Hannah Lingier

# *Unmasking utopia*

## *Civil conditioning*
## *in early-modern utopian literature*

Masterproef voorgelegd tot het behalen van de graad van
Master in de Wijsbegeerte

Academiejaar 2015-2016

*… and continually we met with many things right worthy of observation and relation, as indeed, if there be a mirror in the world worthy to hold men's eyes, it is that country.*

Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis*

## Acknowledgements

Although it took me a while to realize it, the subject of this thesis now seems the logical endpoint of my years as a student. Looking back, it is hard to see how I only decided on the topic of utopian literature at the end of last year. For at last making this choice self-evident, I am very grateful to Prof. dr. Eric Schliesser, who introduced me to many exciting texts and triggered my interest in early modern political philosophy. His course on modern philosophy not only settled the topic but also the supervisor, and I would like to thank him especially for agreeing to take up this task despite the adverse practical and spatial circumstances, and of course for his time and greatly valued input.

Prof. dr. Bart Keunen deserves special mention for opening the door to the world of -topian thought almost five years ago and, ever since, always keeping his own door open.

None of this would have been possible without my family, to whom I am especially grateful for never questioning the need to endlessly keep studying. I would like to thank my grandparents for the financial support; my brother for the philosophical-theological pub talks; my mother for her infinite supply of wise advice; and my father for his valuable remarks on this text, and, I suspect, for being the cause of my decision to study philosophy in the first place.

Lastly, I am very grateful to my biggest fan Jo, for his excitement about this project, our stimulating talks on the subject and, essentially, for teaching me too much to put into words.

# Table of contents

Wordcount: 25.908

## Introduction

In this thesis I show that utopian texts depict a truthful image of the workings of civilizations. I argue that the philosophical value of utopian texts does not primarily lie in their critical stance towards the abuses of European societies or the author's ability to rethink existing structures, but in the texts' capacity to shed light on the inner mechanisms of human communities and to hold up a mirror to man and the world he constructed. The dominant view on the utopian genre considers utopian texts as critiques of the existing situation, as expressions of discontent with the status quo. This has drawn all attention towards the differences between the real and the fictional world and has overshadowed their descriptive value as concentrated reflections of existing society. The lack of attention for the descriptive qualities of utopian texts has led to an oversight of what in my view is the primary utopian quality of the genre: the capacity of utopian texts to make visible the conditioning mechanisms of human communities and the workings of human nature in general. The utopian text, by providing a concentrated view inside the political apparatus of the fictional society, lays bare man's passionate nature and the ways in which it is conditioned by social institutions. The overarching effect of these institutions as depicted by the utopian texts is that they affect the citizens emotionally. By generating politically useful affects, i.e. by directing the people's hopes and fears in the desired direction, social order is ensured in the utopian world. In the utopian world, seemingly neutral institutions of the real world are turned into consciously applied political instruments. Thereby, the utopian texts expose them as effective means to channel man's affective nature into controlled passions that benefit social stability.

Specifically, this thesis provides a textual analysis of the canonical English utopian writing of the early modern period: Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627), Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing-World* (1666), and Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines* (1668). In analyzing the texts I focus on the themes of marriage and the patriarchal family, religion, politics of exclusion and the 'other', and leisure-activities. I start with a theoretical chapter on the utopian genre. In the first section I argue that the combination of two of the genre's most distinctive features facilitate its property of making visible hidden structures. First, the utopian text depicts a perfected version of common institutions that define social life. The conscious, rationalized application of these

institutions in the fictional world provides the reader with a purified image of their conditioning effects that normally remain unnoticed. Second, the text's narrative form allows it to offer a more comprehensive view of social life than is the case for non-narrative political texts. It shows a community at work rather than providing us with an overview of ideal laws, which enables it to provide insight into the inner workings of human nature and society. In the second section of this chapter I indicate how my view diverts from the common interpretation of the genre, which views utopian texts as expressions of a desire for a better life. Chapter 2 contains a short discussion of the political and legal systems in the depicted utopian societies, and shows that these aspects are either deficient and the cause of social unrest or only minimally present. The succeeding chapters constitute the bulk of the argument and provide an answer to the question of how, if not by law or authority, order is secured in the depicted societies. Chapter 3 addresses the role of the patriarchal structure and shows that, both on the level of the family and as a model for society as a whole, it serves as the foundation of education and social control. Chapter 4 argues that the utopian texts expose religion as an effective political instrument, perfectly suited to instill obedience and civic virtue. In chapter 5, I discuss the role of the other in utopia and show that the creation of a deviating other in the utopian societies generates unity among the majority and motivates them to obey the norms. Finally, chapter 6 shows that the utopian texts lay bare the importance of organized leisure-activities to keep the people content and prevent social unrest.

# 1. The utopian genre: an effective mirror

In this chapter I provide a theoretical explanation for the capacity of utopian texts to make visible the workings of social mechanisms that underlie community life and show how this view adds to existing scholarship on the utopian genre. In the first section I argue that two of the genre's primary characteristics enable the utopian text to bring hidden mechanisms to the surface: 1) the societies depicted by utopian texts rely on maximally effective versions of existing institutions, the workings of which are thereby intensified and made discernible for the reader, and 2) the narrative form of the text allows the author to address seemingly unpolitical elements of daily life and lay bare their political meaning. These genre characteristics explain the utopian text's capacity to provide a mirror-image of real societies, as it brings their often unnoticed but highly influential institutions to the surface. In the second section I indicate how my view relates to the common interpretation of the genre as embodying the desire for a better life.

## 1.1 EFFECTIVENESS AND NARRATIVITY

As stated, the goal of this thesis is to show that utopias reflect existing social structures, whose conditioning functions, through the concentrated lens of the text, become visible to the reader. This is made possible by two of the genre's main features: the effectiveness of the depicted society and the text's narrative form.

First, the organization of the utopian society is maximally efficient and orderly.[1] The fictional community is founded on perfected, consciously implemented institutions, whose effects are thereby maximized. As Northrop Frye states in his *Varieties of Literary Utopias*: "The desirable society, or the utopia proper, is essentially the writer's own society with its unconscious ritual habits transposed into their conscious equivalents" (Frye 1965: 325). Frye makes this point in the context of an argument very different from the one set out here (he argues that utopian texts offer a critique on the existing situation by depicting an ideal alternative which remedies the inconsistency and chaotic nature of unconscious

---

[1] Although not all depicted societies in the texts to be discussed (most importantly *The Isle of Pines*) have succeeded in perfecting their organization (yet), all of them focus on at least improving the organizational deficiencies and thus highlight the importance of the (still imperfect) institutions concerned.

social behavior), but nevertheless this sentence captures an essential feature of utopian texts. The fact that these 'ritual habits' are consciously installed by the founders of the pictured society, also renders them conscious for the reader. The enhanced effectiveness of the institutions in the text makes it possible for the reader to see how they impact social life. This primarily holds for the informal part of social life: as the following chapters will show, the efficient order of daily life is – much more so than the perfection of the legal system or form of government – the cornerstone of the society's smooth running. Seemingly trivial or self-evident social features are consciously applied and instrumentalized. Thus, the innovating features of utopian societies that are generally emphasized are accompanied by descriptions of perfected, well-known social institutions. The only innovation in this respect is the efficacy of their implementation, i.e., as will become clear in the succeeding chapters, the degree of proficiency in controlling and guiding the people's passions.

This matter of content is supported by the utopian text's most distinctive formal feature: its narrative form. With respect to form, the utopian text differs from non-narrative political texts that comment on the organization of society, such as – to stay within the early modern context – Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Machiavelli's *The Prince* or Spinoza's *Political Treatise*. This formal distinction has important consequences for the content: the author of the utopian text remains hidden behind a narrator, which gives rise to the question to what extent he deems the described society desirable, as his point of view cannot be unequivocally deduced. Moreover (and, for the present discussion, more importantly) the narrative form implies that instead of an enumeration of the desired laws of a society and a description of the ideal political model, the reader is presented with a demonstration of a society at work; "[utopias'] principles are not abstracted from, but are displayed in, practice" (Stillman 2012: 12). This idea is poetically expressed by Bertrand de Jouvenel:

> Eutopie, it shall be, if and when brought into being: till then Utopie. A dream: aye but that is a capital point, a dream, while less than reality, is much more than a blueprint. A blueprint does not give you the "feel" of things, as if they existed in fact; a dream does so. If you can endow your "philosophical city" with the semblance of reality, and cause your reader to see it, as if it were actually in operation, this is quite a different achievement from a mere explanation of the principles on which it should rest. This "causing to see" by means of a feigned description is obviously what More aimed at: It is also the essential feature of the

utopian genre. (de Jouvenel 1965: 437-8)

The utopian text does not describe but rather *shows* the society, the true way of 'living together' of a community. This allows it to provide a view behind the scenes, an image of public and private life that for a large part lies outside the domain of law. The narrative form gives the author the space to pay attention to features that are at first sight not related to politics, but that, in the perfected world of utopia, turn out to play an important part in the conservation of social stability.

The view of Francis Bacon, author of one of the key texts to be discussed, on literature and historiography provides a useful framework to set out the significance of this formal property. Bacon emphasized the role of what he calls civil history in developing moral and societal insight (see Van Cauter 2016). Not the abstract philosophies but the concrete accounts of men's lives can truly teach us about man's (passionate) nature: "for the expressing of affections, passions, corruptions, and customs, we are beholding to poets more than to the philosophers' works" (Bacon 2013: 89). This view allows us to identify the merits of a utopian tale as opposed to non-narrative political accounts. Literary utopian texts are, first, more accessible to the public ("men taste well knowledges that are drenched in flesh and blood", as Bacon graphically declares (ibid.: 111)) and, second, they are much better fitted to teach about the workings of human passions. Both these points are crucial to our present investigation. I will not go into the first one in detail; let it suffice to say that the texts' accessible nature adds to my claim that their truly utopian quality lies in their capacity to raise awareness, as it allows laypersons a view inside topics that normally remain within the less accessible realm of philosophy.[2]

The second point, the fact that stories are well-suited to provide insight into the workings of human passionate nature, is especially relevant for the present discussion. Bacon explicitly relates the knowledge of human passions offered by literature to insight

---

[2] More's Utopia and Bacon's New Atlantis were received very well in their time (in the 16th century the Latin version of Utopia was reprinted six times and it was translated into German and English; a popularity that has not kindled up until today; New Atlantis was one of Bacon's most popular works and was reprinted thirteen times in the decades following its publication (Vickers 1996: 788)). A book like Roemer's Utopian Audiences illustrates the impressive readership of (old and recent) utopian texts (Roemer in this book argues that "the abundance of documented written and visual evidence of reader's responses" make it the perfect genre for research in reader-response theory (Roemer 2003: 61)). Though the popularity of utopian literature does not directly imply anything about the effects of its narrative form, we can, following Bacon, assume that stories are easier to swallow than purely theoretical treatises, thereby increasing readership and thus the text's utopian impact. (See also Yorke: "the narrative form make the utopian ideal accessible to the public in a manner not possible via discussion of pure theory alone" (Yorke 2004: 10).)

in the ways they can be counteracted and controlled in a civil environment: poets and historians show "how affections are kindled and incited; and how pacified and refrained", which is "of special use in moral and civil matters" as it tells us how one affection can be used to master another. This Bacon sees as the foundation of "that excellent use of *praemium* and *poena*, whereby civil states consist; employing the predominant affections of *fear* and *hope*, for the suppressing and bridling the rest" (ibid.: 145). Indeed, as will become clear, government of the political subjects' passions is key to the smooth running of the utopian societies depicted by the selected texts and this, in turn, is key to understanding the texts' political-philosophical relevance. The fictional space makes it possible to focus on the nation's traditions and customs and the citizens' daily occupations rather than on the juridical framework or form of government. This focus on informal social mechanisms rather than on law and form of government is significant because it goes beyond the specific organization of different societies, emphasizing the universal aspects of human communities. As the next chapter will show, the particular content of the laws of the respective depicted societies and their political organization are negligible. Rather than arguing for the superiority of a specific form of government, these texts lay bare the workings of steady institutions that appeal to the people on an emotional level. What matters for the smooth running of society are the informal social customs that define daily life and that, though arguably in differing forms throughout cultures and history, are present in any community.

To conclude, in the textual analysis of the succeeding chapters I focus on utopian narratives as texts that provide purified images of human society functioning at maximal efficiency. Through a) the perfected form of the depicted society and b) the narrative form of the depiction, they make visible customs and social structures that normally remain below the surface. In that sense these texts are descriptive rather than normative, offering the reader the possibility to gain insight in the hidden workings of society.


## 1.2 THE DESCRIPTIVE VALUE OF THE UTOPIAN GENRE

In this section I indicate how my view differs from the common perspective on the utopian genre in scholarship. The dominant view considers utopian texts as a critique of society,

14

an expression of discontent with the existing situation. The focus on this normative interpretation has drawn all attention towards the difference between the utopian and the real world and has overshadowed the similarities. To indicate more clearly how my view adds to utopian scholarship, I concisely introduce three authors – Ferns, Boesky and Davis – that are close to my own view and show how my ideas relate to them.

Vieira in *The Cambridge Companion to utopian literature* identifies four main aspects that have been attributed the utopian text: 1) its content, i.e. utopia as 'the good place'; 2) its literary form; 3) its function, i.e. encouraging the reader to take action; and 4) a feeling of discontent with the existing situation which leads to a "desire for a better life" (Vieira 2010: 6). Vieira believes the fourth characteristic, the author's discontent with society, to be the dominant and most useful one. Most scholarship indeed takes this angle. Levitas, for example, proposes to define utopia as "the expression of the desire for a better way of being" (Levitas 2010: 9). Northrop Frye, as we saw, argues in his *Varieties of Literary Utopias* that utopian texts offer a critique on the existing situation by presenting an ideal alternative which remedies the chaotic nature of common social behavior. According to Suvin, the common view is that "utopia is a vivid witness to desperately needed alternative possibilities of 'the world of men,' of human life" (Suvin 1979: 38).

This interpretation of the genre implies that it is normatively charged, and attributes to the author a specific stance (discontent with his own society) and intention (criticize certain social abuses)[3]. I do not wish to question this view as rather to shed light on an aspect that has, because of this dominant genre-specification, remained largely undiscussed. By assuming that the text expresses a 'desire for a better life', the focus lies on what is different from existing society.[4] This has obfuscated the fact that utopias are in

---

[3] I myself in this thesis do not make any claims about the author's possible intentions with the text. I accept the (likely) possibility that many of the meaningful elements I point out in the chapters that follow were not intentionally put in there by the author. This, however, does not impact the significance of these textual features as, whether intended to do so or not, they maintain their ability to make visible hidden mechanisms.

[4] Suvin, for example, emphasizes the importance of difference from the real world (utopia is "an *alternative location radically different in respect of sociopolitical conditions* from the author's historical environment" (Suvin 1979: 40-1)). This is affirmed by Claeys and Sargent in the first sentence of *The Utopia Reader*: "Utopianism generally is the imaginative projection, positive or negative, of a society that is substantially different from the one in which the author lives" (Claeys and Sargent 1999: 1). On *New Atlantis*, Nadon writes that it "shows social and political inventions for channeling man as well as furnaces and other laboratories for conquering nature" (Nadon 2013: 58), not taking note of the fact that their ways of

many ways very similar to the world we know. I thus oppose the idea that, as Vieira says, "the imagined society is the opposite of the real one, a kind of inverted image of it" (Vieira 2010: 8). At most, the image is purified and magnified. Some scholars take a step in this direction. I will briefly introduce their views and indicate how I relate to them.

Christopher Ferns in *Narrating Utopia* points out that "[u]topian fiction is often characterized by a certain *prescriptive* quality, suggesting, not simply that things might be otherwise, but that they *ought* to conform to a specific vision" (Ferns 1999: 4, his emphasis). He takes a different stance when he asks:

> What *does* utopian fiction not say? With its stress on the difference, the superiority of its alternative society, it often glosses over the extent to which it continues to resemble the world to which it is designed to be superior. Hence, one question to be asked is—what aspects of the writer's own world does s/he choose *not* to address, *not* to reform? (Ferns 1999: 26, his emphasis)

This is a valuable insight. However, there are some problems with it. First of all, he attributes the lack of attention to the similarities with the real world to the utopian text itself, rather than to the way they have commonly been read and interpreted. Considering the abundance of similarities between the real and the utopian world – as the analysis of the succeeding chapters will make clear – there is little textual evidence to support this view. Secondly, Ferns does not go beyond pointing out the presence of the patriarchal structure in More's *Utopia*, Campanella's *The city of the sun* and Bacon's *New Atlantis*. He does not mention any other resemblances, nor addresses the question of what these similarities to the real world might teach us or what they add to the text's value.

Another partial exception to my claim that the utopian text's descriptive value has been overlooked in utopian scholarship is Amy Boesky. In her illuminating book *Founding fictions* she argues that the early-modern utopias arose in England alongside the emergent institutions of those days (the new public school, the laboratory, workhouses, Restoration theater and the colonial plantation) and shows that the English utopias are shaped by the mechanisms of those institutions. Although she too adds a normative aspect, claiming that the several institutions are 'praised' by the authors for their capacity to generate obedience and discipline, this link to reality sheds new light on the utopian text and, indeed, on its descriptive, mirroring qualities. However, whereas Boesky emphasizes the

---

channeling man are, as the succeeding chapters will show, no 'inventions' but more effectively applied versions of well-known institutions.

historical context of the genre's emergence, I focus on its more universal implications; i.e. on how the text, by depicting a society at work, lays bare aspects of human nature and the inner mechanisms that keep communities running.[5]

A final author that deserves attention is J.C. Davis. Contrary to most other scholars, he does not mention the utopian society's desirability or the author's (critical) intentions. His characterization of the genre as set out in *Utopia and the Ideal Society*, a study of English early-modern utopian writing, emphasizes the importance of order and structural organization for utopian societies. Davis opposes utopia to the 'arcadia' and the 'perfect moral commonwealth'; the first being a world of material abundance, whereby many problems would, as is assumed, automatically disappear; the second a society consisting of morally superior people, making political governing superfluous.[6] The notion of utopia, in contrast, has to be understood as the description of a society where all social problems have been eradicated by means of structural interventions; it is an actively perfected society. The utopian text's starting point is a realistic view of a world of material shortage and human imperfection, and it proposes a structural solution to the problems and conflicts that these deficiencies give rise to; "a set of strategies to maintain social order and perfection in the face of the deficiencies, not to say hostility, of nature and the willfulness of man" (Davis 1981: 37). In utopia, thus, "it is neither man nor nature that is idealised but organisation" (ibid.: 38). Davis aptly states that the utopian's "prime aim is not happiness, that private mystery, but order, that social necessity" (ibid.: 38). Order over the whole of society is vital and to achieve this "there must be discipline of a totalitarian kind" (ibid.: 39). Davis accords this achieved discipline mainly to the perfection of laws (ibid.) and in reference to *Utopia* he briefly mentions the role of "informal social pressures, in the shape of public opinion, accepted norms of behaviour and fashion" and conscience (ibid.: 46). Although he himself does not comment on the texts' normative or descriptive properties, his characterization of the genre lays the foundation for a move away from the normative focus. The societies depicted by the texts are nothing more than perfected,

---

[5] Of course, the material, historical and cultural conditions of communities imply differences in the specific forms these mechanisms take on. The utopian texts' universal meaning concerns the more abstract idea that people are primarily led by their affects and that certain (seemingly) informal structures are more effective in stimulating social stability than official orders.

[6] For a more extensive description of the characteristics of these genres, see Davis, *Utopia and the ideal society*, p. 20-36.

rationalized versions of the real world. I divert from Davis's view by showing that the role of law in the utopian society should not be overemphasized and add to it by providing an interpretation of the 'informal social pressures' he mentions but leaves unspecified.

To conclude, I add to the scholarship on the utopian genre by looking beyond the image of the texts as expressions of a desire for a better life and by analyzing their largely overlooked descriptive qualities. Discontent with the existing situation is a viable interpretation and compatible with the view I set out in this thesis. However, to achieve a more nuanced view of utopian texts, it needs to be complemented by the idea that these texts, by depicting societies at work, confront the reader with his own nature and with the world he lives in and created.

## 2. The politics of utopia

In this chapter I show that the specific legal systems and political models of the societies depicted in the selected texts are negligible due to either their minimal role or their deficient functioning, suggesting that the people are disciplined by other means. I oppose the view that, as Davis suggests, it is the 'idealized' political and legal system that is responsible for the impeccable discipline of the utopian subjects. As will become clear, the official political organization of the respective societies has little to no impact on the smooth running of society, contrary to the generic informal customs shared by all. An analysis of the texts shows that they all 1) question the role of the ruler, as he or she is either strikingly absent, lacking in power or, through an overly active or authoritarian approach, harmful rather than beneficial to the civil peace, and 2) imply that laws should be simple and limited in number, and emphasize that laws alone are not enough to keep the peace. The form of government is trivial, as the monarchies either lack kings or would be better off without, and elected magistrates in supposedly democratic systems (Utopia) do not have the power to exert any real influence on the workings of society. Rulers and laws are presented as absent or defective, which implies that order is achieved by different means, which will be discussed in detail in the succeeding chapters.

The first book of Thomas More's *Utopia* contains a discussion concerning the defects of existing society and the corrupted nature of kings. The character More suggests that Hythloday, who shows great political insight, should become a counselor for kings. According to Hythloday, however, the problems societies are faced with cannot be solved by wise and just advice to the leaders. As princes are "even from their tender age, infected and corrupt with perverse and evil opinions" (More 2008: 34), his counsel would be in vain. Hythloday seems convinced that the corrupted nature of kings is beyond cure. Unsurprisingly, then, Hythloday's succeeding description of the 'wisely governed' nation of Utopia reveals its lack of a real ruler. There is a 'prince', but he is mentioned very rarely and mostly in passing. His role is judicial rather than legislative: as far as we are told, his functions are limited to giving consent for (domestic) travels and granting clemency to unfaithful spouses or other criminals. Two times a week he assembles with the Tranibores, the group next on the hierarchical scale, whose specific function is unclear. The only

description of the council we get is: "Their counsel is concerning the commonwealth. If there be any controversies among the commoners, which be very few, they dispatch and end them by and by" (ibid.: 56). The council thus seems to limit itself to solving small, domestic disputes. Radical changes are clearly unheard of: "to change the state of the weal-public" is a danger to be avoided at all costs (ibid.). Other than the council there is no room for political debate: discussing matters concerning the state outside the official assembly is punished by death (ibid.). The only remaining group with any authority, the so-called Syphogrants, have one job: "to see and take heed that no man sit idle" (ibid.: 57). Although they are exempted from labor, in practice their job consists of working voluntarily to serve as an example for the other citizens. Other than this, there is no mention of any executive functions or law enforcement that could be responsible for the stable functioning of daily routine. The first and only ruler of Utopia was the founder, King Utopus, who determined all laws and customs and even the spatial planning. He was the one to kneed Utopia in its present shape and any changes could only mean regression. The succeeding 'rulers' are mere interchangeable mouthpieces.

Bacon's *New Atlantis* is in this respect similar to *Utopia*. It is unclear if there is a king on Bensalem. Although very occasionally a king is casually mentioned (for example in the description of the Feast of the Family, at which occasion the Tirsan receives the 'King's Charter' for his zealous procreation, or by Joabin the Jew, who believes that when the messiah should arrive, 'the king of Bensalem' would sit at his feet (Bacon 2008: 172)), this might just as well refer to the founding king Solamona, who 1900 years earlier gave Bensalem its present shape. If there is a king, we can safely assume that his function in society is negligible. There is, however, another powerful institution on Bensalem; The House of Salomon, a college "dedicated to the study of the Works and Creatures of God" (ibid.: 167). The House has an impressive command over nature and this, so it seems, also extends to human nature and, specifically, the people of Bensalem. As will become clear in the succeeding chapters, the House of Salomon apparently does not only function as scientific center, but controls the entire island and its inhabitants. However, as they are conspicuously absent from society (at the time of the story it has been twelve years since one of the Fathers visited), they do not 'rule' in an explicit way. Just like Utopia's founder, they have installed certain institutions that secure the smooth running of society and make direct interference unnecessary.

The two other texts to be discussed, *The Blazing-World* and *The Isle of Pines*, reassert the problematic nature of individual leadership by depicting authoritarian rulers that are the cause of, rather than the cure for, the lack of social order. *The Blazing-World* features a young woman who, after a shipwreck, ends up in a strange other-worldly place inhabited by half-creatures, who live "in a continued Peace and Happiness; not acquainted with Foreign Wars or Home-bred Insurrections" (Cavendish 2016: 67). They welcome her as a divine creature and bring her to their emperor as a gift. The emperor also deems her a goddess and immediately gives her "an absolute power to rule and govern all that World as she pleased" (ibid.: 70). Being in full power, she makes two major changes: she encourages her subjects to apply themselves to science and to that purpose erects several schools, and she founds a religious congregation for women, who previously were excluded from the men's congregation. After a while, however, the empress realizes that her interventions in the Blazing-World have led to quarrels among the several schools, endangering the world's stability and unity. Hereupon she decides to revoke her decision and restore the world to the state it was in when she arrived. She and her friend the duchess (Margaret Cavendish herself) then occupy themselves with creating dreamworlds in their own minds. Although the almighty empress is the focus of the text, her active and intervening approach turns out to be detrimental and she gives up her position of power. The Blazing-World returns to its utopic state when the ruler retreats into the shadows.

The *Isle of Pines* (1668) is less a utopia than a community evolving from an arcadia to something in between a dystopia and a 'utopia in the making'. (Throughout my analysis it will function as a negative example, its 'not yet utopian' nature being the cause of its social deficiencies and thus emphasizing the need for certain 'utopian' adjustments.) Government and authority are problematic throughout the island's history. The story is told through a letter by a Dutch sailor called Van Sloetten, who, setting sail to the East Indies, is caught in a storm and ends up on an island inhabited by a primitive, English-speaking people. He and his companions are brought to 'their prince or chief ruler' William Pine. William tells them he is the grandson of an Englishman, George Pine, who was shipwrecked on this island, only he and four women of the company (two maids, his master's daughter and 'a negro female slave') surviving. George immediately takes the lead, but due to the island's paradisiacal nature, not much governing is needed. He does not introduce any laws or regulations and keeps living his life of leisure and idleness, not

wishing to be disturbed by noisy children, let alone govern them. Only right before his death does Pine take some political measures as he orders the Bible to "be read once a month at a general meeting", crowns his eldest son "King and Governor of all the rest", names his people 'the English Pines' (after himself and his master's daughter's name 'English') and distinguishes four families by naming them after their mothers: the English, the Sparks, the Trevors and the Phills ("from the Christian name of the negro, which was Philippa, she having no surname" (Neville 2008: 200)). Under his son Henry's 'rule', the population still growing steadily, "mischief began to arise" (ibid.: 201). At this point for the first time the ruler of the Isle of Pines takes an authoritarian stance and rather randomly scapegoats 'the greatest offender', who is mercilessly thrown into the sea. He sets forth official and very strict laws, prohibiting blasphemy, absence from the monthly assembly, rape, adultery, injury or theft and defaming the Governor, the punishment for these crimes being death or mutilation (an eye for an eye). Choosing one person from every family to see these laws are put into execution, Henry finally introduces political order on the island. Peace is restored and up until the time of Van Sloetten's arrival everything has been running smoothly. When the guests prepare to leave, however, a second uprising occurs. The chief ruler of the Phills is claimed to have raped the wife of the principal of the Trevors, whereupon the two families have engaged in a civil war. The governor "found his authority too weak to repress such disorders" and asks his guests for help (ibid.: 207). With the use of their guns, the Dutch sailors quickly capture the felon, who is immediately sentenced to death and, like his unfortunate predecessor, thrown into the sea. Clearly, the Pines' leadership qualities are deficient; the idleness of the 'founder' George, the authoritarian stance of his son and the lack of authority of his grandson fail to keep the subjects in check.

However diverse they may be, the four texts all in their own way address the problems that accompany individual leadership. In *Utopia* the prince has little authority and only plays a minor part in the society's functioning; in *New Atlantis* the king is absent and the other (unofficial) governing institution, though very powerful, remains behind the scenes; *The Blazing-World* questions the effectiveness of active intervention; and *The Isle of Pines* shows that much more is needed than harsh laws and penalties to ensure social stability. As kings, referring back to Book I of *Utopia*, are almost by definition deficient in their rule and cannot be cured by philosophy, a limitation of their power is a logical step, as it avoids

22

the contingencies that accompany a personal rule and benefits the stability and continuity of society.

Mostly, however, it is the importance of the legal system of the utopian nation that is emphasized. The fact that the utopian society cannot be dependent on the unpredictability of individuals is not surprising in light of the perpetuity they aspire. Conversely, a prevalent view is that the perfected legal system of the society is what makes it 'utopian'. Avilés, for example, believes that "[u]topian thought teaches us that human beings are able to transform society by changing the law and by creating new forms of politics which will improve human life" (Avilés 2000: 226). However, though Utopia is, according to Hythloday, 'wiselier governed' than the European nations, this seems to have little to do with law. Laws are even frowned upon: the Utopians believe that many states have too many and unclear laws, which are not obeyed. Hythloday explicitly states that law in itself is insufficient to instill obedience:

> For you may be sure that he will study either with craft privily to mock, or else violently to break the common laws of his country, in whom remaineth no further fear than of the laws nor no further hope than of the body. (More 2008: 110)

The same holds for *New Atlantis*: here as well laws are very limited and not a word is said about how they are enforced. The previously mentioned king Solamona installed the most important laws, aimed at securing Bensalem's isolated position to protect it against undesirable outside influences (his main goal was "to give perpetuity to that which was in his time so happily established" (Bacon 2008: 166)). The only other laws mentioned concern marriage (no polygamy, no marriage within a month of a first meeting, marrying without parental consent reduces your inheritance). Similarly, in *The Blazing-world*, when inquiring her subjects about their customs, the empress is told that they have few laws, because "many Laws made many Divisions, which most commonly did breed Factions, and at last brake out into open Wars" (Cavendish 2016: 72). In *The Isle of Pines*, as we saw, the harsh laws installed by Henry Pine do not prevent the recurring turmoil.

The questions posed in Book I of *Utopia* – how to get a good and just ruler? what laws would solve the problems we now have? – get an unexpected reply in Book II and in the other utopian texts: a society can function without. As I will show in the succeeding chapters, it is not law, but self-evident, inconspicuous aspects of daily life that discipline

the citizens and ensure stability. In the depicted utopian societies, the citizen is not controlled by a superior but by everyone around her, her family, herself. Order is not forced but generated by mutual control, respect for the father figure, fear of divine justice, contempt for the outsider, distracting occupations: institutions affecting and instrumentalizing the human passions, thereby generating social cohesion.

## 3. The patriarchal family: model and foundation of utopia

In this chapter I show that the several utopian texts depict societies which reassert and instrumentalize prevailing familial and gender hierarchies, and thereby uncover the crucial educational and conditioning role of the family. Although some of the supposedly innovating and future-oriented texts seem to lean towards more modern social relations (like *Utopia* with its female priests and equal educational opportunities, and, of course, *The Blazing-World*), ultimately the patriarchal structure constitutes the foundation of society. The nuclear family provides the basis for education and social control within the community. Moreover, the society as a whole is modelled on this structure and is pictured as one big family of sons, fathers and brothers, which engenders mutual love and respect among the citizens and presents hierarchical social relations as natural. Making use of man's affective tendencies (e.g. love and respect for family members, but also, as we will see in the discussion *Utopia*, lust and shame), stability is secured and citizens are prevented from leaving their allocated, 'natural' position in the hierarchy. The utopian texts reflect this ancient social structure and, by picturing a concentrated, perfected version, shed light on its politically instrumental value.

In the first section I briefly introduce the 'extreme' instance of *The Isle of Pines*, which pictures the epitome of the patriarchal society, as the roles of king and father literally converge. The island's later regression into chaos and tyranny can be attributed to the fact that the family grows out of its bounds and, by lack of 'micro-governing' on the level of the small nuclear unities, the sole Father is no longer able to control it. I then discuss the theme of the father as king in *Utopia* and *New Atlantis,* where the father, in the absence of a political leader, takes up the controlling function in his family. He governs, educates and keeps his offspring and wife in check. The family forms the foundation of society, supported by customs and rituals which reassert the natural quality of the patriarchal order and the position of the family. Finally, I show that *The Blazing-World*, despite its powerful female protagonist, reaffirms the inevitability of the patriarchal structure, as the Empress's rule can in no way be distinguished from the rule of the typical male monarch, and, by ultimately returning her power to her husband, she admits to the status quo concerning gender roles. The empire requires a family-like structure and cannot function without its father.

**3.1 THE KING AS FATHER AND THE FATHER AS KING: ULTIMATE PATRIARCHY IN *THE ISLE OF PINES***

In this first section I introduce the theme of the patriarchal family by means of its extreme application in *The Isle of Pines*, where king and father conflate entirely as the ruler personally brings forth all of his subjects. I show that its extremity is also the cause of its deficiency: as the king does not allow any subordinate 'micro-patriarchs' to arise to control their several families, the island's inhabitants eventually become impossible to control. By means of this extreme instance, the text makes visible the dominance and social functions of the patriarchal structure.

After George Pine's arrival on the island, he naturally takes the lead over the four women and soon starts to rapidly populate the land with his own offspring. Having reproduced an entire people, Pine takes up the role of both father and king of the island, deciding everything for his children, from their marriage partners (taking "the males of one family", he "married them to the females of another" (Neville 2008: 199)) to their place of living. Thereby, a hierarchy is installed which is inherited by the eldest son, who is in his turn crowned 'King and Governor of all the rest' by his father. Pine's four wives, meanwhile, are no persons but social types, being referred to as 'my master's daughter', 'the first maid' and 'the other maid' (who, apart from the first being 'tall' and the other 'somewhat fat', are not distinguished), and 'my negro'. Apart from allowing Pine to have sex with them and bearing the children, they have no function whatsoever. Conversely, Pine actively reproduces, makes up rules (so as to ensure maximal reproductive efficiency), builds houses and takes care of the administration (meticulously keeping count of his descendants). In Neville's story, the common idea of the king as a father for his people and the father as king of his household gets a literal meaning. The family hierarchy *is* the political order.

During George's rule, this system is effective. The number of subjects is controllable and, being George's children or grandchildren, they willingly obey him. However, when his eldest son takes over and the population steadily continues to increase, disorders arise ("it is impossible, but that in multitudes disorders will grow" (ibid.: 201)). Of course, it is not the multitude in itself, but the lack of government that

26

gives rise to this turmoil. George's usurpation of all power and neglect to educate his offspring has prevented any 'micro-patriarchs' to arise among the smaller family-units. Apart from his, and later his son's, deficient rulership, there is no hierarchy or other means of control on the island. As the population outgrows the small-scale familial community and the control of a sole patriarch, this leads to the breakdown of the community and, by implication, of the family structure, resulting in incest ("brother and sister lay openly together" (ibid.)) and a return to the state of nature ("the stronger seeking to oppress the weaker" (ibid.)).

Both by taking the patriarchal structure (the conflation of king and father) to an extreme and by showing the undesirable results of the lack of small-scale governing, the text emphasizes the dominance of the patriarchal hierarchy in society and brings to consciousness the governing role of the family. The idea of the father as micro-king is defining for *Utopia* and *New Atlantis*, which will be discussed in the following two sections. Both texts attest to the importance of the nuclear family for the stability of society. *Utopia* pictures the family as the foundation of society, as the basic political, manufacturing and educational unit, which is supported by customs and rituals engendering an unwavering respect for the patriarchal hierarchy. The family as depicted in *New Atlantis* is similar to the Utopian family in its social functions, but shows more clearly an appeal to the 'naturalness' of the patriarchal order.


## 3.2 PATRIARCHAL MICRO-GOVERNING: THE FATHER AS JUDGE, TEACHER AND PRIEST IN *UTOPIA*

In this section I show that in *Utopia* the patriarchal family lies at the heart of society, as the familial small-scale government makes any further top down authority redundant. Despite the equal learning opportunities for men and women, the patriarchal structure is defining for this community. The father serves as ruler and educator of his wife and children, a hierarchy reinforced by custom and affect-evoking rituals which secure love and respect for the patriarch in the Utopian citizen. The social functions of the family are consciously applied and intensified in this fictional world, making them visible to the reader.

27

Family is the foundation of official and unofficial life on Utopia, as it is the basic unit of the political structure and the place where moral education and social control are primarily situated. On the political level, the families are consulted about "matters of great weight and importance" (More 2008: 56) and a syphogrant is chosen 'per thirty families'. Although it is doubtful that they have any real impact on the way this rigid society is run, the family clearly is the basic social unit. Respecting agriculture and handicraft, each family has its own specific craft that is passed down from one generation to the next. They even go so far as to transfer anyone who prefers another craft to a new, fitting family.[7] The family's most important function, and most to our concern, is the social control exercised by parent over child and husband over wife. The explicit hierarchical structure of the family ("The wives be ministers to their husbands, the children to their parents, and, to be short, the younger to their elders" (ibid.: 63)) plays a crucial part in generating model Utopian citizens. As Davis puts it: "The family provides a powerful cohesive force for the whole commonwealth both as a coercive institution and as a training place for citizens" (Davis 1981: 50). During religious service, the men sit on the right side and the women on the left, the male members of the household sitting in front of the male head of the family, the female members in front of the female head; "thus it is foreseen that all their gestures and behaviours be marked and observed abroad of them by whose authority and discipline they be governed at home" (More: 117). Every last day of the month, a holy day, "the wives fall down prostrate before their husband's feet at home, and the children before the feet of their parents" to confess any sins they may have committed (ibid.: 166). The family also has a 'juridical' function: there are no official laws for small offenses, so the punishment (chastisement) is carried out privately, again according to the husband-wife, parent-child hierarchy. The family, we can conclude, is a crucial social unit in Utopia, responsible for education, social control, teaching crafts, instilling obedience and

---

[7] This strongly reminds of Plato's *Republic* where everyone is appointed his rightful place in society depending on the 'metal' he is born with. Socrates proposes to tell rulers and ruled alike that they are by nature fitted to be either rulers, auxiliaries or craftsmen and by no means must this order be disturbed: "the god, when he molded those of you who are competent to be rulers, mixed gold into them at their formation—that's why they're the most honorable—but all the auxiliaries have silver in them, and there's iron and bronze in the farmers and other skilled workers". So, Socrates says, "the god exhorts the rulers first and foremost to be good guardians of their children, of nothing more diligently than that, and to keep watch for nothing so diligently as for what they have intermixed in their souls. And if a child of theirs is born with bronze or iron mixed in it, they'll by no means give way to pity, but paying it the honor appropriate to its nature, they'll drive it out among the craftsmen or farmers" (415a-c; Plato, 2007: 109).

maintaining order. The lack of a strong public authority figure is easily remedied by the micro-governing of the several families and the extended family of the 'Syphogranty', the district to which the families belong (the 'magistrates' (assumably the syphogrants (see chapter 2)) are called fathers "and like fathers they use themselves", which incites the citizens to "exhibit unto them due honour without any compulsion" (ibid.: 93)). The family is an efficient political vehicle that creates an as good as automatically running society.

For the citizens, however, this cleverly utilized patriarchal structure necessarily remains an unconscious way of living, fed by irrational motives. The family's affective force is secured and strengthened by several clever customs. Besides the, atypically for Utopia, strict laws concerning marriage (adultery is one of the few crimes for which there is a fixed penalty: the "most grievous bondage" the first time and death the second time (ibid.: 92)), we are provided with two important non-legal ways in which the family is supported and respect for the father figure is ingrained. First, the father is linked to the religious institution. The church supports the hierarchy by creating a fear of going to mass with "troubled consciences" if the family members have not confessed their sins to the man of the house (ibid.: 166). Not only does this stimulate a radical form of social control, it provides the father with a priest-like status and thus a link to the divine. Second, marriage and, by extension, family, are reinforced by the strange ritual potential marriage partners undergo. Before any marriage, the bride and groom are presented to one another naked. Apart from the eugenic function that is explicitly mentioned – i.e. avoid getting married to someone with severe physical deformities – the ritual also contains an important emotional aspect. The solemnity of the description gives the event a ritualistic vibe: "a sad and an honest matron showeth the woman, be she maid or widow, naked to the wooer. And likewise a sage and discreet man exibiteth the wooer naked to the woman" (ibid.: 90). The ceremonial character of the ritual, the lust that we can assume to be strong when after a life of obligatory chastity the Utopian sees another person naked for the first time, and (when all goes well) the reciprocal acknowledgment that turns the shame of nudity into gratefulness and self-affirmation, arguably create an emotional bond that benefits the stability of the marriage. Moreover, as the mentioned eugenic function is primarily directed at the physical qualities of the woman ("Verily so foul deformity may be hid under those coverings, that it may quite alienate and take away the man's mind from his wife" (ibid.: 90)), the woman, from her inferior position, has much more reason to be grateful

to have been 'approved', whereby, again, the patriarchal system is enforced.

Emotionally, we can conclude, the Utopian citizens have no choice but to honor the nuclear family they are born, raised and married into and which secures the passing on of the Utopian values. The society depicted in *Utopia* is, despite its gender-equal educational opportunities and apparent move away from strong authority or hierarchy, highly dependent on the ancient patriarchal structure. The hierarchical family in this utopian world is consciously instituted and deployed and thereby made visible by the text as a primary means of education and social control. I now proceed to *New Atlantis'* Bensalem where discipline and an ingrained respect for the father figure are secured by an appeal to the natural and divine origin of the patriarchal family structure.


### 3.3 THE FEAST OF THE FAMILY: THE CELEBRATION OF NATURAL ORDER IN *NEW ATLANTIS*

In this section I show that *New Atlantis* lays bare the educational and governing functions of the family and the ways in which it is supported by means of impressive rituals. The Bensalemite family revolves around a patriarch whose basic social role is to reproduce and govern his offspring. Its functions are similar to those of the Utopian family, but there is a stronger focus on the natural and even holy character of the family and its structure, whereby, even more than on Utopia, there is no choice but to obey the nature/God-given hierarchy.

The importance of the family on Bensalem shows first and foremost in the Feast of the Family, organized for any man with thirty descendants above three years old. It is a luxuriant feast, overflowing with ritual and symbolism, all aimed at celebrating fertility and strengthening the patriarch's position. The fertile 'Father of the Family' or 'Tirsan' is honored and rewarded with "gift of revenew, and many privileges, exemptions, and points of honour" (Bacon 2008: 170). Besides stimulating propagation, the feast serves as a prime occasion for reinforcing the family bond: disagreements between family members are worked out, problems are solved, anyone not living virtuously is reprimanded and the Tirsan, reminiscent of George Pine, advises his descendants about life in general and marriage in particular. The feast is permeated with fertility symbols like grapes, ivy and

wheat,[8] and centers around several ritual ceremonies and blessings, which suggests a strong, pagan-like reverence towards the order of nature. Joabin, the Bensalemite Jew who informs the narrator of Bensalem's customs concerning marriage, calls it a "most natural, pious, and reverend custom" (ibid.: 169) and mentions that only seldom the Tirsan's orders are disobeyed, "such reverence and obedience they give to the order of nature" (ibid.: 169). There is also a Christian motif, as after the feast hymns are sung praising Adam, Noah and Abraham, thereby emphasizing the holiness of the patriarchal order. The mother, meanwhile, functions as a kind of sublimated, inviolable 'Virgin' Mary, taking up an honorable but passive role on a small balcony above the Tirsan's chair "where she sitteth but is not seen" (ibid.: 170).

The father clearly plays an important educational and monitoring role in society. Consequently, again, marriage is valued highly and there are "many wise and excellent laws" on this topic (ibid.: 174). Polygamy is prohibited and chastity is emphasized. Bensalem is "the virgin of the world", "there are no stews, no dissolute houses, no courtesans" (ibid.: 173). In a striking adaptation of the traditions of Utopia, there is also a physical check-up of potential marriage partners, which in this case happens via 'a friend' instead of the interested parties themselves. The motive for this variation is unclear. If the country is as devout and chaste as they claim themselves to be and the friendships as strong, this ritual might encourage the friend to find a partner himself. If we don't accept these premises, the custom seems little beneficial for marital fidelity. Arguably, however, fidelity on Bensalem is secondary to propagation. Mentioning the mother's role in the Feast of the Family, Joabin phrases a condition: "*if there be* a mother from whose body the whole lineage is descended" (ibid.: 170, my emphasis), which implies that the duty of marital fidelity does not hold for the overly fertile patriarch. This makes sense in light of the importance attached to reproduction and does not endanger the familial stability as it is the father who makes up the core of the family and who is the one responsible for his offspring's education.

Bensalem's ethics concerning marriage serve reproduction and the generation of

---

8 The Tirsan chooses the 'Son of the Vine' who is to live with him; the Tirsan's throne is made of ivy; the Tirsan is given a "cluster of grapes of gold, with a long foot or stalk" (Bacon: 170), the number of grapes equaling the number of descendants, and either dyed purple and decorated with a little sun or 'greenish yellow' with a crescent, depending on whether there are more males or females in the family; and all descendants receive a jewel shaped like an ear of wheat.

a pater familias who keeps his descendants in check. The lack of a visible ruler is filled in by the patriarchs' rule over their respective families. This is enforced by means of rituals that appeal to nature and religion, making this contingent hierarchy into the 'true' order. Bensalem's progressiveness as a nation based on science only reaches the people in the shape of a clever application of the knowledge of human nature as affectively highly influenceable (this will become more clear in the succeeding chapters). Again, the accentuation of the significance of informal social relations and the means by which they are reinforced, makes them visible to the reader.

In the final section of this chapter I show that the need for and naturalness of the patriarchal structure is also affirmed by the Empress of the Blazing-World, and concludingly argue that the discussed texts do not simply and unwittingly reflect a dominant social hierarchy, but, by emphasizing it the way they do, uncover the crucial social function of the family as the basic conditioning unit.

## 3.4 THE ALL-PRESENT PATRIARCH: FEMALE FORFEIT IN *THE BLAZING-WORLD*

In this final section I show that *The Blazing-world*, despite its female protagonist, emphasizes male dominance. The text's feminism ends in defeat as the empress returns her power to her husband and thereby reasserts the established hierarchies. Cavendish thereby ironically stresses the seeming unavoidability of the patriarchal structure and its preeminence in the real world.

Cavendish has given rise to many contrastive interpretations concerning her view on gender roles, some congratulating her on her feminist message, others claiming that she was essentially concerned with herself, condemning other 'ordinary' women to their inferior position (see e.g. Williamson 1990). This ambiguity is present in *The Blazing-World* as well. On the one hand, there is a strong message of gender equality: the only two active characters are female (viz. the empress and her dear platonic friend the duchess of Newcastle, i.e. Cavendish herself); they both seem to be on equal footing with their husbands; and the empress has a powerful political position. The world she enters is male-dominated (women have to pray by themselves at home instead of joining the men in the

religious congregation because "their company hinders Devotion" and the priests and governors of the Blazing-World are made eunuchs so as to avoid the mischievous, "importunate perswasions" of women (Cavendish 2016: 73)), but the empress remedies this inequality and establishes a congregation of women. In this sense, the work calls into question the prevailing gender roles and shows a sharp contrast with the other works discussed.

However, the empress's rather despotic reign is not in any way different from the paradigmatic 'male' rule and all other women in the story remain as passive and silent as ever: it is the bear-*men*, worm-*men* etc. that form scientific schools and present the Empress with their findings; the women's only 'progress' is that they are allowed to attend religious service, which is ultimately aimed at instilling obedience (see chapter 4). As Trubowitz states: "the Duchess's feminist desire for self-government and female community is finally undermined by her aristocratic investment in monarchy or, more precisely, by her adoption of the patriarchal ethos of absolutism that monarchy, both male and female, mystifies and enshrines" (Trubowitz 1992: 241). Moreover, the changes she makes in her empire in the end turn out to disrupt the paradisiacal state it was in when she first arrived, which eventually makes her decide to annul all of her own innovations. Thereby, she seems to admit the mistake of a woman trying to govern a state and returns the power to her husband[9] (who gave her the power in the first place, an empire as a toy for his wife to play with), under whose passive rule the Blazing-World could actually be called a utopia. The empress even attributes her failure to gender-related flaws:

> For, said she, although this World was very well and wisely ordered and governed at first, when I came to be Empress thereof; *yet the nature of Women being much delighted with Change and Variety*, after I had received an absolute Power from the Emperor, did somewhat alter the Form of Government from what I found it; but now perceiving that the World is not so quiet as it was at first, I am much troubled at it. (Cavendish: 139, my emphasis)

Interestingly, the Duchess then advises her to, like before, "have but one soveraign, one

---

[9] We see a similar move in Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure* (1999), a play about a young woman, Lady Happy, who, unwilling to conform to the (patriarchal) demands of society, founds a community of women. No men are allowed (Lady Happy ardently criticizes marriage throughout the play) and the women adopt male roles, even dressing in a masculine fashion, and become the rulers of their private world. However, the 'Princess' with whom Lady Happy seems to have a romantic relationship turns out to be a man and the play ends with their marriage. Just like *Blazing World* this text provides us with an ambiguous mixture of a plea for gender equality and the ultimate conformation to prevailing gender roles.

Religion, one Law, and one Language, *so that all the World might be but as one united Family*, without divisions; nay, like God, and his Blessed Saints and Angels" (ibid.: 139, my emphasis). Thereby, once again the nuclear male-run family is put forth as the ideal political model.[10] The 'rational' male element has to keep the irrational woman, 'delighted with change and variety', in check – both on the level of the family as on the level of politics.

Still, this analysis can be given a further twist. As mentioned, priests and governors are made eunuchs to keep them from marriage and female influence:

> although [women] are not admitted to publick Employments, yet are they so prevalent with their Husbands and Parents, that many times by their importunate perswasions, they cause as much, nay, more mischief secretly, then if they had the management of publick Affairs. (ibid.: 73)

Women, this implies, may be more powerful behind the scenes. This idea is made more explicit in one of Cavendish's other texts. In her *Sociable letters* she writes:

> Nature be thank'd, she hath been so bountiful to us, as we oftener inslave men, than men inslave us; they seem to govern the world, but we really govern the world, in that we govern men: for what man is he, that is not govern'd by a woman more or less?" (Cavendish 1664: XVI)[11]

The empress's forfeit thus can, paradoxically, be considered a covert assertion of female power. However, as the patriarchal structure ostensibly remains undisputed, its dominance and apparent unavoidability are highlighted, even more so considering the text's feminist nature.


**CONCLUSION**

The importance of the family and its patriarchal hierarchy in the societies depicted by the

---

[10] See also Holmesland: "The state as a human family, deified in the image of natural harmony, seems to become the ideal." (Holmesland 1999: 466)

[11] On a side note, it could be argued that this idea of covert female power provides an answer to Spinoza's ambiguous message in the last chapter of his *Political Treatise.* In reply to the question "whether it is by nature or by convention that women are subject to the authority of men" Spinoza first suggests that, as we can derive from history and experience, it is women's deficient nature that makes them unfit to rule. His last sentences on the topic (and of his book), however, implicate that it is in fact *man*'s deficient nature that makes female rule impossible, as men are led by their lusts and judge women by their beauty rather than their abilities. Cavendish's idea that it is exactly this male lust that makes women powerful is an interesting response to Spinoza's ambivalent stance.

early-modern utopian texts is hard to overlook. Even when the nuclear family is abolished as for example in Tomasso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (an early-modern utopian text (1602) that will not be further discussed here), its structure serves as a model for the organization of society as a whole, as social relations are described as (male) family relations and the whole (male part of) society is structured as one large family, installing greater obedience towards the elder and preventing possible resentment.[12]

It is not surprising that the patriarchal family is featured in these texts as it was of course a prevalent social structure. However, it is not merely present; rather, it plays a lead role in the organization of society, much more so than the innovative aspects the texts introduce (which is made blatantly clear in *The Blazing-World* where the empress's innovations quickly have to make place for the traditional male rule). It is striking that a social unit as traditional as the patriarchal family plays such an important part in texts that are, according to the specifications of the genre, supposed to provide an innovative alternative for, or at least offer a critique of the existing situation. As Ferns puts it (in reference to *Utopia*):

> What is striking is that *Utopia* makes explicit aspects of social organization that would more commonly be taken for granted: the patriarchal family, in other words, is represented as being *just as* fundamental to the workings of Utopian society as any of the sweeping changes that are evident; its maintenance is *as* crucial as the abolition of money and private property, or as the radically different laws, customs, and rituals which are described in such detail. (Ferns 1999: 46)

Looking back at Northrop Frye's apt characterization of the utopian genre, this surprising discovery is easily explained: "The desirable society, or the utopia proper, is essentially the writer's own society with its unconscious ritual habits transposed into their conscious equivalents" (Frye 1965). The inconspicuous way the family normally functions is made explicit in these utopian texts, which thereby uncover its several political, societal and disciplining functions. In *The Isle of Pines* the family entirely conflates with society and the head of the household has officially (though unsuccessfully) been promoted to king and peacekeeper of the country. In *Utopia* the family lies at the heart of political life, education and social control. In *New Atlantis* it serves an educational and a juridical function, keeping

---

[12] Similarly, in Plato's *Republic* the guardians, as wives and children are communal, all "know each other as brothers, fathers, and sons, and call each other by those names" (461d). Hereby respect and social cohesion is secured: "Shame will prevent him from laying a hand on his parents, and so will the fear that the others would come to the aid of the victim, some as his sons, some as his brothers, and some as his fathers" (ibid.: 465b). Also, in war "they'd be least likely to desert each other" (ibid.: 471c).

the peace in the apparent absence of a real ruler. In *The Blazing-World* The Empress's rule fails because she tries to change the patriarchal order. Thus, rather than providing an alternative for the existing situation, these texts have taken up, highlighted and maximized an ancient and dominant social order, thereby showing the reader how this seemingly self-evident structure functions as an efficient political mechanism, a micro-authority keeping the citizens in check. As it is a strongly emotionally charged mechanism, this is achieved without obvious suppression. Deploying the people's affects (natural familial love, reinforced by means of customs and rituals), a 'natural' respect and obedience is instilled. These utopias are not offering an innovative social alternative, but rather show how something as common and self-evident as the family can play an important political and conditioning role.

## 4. Utopia and civil religion

In this chapter I show that the several utopian texts uncover religion as an important political tool. Religion in the societies depicted by the texts is an expressly civil religion, serving political rather than spiritual goals. These texts, despite their fictional communities' seemingly progressive move towards religious tolerance or emphasis on a scientific mindset, picture societies that largely depend on rigid, dogmatic belief systems, aimed at instilling virtue and obedience by appealing to the people's affective nature. The rationally organized utopia cleverly governs its irrational citizens by means of religion-inspired hopes and fears. Again, rather than introducing innovating ideas, these texts reflect a dominant, age-old social institution and, by showing it 'at work', lay bare its mode of operation. Together, the several texts dismantle the different aspects of this political instrument: its motivation is the smooth running of society, its methods are aimed at man's passionate nature, ranging from prophecy and miracles to ceremony and clever architecture, and its result is obedience and docility.

I again start with a short discussion of *The Isle of Pines*, which pictures religion as the main instigator to civic virtue as the Pines try to solve the obvious need for legal and moral regulation by implementing laws based on the Bible. I then proceed to the much more effective religious institution as depicted in *Utopia*, which shows how the citizens of Utopia are emotionally impelled to remain in religion's grip by means of ceremonial features like the church's atmosphere and an awe-inspiring service. This is followed by a discussion of the 'chosen people' of Bensalem, who were converted by a seemingly miraculous event resulting in extreme devotion and docility. The notion of miracle is subtly but radically deconstructed in this text, which is also the case, though more explicitly, in *The Blazing-World.*

### 4.1 RELIGION AS LAWGIVER IN *THE ISLE OF PINES*

In this first section I show that religion on the Isle of Pines is consciously implemented to remedy social disorder, but fails in its task due to a lack of measures to evoke emotional attachment. Religion is advanced as the solution to all social problems, both through

individual faith and as the moral basis of the legal system. However, as it is forced upon the people by law rather than founded on affective persuasions (as in the utopias to be discussed next), the attempts to implement Christianity fail to inspire the inhabitants.

Religion first enters the text when George Pine, having taught 'some of his children' to read, at the end of his life orders that the Bible should be read in group once a month. He also warns his offspring not to admit any other religion if "any should come and find them out" (Neville 2008: 200). Pine clearly values the Christian religion (one of the few items he managed to salvage from the shipwreck was a Bible), but it is only on the verge of death that he takes any measures to institutionalize his faith. This, as we saw, applies to all of his 'political' decisions and  it soon becomes clear that his leadership was deficient;  George Pine's informal and ad hoc commands are not backed up by any enforcing measures and after his death the situation escalates. Religion, or rather the lack of it, holds center stage in these events. Although George's grandson William tells us that "no tie of religion [is] strong enough to chain up the depraved nature of mankind" (ibid.: 201), he immediately continues to identify the lack of religious activity as the reason for the uprising during his father Henry's reign:

> The source from whence those mischiefs spring, was at first, I conceive, the neglect of hearing the Bible read, which according to my grandfather's prescription, was once a month at a general meeting, but now many of them wandering far up into the country, they quite neglected the coming to it, with all other means of Christian instruction, whereby the sense of sin being quite lost in them, they fell to whoredoms, incests, and adultery. (ibid.)

Interestingly, Henry's solution to these 'mischiefs', after having executed the main instigator (the second son of the African slave Philippa, see chapter 5), is to set forth a set of strict laws that have generally been read by critics as being loosely based on the Ten Commandments (see e.g. Stillman 2006: 159; Mahlberg 2012: 61). Blasphemy, absence from the monthly assembly, rape, adultery, injury to and theft from your neighbor, and speaking ill of the governor are severely punished by either death or 'an eye for an eye'.

Biblical piety is thus seen as the main source of obedience and chastity, and forms the foundation of the political order. However, indeed, religion alone cannot 'chain up the depraved nature of mankind'. Due to a lack of efficient leadership and persuasive measures this approach only works for a short while before the people again fall in

disarray. George's casual command and Henry's abrupt authoritarianism, lacking social foundation, do not evoke any religious devotion or, by implication, motivation to obedience in the island's inhabitants. In the following sections I discuss the role of religion in *Utopia*, *New Atlantis* and *The Blazing-World*, which all emphasize the political value of religion and show how it can be implemented efficiently by means of ceremony and miracles, i.e. by persuasion aimed at the affects.

## 4.2 THE AWE OF CHURCH AND CEREMONY: TOLERANCE AND DOGMA IN *UTOPIA*

In this section I argue that *Utopia* depicts a society that depends on a strongly dogmatic belief system and, by showing the effective way in which it generates obedience, uncovers religion as a powerful political instrument. Despite the nation's proclaimed religious tolerance, rigid dogmas are implemented to secure social stability, supported by emotionally influential customs. The text offers a detailed illustration of the several ways in which the people are tied to religion, thereby deconstructing its material and ceremonial aspect. Again, it is not the innovative element that is crucial for Utopia's efficient functioning, but the cunning implementation of a well-known institution, whose traditional functions are intensified and thus brought to light by the text.

As Hythloday enthusiastically tells his hearers, people on Utopia are free to choose whom or what they worship. This is one of their 'ancientest' laws, put forth by King Utopus to prevent dissension among his people and resulting from his enlightened conviction that no one can be forced to believe something he does not. This suggestion of a progressive move towards freedom and rationality is, however, immediately undermined by Hythloday, who firmly states that, although the Utopians are free to choose the object of their worship,

> no man should conceive so vile and base an opinion of the dignity of man's nature as to think that the souls do die and perish with the body, or that the world runneth at all adventures, governed by no divine providence. (More 2008: 109-110)

He then states the reason for these conditions: they result in a belief in divine judgment, i.e., the conviction that in the afterlife vices will be punished and virtues rewarded. One who is of a different opinion has no place in Utopia, "whose laws and ordinances, if it were

not for fear, he would nothing at all esteem" (ibid.: 110). Hythloday in his tale thus very explicitly links the smooth functioning of society to religious beliefs. Although the specific interpretation of the worshiped god is not stipulated, there are two dogmas that cannot be questioned as they are fundamental for social stability.

This social function of religion is cleverly reinforced by its physical manifestations. The religious service is elaborately described and is key to understand the functioning of religion on Utopia. It is organized in a way acceptable to all different faiths and maximally exploits religion's instrumental value by intensifying its emotional force. Every aspect of the religious practice serves religion's ultimate goal, i.e. for the people "to conceive a religious and devout fear towards God, which is the chief and almost the only incitation to virtue" (ibid.: 117). The churches are impressive buildings ("gorgeous ... wide and large") that are consciously designed to be dark to intensify the religious experience (ibid.: 115). The service itself is presided over by a priest dressed colorfully and impressively in divers bird feathers, which are said to contain 'divine mysteries'. Upon his appearance, the churchgoers "fall down incontinent every one reverently to the ground, with so still silence on every part, that the very fashion of the thing striketh into them a certain fear of God, as though he were personally present (ibid.: 117-118). The service then continues with music that so resembles 'natural affections' that it is able to "wonderfully move, stir, pierce, and inflame the hearers' minds" (ibid.: 118). Frankincense and candles create a pleasant atmosphere, by which the churchgoers "feel themselves secretly lifted up and encouraged to devotion with more willing and fervent hearts" (ibid.: 117).

*Utopia* shows that for religion to have the desired effect, people should be bound to it emotionally. Specifically, it makes clear how service and ceremony make use of this idea by touching the senses and thereby shaping the minds of the churchgoers, making them love, fear and ultimately obey. The citizens' faith is determined by fear and devotion and is practiced in an emotional and irrational manner. In the priest's garb of feathers they see divine mysteries; they believe in miracles "as works and witnesses of the present power of God" (ibid.: 112); they are convinced they are watched (over) by the dead (ibid.: 111). This suggests a stimulation of a mythical way of thinking incompatible with an enlightened move towards freedom of conscience. The contrast between the deliberate, well thought-through tactics deployed to intensify the desired effects of religion and the resulting irrational and emotional practice on the part of the citizens unmasks its civil

40

rather than spiritual goals. Through the concentrated lens of narrative, the text uncovers the political instrumentality of religion.

**4.3 WORKS OF NATURE AND WORKS OF ART: MIRACULOUS CONVERSION IN *NEW ATLANTIS***

In this section I argue that *New Atlantis* unmasks religion as a man-made invention and deconstructs the divine origins of the Bible, reducing it to nothing but a useful tool to be adapted to one's social and political needs. I oppose the view that the dominant presence of Christianity in the text reflects Bacon's sincere faith and is an attempt to combine this faith with his idea of a science-based society.[13] The text, as we will see, strongly implies that Christianity was consciously introduced by means of an artificially constructed miracle and keeps the people in a state of eerie docility. Rather than introducing a modern version of Christianity compatible with intellectual development, *New Atlantis* intensifies its anti-rational features and shows how it keeps the citizens of Bensalem meek and governable. The utopian text again reflects, magnifies and thereby makes visible the hidden workings of an omnipresent social institution.

In the preface to *New Atlantis* written by Bacon's secretary Rawley, the goal of the text is announced to be "a model or description of a college instituted for the interpreting of nature and the producing of great and marvellous works for the benefit of men" (Rawley, in Bacon 2008: 151). More specifically, Bacon's *New Atlantis* is supposed to describe a state based on the (search for) knowledge of nature. The House aspires "the knowledge of Causes, and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of Human Empire, to the effecting of all things possible" (ibid.: 177). If we can believe the elaborate enumeration of their activities, they are well on their way to achieve this goal. Virtually everything in nature, ranging from the weather to live organisms, can be imitated or enhanced; they can prolong human life, resuscitate dead animals and create new plant

---

[13] McKnight, for instance, "maintains that Bacon's program of utopian reform presented in the *New Atlantis* is grounded in genuinely and deeply felt religious convictions" (2006: 11), and argues that Bacon demonstrates the 'purity' of Bensalem's Christianity and its importance for the people's well-being (ibid.: 30). Although his focus according to McKnight is "to rebuild natural philosophy", he also shows that it is complementary with spiritual regeneration (ibid.).

species, almost raising themselves to the level of gods. However, despite this explicitly specified goal, a strikingly large part of the text centers on religion and the Christian faith seems more defining for life on Bensalem than this proclaimed interest in nature. As Innes phrases it, "Bacon makes a display of religion" when describing the sailors' arrival on the island and their first encounter with the inhabitants (Innes 2010: 124). The scroll delivered to the sailors' leader is stamped with cherubims' wings and a cross, which to the sailors was "a great rejoicing" (Bacon: 153). The first question asked of them is: "Are ye Christians?" and, having affirmed this, the sailors are asked to swear "by the merits of the Saviour" that they are no pirates (ibid.: 154). In a parallel gesture, the sailors' first question to their hosts is how this isolated land was converted to Christianity. The governor of the Strangers' House (who is also a priest) applauds them for this as it shows that they "first seek the kingdom of heaven" (ibid.: 159). The sailors, in sum, have come "amongst a Christian people, full of piety and humanity" (ibid.: 157). Bensalem is "a land of angels", a picture of heaven (ibid.: 158).

The prominent presence of Christianity in the text has often been interpreted as an attempt by Bacon to show the compatibility of his science-based state and the religion he sincerely believed in (see e.g. McKnight 2006; see Innes 2010 for a comprehensive list of scholarship in this line). This view, however, ignores the text's many strange and even uncanny features which suggest that there is more to Bensalem than meets the eye. The little we get to see of the inhabitants makes clear that it is an extraordinarily virtuous (Bensalem is "free from all pollution our foulness ... the virgin of the world" (Bacon: 173)) and docile people – so much so that they almost seem robotic (when the Father of the House makes his impressive entry in Bensalem, there is no festivity or cheerfulness; rather, "the street was wonderfully well kept: so that there was never any army had their men stand in better battle-array, than the people stood" (ibid.: 176)). Christianity permeates all aspects of life (even the Jews on the island believe that Christ was "born of a Virgin, and that he was more than a man" (ibid.: 172)) and there is a strong, almost primitive faith in divine miracles.

Christianity is thus depicted as holding back rather than supporting a progressive move towards intellectual growth. Intellectual development is reserved for the small elite of Salomon's House, while the Bensalemites are portrayed as an extremely irrational and easily manipulated people. The key passage in this respect is the priest's remarkable tale

42

of the miracle that befell the nation. Twenty years after the ascension of Christ, the people of Renfusa (meaning 'sheep like') witnessed "a great pillar of light" in the sea with a large cross on top (ibid.: 159). Having approached this strange phenomenon, a member of the House of Salomon declares it to be a divine miracle. When the light is gone, a chest remains "dry, and not wet at all with water" (ibid.: 160), carrying a letter of the apostle Bartholomew, the Old and New Testament and, even more miraculously, other books of the New Testament which have not yet been written. Moreover, the books can be read by the several language communities in the land as if they were written in their own language. "And thus," the priest concludes, "was this land saved from infidelity … by an ark, through the apostolical and miraculous evangelism of St. Bartholomew" (ibid.: 161).

The reader is at first left to wonder what to make of this strange story. Advancing further in the text, however, a plausible interpretation is suggested. At the end of the book, the Father of the House who is visiting Bensalem describes to the narrator the works of the House. At the end of his enumeration of their impressive accomplishments, he informs the narrator that although the House hates "impostures and lies", they have so-called "houses of deceits of the senses", in which they can, if they would want to, make natural phenomena look 'miraculous' (ibid.: 183). He also mentions so-called 'perspective-houses' in which they carry out experiments with light, creating "delusions and deceits of the sight" (ibid.: 181). Though no definite proof, the suggestion that the House created the miracle is strong.

The text contains another hint that suggests that miracles, when properly investigated, are nothing more than deceptive natural phenomena. The member of the House declaring the pillar of light to be a miracle is, according to his own statements, able to distinguish between "divine miracles, works of nature, works of art, and impostures and illusions of all sorts" (ibid.:160). As Innes (2010) notes, 'impostures and illusions' are a subset of 'works of art'. He then draws a parallel with the first two options, of which 'divine miracles' can also be seen as a sub-category of 'works of nature', as unknown natural phenomena are often wrongly interpreted as miracles:

> As "impostures and illusions" are merely works of art that have deceived the observer, so too Bacon is implicitly stating that what we call "divine miracles" are only works of nature that have deceived the observer. Again, the distinction here is one between, on the one hand, credulous and erroneous opinion and, on the other hand, a true knowledge of the phenomena themselves. (Innes 2010: 127)

Moreover, as the House many centuries after this event is still gaining new knowledge of nature, it is unclear how the member of the House could at that point in time legitimately proclaim the pillar of light to be a miracle. According to Innes this points towards deception on the part of the House, an interpretation supported by Jerry Weinberger: "the fact is that the very knowledge that supposedly enables the scientists to determine the genuineness of miracles empowers them to commit successful religious fraud" (Weinberger 2002: 114).

These textual features allow us to legitimately assume that the miracle that converted Bensalem to Christianity was staged by Salomon's House. This interpretation has important implications. First of all, it explains how the seemingly unchristian practices of the House (promoting themselves to gods, manipulating nature, life and death) are combined with this religion: if the miracle was indeed staged by the House, this means that they also wrote the biblical books in the chest that were 'not at that time written'. They not only introduced Christianity, but altered its content to their liking, enhancing the political advantage and making it compatible with their practices (in this distorted sense the science-based nation and Christianity are indeed shown to be compatible). This, however, can be taken another step further. If the House indeed wrote the 'not yet written' books, and we exclude the miraculous possibility that at a later point in time the exact same books would be written elsewhere in the world, we have to conclude that Bensalem dispersed these self-written books of the New Testament throughout the world. This is implied by the fact that although the New Testament would normally presuppose the presence of the Apocalypse, this book is mentioned separately, grammatically at the same level as the 'other' yet to be written books ("...and the Apocalyps itself, and some other books of the New Testament which were not at that time written, were nevertheless in the Book" (Bacon: 160)). Since the Apocalypse is of course known to us, this implies that if these books were indeed written by the House, they had a worldwide impact on the substance of the Christian doctrine. The text thus unmasks religion as a purely human construct.

Bacon with this passage entirely drains miracles and scripture of their spiritual nature. Religion is reduced to a human invention and a political instrument. It is a useful and maybe even necessary element of society. Innes suggests that Bacon considered it natural to man:

44

> It is not Bacon's intention to purge religion from the popular mind. Apparently, he considered that to be unnatural, and thus impossible, but also undesirable. This natural impulse can be usefully commanded by being 'obeyed'. (Innes 2010: 129)

Innes provides no arguments for this 'apparent' claim, but whatever Bacon's opinion in the matter was, it is clear that at least the scientific institution he describes believes religion to be a necessity and, indeed, highly compatible with human nature. After king Solamona's adjustments to Bensalem, there was one thing lacking to truly make the island an 'ideal society'. Religion created unity between the diverse ethnic communities and brought forth the humanity that is so praised by the narrator and his companions. This way, the link between religion and science becomes clear: the prevalence of religion in the text does not diminish the role of science, nor is it an attempt by Bacon to reconcile his faith with scientific inquiry; rather, the message is that the House's examination of (human) nature has generated the valuable insight that belief in the supernatural is inherent to man and can be put to political use. Religion on Bensalem, however ethereal it seems, is a product based on rational insight in the nature of man, with an indispensable civil function. The people of Bensalem lead a life imbued with faith and piety, unconscious of the fact that it is nothing but a clever invention of the ruling but ever absent elite. *New Atlantis* thus offers a radical view of religion as a man-made political instrument, completely draining the notions of divine miracle and prophecy of (spiritual) meaning.


**4.4 THE DIVINE GIFT OF RHETORICS: THE CONVERSION OF THE BLAZING-WORLD**

In this final section I argue that *The Blazing-World* explicitly showcases the politically instrumental value of religion and the manipulative function of miracles and rhetorics in the process of engendering devotion. Despite the empress's seemingly emancipatory interventions – promoting gender equality and scientific research – she is a cunning ruler, deploying rhetorics and art to convert her people to Christianity, and even presents herself as a divine creature to ensure her subjects' love for their leader. Cavendish takes it to the extreme, presenting us with a political 'master-mind' who enchants her people with persuasive techniques to channel their affects in the right direction, instilling unconditional obedience towards their beloved empress.

The introduction of Christianity is one of the Empress's most radical interventions in the Blazing-World. Inquiring after the religious stance of her subjects, she is told that they believe in one God, whom they all "unanimously worship and adore with one faith" (Cavendish 2016: 72). Finding their existing religion 'defective', she decides to convert them to her own. Although it is implied that her motive for this decision is her disapproval of the exclusion of women in the congregations, this initiative seems to be a case of random missionaristic paternalism (she is 'troubled' that "so wise and knowing a people should have no more knowledge of the Divine Truth" (ibid.: 100)). More to our concern, however, is the way she brings about this nationwide conversion. She builds churches, establishes a congregation of women who quickly become "very devout and zealous Sisters" and successfully converts everyone to Christianity by means of her "excellent gift of preaching" (ibid.). However, fearing the "inconstant nature of Mankind", she decides a more radical intervention will be needed to keep them from "following their own fancies" (ibid.: 101). Hereupon she ingeniously (and much more explicitly than Salomon's House in *New Atlantis*) creates her own miracle. She builds two chapels; one seemingly on fire by way of some scientific trickery, the other casting a splendorous light. In the fire-chapel, the 'emblem of hell', she "preached Sermons of Terror to the wicked, and told them of the punishments for their sins", in the other chapel, the 'emblem of heaven', "she preached Sermons of Comfort to those that repented their sins, and were troubled at their own wickedness" (ibid.: 102). She appears before the congregation like an almost divine creature, not hindered by the fire in the hell-chapel and enlightened like an angel in the other. Using these 'gentle persuasions', "the Empress, by Art, and her own Ingenuity … kept them in a constant belief without inforcement or blood-shed" (ibid.).

The motive of her endeavor is clear: "after this manner she encouraged them also in all other duties and employments: for Fear, though it makes people obey, yet does it not last so long, nor is it so sure a means to keep them to their duties, as Love" (ibid.: 102).[14] According to Cottegnies, Cavendish's "version of 'Paradise' is a secular society where religion is unashamedly used as a political instrument to keep order, and where the only limits to scientific pursuits are the social disorders that might ensue" (Cottegnies

---

[14] Later on, she uses a similar tactic to bedazzle her native country and their enemies as she arrives like a modern messiah seemingly walking "upon the face of the water" dressed in "Garments of Light". Struck with wonder, "all kneeled down before her, and worshipped her with all submission and reverence" (ibid.: 149)

2014). Regardless of the question whether or not Cavendish actually supported this view, her text very obviously shows the ways in which religion and more specifically its ceremonies instill awe and obedience, and manipulate the hopes and fears of its believers. Like Bacon, Cavendish in her text exposes the true nature of seemingly divine phenomena and radically demotes religion to a political instrument that can be steered and adapted to one's liking.[15]

**CONCLUSION**

The utopian texts here discussed are unanimous on the subject of religion: its function is civil rather than spiritual and the founders or leaders of the several societies, knowing the nature of man, are well aware of its instrumental value. It is a political tool perfectly suited to speak to the people on an emotional level and, by channeling their passions, turn them into obeying subjects. It is used to implement order and its emotional effects are enhanced through clever architectural features, rhetorics, awe-inspiring ceremonies and staged miracles.

Clearly, the manipulative character of some of these interventions does not correspond to the idea of a desirable alternative to the existing situation. What these texts are doing, in the first place, is 'showing how it works'. The several ways in which religion gains power (persuasive prophets and miracles), retains it (impressive religious services) and the effects it has on people's minds (obedience, and in the more extreme case of *New Atlantis*, an almost robotic mental subjugation) are deconstructed one by one, putting motives, tactics and results on display. The reader is offered a view behind the scenes and shown the inner dynamics of a powerful political mechanism.

---

[15] This idea can also be found in other texts written by Cavendish. See for example this illuminating passage from her play *Youth's Glory and Death's Banquet*, spoken by Lady Sanspareille: "But Kings and Royal Princes should do as Gods, which is to keep their Subjects in aw, with the Superstitious fear of Ceremonies; wherefore Princes should do no actions, no, not the meanest, without Ceremony to astonish the vulgar; for Ceremonies begets fear, fear begets Superstition, Superstition Reverence, Reverence Obedience, Obedience brings Peace, Peace brings Tranquility; But where Ceremonie is not used, the Gods are neglected, and Princes dispised; for Ceremonie is the Throne which Gods and Princes sits on, which being pulled away, they fall from their Glory; for Ceremonie is the Royal Crown which makes them Majestical, it is the Scepter by which they rule, it is the Altar at which all the Subjects kneel, do bow, and they offer up there their natural free liberty" (Cavendish 2003: I,2). The discussed passages of *The Blazing-World* are an embodiment of this Machiavellian idea (though aimed at inspiring love rather than fear).

## 5. National enemies and identities: the other in utopia

This chapter argues that the creation of a diabolized other in the depicted utopian societies generates unity and solidarity among the true 'utopian' citizens. It motivates them to obey the laws and norms and be more vigilant towards deviant behavior of their neighbors. Instead of the unity one might expect in these societies, there is always a group that deviates from the established norm, allowing the majority to distinguish and identify themselves in opposition to the selected minority. Referring back to the previous chapters this can, for example, take the form of  the woman, the infidel, the adulterer, the ugly, unmarried or infertile. The fact that such minority groups exist in these perfected societies suggests that they are consciously allowed or created. Their beneficial effects on social cohesion within the majority group lays bare the political use of exclusionary practices.

I start with a discussion of the role of the other in *The Isle of Pines*. The racism inherited from the Pines' English ancestors is defining for the community. The deviating racial origin of the African slave's descendants demotes them to the position of scapegoat. This unites the rest of the people and enhances the respective leaders' authority. The society of *Utopia* condemns unwanted social groups such as unfaithful spouses or atheists to the realm of criminality, madness and beasts, and thereby reinforces its norms for the truly Utopian part of the nation. *New Atlantis* is an exception in the sense that it bans or eliminates all possible deviancy. It thereby stifles all debate and prevents the emergence of critical voices in a melting pot of eerily uniform people. It reflects the typical fear and condescension towards otherness, which necessarily lies outside its bounds. In *The Blazing-World* the most obvious 'other' is the woman, at least before the Empress's arrival. I will not go into this in detail as it overlaps with the previous discussion on patriarchal structure. Let it suffice to say that Cavendish makes an unexpected move by putting a member of the discriminated group in an all-powerful position, but, as we know, soon backtracks and reasserts the status quo.

## 5.1 THE OTHER AS SCAPEGOAT AND SOCIAL GLUE: RACIAL DIVISION IN *THE ISLE OF PINES*

This section argues that 'the other' in *The Isle of Pines* keeps the nation together in the face of social disorder.[16] Although the inherent racism of the people may seem problematic for national unity, it is precisely this that prevents the community's total collapse. As the racial other is used as scapegoat, the majority group unites in a shared striving for 'justice'. Thereby, social cohesion and respect for the ruler are rekindled, and a tentative harmony is restored in the community.

Clearly, as we have seen in previous chapters, not all is as it should be on the Isle of Pines. Despite the three Pines' well-meant interventions and attempts to keep their subjects in check, they are unable to ensure sustainable social peace. The arcadian (not to say lazy) lifestyle of the first generation of inhabitants has led to chaos and moral deterioration due to a lack of leadership. The first seeds of government are planted by William Pine only at the verge of his death and, lacking measures to impose his wishes, they are quickly nipped in the bud. The first uprising occurs during his son Henry's reign and only then law is introduced. Backed by severe punishments, this measure keeps the peace for a while, but eventually also proves ineffective in motivating the people to obedience. During the sailors' visit, the turmoil repeats itself (and is only repressed thanks to the guests' fire arms). From this perspective, the text can be read as a critique of several forms of bad (monarchical) government, George Pine being a self-involved, lazy ruler who makes no effort to manage his people and indulges in his primitive lusts, Henry Pine an authoritarian, randomly executing the so-called 'greatest offender' to end the turmoil, William Pine an equally random ruler – executing an accused citizen on the spot without trial – and lacking authority.[17] However, another (not per se incompatible) reading presents itself when we consider the fact that the uprisings are not necessarily detrimental to the society as a whole *and* that in both cases, the culprit (or, more

---

[16] For this interpretation I am indebted to Amy Boesky, who formulates a similar idea in 'Nation, Miscegenation. Membering utopia in Henry Neville's *Ilse of Pines*' (1996).

[17] For a more extensive and historically contextualized account of the critique of different types of government in *The Isle of Pines*, see Peter Stillman, *Monarchy, Disorder, and Politics in The Isle of Pines* (2006).

accurately, the accused), belonged to the family of the Phills, the descendants of the African slave Philippa.

One thing George Pine takes with him from his native country to the island is his racial prejudice. We see this very clearly in his behavior towards Philippa, with whom, for example, he only sleeps at night because of his strong physical aversion towards her ("my stomach would not serve me" (Neville 2008: 198)). By introducing family names (George distinguishes four families by naming them after their respective mothers' names), George installs (or rather safeguards) disunity and ultimately dissension on his island. Although his genes are dominant and Philippa gives birth to 'fine white' children, they are unavoidably branded by their family name and carry the stigma of their heritage. At first sight this seems an unwanted outcome, but looking more closely we see that the Phills' manifestations of disobedience are closely linked to the Pines' manifestations of power.

Going back to the very beginning, we see George and the four women leading their arcadian life, "living idly", "at liberty to do our wills" (ibid.: 198). George in this lawless paradisiacal state has sex openly with the two maids and his master's daughter. At a certain point, however, "my negro, who seeing what we did, longed also for her share". Going to him in his sleep, "thinking it being dark to beguile me", she tries to trick George into having sex with her (ibid.: 198). This act of transgression leads George to introduce 'law' on the island (see Boesky 1996: 155), bringing an end to arcadia and setting up rules that determine when he sleeps with whom, so as to make reproduction – which has now become an end in itself, replacing the original 'motive' of licentious and aimless lust – as efficient as possible. (His custom is "not to lie with any of them after they were with child till others were so likewise; and not with the black at all after she was with child" (Neville 2008: 198).

Philippa's disruptive behavior and George's response of regularization establish the social formula that will be repeated by the following generations of Phills and Pines. The rest of George's life is uneventful and the community is at peace. When during his son Henry's reign disorder arises, "the greatest offender" turns out to be Philippa's second son. He is quickly thrown into the sea and "execution being done upon him, the rest were pardoned for what was passed" (ibid.: 202). "Now," we are told, "as seed being cast into stinking dung produceth good and wholesome corn for the sustenation of man's life, so bad manners produceth good and wholesome laws for the preservation of humane

society" (ibid.: 202). Henry indeed takes this event as an opportunity to put forth a series of strict laws and introduce a police force whose task is "to see them put in execution" (ibid.: 203). Having gone through the social procedure of disorder and renewed authority outlined by his father, he then continues to live "quiet and peaceable" until his death at ninety-four (ibid.: 203). During his son William's reign no new dissensions have arisen, until, just as the sailors are leaving, a civil war breaks out. The 'chief ruler' of the Phills is claimed to have "ravished the wife of one of the principal of the family of the Trevors" (ibid.: 207). The Trevors, assisted by the sailors, eventually capture the culprit, who, like his predecessor, is immediately thrown into the sea (despite the fact that the laws established by William's father stipulate burning as the punishment for rape, which either suggests that the man is falsely accused, or reaffirms the Pines' lack of consistent leadership).

Ultimately, it is the Phill's dissension that allows the Pines to impose their authority. As Boesky suggests, the Pine's rule is "dependent on the spectacle of insurrection it claims to abhor"; it is "a nation that uses disorder to justify its own social and political categories" (Boesky 1996: 159). Indeed, as both insurrections are caused by Phills, the Pines' rule is in fact successful in governing the white, 'English' part of the population. Not only does the disobedient behavior of the racial minority group assert the rulers' power by allowing them to establish their authority more fiercely, it also unites the majority in one strong people, siding with their leaders. In the events during Henry's and William's rule, the majority group functions as a sort of improvised army, fighting for their nation's values that are threatened by the Phills' wanton behavior. Consider the following scene during the first uprising:

> To redress those enormities, my father assembled all the country near unto him, to whom he declared the wickedness of those their brethren; who with all one consent agreed that they should be severely punished. And so arming themselves with boughs, stones, and such like weapons, they marched against them. (Neville 2008: 202)

Although it is not explicitly stated here, it soon becomes clear that the misbehaving 'brethren' are the Phills, implying that "all the country" consists of the three other families who are by this event united in a strong and patriotic group. The imposed divisions introduced by George Pine's family names thus both legitimate the rulers' authority and engender obedience and solidarity in the principal and only real part of the citizenry – the

Phills being but a negative in opposition to which the citizens can identify themselves. The other in *The Isle of Pines* serves as a scapegoat, providing a tentative harmony by lack of a more durable order. In *Utopia*, to be discussed next, we do find this durable order, though there as well it is supported by the creation of an internal enemy.

**5.2 MADNESS AND CIVILIZATION: THE BEASTLY OTHER OF *UTOPIA***

In this section I show that Utopian identity and norms are reinforced by the identification of a deviating other, securing 'normal' behavior in the majority. Despite Utopia's seemingly radical uniformity throughout the nation, there are several groups that do not meet the criteria of the ideal Utopian citizen. These are not eliminated but, though clearly branded as 'other', remain part of the community, thereby serving as a negative example and allowing the normal group to oppose themselves to them and emphasize their normalcy. *Utopia* thereby reflects the very common non-utopian reality of social exclusion and stigmatization in favor of the ruling norms.

The Utopians are extremely judgmental towards any sort of inappropriate (i.e. un-Utopian) behavior. The Utopian citizens are arrogant towards and ignorant about foreign peoples and cultures (they, for example, abuse a 'savage' and 'wicked' nearby people to fight their wars, and mistake the visiting ambassadors of a neighboring country for fools because they are dressed abundantly with gold and jewelry, something the Utopians associate with children's toys and prisoner's chains). This ignorance results from the island's isolation; even within Utopia itself the citizens are scrupulously kept within their own precinct. Leaving your own 'bounds' without the Prince's official approval is a terrible crime; after a first offense the 'fugitive' is met with "great shame and rebuke", the second time with slavery (More 2008: 68). The option of traveling abroad is, unsurprisingly, not even mentioned. The lack of internal dynamics and openness on Utopia is explicitly linked to the all-important social control of the individual communities. [18] The so-called

---

[18] The passage on (lack of) travel is followed by this telling conclusion: "Now you see how little liberty they have to loiter, how they can have no cloak or pretence to idleness. There be neither wine-taverns, nor ale-houses, nor stews, nor any occasion of vice or wickedness, no lurking corners, no places of wicked councils

syphogranties, each consisting of thirty families, are kept as closed as possible, excluding contingency and facilitating mutual control.

However, even in this perfected society the other cannot and must not be kept out entirely. Though less dominantly than in *The Isle of Pines*, the other is present on Utopia and serves as a negative exemplar, a useful educational tool, stimulating the 'normal population' to obey the norms and making them vigilant towards the normalcy of their neighbors' behavior. The Utopians' judgmental stance towards indecency or deviancy is prevalent throughout the text. On the subject of sexuality and marriage, Hythloday tells us that if your partner divorces you because of your "intolerable wayward manners" you will live "ever after in infamy and out of wedlock" and unfaithfulness is "punished with most grievous bondage" (ibid.: 91). We see the same harsh judgment concerning religious topics: as mentioned earlier, whoever does not believe in the immortality of the soul and divine justice, "they count not in the number of men, as one that hath avaled the high nature of his soul to the vileness of brute beasts' bodies" (ibid.: 110). However, though this madman is excluded from all offices and "despised as of an unprofitable and of a base and vile nature", he suffers no further punishment and remains within the Utopian society, in the hope that eventually his "madness will give place to reason" (ibid.). In the meantime, of course, the 'sane' part of the population, i.e. the part that does believe in the dogmas postulated by King Utopus 1.760 years earlier, are given a chance to oppose themselves and their own opinions to this non-human and, arguably, are thereby strengthened in their belief and their solidarity with like-minded fellows. Similarly, committers of "heinous faults" are not immediately put to death, but sentenced to slavery, so that "by their example they fear other the longer from like offenses" (ibid.: 92). If they rebel again, however, they are radically excluded from the human race as such: "forsooth they be slain as desperate and wild beasts, whom neither prison nor chain could restrain and keep under" (ibid.).

The distinction between 'Utopian' and 'non-Utopian' is strict and merciless. Utopian citizens are virtuous, devout and respectfully follow the Utopian customs. Anyone who deviates from this norm is 'mad', excluded from 'the number of men' and condemned

---

or unlawful assemblies. But they be in the present sight and under the eyes of every man. So that of necessity they must either apply their accustomed labours, or else recreate themselves with honest and laudable pastimes." (More: 68)

to the realm of beasts. However, they are not excluded from their borders. Though on the margins, unfaithful spouses, infidels and others showcasing un-Utopian behavior remain part of the community. Thereby, they are put forth as negative examples and define the boundary between normalcy and deviancy. The other on utopia urges the true Utopian to closely watch his own behavior if he wants to remain sane and 'human'. Even in this perfected society there are imperfections, though consciously retained to serve the greater cause. Again, social reality is reflected and brought into consciousness in the frame of this fictional nation.

## 5.3 ADAPT OR DIE: THE ELIMINATION OF OTHERNESS IN *NEW ATLANTIS*

In the final section of this chapter I discuss the absence of deviancy in Bensalem. I show that on Bensalem, otherness in any form is either expelled or ruthlessly swallowed up and normalized, i.e. rendered 'Bensalemite'. Unlike what their 'humanity' and hospitality towards their guests might suggest, alterity is not welcome here. All contingency is excluded from this island which showcases an utmost internal control. Otherness, therefore, is necessarily situated outside their bounds. The text thereby puts on display another important and common aspect of dealing with alterity: arrogance towards other, inferior cultures and fear of their possible corrupting influence.

On the island described by *New Atlantis* there is only unity, uniformity and obedience. There is no crime nor criminality on Bensalem, no unchastity, no unbelievers nor fanatics, and the divine miracle introducing Christianity on Bensalem eliminated all language and cultural differences between the different ethnic communities (even the Jews – a nice example of a 'normalized other' – believe that "Christ was born of a virgin, and that he was more than a man" (Bacon 2008: 172)). Of course they are still part of a world containing other nations and cultures, and alterity cannot be wiped out entirely. However, any otherness the Bensalemites might be confronted with lies outside their borders. They have an obvious racist opinion about other peoples: native Americans are "simple and savage" (ibid.: 164), China is a "curious, ignorant, fearful, foolish nation" (ibid.: 166), and in contrast to Bensalem's chastity – "a fair beautiful Cherubin" –, the Europeans' "Spirit of

Fornication" finds its likeness in "a little foul ugly Ethiop" (ibid.: 173). Their intercultural contact is scarce and mostly one-sided (Bensalem sees but is not seen) and they demonstrate a condescending self-righteousness reminiscent of Utopia and, closer to home, Europe.

From time to time, of course, the outside intrudes. Their way of handling strangers is telling for their obsession with uniformity. As the priest tells the visiting sailors, though they do not "detain strangers here against their will", they, not wanting the outside world to know of their existence, make their guests' stay as pleasant as possible and, resultingly, "have memory not of one ship that ever returned" (ibid.: 166). Although the priest offers no explanation for how this policy of accepting strangers in their community is compatible with avoiding the danger of "commixture of manners" (ibid.), one of the founding king's priorities, the text itself does. That is, in the rare case that strangers reach their island, the nation has a strict welcoming procedure illustrative of their defensive isolationism. As if carrying an exotic and contagious disease, the sailors are immediately after their arrival put into quarantine for three days. After this period of acclimatization, their quarantine is broadened: for a period of six weeks they are allowed in the city, though they have to stay within the controllable space of a mile and a half outside the city walls. During this time they are not only observed, but subtly converted to the Bensalemite culture. The sailors seem to have reached an enchanted island ("a land of magicians" as the priest himself says (ibid.: 162)), which gradually bewitches them. Immediately upon their arrival they are given a mysterious orange-like fruit "(as it seemeth) for a preservative against infection" (ibid.: 154). Having been brought to the Strangers' House they are told that they "shall want nothing, and there are six of our people appointed to attend you" (ibid.: 156). They get an abundant welcoming meal accompanied by wine, ale and cider, and more of the scarlet oranges. The next day, the narrator urges all of the men to "reform his own ways" (ibid.: 157). Besides the lure of the food and possibly drugging effects of the strange fruit (later in the text the possible 'strange effects' of their food and drinks will be addressed, see chapter 6), the governor of the Strangers' House enchants them with his words: "we forgot both dangers past and fears to come, for the time we heard him speak; and that we thought an hour spent with him, was worth years of our former life" (ibid.: 161). Under their host's spell, they soon "forget all that was dear to [them] in [their] own countries" (ibid.: 168).

Foreigners that reach the land of Bensalem are scrupulously examined and 'neutralized', either in the sense of being assimilated successfully by the Bensalemite culture or, possibly (though there is no direct textual evidence in this direction), in the more morbid sense of the term. Bensalem successfully manages to keep alterity out of its bounds and thereby remains in full control over its population. The other remains safely outside the boundaries, where he can still serve as an assertion of the nation's superiority. Bensalem's arrogance towards other cultures, the accompanying fear of 'commixture' and their strict policy of assimilation mirror man's apparently inherent exclusionist tendencies.

**CONCLUSION**

The discussed utopian texts mirror the fear for and exclusion of alterity, and the instrumental value it can have for the community as scapegoat or negative model. These utopian nations that are supposed to be peopled with highly rational and morally superior citizens, take up a primitive and hostile stance towards deviant behavior and foreign cultures. In order for these not-so-perfect citizens to behave as desired and live according to the norms of their perfect nation, there is, apparently, a need for an other to distance themselves from, an enemy, someone to look down upon, to blame and punish and who, in a reverse way, reasserts the norm he overstepped. The utopias discussed treat different aspects of this apparently unavoidable human need for opposition. *The Isle of Pines* shows how the diabolized other can strengthen the ruler's authority and the citizen's unity, *Utopia* emphasizes its role in defining and reinforcing norms, and *New Atlantis* depicts the typical defensive stance towards otherness and the unwillingness to allow change. The utopian texts showcase the inherent need of any culture for an opposing other to help define its identity and generate unity in the face of difference.

## 6. All work and no play...: utopian lands of (anti-)leisure

This final chapter discusses the daily occupations of the utopian citizens. It argues that the organization of leisure-activities in the several societies is aimed at keeping the people occupied and stifles individual growth. The texts thus expose the political use of the distracting and mind numbing effects that seemingly harmless daily occupations can have. I oppose the idea that utopian leisure, in contrast to dystopian leisure, is constructive and intellectually stimulating. On the contrary, the occupations depicted in the utopian texts show great similarity to the concept of anti-leisure, a concept that refers to the manipulative and suppressive nature of leisure in dystopian fiction.

Burnett and Rollin introduced the concept of 'anti-leisure' to refer to the leisure-activities found in (late 20th century) dystopian fiction. Though of course belonging to the same generic family, generally, a firm distinction is made between utopian texts, which offer a positive, desirable alternative to the deficient societal situation, and the more fatalistic nature of dystopian texts, which grimly exaggerate the existing problems with no hope for a solution remaining. On the topic of leisure specifically, 'utopian' leisure is deemed to be constructive, stimulating the individual's personal and intellectual growth. Anti-leisure, then, entails the exact opposite. Although the activities themselves are not always easily distinguished from normal, 'positive' leisure activities, anti-leisure, Burnett and Rollin argue, has a questionable political agenda and an entirely different outcome. They identify four main characteristics: anti-leisure is leisure used to manipulate identity, to control individual thought, to impede self-sufficiency and moderation, and to distract attention from social injustice (Burnett and Rollin 2000: 79). As will become clear, the nature of leisure in the utopian texts here discussed shows a remarkable similarity to this concept and it provides a useful framework to interpret these texts. Though not all of the features enumerated are straightforwardly present, at least some of them can be easily identified and help us to uncover the social and political functions of the several societies' main recreational activities. In *The Isle of Pines* the lack of organized leisure that could occupy and distract the inhabitants is one of the main causes of the recurring social unrest. *The blazing-world* indirectly reasserts the effectiveness of anti-leisure by showing how activities that promote self-development lead to disunity. *Utopia*, conversely, has a clever and strictly organized leisure-policy that keeps the citizens busy and stifles individual

thought. In *New Atlantis* it is suggested that the people are kept in a state of docile obedience by means of drugs and the distraction offered by an idolatrous pop culture of scientists.


## 6.1  LACKING LEISURE: THE THREAT OF IDLENESS IN THE ISLE OF PINES

In this section I show that the lack of organized leisure on the Isle of Pines is one of the main causes of the recurring civil strife. The island's paradisiacal nature and abundance does not eliminate all social problems (as the utopian vision of arcadia assumes[19]), but gives rise to boredom and impedes the development of discipline, which in its turn causes unrest among the population. The text thereby shows the necessity of organized activities for the stability of a community, whether in the shape of work or of leisure.

The Isle of Pines is a land of plenty. George Pine has stumbled upon a paradise, a country "so very pleasant, being always clothed in green, and full of pleasant fruits, and variety of birds, ever warm and never colder than in England in September" (Neville 2008: 197). It is packed with fowls, fish and shellfish, and beasts so tame that they, Lang of Cockaigne-style, almost jump into their mouths. This abundance does not falter when the island becomes more populated[20], so we can assume that George's descendants live as luxuriously and leisurely as he did on his first arrival. The inhabitants' only job is to reproduce, and this implies no more than just that, as, except for feeding them, no further care is taken of the babies after they are born (ibid.: 198).

The Isle is the paradigm of a land of plenty and the inhabitants, having no obligations, are free to do as they please. However, life turns out to be less blissful than the circumstances  suggest. There are no occupations or distractions, whether stimulating or numbing, and the inhabitants themselves, wallowing in idleness, take no initiative to change this. No measures are taken to control this freedom or fill the infinite gap of spare

---

[19] "Arcadians tend to assume that, if the problems of material scarcity are resolved in a world of men of moderation, problems of sociological scarcity will also cease to exist" (Davis 1981: 22).

[20] Contrary to Davis's assumption that the disorders on the island arise because "[m]en competed for what was now in short supply and in doing so abandoned moderation" (Davis 1981: 25-26). There are no textual indications to support this view, on the contrary, the sailors are welcomed with an abundant meal and make the same observation as George Pine on his arrival: "very fertile", "many and several sorts of beasts", "wild fruits", "running streams" (Neville: 204-205).

time the inhabitants face. According to David Lorenzo, the message Neville sends us with his text is that a life of ease is the root of all social degeneracy. In an easy environment which presents no challenges, there is no urgency for man to develop himself and acquire discipline or virtues. Neville in this text, Lorenzo states, "depicts leisure as the enemy of development" (Lorenzo 2014: 60).

Lorenzo raises an interesting point. It would, however, be more accurate to say that the lack of discipline and self-control is not the result of leisure in se, but of ungoverned and unorganized leisure. Despite its natural fullness, the Isle of Pines is a blank space, its most characterizing feature being that it is lacking. It lacks a real leader, it lacks culture, it lacks national identity which it tries to gain by opposing itself to a self-created negative (see chapter 5). Everything on the island that is not there by nature arrived with the ship or, like their weddings and baptisms, is based on George's memory of English culture. George's observation on his first arrival that "this place, had it the culture that skilful people might bestow on it, would prove a paradise" (Neville: 197), is mirrored, so many years later, by the Dutch sailors: "had but nature had the benefit of art added unto it, it would equal, if not exceed, many of our European countries" (ibid.: 205). On the topic of leisure specifically, the only 'measures' taken are negative. George, for example, only learns some of his children how to read, thereby denying the rest the chance to read the Bible for themselves. This in itself could be a strategic political move, if it were accompanied by a positive policy of introducing other kinds of diversions. Pine, however, simply denies his descendants this potentially beneficial occupation. In the case of George we see an explicit causal link between his lack of occupation and the rise of his lust, as he writes: "Idleness and a fullness of everything begot in me a desire for enjoying the women" (ibid.: 197). This sexual wantonness, caused, apparently, by lack of other employments, will repeat itself and intensify in the following generations, amounting to "whoredoms, incests, and adultery" (ibid.: 201) and ultimately rape. As the land, so the inhabitants remain uncultivated, there being no 'skillful people' to add 'art' to their ungoverned minds.

*The Isle of Pines* shows how lack of government and, more specifically, organized activities is detrimental to the social order. There being no necessary occupations on the island and no initiative to create distractions, the inhabitants lapse into animalistic behavior kindled by a state of radical ennui.

## 6.2 THE RUIN OF GOVERNMENT: SELF-DEVELOPMENT AND STRIFE IN *THE BLAZING-WORLD*

*The Blazing-World* affirms the idea that leaving people free to determine their occupations is detrimental to social stability, although in this case it is a more positive freedom, aimed at increasing knowledge. The empress in her naive liberality, a characteristic uncommon for the typical utopian ruler, makes all of her subjects into scientists, assigning a specific field to each 'race' and giving them free reign to develop their knowledge of nature, to which they enthusiastically apply themselves. However, this turns out to be the main cause of the dissension that arises during her reign:

> there are such continual Contentions and Divisions between the Worm- Bear- and Fly-men, the Ape-men, the Satyrs, the Spider-men, and all others of such sorts, that I fear they'l break out into an open Rebellion, and cause a great disorder; and the ruin of the Government. (Cavendish 2016: 139)

The duchess advises her friend "to dissolve all their societies; for 'tis better to be without their intelligences, then to have an unquiet and disorderly Government" (ibid.: 140). As people are not able to control their pride, "wheresoever Learning is, there is most commonly also Controversie and quarelling" (ibid.). The duchess rather dramatically states that this quarreling will lead to factions, and ultimately "break out into open Wars" ending in "utter ruin upon a State or Government" (ibid.). Letting people develop their intellectual capacities, this suggests, is detrimental for social stability, leading to chaos and dissension. *Utopia* and *New Atlantis* will provide an answer to both these 'lacking utopias'. In the following two sections, I show how in both texts a well thought out leisure-policy aimed at mental control effectively supports the political agenda and promotes civil peace.

## 6.2 GARDENING AND BLOCK PARTIES: DISTRACTION AND IDENTITY-CONTROL IN *UTOPIA*

This section argues that *Utopia*, by picturing a society where leisure is strictly governed, shows how a clever policy can offer distraction, engender obedience and enable identity-control. Opposing the common interpretation that Utopia promotes individual and intellectual development through, for example, the daily lectures it offers its inhabitants, I show that all daily occupations are carefully organized to generate a uniform, well-

disciplined, obedient people. As the content of the lectures is not specified (presumably aimed at promoting the Utopian values) and the other main activities (gardening and the daily common meal) either distract or stimulate social control and compliance with the norms, we can conclude that docility is the overarching purpose.

Utopia has a strict policy concerning leisure. The typical Utopian day exists of six hours of work, eight hours of sleep, dinner and supper. The rest of the time, the Utopians are 'free' to fill out as they please, though not, of course, to "misspend this time in riot or slothfulness, but … to bestow the time well and thriftily upon some other science as shall please them" (More 2008: 58). The choice is limited, as "dice-play and such other foolish and pernicious games they know not" (ibid.), and "[t]here be neither wine-taverns, nor ale-houses, nor stews, nor any occasion of vice or wickedness" (ibid.: 68), so that "they must either apply their accustomed labours, or else recreate themselves with honest and laudable pastimes" (ibid.). The options during the day consist of either attending the daily lectures or, for those "whose minds rise not in the contemplation of any science liberal", of simply continuing their labor (ibid.: 58). After supper they have another hour of spare-time which in summer is spend in their gardens and in winter in the common dining-hall, where they occupy themselves with either music, "honest and wholesome communication" (ibid.), or two chess-like games with an obvious edifying nature[21].

Hythloday presents the Utopians' pastimes as exemplary and constructive activities, aimed at the citizens' personal development. He claims that the nation's chief end is that

> what time may possibly be spared from the necessary occupations and affairs of the commonwealth, all that, the citizens should withdraw from the bodily service to the free liberty of the mind and the garnishing of the same. For herein they suppose the felicity of this life to consist. (ibid.: 62)

This aspect of Utopian life is commonly received with enthusiasm ("When this routine is set beside the common practice in contemporary Europe its appeal is evident at once",

---

[21] "The one is the battle of numbers, wherein one number stealeth away another. The other is wherein vices fight with virtues, as it were in battle array or a set field. In the which game is very properly showed both the strife and discord that vices have among themselves, and again their unity and concord against virtues. And also what vices be repugnant to what virtues; with what power and strength they assail them openly; by what wiles and subtlety they assault them secretly; with what help and aid the virtues resist and overcome the puissance if the vices; by what craft they frustrate their purposes; and, finally, by what sleight or means the one getteth the victory." (More 2008: 59)

Baker-Smith writes (2000: 163), and calls the daily lectures "opportunities for self-cultivation" (ibid.)). This 'liberty of the mind', however, is hard to reconcile with the general impression the work leaves of this rigid society. Although the intellectual opportunity sounds appealing, there is no room for individual choice in the way one spends one's time, the only two options being lectures and labor. Considering the high level of mental control on Utopia that the preceding chapters laid bare, the idea that true individual development is possible on Utopia is highly questionable. More in line with the text's spirit, we can assume the lectures (like the edifying text that is read before every meal, pertaining to 'good manners and virtue') to stimulate Utopian thought, i.e. to encourage the citizens to modesty, spiritual devotion, filial respect, moderate behavior and industry.

These assumptions are backed by the political instrumentality displayed by the other main leisure-activities. Their custom of gardening in summer is a perfect instance of leisure aimed at keeping the people occupied and content. After having described the cities of Utopia – and emphasizing their uniformity ("whoso knoweth one of them knoweth them all" (ibid.: 52)) – Hythloday goes on to discuss the houses, which are equally uniform. This, however, does not extend to the gardens. The Utopians are very zealous to keep their garden in the best state possible. Rather than reasserting the all-present homogeneity of Utopia, they are an object of competition, the only instance of rivalry and personal ambition on the island:

> Their study and diligence herein cometh not only of pleasure, but also of a certain strife and contention that is between street and street concerning the trimming, husbanding, and furnishing of their gardens, every man for his own part. (ibid.: 54)

This competitive spirit seems out of character for the Utopians, as pride is considered a most dangerous emotion, "the princess and mother of all mischief", which, as Hythloday declares, needs to be rooted out in order to avoid the "jeopardy of domestical dissension" (ibid.: 122). As everything on Utopia, however, this garden competition did not come about by accident. Apparently the founder Utopus, who drew the design of the cities himself, "minded nothing so much as these gardens" (ibid.: 54). As Peter New nicely puts it, "Utopus was shrewd enough" to install an outlet for the feelings of pride and competition that are otherwise repressed (New 1985: 74). More than anything, however, it is a clever way to keep the people occupied. To relate it to the aforementioned concept of anti-leisure: the gardening on Utopia is no different from the example Burnett and Rollin

provide of the dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, where the wives' gardening and knitting is in the first place "something to keep Wives busy, to give them a sense of purpose" (Schlöndorff 1985, cited in: Burnett and Rollin 2000: 87). Leisure on Utopia is not "entered into freely, as a matter of election or choice", as should be the case for it to be 'true' leisure; it is, rather, "both distractive and non-voluntary" and therefore anti-leisure (Burnett and Rollin: 86).

The other main custom that deserves attention here, though not counted as leisure activity by Hythloday, are the communal meals. It is one of the most pervasive Utopian traditions and is the central aspect of community life. Every day all families of a district gather in the common dining hall to eat, under the scrutinous gaze of their syphogrant. Though it is not legally forbidden to eat at home, "no man doth it willingly because it is counted a point of small honesty" (More: 65). Custom and social pressure thus guarantee full attendance, but it is also a very festive occasion. There is music, sweatmeats and pleasant smells, and "they leave nothing undone that maketh for the cheering of the company" (ibid.: 67).

Of course, however, there is an agenda to this extravagance. The patriarchal family-structure with its controlling and edifying functions is in this dining-hall extended to the whole neighborhood. In a panoptic set-up, the Syphogrant and his wife are seated at the high table, from whence "all the whole company is in their sight" (ibid.: 66). The rest of the company is strategically placed according to age, "to the intent that the sage gravity and reverence of the elders should keep the youngers from wanton license of words and behaviour" (ibid.). Nothing can be said or done without the elders noticing. Moreover, the feast functions as a test space to see if the youngers have the desired, Utopian mindset. The elders do not dominate the conversation with wise, educational talk, but

> purposely provoke [the young men] to talk, to the intent that they may have a proof of every man's wit and towardness or disposition to virtue, which commonly in the liberty of feasting doth show and utter itself. (ibid.: 67)

The festive atmosphere is thus created with the intent to bring to light any improper thoughts. We could even conclude that the adolescents are consciously dulled into a compliant and loose-lipped mood by the "sweet gums and spices or perfumes and pleasant smells" (ibid.: 66) and, arguably, the wine, cider and mead of which they have plenty (ibid.: 52). Again, instead of contributing to self-identity, as positive leisure is said

to do (Burnett and Rollin 2000: 81), the organized leisure here is used to test and control identity, in order to engender a homogeneous people defined by conformity.

The leisure-activities on Utopia are designed to distract and content the people, channel social control and promote good behavior. *Utopia* thus exposes the steering and controlling effects of seemingly free and inconsequential leisure-activities.


**6.3 SEX, DRUGS AND SCIENCE: THE MIND DULLING POPCULTURE OF NEW ATLANTIS**

In this section I argue that *New Atlantis* depicts a people rendered docile by means of sedating victuals and a distracting idolatry. Although there are no explicit indications in the text for this reading, several subtle remarks and the atmosphere conjured by the text as a whole make this a valid and illuminating interpretation. The people's uncanny meekness, Bensalem's suggested magical powers and the food and drinks with 'special effects' created by the House all point in this direction. *New Atlantis* thereby presents a more extreme case of the instrumentalization of (anti-)leisure, as it clearly tends towards the dystopian uses of leisure indicated by Burnett and Rollin. In varying degrees, Bensalem displays all four characteristics of anti-leisure (manipulation, distraction, thought-control and thwarting self-sufficiency). *New Atlantis* thus shows the possible dangers of seemingly innocent diversions.

There are next to no indications in *New Atlantis* of how the Bensalemites (that are not members of the House) spend their time, either for work or pleasure. Still, reading between the lines, a lot can be deduced about the people's conditions. Firstly, the fact that nothing is said about their activities might simply mean that, indeed, there are no real activities to be spoken of. There are two instances where we get a direct image of the people (simultaneously also the only two instances in the text where we directly see the island through the narrator's eyes rather than getting a transcript of a speech by either the governor, Joabin or the visiting Father): the moment when the sailors first leave their ship and are led through the town to the Strangers' House, and the scene of the Father's arrival in Bensalem. The two events are very similar, as both indicate the people's strange

docility[22] and give the reader the impression that the people do not have much else to do than stand in the streets. On the sailors' arrival particularly, which was unexpected (though even this could be called into question considering the eerie amount of control Salomon's House is suggested to have over the weather[23]), it seems like the whole town is standing along the road to see and welcome them.

Of course, there is not much need for labor in a place where the scientific institution has reached such an impressive level of control over nature that they can, by manipulating the growth and generation of plants and animals[24], easily produce enough food for all inhabitants. Similar to the Pines, the only task that remains for the population is to reproduce (which, as chapter 3 indicated, is highly stimulated). In this over-developed state, science has taken over everything, leaving the people with a life of undisrupted leisure.

This seems like a truly utopian scenario, were it not for the fact that the people themselves have come to resemble machines in this unstimulating environment. As Weinberger writes, "[t]heir happiness seems that of contented cows (or, to speak more accurately, sheep)" (2002: 107). Unlike on the Ilse of pines, however, this lack of activity does not cause unrest. I argue that this unshakeable order is achieved by means of drugs. There are several arguments to support this interpretation, which all relate to the fact that the most clear references to any leisure-related activities on Bensalem concern food and drink. First, the only explicit (negative) claim we get regarding leisure-activities, is: "there are no stews, no dissolute houses, no courtesans" (ibid.: 173). This strongly reminds of Hythloday's statement that in Utopia "[t]here be neither wine-taverns, nor ale-houses,

---

[22] On their arrival in the city, all along the way "there were gathered some people on both sides standing in a row; but in so civil a fashion, as if it had not been to wonder at us but to welcome us" (155); on the Father's entry "there was never any army had their men stand in better battle-array, than the people stood" (176).

[23] As the Father claims in his description of the works of the House, they can manipulate the motions of water and winds: "We have likewise violent streams and cataracts, which serve us for many motions, and likewise engines for multiplying and enforcing of winds, to set also on going divers motions" (ibid.: 178.). This may suggest that "the strong and great winds" that drove the sailors towards the north and ultimately towards the island (Bacon: 152), were no random act of nature.

[24] "And we make (by art) in the same orchards and gardens, trees and flowers to come earlier or later than their seasons; and to come up and bear more speedily than by their natural course they do. We make them also by art greater much than their nature; and their fruits greater and sweeter and of differing taste, smell, colour, and figure, from their nature." (Bacon, 179); "We have also parks and inclosures of all sorts of beasts and birds … Wherein we find many strange effects; as continuing life in them …; resuscitating of some that seem dead in appearance; and the like." They can also make the animals bigger than they are by nature or more fertile, and even create new kinds (Bacon, 179).

nor stews" (More: 68). As Bacon obviously read *Utopia* (he even explicitly refers to it when introducing the Bensalemite custom of inspection of potential marriage partners), it is not farfetched to assume that this parallel phrasing is a conscious move. The fact that he leaves out wine-taverns and ale-houses might indirectly indicate that these are in fact present on Bensalem. Second, upon the sailors' arrival, they are served an extensive meal, "which was right good viands, both for bread and meat: better than any collegiate diet that I have known in Europe", accompanied by both wine, ale and "a kind of cider made of a fruit of that country; a wonderful pleasing and refreshing drink" (Bacon: 156). Third, while recounting the works of Salomon's House, the Father mentions their "brewhouses, bakehouses, and kitchens, where are made divers drinks, breads, and meats, rare and of special effects" (ibid.: 180). Although he says he will not 'hold the narrator long' on these specific houses, his subsequent description of the many sorts of drinks and mixtures they have (some of which ripe for forty years, which arguably indeed induces 'special effects') is by far the longest of all (beating the second longest paragraph on the 'perspective houses' and their notorious 'demonstrations of light' (see chapter 4) by almost half of its length). Food and alcoholic beverages thus seem to be the people's most important 'diversion'. If the Bensalemites are indeed incessantly subject to the special effects these substances provide, this explains the people's docility and the strange atmosphere of drowsy apathy evoked by the text.

One other occupation on Bensalem that can be inferred from several textual remarks, is what we could call their pop star culture. Their knowledge and impressive works have raised the scientists of this society to true objects of worship. This can be seen in the pompous and festive arrival of the Father of the House, which the narrator accurately names a 'show' (ibid.: 176). The House has a walk of fame consisting of two galleries exhibiting rare inventions and statues of the most important scientists the world has known (ibid.: 184) and they go on promotional tours with their new inventions ("we have circuits or visits of divers principle cities of the kingdom; where, as it cometh to pass, we do publish such new profitable inventions as we think good" (ibid.: 185)). This encouraged idolatry is another distracting diversion, keeping the people orderly and content.

Both these features (drugs and worship) suggest that the people of Bensalem are kept in a state of lethargic idolatry, which is ultimately nothing more than an exaggerated

version of the Utopian (anti-)leisure discussed in the previous section. The Bensalemite activities are not free to choose, impede self-sufficiency and the construction of self-identity, and are aimed at keeping the people passive and content. *New Atlantis* is an urban version of the Land of Cockaigne, i.e. not simply a world without work but "a world in which the only escape from work is to drift in and out of consciousness, one in which pleasure is insensible and there can be no enjoyment from articulate thought or achievement" (Hadfield 2010: 220). The people of Bensalem lack nothing and their full stomachs and numb minds prevent them from taking action in any form whatsoever, whereby absolute social stability is ensured.[25] *New Atlantis* thereby presents us with a dystopian image of a land ruled by an intellectual elite who, by way of their impressive knowledge of nature, succeed in acquiring full control over the citizens. But rather than a daunting image of a possible future, it mostly, like any dystopian *and* utopian text, exaggerates existing social structures, showing how easily the people's passions are channeled by means of appeasing distractions.

**CONCLUSION**

The several texts all in their own way show how leisure-activities can be deployed for political means and the steering effects they have on people's minds. *Utopia* and *New Atlantis* especially are significant in this respect, taking mind- and identity-control to an extreme in their respective societies, where leisure is presented as a forceful tool in generating a docile and uniform people. If the people are kept dumb and numb, there is no danger for strife or disorder to arise, a belief that the rulers of Utopia and Bensalem successfully put into practice. Though these utopias, just like their dystopian relatives, take it to an extreme, they ultimately merely depict applications of the well-known idea of

---

[25] This lack of productivity gives rise to the question of what use the people still are to the ruling elite, who can clearly tend to themselves. There is an obvious answer that follows directly from everything we have discussed: just like the several houses where experiments on all kinds of natural phenomena are carried out, the island as a whole can be read as a laboratory where the nature of man is investigated. (See also Amy Boesky's description of Bensalem as one big laboratory: "the perfect institution for empirical containment and control", a place where nature can be pinned down and the scientist can isolate and uncover its subjects (Boesky 1996: 68).) The people's sole purpose, therefore, is to exist and procreate. The House's knowledge of human nature gives them full command over the people's passions and led them to install a patriarchal family structure and religion, and to keep them content with abundant food and heroes to look up to.

*panem et circenses.* The supposed difference between leisure and anti-leisure may – in a normal, non-totalitarian, non-dystopian context – just be a theoretical nicety, their common goal being to keep the people happy and channel the passions in non-destructive directions. Once again the utopian texts present us with an intensified image of normal, social life, uncovering the possibly distracting or controlling effects of leisure-activities and more generally the pliant nature of man.

## Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that utopian texts are, first and foremost, reflections of existing society. The standard view that utopias offer a critique on the existing situation by offering an alternative view of a society where the common social problems have been eliminated, directs the reader's attention towards what is different from the world we know. This perspective on the genre covers up an at least equally interesting aspect of these works: they offer a view on a community at work, illuminating and enlarging its most pervasive, though generally inconspicuous, institutions. By focusing on these structural facets and largely neglecting or questioning the (positive) impact of the specific form of government, they show both the universality of these mechanisms and their effectiveness in sustaining the social order. Thereby, these texts, rather than offering a fantastical image of an inventive, unknown social organization, provide us with valuable insights into the workings of human coexistence and, more generally, the nature of man as a social being.

In the first chapter I addressed the difference between utopian texts and non-utopian political treatises. I noted that due to its narrative form, the utopian text is better suited to show the inner dynamics of a society at work, as it can present the reader with an image of the citizens' daily lives and thus focus on aspects that in purely theoretical works, centered on the best frame of law, remain largely undiscussed. Still, they fit right into the project of the main political philosophies of their time, which center on the question of how the passionate nature of man is to be dealt with in a social context.[26] This worry can be traced back as far as Plato, who famously introduced the so-called philosopher-kings to rule and keep in check the irrational part of the population. The texts here discussed belong in this tradition. However, rather than advancing an idealized ruler

---

[26] Machiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza and Mandeville all emphasize the need to channel the passions and irrational inclinations of man in a social context. According to Machiavelli, it is, for example, beneficial for a prince to be feared as "fear preserves you by a dread of punishment which never fails" (Machiavelli 2000: 32). Hobbes writes that the reason why people accept 'the restraint' that the commonwealth introduces is to get "themselves out from that miserable condition of Warre, which is necessarily consequent ... to the naturall Passions of men, when there is no visible Power to keep them in awe, and tye them by feare of punishment to the performance of their Covenants" (Hobbes, 1985: 223). According to Spinoza, as all men are led by their desire for pleasure, a social covenant is only possibly out of 'fear of a greater evil or hope for a greater good'. The ruler needs to take into account the fact that "the masses are governed solely by their emotions, not by reason" (Spinoza 2002: 538) and find a way to reign "over his subjects' minds" (ibid.: 537). This idea finds its culmination in Mandeville. From *The fable of the bees* we learn that instead of controlling the passions, they should be made useful: "Private Vices by the dextrous Management of a skilful Politician may be turned into Publick Benefits" (Mandeville 1988: 369).

as the solution (which, as Hythloday argued, is an unattainable goal) or, as commonly held, proposing an alternative societal structure, they essentially confront the reader with himself and the passion-guiding structures that already define social life. The longing for the security the family provides, the search for supernatural meaning, the urge to be part of a community, and the need for diversion and (seemingly) meaningful occupations are universal human tendencies that find their embodiment in important structuring institutions. There is no grand (utopian) solution to the problems societies are inevitably confronted with, but through the accessible form of narrative, the utopian text can at least hold up a mirror to the reader and the world he knows, exposing the mechanisms that are already at work and bringing them to consciousness.

Like Bensalem for Salomon's House, the utopian narrative is a laboratory of human nature, though in this case not reserved for an intellectual elite alone.[27] Zooming in on man's affections and natural tendencies, and the conditioning effects generated by the social structures man himself, through these very affects, gave rise to, the utopian takes the first step in a truly utopian direction: awareness of our own selves as subjects and protagonists within the body politic.

---

[27] As mentioned in chapter 1, the narrative form enhances accessibility: "men taste well knowledges that are drenched in flesh and blood" (Bacon: 111).

## Works cited

Avilés, Miguel Angel Ramiro. 2000. "The Law-Based Utopia." *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 3 (2–3): 225–248.

Bacon, Francis. 2008. "New Atlantis." In *Three Early Modern Utopias. Utopia, New Atlantis and The Isle of Pines*, 149–86. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2013. "The Advancement of Learning." In *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon*, 39–176. Routledge.

Baker-Smith, Dominic. 2000. *More's Utopia*. University of Toronto Press.

Boesky, Amy. 1996. *Founding Fictions. Utopias in Early Modern England*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

Burnett, G. Wesley, and Lucy Rollin. 2000. "Anti-Leisure in Dystopian Fiction: The Literature of Leisure in the Worst of All Possible Worlds." *Leisure Studies* 19 (2): 77–90.

Campanella, Tommaso. 2015. *The City of the Sun*. BookRix.

Cavendish, Margaret. 1664. *Sociable Letters*. London: William Wilson

———.1999. *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*. Edited by Anne Shaver. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

———. 2016. *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*. Broadview Press.

———. 2003. *Youth's Glory and Death's Banquet*. Oxford: Text Creation Partnership.

Claeys, Gregory, and Lyman Tower Sargent. 1999. *The Utopia Reader*. NYU Press.

Cottegnies, Line. 2014. "Brilliant Heterodoxy: The Plurality of Worlds in Margaret Cavendish's Blazing World (1666) and Cyrano de Bergerac's Estats et Empires de La Lune (1657)." In *God and Nature in the Thought of Margaret Cavendish*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

Davis, J. C. 1981. *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing 1516-1700*. Cambridge University Press.

de Jouvenel, Bertrand. 1965. "Utopia for Practical Purposes." *Daedalus* 94 (2): 437–53.

Faulkner, Robert K. 1988. "Visions & Powers: Bacon's Two-Fold Politics of Progress." *Polity* 21 (1): 111–36.

Ferns, Christopher S. 1999. *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature*. Liverpool University Press.

Frye, Northrop. 1965. "Varieties of Literary Utopias." *Daedalus* 94 (2): 323–47.

Gardner, Catherine. 2000. "The Remnants of the Family: The Role of Women and Eugenics in Republic V." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 17 (3): 217–35.

Hadfield, Andrew. 2010. "Afterword." In *New Worlds Reflected: Travel and Utopia in the Early Modern Period*, 219–22. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

Hobbes, Thomas. 1985. *Leviathan*. Penguin books.

Holmesland, Oddvar. 1999. "Margaret Cavendish's 'The Blazing World': Natural Art and

the Body Politic." *Studies in Philology* 96 (4): 457–79.

Innes, David C. 1997. "Bacon's New Atlantis: The Christian Hope and the Modern Hope." In *Piety and Humanity: Essays on Religion and Early Modern Political Philosophy*. Rowman & Littlefield.

———. 2010. "Civil Religion as Political Technology." In *Civil Religion in Political Thought*. CUA Press.

Lorenzo, David J. 2014. *Cities at the End of the World: Using Utopian and Dystopian Stories to Reflect Critically on Our Political Beliefs, Communities, and Ways of Life*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Machiavelli, Niccolò. 2000. *The Prince*. Blackmask Online.

Mahlberg, Gaby. 2012. "An island with potential: Henry Neville's 'The Isle of Pines'." In: *Utopian moments: Reading Utopian texts. Textual moments in the history of political thought*, 60-66. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Mandeville, Bernard. 1988. "The Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Publick Benefits." http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/mandeville-the-fable-of-the-bees-or-private-vices-publick-benefits-vol-1.

McKnight, Stephen A. 2006. *The Religious Foundations of Francis Bacon's Thought*. University of Missouri Press.

More, Thomas. 2008. "Utopia." In *Three Early Modern Utopias. Utopia, New Atlantis and The Isle of Pines*, 1–148. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nadon, Christopher. 2013. "Bacon's New Atlantis: From Faith in God to Faith in Progress." In *Enlightenment and Secularism: Essays on the Mobilization of Reason*, 55–66. Lexington Books.

Neville, Henry. 2008. "Ilse of Pines." In *Three Early Modern Utopias. Utopia, New Atlantis and The Isle of Pines*, 187–212. New York: Oxford University Press.

New, Peter. 1985. *Fiction and Purpose in Utopia, Rasselas, the Mill on the Floss and Women in Love*. Springer.

Plato. 2007. *Republic*. Newburyport: Focus Publishing.

Price, Bronwen. 2002. *Francis Bacon's New Atlantis: New Interdisciplinary Essays*. Manchester University Press.

Roemer, Kenneth M. 2003. Utopian Audiences: How Readers Locate Nowhere. University of Massachusetts Press.

Spinoza, Baruch. 2002. "Theological-Political Treatise." In *Spinoza: Complete Works*, First Edition, 381–583. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

Stillman, Peter G. 2006. "Monarchy, Disorder, and Politics in The Isle of Pines." *Utopian Studies* 17 (1): 147–75.

———. 2012. "'Nothing Is, but What Is Not': Utopias as Practical Political Philosophy." In *The Philosophy of Utopia*, 9–24. Routledge.

Suvin, Darko. 1979. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. Yale University Press

Trubowitz, Rachel. 1992. "The Reenchantment of Utopia and the Female Monarchical Self: Margaret Cavendish's Blazing World." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 11 (2): 229–45.

Van Cauter, Jo. 2016. "Wisdom as a Meditation on Life: Spinoza on Bacon and Civil History." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24 (1): 88–110.

Vickers, Brian. 1996. "Notes." In *Francis Bacon. The Major Works*. Oxford University Press.

Vieira, Fátima. 2010. "The Concept of Utopia." In *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, 3–27. Cambridge University Press.

Weinberger, Jerry. 2002. "On the Miracles in Bacon's New Atlantis." In *Francis Bacon's New Atlantis. New Interdisciplinary Essays*, 106–28. Manchester: University Press.

Williamson, Marilyn L. 1990. *Raising Their Voices: British Women Writers, 1650-1750*. Wayne State University Press.

Yorke, Christopher. 2007. "The Normative Role of Utopianism in Political Philosophy." In *New Thinking Journal* II (1).

## Samenvatting

In deze thesis toon ik aan dat utopische literatuur een waarheidsgetrouw beeld schetst van de werking van samenlevingen. Ik stel dat de filosofische waarde van utopische teksten niet in de eerste plaats ligt in de kritische houding die ze aannemen tegenover de misbruiken van maatschappijen of in het herwerken van bestaande structuren, maar in hun mogelijkheid om licht te werpen op de verborgen mechanismen van menselijke gemeenschappen en de mens een spiegel voor te houden van zichzelf en de wereld die hij gecreëerd heeft. De gangbare visie op het genre beschouwt utopische teksten als een kritiek op de bestaande situatie, als uitdrukking van ongenoegen over de status quo. Deze visie trekt alle aandacht naar de verschillen tussen de echte en imaginaire wereld en overschaduwt de descriptieve waarde van de teksten als geconcentreerde weerspiegelingen van de echte samenleving. Dit heeft geleid tot een verwaarlozing van wat we de ware utopische kwaliteit van het genre zouden kunnen noemen: hun vermogen om de conditionerende mechanismen van samenlevingen en de werking van de menselijke natuur (met name zijn emotionele natuur) in het algemeen bloot te leggen. Door bepaalde schijnbaar neutrale sociale instituties te weerspiegelen en uit te vergroten, ontmaskert de tekst ze als politieke instrumenten die erop gericht zijn de menselijke affecten in de gewenste richting te sturen en sociale stabiliteit in de hand te werken.

Specifiek bespreek ik vier canonieke teksten uit de Engelstalige vroegmoderne utopische traditie: Thomas Mores *Utopia* (1516), Francis Bacons *New Atlantis* (1627), Margaret Cavendish' *The Blazing-World* (1666), en Henry Nevilles *The Isle of Pines* (1668). Ik focus op de thema's van huwelijk en de patriarchale familie, religie, uitsluiting en de ander, en vrijetijdsbesteding.

Het eerste hoofdstuk is een theoretische bespreking van het utopische genre. In de eerste sectie bespreek ik twee eigenschappen van het genre die het in staat stellen verborgen politieke structuren bloot te leggen. Ten eerste beschrijft de tekst een geperfectioneerde versie van bestaande instituties die het sociale leven bepalen. De bewuste, rationele toepassing van deze instituties in de fictionele wereld biedt de lezer een gepurificeerd beeld van hun conditionerende effecten die normaal onopgemerkt blijven. Ten tweede maakt de narratieve vorm van de tekst het mogelijk een meer alomvattende beschrijving van het sociale leven te geven dan het geval is voor niet-

utopische politieke teksten. De utopische tekst portretteert een samenleving in werking eerder dan een overzicht van ideale wetten te bieden, en hierdoor kan de tekst inzicht bieden in de innerlijke werking van de menselijke natuur en samenleving. In de tweede sectie van dit hoofdstuk toon ik hoe mijn visie afwijkt van de gangbare interpretatie van het genre, die utopische teksten beschouwt als uitdrukkingen van het verlangen voor een beter leven en de normatieve kant benadrukt.

Hoofdstuk twee bevat een korte bespreking van het politieke en legale systeem van de utopische samenlevingen uit de geselecteerde teksten. Ik toon aan dat deze aspecten ofwel deficiënt zijn en de oorzaak van sociale onrust, of slechts minimaal aanwezig en verwaarloosbaar voor het vlotte verloop van het sociale leven. Heersers en wetten spelen een beperkte rol in deze samenlevingen, wat erop wijst dat de orde op een andere manier gehandhaafd wordt. De vier volgende hoofdstukken werpen licht op hoe dat gebeurt.

Hoofdstuk drie toont aan dat de patriarchale structuur, zowel op het niveau van de familie en als model voor de samenleving als geheel als fundament van opvoeding en sociale controle fungeert. Door een samenleving te tonen die de gangbare familiale en genderhiërarchieën instrumentaliseert, wordt de cruciale opvoedende en conditionerende rol van de familie blootgelegd. Door gebruik te maken van de affectieve neigingen van de mens (zoals liefde en respect voor gezinsleden, maar ook bijvoorbeeld lust en schaamte), wordt de stabiliteit verzekerd en worden burgers verhinderd om hun toegewezen plaats in de hiërarchie te verlaten.

In hoofdstuk vier toon ik aan dat de utopische teksten religie als een effectief politiek instrument inzetten, erop gericht om gehoorzaamheid en civiele deugdzaamheid te stimuleren. Hoewel de teksten op het eerste zicht samenlevingen beschrijven die een progressieve beweging maken richting religieuze tolerantie of een wetenschappelijke ingesteldheid, blijken ze in sterke mate te steunen op rigide, dogmatische geloofssystemen die, door in te spelen op de menselijke emoties, gehoorzaamheid garanderen. De rationeel georganiseerde utopie regeert over zijn irrationele bewoners door middel van religieuze hoop en angst. Samen ontmantelen de teksten de verschillende aspecten van dit politieke instrument: de motivatie is de vlotte werking van de samenleving, de methoden, gaande van mirakels en profetieën tot ceremonieën en slimme architectuur, zijn gericht op de passionele natuur van de mens, en het resultaat is volgzaamheid.

78

Hoofdstuk vijf bespreekt de rol van de ander in de utopische samenleving. Ik toon aan dat de creatie van een afwijkende ander eenheid genereert voor de 'normale' meerderheid en hen aanspoort om aan de normen te beantwoorden. De gediaboliseerde ander laat de meerderheid toe zichzelf te onderscheiden en te identificeren ten opzichte van de geselecteerde of gecreëerde minderheid. Deze groep kan verschillende vormen aannemen, zoals een raciale minderheid, de vrouw, de ongelovige, de overspelige, de ongetrouwde of onvruchtbare.

In hoofdstuk zes stel ik dat de utopische teksten het belang blootleggen van georganiseerde vrijetijdsbesteding om de burgers gelukkig te houden en sociale onrust te voorkomen. In de beschreven maatschappijen zijn de dagelijkse activiteiten erop gericht om de bewoners af te leiden en individuele groei in te perken. Ik toon daarmee aan dat de utopische ontspanningsactiviteiten niet, zoals vaak gedacht, constructief en intellectueel stimulerend zijn, maar net een grote gelijkenis tonen met de manipulatieve en onderdrukkende eigenschappen die activiteiten in dystopische teksten vaak hebben.