the scope of utopia is greater than merely the fictional realm. However, when we consider utopian literature as a genre, instead of more neutral terms such as a 'mode' or 'perspective', the guide is the one who is rendered 'Other', because he is the one who is the defamiliarizing element, as a spokesperson of an ideal and ideology of a society that is unfamiliar to both the reader and the guided. It is this interpretational discrepancy between utopia as a 'mode' or 'perspective' and the particularities of the literary utopia that, in my opinion, forms both the great frustration and pleasure in reading these kinds of texts, and, on a greater scale, defining the concept of 'utopia': as a concept, it has ideological, interventionist overtones, which transcends the status of the 'genre', but when interjected in the realm of literature, it constructs and deconstructs rules and laws, thereby forming a specific utopian discursive space.

From the viewpoint of ideology, the term 'utopia' poses some interesting representational difficulties as well. Firstly, its rational nature, distinguished by Frye, ties in well with Immanuel Kant's distinction between private and public reason. In his 1784 essay "What is Enlightenment?", Kant describes these types of reason thus: 'By the public use of one's reason I understand the use which a person makes of it as a scholar before the reading public. Private use I call that which one may make of it in a particular civil post or office which is intrusted to him'.[16] The utopia in fiction, I would argue, combines the private with the public use of reason. The writer resorts to fiction to construct his 'speculative myth', thereby creating a space within the confines of his own spatiotemporal context, without posing an 'unreasonable' threat to an imminent change in that same context, in which he is able to use his own reason freely, which is

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[12] Frye, Northrop. "Varieties of Literary Utopias". In More, Thomas. *Utopia.* George M. Logan (ed.), W.W. Norton & Company, New York/London, 2011, pp. 214.
[13] The dialogic nature of utopian texts will be of primary importance in my usage of the concept 'dialogism', as described by Mikhail Bakhtin, which I will later comment on.
[14] Frye, p. 214.
[15] Bagchi, Barnita. 'Introduction'. In *The Politics of the (Im)possible: Utopia and Dystopia Reconsidered,* SAGE Publications, New Delhi, 2012, p. 1.
[16] Kant, Immanuel. "What is Enlightenment?" In *The Portable Enlightenment Reader,* Isaac Kramnick (ed.), Viking/Penguin,London, 1995, p. 3.

commonly reflected, as we have seen in Frye's analysis, in the rational nature of literary utopias.[17] Thus, the utopia must not be seen as a call to arms or an incendiary, revolutionary piece on politics, such as a pamphlet, that seeks to drag its ideals into reality (ideals which are both 'nowheres' and 'no-places' and whose ultimate realization is, purposely, doubtful) but instead as an intermediary, reformist position between the imperfect society the utopist finds himself in, and the possibility of the realization of a better world, established and communicated through the fictional realm.

What is central here is the confrontation between existential and historical time. Jameson writes: (…) 'it is worth pointing out that at some point discussions of temporality always bifurcate into the two paths of existential experience (in which questions of memory seem to predominate) and of historical time, with its urgent interrogations of the future. (…) it is precisely in Utopia that these two dimensions are seamlessly reunited and that existential time is taken up unto a historical time'.[18]

Thus, the utopian text can serve as a vehicle for an author to comment on, and reconceptualise the existing status quo, without positioning him or herself outside of the status quo, a position that is already taken in the public display of his reason, i.e. his fictional work, which could be characterized as a 'wish' (and a hope geared towards a certain degree of fulfilment of that wish) in fictional form.[19] [20] [21]

As Jameson argues in the first chapter of *Archaeologies of the Future*: 'It has often been observed that we need to distinguish between the Utopian form and the Utopian wish: between the written text or genre and something like a Utopian impulse detectable in daily life and its practices by a specialized hermeneutic or interpretive method. Why not add political practice to this list, inasmuch as whole social movements have been founded and revolutions waged in its name, and since, as we have just seen,[22] the term itself is once again current in present-day discursive struggles?'[23]

Recapturing the comments above, several (preliminary) conclusions can be drawn on the subject of

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[17] This does not imply that utopian literature is of a totally rational nature: 'The utopian romance does not present society as governed by reason; it presents it as governed by ritual habit, or prescribed social behaviour, which is explained rationally.' In Frye, Northrop. 'Varieties of Literary Utopias'. In More, Thomas. *Utopia.* George M. Logan (ed.), W.W. Norton & Company, New York/London, 2011, pp. 214.

[18] Jameson, Fredric. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire called Utopia and other Science Fictions,* Verso, London/New York, 2005, p. 7.

[19] Kant's paradoxical attitude in his description of the use of private and public reason is adequately described by Slavoj Zizek: 'Immanuel Kant countered the conservative motto "Don't think, obey!" not with the injunction "Don't obey, think!" but rather "Obey, but think!" In Zizek, Slavoj. *First as Tragedy, then as Farce.* Verso, London/New York, 2009, p.17.

[20] I do not mean to trivialize the political, interventionist overtones of utopia in general and utopian literature in general. What I mean is that utopia forms, to invoke Fredric Jameson, a reasonable 'disruption': 'Disruption is, then, the name for a new discursive strategy, and Utopia is the form such a disruption necessarily takes. And this is now the temporal situation in which the Utopian form proper – the radical closure of a system of difference in time, the experience of the total formal break and discontinuity- has its political role to play, and in fact becomes a new kind of content in its own right.' Jameson, p. 231.

[21] The last paragraph of More's *Utopia* is exemplary in this context of utopia as wish-fulfilment. Referring to Raphaël Hythloday, More says: 'Meanwhile, though he is a man of unquestionable learning, and highly experienced in the ways of the world, I cannot agree with everything he said. Yet I freely confess there are very many things in the Utopian commonwealth that in our societies I would wish rather than expect to see'. In More, Thomas. *Utopia.* George M. Logan (ed.), W.W. Norton & Company, New York/London, 2011, p. 97.

[22] I.e.: In Jameson's introduction to *Archaeologies of the Future.*

[23] Jameson, p. 1.

'utopia'. Utopia can be characterized as a 'mode' or 'perspective', that offers possibilities for development and (re-)conceptualization, as well as a feeling that the realization of these ideals is very hard or impossible, hence 'no-place'. On the other hand, utopia is a *topos,* a place in which, as I have tried to argue above, the public use of reason can be employed, as a means of offering alternatives to existing modes of governmentality, without resorting to an attempt to implement the utopian characteristics of the depicted society in the real world. In the realm of literature, the utopian author resorts to fiction in order to communicate his ideas through the 'public use of reason', in which the utopia serves as a contemplation of the existing status quo and the possibilities of a potential counter-hegemonic force of change inherent in the same status quo. It is in literature that the frictions between existential time and historical time become apparent and become dialogized.

With the statements above in mind, I will now present the main theoretical concepts and tools which I will employ in my thesis, Jameson's 'cognitive mapping', and Bakhtin's 'polyglossia', 'heteroglossia','dialogism' and the 'ideologeme'.

2.2 Conceptual apparatus: Jameson and Bakhtin

In *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,* Jameson presents an outline of his concept of 'cognitive mapping', a concept that has continued to crop up in his works over the years. I find this concept useful in the analysis of utopian literature, for it manages to incorporate ideological, spatial and temporal dimensions in an interesting way. What exactly, then, does this concept consist of?
Jameson starts with a short description of this new approach, taking his cue from urban planner Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* (1960)*,* which details the way in which subjects gradually form 'mental maps' of their surroundings in the city: '...the conception of space that has been developed here suggests that a model of political culture appropriate to our own situation will necessarily have to raise spatial issues as its fundamental organizing concern. I will therefore provisionally define the aesthetic of this new (and hypothetical) cultural form as an aesthetic of *cognitive mapping'.*[24]
In this passage, Jameson already defines the project of cognitive mapping as a conglomerate of a spatial and political dimension. Later on, he broadens the concept: 'Cognitive mapping in the broader sense comes to require the coordination of existential data (the empirical position of the subject) with unlived, abstract conceptions of the geographic totality'.[25]
Jameson's concept also involves the famous definition of ideology by Louis Althusser (1918-1990): 'Ideology is a 'representation' of the Imaginary Relationship of individuals to their Real conditions of existence'.[26] [27]

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[24] Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* Verso, London/New York, 1991, p. 50-51 (Jamesons italics).
[25] Ibidem.
[26] Althusser, Louis. *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation).* In *Mapping Ideology,* Slavoj Zizek (ed.), Verso, London/New York, 2007, p. 123. In *The Political Unconscious,* Jameson succinctly formulates Althusser's definition as (...)'a representational structure which allows the individual subject to conceive or imagine his or her lived relationship to transpersonal realities such as

For Jameson, the incorporation of Althusser's definition 'now allows us to rethink these specialized geographical and cartographic issues in terms of social space- in terms, for example, of social class and national or international context, in terms of the ways in which we all necessarily cognitively map our individual social relationship to local, national, and international class realities'.[28]

In his conclusion to *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,* Jameson states the relevance of Althusser's formula more clearly: '...this positive conception of ideology as a necessary function in any form of social life has the great merit of stressing the gap between the local positioning of the individual subject and the totality of class structures in which he or she is situated, a gap between phenomenological perception and a reality that transcends all individual thinking or experience; but which ideology, as such, attempts to span or coordinate...'.[29]

2.3 'Cognitive mapping' in the context of utopia

To summarize, cognitive mapping involves the need of the subject to make sense of both the 'existential data' he is confronted with, his empirical position, as well as his space within a broader social space, which is frequently combined with a position within a 'class reality', or economic disposition. In the context of utopia, Jameson's concept is useful in three ways.

Firstly, his concept is helpful to 'map out' the empirical position of the character in the unfamiliar space within the fictional realm. Secondly, cognitive mapping stresses the position of the aforementioned subject in the context of the socio-economic environment he or she finds himself in. Thirdly, the ideological aspect of the concept is helpful when we try to 'map' the ideologies of the newly discovered utopian world, as well as the subsequent modifications of the empirical subject after being introduced to the (as we have seen in Frye's analysis) increasingly 'rationalized' rituals of the utopian world.

Thus, cognitive mapping poses both metaphorical and practical possibilities in 'mapping' the territory of the utopia, in a socio-economic, ideological and phenomenological sense. With these remarks in mind, I will now devote attention to the critical apparatus of Mikhail Bakhtin, which in my analysis complements Jameson's concept.[30]

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the social structure or collective logic of History'. Jameson, Fredric. 'On Interpretation: Literature as Socially Symbolic Act'. In *The Political Unconscious.* Routledge, London/New York, 2002, p. 14-15.

[27] I will not elaborate on the Lacanian underpinnings of Althusser's definition (although such a diversion would certainly be interesting).

[28] Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* Verso, London/New York, 1991, p. 52.

[29] Ibidem, p .415-416. It has to be noted that, whereas in Marxism 'ideology' is frequently defined as 'false consciousness' (for instance in Friedrich Engels' letter to Franz Mehring on July 14, 1893 and several decades later in Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*), Althusser departs from this negative conception and presents a more positive, post-Marxist version of the term.

[30] In Jameson's concept of 'cognitive mapping', a linguistic component is strangely lacking. When one finds himself in an unfamiliar environment for instance, a logical strategy would involve the search for linguistic markers (for instance, the searching for traffic signs in an unfamiliar city) as a means of spatial orientation.

2.4 Bakhtin

Bakhtin's literary criticism focuses (mainly) on the relationship between literature, language and philosophy. In the essays compiled in *The Dialogic Imagination,* the 'dialogue' and the 'dialogic', 'heteroglossia' and the 'ideologeme' are central concepts.

Bakthin starts out with describing the distinctiveness of the novel as a genre, by contrasting it to the epic, an already fully realized and formalized genre. What is characteristic for the novel, according to Bakhtin, is its dialogic nature. Therefore, the novel is an excellent way to interrogate the underlying ideological positions of the society or social group depicted in the fictional realm. The term 'dialogue' implies the existence of various voices that communicate in their own way: (…)'no living word relates to its object in a singular way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that is difficult to penetrate. It is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualized and given stylistic shape'.[31]

Thus, the novel radically incorporates and subsequently transforms several languages within its fictional frame, thereby creating 'polyglossia': 'Languages throw light on each other: one language can, after all, see itself only in the light of another language… In this actively polyglot world, completely new relationships are established between language and its object (that is, the real world)- and this is fraught with enormous consequences for all the already completed genres that had been formed during eras of closed and deaf monoglossia. In contrast to other major genres, the novel emerged and matured precisely when intense activization of external and internal polyglossia was at the peak of its activity…'.[32] Bakhtin points out that '…such a full and complete transformation can occur only under certain conditions, namely, under the condition of thoroughgoing *polyglossia.* Only polyglossia fully frees consciousness from the tyranny of its own language and its own myth of language'.[33]

Bakhtin describes language as a conflict between 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' discursive forces, respectively the centralizing and decentralizing forces in a language. The novel, as we have seen before, manages to incorporate various voices (polyglossia), thereby resisting the myth of a unitary, closed off, monoglot language. The conflict between these forces is where heteroglossia is able to enter the novel: 'The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized)'.[34]

These last remarks point us to the final crucial dimension of Bakhtin's conceptual apparatus. He states: 'At any given moment of its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense

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[31] Bakthin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination.* University of Texas Press, Austin, 2011, p. 276.
[32] Ibidem, p.12.
[33] Ibidem, p.61.
[34] Ibidem, p. 263.

of the word… but also- and for us this is the essential point-into languages that are socio-ideological'.[35] With the incorporation of different social voices, a multiplicity of ideologies enters the novel. Every utterance, according to Bakhtin, has ideological overtones or implications. Therefore, every speaker is an ideologue, and every utterance an 'ideologeme'.

2.5 'Dialogism', 'heteroglossia' and 'ideologemes' in the context of utopia

As Frye pointed out, the literary utopia frequently involves a 'Socratic dialogue'. Thus, utopian literature can be seen as an overtly dialogic genre in the Bakhtinian sense: it incorporates several voices within its framework,[36] and, as Bakhtin argued, these voices all utter 'ideologemes'. Heteroglossia in the novel, and especially in the utopian novel, therefore asserts an ideological dimension to the speech acts of the various characters in the fictional realm. In the utopia, as I have tried to argue before, socio-economic, phenomenological as well as ideological dimensions are of primary importance. To these three factors I will add a linguistic component: the language employed by the characters within the utopian text can be studied as a dialogue between different ideologues and ideologemes. Therefore, I shall argue that Bakhtin's attention to language, which is able to complement Jameson's concept 'cognitive mapping', is of great importance. The spaces in Wells and Morris which I will try to 'map', therefore, cannot be separated from the language(s) employed by the fictional characters within these utopias. In the next section, I will start with an analysis of Morris's *News from Nowhere* with the aforementioned concepts in mind, focusing on socio-economic, ideological and linguistic components.

3. Mapping the ideal: William Morris's *News from Nowhere*

News from Nowhere, published in 1890, starts off with protagonist William Guest, who falls asleep, and, upon waking up, finds out that he has entered a land in the future, which strikes him as peculiar, for the country has abolished the government, imperialism and state factories and other staples of the industrialized England in Guest's existential time, the 19th century. Guest then starts to 'map' this vaguely familiar territory and the collision between existential time and historical time he is confronted with, through conversation and travel with those whom he encounters. This cast of characters is quite diverse, and also incorporates remnants of those who still remember the conditions in England in the time from which Guest comes from. I will analyse two passages by using dialogic theory, thereby striving to answer the question: How is the ideal presented in *News from Nowhere,* and what roles do the dialogic relationships between the various characters/speakers play? Before doing so, it is helpful to establish a short genealogy of Morris's thought via the writings of Ruskin, Fourier, and Morris himself.

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[35] Bakthin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination.* University of Texas Press, Austin, 2011, p. 271-2.
[36] As opposed to the pamphlet or essay, which are essentially monoglot.

3.1 Aesthetics, labour and eudaimonism: Ruskin, Fourier, Morris

The writings of (art) critic John Ruskin were very influential in its time, and one of those who was enamoured of his vision was Morris.[37] Ruskin's essay "The Nature of Gothic" reveals several aspects that crop up in *News from Nowhere* (in revised form). Ruskin takes the mediaeval Gothic architecture as a metaphor for the diversity of a society in which people collaborate in constructing objects of beauty without being polarized by their differences in class and skill. The Gothic character itself '…is made up of many mingled ideas, and can only consist in their union'.[38] Thus, the character of the Gothic is open to everyone to help in construction, regardless of one's skill in manual labour. Imperfection is celebrated by Ruskin, who states that '…no good work whatever can be perfect, and the demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art'.[39] Imperfection, moreover, is essential to humanity itself: '…imperfection is in some sort essential to all that we know of life. It is the sign of life in a mortal body, that is to say, of a state of progress and change. Nothing that lives is, or can be, rigidly perfect; part of it is decaying, part nascent'.[40]

In Ruskin, the Gothic invites everyone to contribute to the construction of an object of beauty, regardless of skill or class, for this diversity is reflected in the (necessarily) imperfect product of art itself, an imperfection that is essential to art, for art, to Ruskin, resembles life. Morris would later opt for a more radical interpretation of Ruskin's aesthetics. Morris defines art thus:

'…beauty produced by the labour of man both mental and bodily, the expression of the interest man takes in the life of man upon the earth with all its surroundings, in other words the human pleasure of life is what I mean by art'.[41]

Morris would also radicalize Ruskin's hierarchism by calling for a more radical, egalitarian way of looking at art in relation to the pursuit of happiness. These revisions can be linked to Morris's appreciation for the utopian socialist Charles Fourier.[42]

Fourier saw work as a privilege, as a pleasure, but insisted that, if this pleasure were to be enjoyed as much as possible, labour conditions needed to be bettered in order to reach happiness: 'In order to attain happiness, it is necessary to introduce it into the labors which engage the greater part of our lives. Life is a long torment to one who pursues occupations without attraction'.[43] Another idea of Fourier, taken up by

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[37] Morris wrote in "How I became a Socialist": (…) how deadly dull the world would have been twenty years ago but for Ruskin!' Morris, William. "How I became a Socialist". http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1894/hibs/hibs.htm

[38] Ruskin, John. "The Nature of Gothic". In *Unto this Last and other Writings,* Penguin, London/ New York, 1997, p. 77.

[39] Ibidem, p. 91.

[40] Ibidem, p. 92.

[41] Morris, William. "Art and Labour". http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1884/art-lab.htm

[42] 'Utopian socialism' is a term to denote several thinkers who sought to establish small communities as an alternative to existing forms of government. Engels spends some time in his "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" dwelling on the innovations and mistakes of the most prominent utopian socialists, the 'triumvirate' of Robert Owen (1771-1858), Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) and Fourier, a main point of critique of utopian communities being that '…the more completely they were worked out in detail, the more they could not avoid drifting off into pure fantasies'. In Engels, Friedrich. "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific". http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/

[43] Fourier, Charles. "Attractive Labour". http://marxists.org/reference/archive/fourier/works/ch26.htm

Morris, was the rejection of the repressive apparatus of the government. Fourier stated: 'Neither the ancient nor the modern civilisations have ever conceived of a measure which did not rely on government. Are they unaware that any civilised administration, however organised, prefers its own good to that of the people?'[44]

Synthesized in Morris's thought is the convergence of labour, art, and eudaimonism. Labour, in Morris's view, was essential as a way of achieving happiness when combined with the production of works of art. In *News from Nowhere,* Guest's shift in positioning is exemplified by two passages*.* In the first passage, Guest feels the urge to smoke. A young girl nearby immediately starts making a pipe, and, upon finishing it, hands it to Guest, with an amount of tobacco. Guest commits a slip of the tongue, betraying his background as an ideologue of a now extinct commercial system: 'I took it out of her hand to look at it, and while I did so, forgot my caution, and said, 'But however am I to pay for such a thing as this?' Dick laid his hand on my shoulder as I spoke, and turning I met his eyes with a comical expression in them, which warned me against another exhibition of extinct commercial morality: so I reddened and held my tongue, while the girl simply looked at me with the deepest gravity, as if I were a foreigner blundering in my speech, for she clearly didn't understand me a bit'.[45]

Guest's speech could in this context be interpreted as a mere 'error' in a country in which private property and money are abolished. However, from a linguistic point of view, we here encounter the first example of the dialogization of Guest's speech and the utopian speech spoken by the inhabitants of Nowhere. Guests question, 'But however am I to pay for such a thing as this?' therefore not only betrays a commercial mentality no longer valid in this context, but also another concept of language, best exemplified by the failure of the girl to make sense of what Guest is saying. As a utopian, the girl is an ideologist as well. Her failure therefore suggests an inability to communicate, through language, with the words that have lost their conditions of existence in her society. By correcting Guest, Dick's hand on Guest's shoulder can be taken up as a subtle form of dialogism: Guest learns that his language and different vocabulary exemplify an extinct ideology and Dick and the little girl are implicitly informed of a whole other means of conceptualizing. In terms of the opposition of Other and Self, Guest here gradually becomes 'ritualized', as Frye put it, and comes to terms with the linguistic Otherness of the world he encounters, and conversely, the utopians come to terms with the Otherness of Guest's ideologemes.

Later on in the book, the roles are reversed. Guest has gradually become immersed ('ritualized') in the customs of the utopians, and now serves as a spokesperson who is identified with the society he has come to live in, versus a man who questions the status quo in Nowhere, the grandfather of Ellen, Guest's object of desire.

'First of all (excuse my catechising), is there competition in life, after the old kind, in the country whence you come?'

'Yes,' said I, 'it is the rule there.' And I wondered as I spoke what fresh complications I should get into as a result of this answer.

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[44] Fourier, Charles. "Politics and Poverty".
http://marxists.org/reference/archive/fourier/works/ch16.htm
[45] Morris, William. *News From Nowhere, or, An Epoch of Rest.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, p. 32.

'Question two,' said the carle: 'Are you not on the whole much freer, more energetic- in a word, healthier and happier- for it?'

I smiled. 'You wouldn't talk so if you had any idea of our life. To me you seem here as if you were living heaven compared with us of the country from which I came'.[46]

Seen from the point of view of the Self-Other opposition, Guest has become adapted to utopian standards. I would argue that his language therefore also has become adapted to the same standards, in a dialogue with his former system of speech. Guest compares historical and existential time, and thereby forms a bridge between two systems of speech, and thereby between two distinct ideologies. Again, an interpretational difficulty concerning the Self and Other opposition has been resolved through the 'ritualization' of Guest: through his contact with both existential and historical time, his speech and thought have become dialogized, which is why he is able to serve as a spokesperson in this passage towards Ellen's reactionary grandfather.

To conclude, in *News from Nowhere* we find a plurality of voices that, during their encounter, transform into new relations between each other. Not only Guest's status as an ideologue, but also the status of the utopians as ideologues transform in contact with each other, resulting in an approximation and resolving of their oppositions as Self and Other in a gentle confrontation.[47] This confrontation, exemplified by Guest's gradual 'conversion', in which his speech acts become hybridized with utopian speech acts, is where polyglossia enters the novel. In my view, this hybridization of languages and inherent ideologemes and ideologies (polyglossia) and the collision of centripetal and centrifugal forces that Bakhtin identified as the essence of heteroglossia are central in understanding the 'mapping' of discursive spaces and the inherent ideological orientation that accompanies that process.

I will now proceed to analyse Wells's *A Modern Utopia* along the same lines, contrasting it with Morris's approach while doing so.

4. Mapping the ideal: H.G. Wells's *A Modern Utopia*

In *A Modern Utopia,* the protagonist, identified as 'The Owner of the Voice' and his companion, 'the botanist', are taking a stroll through the Swiss Alps, when, suddenly, they undergo a space-warp and are transported to a parallel dimension, in which they encounter a utopian society. This society is the same

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[46] Morris, William. *News From Nowhere, or, An Epoch of Rest.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 130-131.
[47] I do not mean to imply a straightforward dialectical thesis-antithesis-synthesis process, but instead a confrontation with the Other that transcends one's totality in contrast with the 'infinity' posed by the 'Face' of the Other, as described by Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) in *Totality and Infinity* (1961): 'By virtue of its intentional structure gentleness comes to the separated being from the Other. The Other precisely reveals himself in his alterity not in a shock negating the I, but as the primordial phenomenon of gentleness. The whole of this work aims to show a relation with the other not only cutting across the logic of contradiction, where the other of A is the non-A, the negation of A, but also across dialectical logic, where the same dialectically participates in and is reconciled with the other in the Unity of the system. The welcoming of the face is peaceable from the first, for it answers to the unquenchable Desire for Infinity.' In Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority.* Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 2011, p. 150.

familiar environment and time they are acquainted with, which makes this transportation a spatial and not a spatiotemporal one, as is the case in *News from Nowhere.*

This society is distinguished by the formation of a World State, ruled by 'voluntary noblemen', who are called 'the Samurai'.[48] Technology and science have advanced greatly, and industrialization and a highly efficient infrastructure are common features. This infrastructure enables the inhabitants of the World State to travel fast and comfortably to other provinces of the World State, thereby enabling them maximum dynamism, which is a huge contrast to the relatively static autarchy encountered in *News from Nowhere.*[49]

A Modern Utopia strikes the reader as a peculiar text. The basic, yet important question to ask therefore is: What kind of text are we dealing with? The Voice states his purpose at the beginning of the text: 'The entertainment before you is neither the set drama of the work of fiction you are accustomed to read, nor the set lecturing of the essay you are accustomed to evade, but a hybrid of these two'.[50] He goes on to state that the botanist, his companion '…gets no personal expression in this book, the Voice is always that other's'.[51]

These two remarks pose several preliminary interpretational difficulties. Firstly, this hybrid construction, in which novelistic and essayistic elements converge, poses the problem of classification: what exactly constitutes 'essayistic' language, and what constitutes 'novelistic' language, and how do we approach a hybrid of the two?

Secondly, the hybrid positions itself as a foregrounding of Jameson's observation that utopian literature frequently relies on intertextuality.[52] In the text, the Voice enters into a dialogue with the many intertextual allusions to earlier utopian works, often by means of negation, in which he tries to correct some misunderstandings he claims his forerunners have made. This commentary is both direct, when the Voice employs what I would call 'essayistic' language, and indirect, through dialogues with the characters he encounters, i.e. through 'novelistic' language.[53]

Thirdly, the Voice's remark that the botanist does not really speak for himself, is indicative of the authoritative 'spectre' the Voice maintains throughout the text. Therefore, every utterance that is not the Voice's utterance, is mediated and filtered through the Voice. The concept of dialogism, characterized by 'the social diversity of speech types' and 'differing individual voices', seems to be heavily undermined by

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[48] The Voice likens the Samurai to the House of Salomon in *The New Atlantis* (1624) by Francis Bacon (1561-1626). This utopian text describes a scientific academy, located on the fictional island of Bensalem and founded by king Salomon which is '…dedicated to the study of the works and creatures of God'. Bacon, Francis. *The New Atlantis.* In *Two Classic Utopias.* Dover, New York, 2003, p. 20.

[49] The absence of modern ways of transportation in *News from Nowhere* logically implies long periods of travelling, whereas the technologically advanced infrastructure in *A Modern Utopia* allows its inhabitants to travel extremely fast and efficiently. In the base- and superstructure dichotomy, infrastructure, positioned in the base, partially determines the political superstructure, making *News from Nowhere* and *A Modern Utopia* examples of the Deleuzian concepts of the 'arboreal' (based on a common root, less flexible and with a need to refer to the common root) and 'rhizomatic' (several 'nomadic' offshoots without a common base, highly dynamic and in a state of free, independent movement) respectively.

[50] Wells, H.G. *A Modern Utopia.* Penguin, London/New York, 2005, p. 7-8.

[51] Ibidem, p. 8.

[52] See footnote 7.

[53] An observable difference in these two modes of expression is the use of the future tense when the Voice speaks 'essayistically', and the use of dialogue and *monologue intérieur* when speaking 'novelistically'.

this remark. This interpretational difficulty seems to stem from the hybrid construction of the text, a confrontation between the essay, an essentially monoglot genre in which an authoritative voice has power over the other voices he incorporates,[54] and the novel, which channels diverse social speech types and accommodates their dialogical potential through confrontation and conversation.

With these remarks in mind, I will now proceed to analyse *A Modern Utopia,* again by employing the concepts of 'cognitive mapping' and 'dialogism'. Comparisons with *News from Nowhere* will be made, with special attention to social-economic, ideological and phenomenological aspects.

4.1 Cognitive mapping and dialogism in *A Modern Utopia*

A Modern Utopia depicts a utopian world parallel to the world the protagonists are familiar with. This parallel world establishes a displacement in space, but not in time, as in *News from Nowhere.* Whereas in *News from Nowhere* the characteristic aspects of the literary utopia are present (as described by Frye, see chapter 2.1), the Voice in *A Modern Utopia* does not become involved in a 'ritualization process', in which he is gradually introduced to the customs of the utopian world. Rather, he already possesses an a priori vision of a utopian society, expressed in an interior monologue in the future tense. In the text, it quickly becomes clear to the reader that the narrator is not your typical 'potential utopian', who is eager to become 'ritualized' and willing to adapt to the circumstances of the society he is confronted with. Instead, the Voice already has a clear idea of what a utopian society should look like, which is why Jameson's observation of the foregrounding of the distinction between historical and existential time in the literary utopia does not work completely here. When we instead treat the text as 'essayistic', the purpose of the authoritative, slightly cynical Voice becomes clearer.
A Modern Utopia offers '…a second-order utopia, based on a synthesis of previous utopian constructions adjusted to what he sees as the demands of contemporary, and necessarily imperfect, human society'.[55] Therefore, the concept of dialogism, taken as the confrontation and subsequent convergence of several stratified languages into new languages, is here present in a different form; that of the intertextual, essayistic enquiry, in which a dominant voice reflects polemically on instances that lie outside the text. This intertextual dialogue is most prominent in the reflections of the Voice on the mistakes of the earlier utopias, and the necessary steps the *modern* utopia should take.

Therefore, the concept of cognitive mapping, from an ideological viewpoint, takes shape in *A Modern Utopia* as the orientation between several texts of the past that have striven to do the same, yet through

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[54] The pioneer of the modern essay, Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), quoted heavily from (mainly) Greek authors, but nevertheless we can argue that the dominant voice in his essays was always his own. The other voices of the authors he cites do not have the capacity to transform, to become dialogized, but remain citations that serve the point of the dominant voice of the author. This is why I treat the essay as a monoglot genre, and why a mixture between narrative and essay poses interpretational difficulties.
[55] Parrinder, Patrick. 'Utopia and Romance'. In Gregory Claeys, (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, p. 169.

the portrayal of societies that either presume a huge metaphysical leap into universal benevolence[56] or focus on an isolated community that strives to sustain itself by a policy that excludes non-utopians. The Voice remarks at the end of the text: 'There is a common notion that the reading of a Utopia should end with a swelling heart and clear resolves, with lists of names, formation of committees, and even the commencement of subscriptions. But this Utopia began upon a philosophy of fragmentation, and ends, confusedly, amidst a gross tumult of immediate realities, in dust and doubt, with at best the one individual's aspiration. Utopias were once in good faith projects for a fresh creation of the world and of a most unworldly completeness; this so-called Modern Utopia is a mere story of personal adventures among Utopian philosophies'.[57]

The concept of cognitive mapping in the framework of the 'essayistic' speech should therefore pay attention to the positioning of the primary speaker, situated in an intertextual field with previous utopian speakers that are channelled in the text as intertexts that the Voice polemicizes with. To conclude, *A Modern Utopia* can be read as a meta-utopian text, that seeks to establish a framework for future utopias through a curious hybrid of narrative and essay (and the inherent collisions between these two discursive spaces): '…the Modern Utopia must be not static but kinetic, must shape not as a permanent state but as a hopeful stage leading to a long ascent of stages'.[58] Its contrast between different speech genres contributes to a difficulty in classifying the literary utopia, which foregrounds both its instance as a textual construction and its position in a wider political debate.

5. Conclusion

What are the characteristics and complications of the concept of utopia in general and utopian literature in particular?

This final question can be answered in many ways, but a few topics have recurred throughout my thesis, topics that are therefore worth to mention again briefly.

Firstly, the distinction between the utopia as a genre and as a 'mode' or 'disposition' poses several interpretational difficulties. As I have pointed out, reading these texts positions the reader between the text as a construct, and the text as an ideological text that, to transform Althusser's definition, has an imaginary (i.e. fictional) relevance to one's real modes of existence.

Secondly, the dichotomy between existential and historical time, as distinguished by Jameson, foregrounds the utopia as a channelling of a 'collective wishfulfilment'. By confronting the imaginary utopian world, and reflecting upon its differences with his real modes of existence, the protagonist in the utopian narrative whom the reader identifies himself with, whose gradual 'conversion' to utopianism is

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[56] Interestingly, the Voice takes *News from Nowhere* as an example of this impossibility: 'Were we free to have our untrammelled desire, I suppose we should follow Morris to his Nowhere, we should change the nature of man and the nature of things together; we should make the whole race wise, tolerant, noble, perfect – wave our hands to a splendid anarchy, every man doing as it pleases him, and none pleased to evil, in a world as good in its essential nature, as ripe and sunny, as the world before the Fall'. Wells, H.G. *A Modern Utopia.* Penguin, London/New York, 2005, p. 12.
[57] Ibidem, p. 247.
[58] Ibidem, p. 11.

witnessed by the reader, becomes immersed in a collective longing for a better mode of existence. Thirdly, the utopia confronts the reader with a Self versus Other dichotomy that can be viewed both from the categorization of the utopia as a 'mode', and from the utopia as a literary text. This interpretational difficulty, as I have tried to argue earlier,[59] shows us that a traditional dialectical method of an *Aufhebung* of the Self-Other opposition does not wholly work, and surpasses the status of the literary utopia as an always-already ideological positioning versus the construction of (artificial) binaries.

Fourthly, the literary utopia can be viewed as a conceptual 'plane' upon which several ideologues and ideologemes converge, and subsequently become dialogized in their common desire to make sense of not only their at first alien environment, but also of the linguistic displacement or disruption that the confrontation between utopian and non-utopian poses.

5.1 Final remarks

In this thesis, I have established a conceptual framework with which I have attempted to take ideological, linguistic, and spatiotemporal aspects into account, factors which are regularly foregrounded in the literary utopia. I am aware that using a slippery concept like 'ideology' is dangerous in every circumstance, and one of the attractive notions of utopia is the confrontation between ideology as 'false consciousness', i.e. a fictional place, and ideology understood as a more or less unified system of (political) beliefs that strive to establish 'the good'. Due to a lack of space, I have not been able to make such an interesting inquiry into the several definitions of the concept of 'ideology' in relation to utopia. I hope that the reader takes this necessary omission into account, an omission that could be incorporated into a further, more detailed study of the relation between the dialogic and cognitive mapping that I have tried to establish.

Herbert Marcuse's formulation of 'the end of utopia' as '…the refutation of those ideas and theories that use the concept of utopia to denounce certain socio-historical possibilities'[60] will continue to pose the idealism of the achievement of utopia as a Zeno's paradox, a certain point in space and time that perhaps cannot be reached, but which has to be approximated as much as possible.

It is therefore my conviction that literature is able to contribute (politically) to the refutation of ossified, polarizing ideas and the subsequent establishment of a 'principle of hope', in which the formation of the utopian serves, to quote Wells again, as 'a hopeful stage leading to a long ascent of stages'.[61]

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[59] See chapter 2.1.
[60] Marcuse, Herbert. "The End of Utopia". In Marcuse, Herbert. *Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics and Utopia.* Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, London, 1971, pp. 62.
[61] Wells, H.G. *A Modern Utopia.* Penguin, London/New York, 2005, p. 12.

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