

From Utopia to Heterotopia:  
Outgrowing Culturally-Specific Utopian and National Models

by

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Mr  
Mind over matter

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To J.L. and M.E., for inspiration.

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## Preface

While doing research at the National Archives in Bucharest in 2008, I came across an intriguing anonymous manuscript written in Romanian. I translated<sup>1</sup> and typed it exactly the way it was written, and include the prologue here as part of my doctoral project as it closely pertains to it. I do so without the express permission of the author, whom I could not find any information on. The manuscript was a challenge to read: sometimes the author addresses the reader directly, and sometimes s/he goes into lengthy tangential discussions on seemingly unrelated topics. The narrative style is typical of the times during which it was written, with erratic punctuation and numerous footnotes. The manuscript was also title-less, so based on its prevalent theme, I took the liberty of calling the fragment used here “Summer in Utopia.” Hopefully, some day in the future, a patient editor will find more information on the mysterious author, correct, and translate the long text, and if it is found worthy, make it available to the larger public as a book.

### “Summer in Utopia”

I vividly remember the green tobacco leaves. Rows and rows of sticky, pungent, heavy tobacco leaves waiting to dry out, swaying in the gentle grip of Wallachia’s<sup>2</sup> winds. They had taken over the courtyard, rising up in the air on stilts, towering over the house, the barn, and the cherry trees. The tomatoes smelled like tobacco, the goat milk that was supposed to be delivered to the *cooperativa*,<sup>3</sup> but which we drank a bit of each day, smelled of tobacco. The confused hens, dispossessed of their courtyard, laid eggs haphazardly on the dirt road and around the fields, and they too, like everything else that summer, smelled of tobacco.

Our hands, and the very long needles we used to puncture the petioles of the big, tropical size leaves, had become a unit, a machine, sputtering, jittery, in the sweltering heat. “Meaty”—that’s the word that comes to mind when thinking about those leaves. There was something grotesque and obscene about their size, the sheer quantity, and their stench. There was nothing, but scarcity of everything else: food, clothes, books, trust. I had just finished reading one of Jules Verne’s novels, and his description of the tropics made me think that people living there might have felt the same way I did: suffocating,

sluggish, diminished, hungry, thirsty, enslaved. I pushed the needle through the green stalks with a vengeance—desperation even. When they finally gave in, they did so with indifference, oozing stubborn, gooey juices all over our prickled fingers.

“They want us to cultivate tobacco this year,” my *mamaitza*<sup>4</sup> had told us that summer. “The corn did not do too well the last three years, and they want to try something else. It is for export, export quality.”

So, she, like the rest of the peasants who worked for the *cooperativa*, used rusty shovels with handles made shiny by their trudging hands to yank the leftover roots from the frozen ground. That cold spring, when their arms, backs, and hands could not work anymore, and the corn roots were piled up and carted away to be used as fodder for the animals, in went the pesky tobacco seeds.

“This here used to be our land,” she had told me the previous year. “Wherever you look, from the top of this hill, all the way to the river, and on the right, all the way to the hidden cave, this land was ours. Now it’s the state’s.”

She was small, but strong, and still very beautiful. Her skin, on her shoulders and on her back, the top of her legs, was the brightest white, the softest alabaster I have ever seen. Her face, the hands, arms and lower legs were burned, wrinkled, dried up by the scorching sun; her feet, in the *cooperativa* issued rubber shoes—many times broken and lovingly mended with thread in several colors—were calloused beyond belief.

Her hands were a wonder: with them she embroidered the whitest cloth, the *borangic*,<sup>5</sup> with stories and rivers, mountains, butterflies, and flowers. With those hands she rubbed healing into my small body, hurting from the hardships of peasant life. She cooked the best meals I have ever had with those sun-burned hands: tasty scrambled eggs, spicy beans, stewed tomatoes, eggplant salads, and once or twice, golden-crust roasted chicken. Desserts she made very rarely; we did not have the time, or the ingredients to make desserts. We ate sun-kissed, warm watermelons, brightly red, zesty cherries, and crunchy, purple, violently perfumed plums. When she died, her hands were folded primly on her sunken chest and they made her look content, as she was done with tobacco crops, and utopia, and what came after utopia, as if she had earned the long rest...

That summer, though, her hands were hard at work. Comrade Ciondea, the *cooperativa* chief and local *balaur*,<sup>6</sup> was supposed to stop by to see how the work was going. We were behind. We had spent the last few nights working under the flickering light of an old oil lamp. I remember that lamp, too. Its glass was broken on all four sides, and night bugs, lured by the oil fumes, dove in by the dozens, and fizzled loudly in the stifling air of the restless nights. We had even taken some tobacco in the house; there was no more space for it anywhere else. Piles and piles of leaves, brought back from the fields on our backs, were still waiting to be strung up, dried by the sun, taken to the *cooperativa* by small carts. I kept thinking of how lucky these leaves were, to travel abroad as “export quality” cigarettes and cigars, to maybe end up in some of those amazing places Jules Verne wrote about in his books.

But that day, they just sat there, the whole mountain of them, and there was no place to hide them, to pretend they had been processed; the leaves were too big, they smelled too bright.<sup>7</sup> From where we were working, under the shade of the shingled barn, we could not see Ciondea arriving: between us and the road, the courtyard—before filled with sunshine and busy, silly-looking hens, and ducks and geese—was now overtaken by huge piles of tobacco. Swaying in the timid breeze, towers of drying rows of leaves had taken over the sky. We heard him as he walked though the gate, which was still squeaky that summer, and waited for him to make his way to us. With sausage-like hands he pushed the big tobacco leaves away from his face and towered over us as we sat crunched over, rough thread and needles in hand.

“Good day, comrades,” he said cheerfully, wiping sweat and sticky white residue from his forehead. “I see you are working. Good. Good. Good.”

I did not like him. He had a big belly, and he was always sweating, always wiping his forehead, his hands. His smile was shifty, and he always pinched my cheeks with what he thought was the adult’s indulgent attention to a naughty child. He smelled of too much cologne, and his uniform was too perfectly clean.

“I see your granddaughter from Cluj is here. Good. Good. Good. Transylvania can learn a few things from the south. She can see first-hand the making of our society, our multicultural, multi-developed socialist society. Our utopia. The transformation of this backward land into an industrialized power on the *mapamond*.”<sup>8</sup>

The man loved that word, “the map of the world.” He used it all the time, and his other words sounded rehearsed, over-wrought, and all too familiar.

“Yes, comrade,” my *mamaitza* muttered. Her hands never stopped from working. “She is going to herd whose goats?” he asked.

Up till I was twenty, I spent three months every summer working as a goat herder to that part of my grandma’s village. Stubborn beasts, those goats, wiry and dried up like the rest of the landscape, like the people. For the first three years of my herding career I did what I was told: made sure that none of the beasts touched a leaf of grass, or trespassed on the *cooperativa*’s fields. But when I had turned ten, the previous summer, I had re-discovered gymnastics and Jules Verne, and had concocted a way to do what I wanted, and still appear to follow Comrade Ciondea’s precious “directions of conduct.” It only seemed fair to me to accept what I had been told, and follow the rule if I applied it like this: the goats were not allowed on the *cooperativa*’s grounds, but the damn things loved anything on the side of that fence. It was like the grass was greener on the other side, goat version. Or who knows, maybe they rebelled on behalf of their owners, and greedily snatched the fruits and grains that were their owners’ anyway. My eleven-year-old logic? It was perfectly acceptable to have the goats eat anything they wanted, while *away* from the fenced property. So, instead of running after the springy creatures, trying to corral and force them to stay put so I could read science fiction and practice cartwheels, I would collect their favorite things beforehand, place them under piles and piles of honeysuckle branches and long grass leaves, and tie them down to feast. The whole day was thus mine: while the goats were chewing away delightedly, they were getting fatter—which their owners liked—they produced more milk—which the *cooperativa* accountant liked—and I was free to read books and do as many cartwheels as I liked.<sup>9</sup> So, I had no problem herding goats.

“Everybody’s goats from this part of the village, comrade,” my *mamaitza* answered the man.

“Good. Good. Good. She can see how hard the Romanian peasant works to contribute to the making of our utopia. She is lucky to have both city and countryside transform before her eyes. One day,” and he addressed me directly, so I looked up and squinted in the bright light, “when you go to university, you should describe what you

have seen here, what we are doing, day after day, our very hard work, building a new world. You will do that, city girl, won't you?"

The sweat was pouring from his face in rivulets, and I felt oddly happy when a huge grasshopper landed on his forehead and he smacked it dead against his skin. With a bright white, perfectly folded handkerchief he swiped his forehead, disgusted. Some smeared entrails trailed over his left brow. I looked down, smiled at his silliness, and in the very same moment, felt ashamed that this dirtied man was talking down to my *mamaitza*, who showed him so much undeserved deference and said so very little when he was around.

"Yes, comrade," she answered again.

"You know, little one, you are lucky. If you lived in France or England, those goddamn capitalists who wring the heart out of our proletarian brothers and sisters would put little kiddies like you in factories to work fourteen, sixteen hours a day instead of letting you go to school. That's true, don't look amazed, that's what they do there!"

I was crouched at his feet, a pile of tobacco leaves bigger than myself to my right, a small row of tobacco leaves wrapped across my lap. I was trying really hard to work fast, help my *mamaitza*, and if I could have closed my eyes and wished this man and his tobacco away forever, I would have. Instead, I just gripped the long needle, too big and thick for my hands, and very sharp. I could not feel my fingertips; they had been punctured countless times. From the juices of the leaves, turned venomous in the heat of the day, they had swelled up. Tears rolled down my cheeks: pain, frustration, shame, anger.

"Now, now, city girl," the man crooned. "You'll get used to it, and get better. We cannot build our society only with our brains. I hear you do very well in school. Is that right? And you do sports, too? A champion, I heard— is that true?"

My *mamaitza* answered again:

"Yes, comrade Ciondea."

"That's good. You'll go back to your books with life experience. You'll know and appreciate the life you got. For this is"—when he bent over to grab my chin and tilt it up so that he could see my face, I peered into small eyes hidden behind swollen eyelids, and smelled sweat and, overwhelmingly, his cologne—"utopia, my little city girl."

Three months later, at the end of the summer of 1981, when I went back to Cluj, I went straight to the library and asked my mother's best friend, the beautiful, but tired looking librarian, what this "utopia" thing was, if they had tobacco over there, and if there was a book I could read to understand what the *balaur* meant by the good life that was expecting us, the life that everybody was working so hard towards. Maybe he had come from this utopia place and his people wanted him, and his tobacco expertise, back.

"There used to be quite a few of them, and good ones," Ana, the librarian whispered wistfully, "but all those books are now gone, forbidden. They said we don't need utopias anymore."

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## List Of Abbreviations

CPP: Convention People's Party, Ghanaian political entity at odds with NLM.

HIPC: Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

NEL: New English Literatures.

NLM: National Liberation Movement, Ghanaian political party.

OPEC: The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

PLF: Palestinian Liberation Front.

PCR: Romanian Communist Party.

## Glossary of Terms

**Anthropia:** (Greek), “anthropos,”–(hu)man and “topos”–place; “the human place” or “human in place,” by extension, “human at place within him/herself and the world.”

**Anti-utopia:** literary genre opposed to utopian projects and narratives.

**Apotropaic:** (Greek), “apotropaios”– “avert, turn around.” In various cultures and spiritual traditions certain words and expressions are believed to have the power to avert evil influences, the evil eye, or bad luck.

**Băcani:** (Romanian), “shopkeepers,”– slightly derisory term used by Constantin Noica and his Păltiniș students to denote those pleased with the status quo, and unwilling to work to better themselves.

**Castalia:** the nymph transformed by Apollo into a spring at Delphi after she refused his advances. Supposedly, the fountain’s waters could bestow poetic genius on aspiring writers and poets. Herman Hesse called the utopian locale in *The Glass Bead Game* after the spring. The name came to be associated with any locale where high learning and creativity take place. Constantin Noica’s paidetic school at Păltiniș was known among its students as “the new Castalia.”

**Collective memory:** term coined by Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) meaning a collection of constructed, shared, memories passed on to a respective group from generation to generation. In the modern age, collective memory is created by the juxtaposition of a variety of media: films, TV, Internet, print. In the pre-modern era, it relied heavily on oral tradition. Throughout time, it inspired the construction of such imagined communities as the nation, and utopia.

**Derasha:** (Hebrew), the implied meaning of the text.

**Dystopia:** (Greek), “dys”–“bad, ill” and “topos”– “place, landscape”; story or society–usually futuristic–which, under the veneer of perfection, has lapsed into a totalitarian or repressive state. It usually carries a cautionary message about the slippery slopes that can derail a well-intended plan.

**Ecotopia:** (Greek), “eco”– “home, dwelling,” and “topos”– “place,” by extension: dwelling at home, indwelling in the land.” It is also the title of Ernest Callenbach’s very influential 1975 utopian novel.

**Elohim:** (Hebrew), “god, gods,” Biblical name for God. In *The Zohar*, the name is usually associated with various sephirot.

**Exilic consciousness:** the feeling and/or state of not being at home, not being integrated in a place, society. It does not necessarily imply geographical displacement.

**Galut:** (Hebrew), “exile,” the condition of being away from the land of Israel.

**Galilee:** (Hebrew), province in Northern Israel, also the mythical locale described in *The Zohar* as a garden like-place where the group of friends are walking and discussing the nature of the Divine, and the world.

**Haggadah:** (Hebrew), the allegorical meaning of the text, which illustrates a point of Law from the Talmud. Also, the text recited during Seder on the first two nights of the Jewish Passover, and emphasizing the lessons that can be learned from the Exodus story.

**Halakhah:** (Hebrew), “practice, (Jewish) law” or “the path that one walks.”

**Havdalah:** (Hebrew), “separation”: multi-sensorial ceremony performed at the end of the Sabbath to mark the end of the holiday and the return to everyday life.

**Hasid**, pl. Hasidim: (Hebrew), “pious one,” “lover of God” (also spelled Chassid, Chassidism). Hasidism is a branch of Orthodox Judaism that encourages ecstatic and joyous expressions of the believer’s encounter with the Divine.

**Heterotopia:** (Greek), “hetero,”– different, and “topos”– place. Term coined by the French philosopher Michel Foucault to depict the side-by-side existence of various narratives and modalities of engaging space, interacting in non-hegemonic conditions. As spaces of otherness, they are simultaneously physical and mental, and differ from the homogenous space associated with utopia in the fact that they encourage multi-vocal, multi-semantic accounts of the same experiences and facts. He classified heterotopias in various categories: of crisis, of deviation, of time, and of purification or ritual.

**Hybridity:** the dissolution of rigid cultural boundaries between groups, the mixing of cultural, and linguistic characteristics between groups of people living next to each other and engaged in equal or hierarchical relationships.

**Intopia:** (Greek), “in”– “inside,” and “topos”– “place, landscape,” by extension: “introspection.” Most recently the term has been associated with narratives from oppressed or minority groups describing epiphanies and deep changes in the consciousness of the individual or the group.

**Israel:** (Hebrew), “the people of Israel.”

**Jubilee:** (Hebrew), “the Sabbath of Sabbath” or “a year of emancipation and restoration provided by ancient Hebrew law to be kept every 50 years by the emancipation of Hebrew slaves, restoration of alienated lands to their former owners, and omission of all cultivation of the land.”<sup>11</sup>

**Kabbalah:** (Aramaic), “tradition, that which is received” (also spelled Cabala). The term, from the thirteenth century to the present, is associated with the esoteric teachings of Judaism.

**Kellipot:** (Hebrew), “shards, husks, or shells” that imprison the sparks of Divine Light separated from the Creator during the Shevirat ha-Kelim, the “breaking of the vessels” process.

**Kibbutz, pl. Kibbutzim:** (Hebrew), “communal settlement,” a unique rural community, dedicated to mutual aid and social justice established in Israel at the beginning of last century and credited with turning the deserts of the country into fertile agricultural lands.

**Merkavah/merkavot:** (Hebrew) “Chariot, throne.” In Jewish mysticism an object of visionary contemplation, first described by the prophet Ezekiel, with the help of which the mystic’s soul ascends to heavenly spheres.

**Midrash, pl. Midrashim:** (Hebrew), legal interpretation of the Bible.

**Mitsvah, pl. Mitzvot:** (Hebrew), religious duties, “commandments” (613 in the Torah), and good deeds.

**Moshav, pl. Moshavim:** (Hebrew), a type of settlement consisting of individual leaseholds farmed cooperatively, in Israel.

**Mystical indigenism:** set of beliefs and mystical practices particular to a specific group; the nation-building block for the Criterion Group and the Păltiniș school and the foundation for the Romanian Communist Party’s ultranationalist ideology.

**Nation:** community of people who share a common territory, government, language, race, descent, and history; sovereign state.

**Négritude:** 1930’s literary and ideological movement developed by a group of francophone black intellectuals led by Aime Césaire, Leon Damas, and Leopold Sedar Senghor. It extolled the values of black heritage and encouraged blacks to be proud of it and express it fully in politics, diplomacy, art, culture, and the process of decolonization.

**Olam-ha-haba:** (Hebrew), “the world to come,” or “the afterlife.” In Jewish mysticism, also associated with Edenic experiences taking place during rituals and holidays.

**Ontology:** (Greek), “ont”– “of “ and “logia”– “science, theory.” A branch of philosophy that studies the nature of being, existence, or reality and the connections between its categories.

**Paideia:** (Greek) “to educate, child-rearing, education.” An encompassing pedagogical system originating in classical Athens, paideia emphasized the education of pupils into the best, truest form of human nature. It combined rigorous academic training with physical training and moral education. The intended result was the creation of well-

educated, self-governed individuals capable of upholding moral values and, if/when involved in civic activities and government, rule justly.

**Palimpsest:** (Greek), “scraped (clean and used) again”– something having several layers or aspects, a manuscript (originally a scroll) which has been erased so that new text could be written over. The implied meaning of the word is that traces of old texts filter through the new ones, that they cannot be completely erased.

**Panopticon:** (Greek), “pan”–“all” and “opticus”– “to observe, see all, to see all around.” In Jeremy Bentham’s 1785 design, it was a circular type of prison that enabled the guards to see all prisoners, or give them the impression that they were observed at all time so as to create an ominous feeling of omnipresent surveillance.

**Pogroms:** (Russian), mob attack or violent riot directed against a particular group, usually of a different religion or ethnicity, resulting in killings, extensive destruction of private property and associated cultural artifacts and religious sites.

**Proletcultism:** literary and cultural movement during the Romanian communist regime that emphasized the cult of the proletariat and extolled the virtues of the working class.

**Protochronism:** set of beliefs and theories espoused by the Criterion group and the Romanian Communist Party according to which the ancient history of Romania had been one of glorious battles and advanced technological achievements precluding those of Western Europe.

**Sabras:** nickname for Jews born in the state of Israel; the name is inspired by a hardy desert plant with a prickly exterior and a soft, tender interior.

**Sedinte:** (Romanian) “working meetings.” Mandatory, weekly, or by-weekly meetings which lasted for hours and were highly formulaic and unproductive, used by the communist regime to monitor the private sphere.

**Sefer ha-Zohar:** “The Book of Radiance/Splendor,” the summa mystica of the Kabbalistic tradition, a mystical commentary on the first five books of the Torah.

**Sefirah,** pl.sefirot: (Hebrew) nine aspects of the divine personality originating from Ein Sof and the first sefirah, Keter. Also known as centers of energy, similar to those described in the Yogic and Tantric traditions.

**Shekhinah:** “presence,” divine immanence of female qualities, the female partner of Tif’eret, also known as Malkhut.

**Shevirat ha-Kelim:** (Hebrew), “breaking of vessels.” In Lurianic Kabbalah, a cataclysmic event during which the ten vessels meant to contain the emanation of God’s

light shattered, or were displaced. Through good, righteous deeds, mankind could help restore these vessels and the intended order of the universe.

**Shema:** “hear,” essential prayer recited in the morning and the evening by the people of Israel.

**Theurgy:** (Greek), the belief that, through specific magical rituals and invocations, human beings can not only cleave to the divine, but also engender the reunification of its male and female aspects.

**Third-worldling:** the mass (economic and intellectual) migration of various previously colonized peoples to the metropolises of their masters, a process also known as “reverse colonization.”

**Tif'eret:** “beauty, glory,” sefirah, which balances polar opposites, male partner of Shekhinah, also called Rahamin.

**Tikkun:** (Hebrew) “correction.” The process of removing the keliipot, and freeing the light they trapped, thus helping the reunion of the male and female aspects of the Divine.

**Torah:** “instruction, teaching,” comprised of the Five Books of Moses.

**Tzimzum:** (Hebrew) “correction, constriction.” Term used in Lurianic Kabbalah to explain the withdrawal of God’s infinite Light so that other acts of creation could be performed in the vacuum created.

**Uchronia:** (Greek), “u”– “non” and “chronos”– “time”: “the non/other-time.”

**Utopia:** (Greek), “u”– “non” and “topos”– “place”: “the non/other-place.”

**Weltanschauung:** (German), comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world from a specific (cultural or ethnic) point of view.

**Zionism:** (Hebrew), from Zion, a synonym for Jerusalem and the land of Israel. The term was coined by Nathan Birnbaum in 1890 and applied to the Jewish political movement that supported the return of the people of Israel to their ancient homeland. The term could refer to various types of Zionism, like the non-political, cultural branch, or the Christian branch.

## Glossary of names

**Achim, George:** (1958– ) Romanian utopian scholar, professor at North University in Baia Mare, Romania, author of several books on local utopias and dystopias.

**Aidoo, Ama Ata:** (1942– ) Ghanaian author and playwright, best known for her award winning novel *Changes* and her insights into the complex tensions between Western and African points of view. She is presently teaching at Brown University.

**Anderson, Benedict:** (1936– ) Chinese born American university professor and theorist of the nation, best known for his 1983 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. In this influential work, he introduced the concept of the nation as “an imagined political community” with limited and sovereign characteristics, built continuously by a certain ethnic or group and, in Europe, facilitated by the rise of the novel and print-capitalism.

**Antohe, Sorin:** (1957– ) Romanian historian, essayist, and journalist specializing in intellectual history, utopias, and Romanian cultural studies in various European contexts. He taught at University of Michigan and Central European University.

**Archangels:** nickname for the leading Romanian legionaries associated with the Iron Guard, or the Legion of Archangel Michael.

**Bănuș, Maria:** (1914–1999) Romanian poet and translator of Jewish origin, initially an avid supporter of the Communist Romanian Party. She wrote in the proletcultist style in the 1940s and 1950s, and later turned against the system because of its human rights and political abuses.

**Bar Yochai, Shimon:** First century rabbi and mystic of great influence who lived in the land of Israel during the Roman period, after the destruction of the temple (70CE). Moses de Leon, the thirteenth century scholar, credited him with the authorship of *The Zohar*. In Kabbalah, Shimon bar Yochai is considered one of the most righteous men who ever lived, and *the* main spiritual guide for students following into his footsteps.

**Bloch, Ernst:** (1885-1977), German Marxist philosopher of Jewish ancestry. Influenced by Hegel and Marx, he developed a new methodology to approach and critique cultural and ideological phenomena. His *Principle of Hope* analyzes the ways cultural artifacts contain emancipatory moments that both inspire better ontological alternatives and challenge the status quo.

**Brennan, Timothy:** Contemporary American university professor best-known for his work on cultural theory, comparative literature, postcolonial topics, globalization, etc.

**Ceașescu, Nicolae:** (1918–1989) A long time member of the Romanian Communist Party and the president of the republic from 1965 to 1989. He ruled the country with an iron fist and instituted draconian laws in order to eliminate the country’s foreign debt. In



1989, after decades of human rights abuse and economic failures, he was captured with his wife Elena Ceaușescu as they were trying to flee the country and, after a summary trial, were executed by firing squad on Christmas day.

**Cesaire, Aime:** (1913–2008) Martinican poet, playwright, and politician, one of the most influential authors from French-speaking Caribbean. With a group of Francophone scholars he formulated the concept of “*négritude*” which emphasized and extolled the character of being black and celebrated the cultural patrimony of Africa and the Caribbean. These concepts were published in *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal (Return to My Native Land)* and together with *A Tempest*, his version of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, constitute his most known works.

**Cioran, Emil** (1911–1995), Romanian philosopher, essayist, founder of the Criterion group. He left Romania for France after the communist takeover in 1947. His work is marked by profound pessimism, and indulgent reflections on the human condition, and particularly on the misfortune of having been born in Romania, which he called “a minor culture.”

**Cornea, Andrei:** (1952– ) Romanian essayist, philosopher and translator who wrote extensively on the Păltiniș School and the specter of communism in Romania after the 1989 revolution. He is an active member of the Group for Social Dialogue, one of Romania’s most civically-minded post-revolutionary intellectual groups.

**Coteptra Group:** "European Thematic Network on Comparative Studies" was a three-year project (1998/99; 1999/2000; 2000/2001) sponsored by the European Community, grouping several European Universities and Coordinated by the University of Bologna. The aim of this project was to create and implement teaching modules (at both undergraduate and graduate levels) with which the various national schools and university systems could experiment autonomously and in collaboration with each other. Subproject 6 was focused on inventorying utopian narratives and practices from Eastern European and other non-Western cultures in attempt to test the hypothesis that utopian aspiration is universal, but manifests nationally-specific adaptations.

**Crețu, Bogdan:** (1974– ) Romanian utopian scholar, sociologist, and member of the The New Generation; published a book on Romanian anti-utopia during the communist regime.

**Criterion Group:** (1930s) Highly influential Romanian literary group which included Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica, Emil Cioran, Nae Ionescu, and Petre Țuțea. The group was interested in finding the specifics of the local national character, and also in folklore, and mystical indigenism. Its members believed into an ontology unique to the Romanian people and in its messianic and cultural mandate. Initially apolitical, it was influenced by the anti-Semitic, ultranationalist, fascist, paramilitary Iron Guard, and its members were later publicly criticized for these sympathies.

**Dacia Felix:** (Latin), “Happy Dacia”– the geographical cradle of Romania, inhabited by Dacians and conquered by Romans in 106AD.

**De Leon, Moses:** (c.1250–1305) Spanish rabbi and Kabbalist who claimed to have found a manuscript of *The Zohar* supposedly written in Galilee by the famed first-century Jewish mystic Shimon bar Yochai. According to some scholars, De Leon was, in fact, the central author and redactor of the opus, but the text benefited from the work and later additions of other noted Jewish scholars.

**Eliade, Mircea:** (1907–1986) Romanian historian of religion, member of the Criterion group, writer, philosopher, translator, and university professor famous for his theories of the “eternal return” and “the sacred and the profane.”

**Ellison, Ralph:** (1914–1994) African-American novelist, literary critic, best-known for this award winning novel *Invisible Man* and his political writings on American racial discrimination.

**Esher, Melila Hellner:** (1959– ) Jewish-Israeli author, and a noted mysticism scholar, Hellner is affiliated with the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem and is an active member of the Israeli-Palestinian Sulha Peace Project.

**Fanon, Franz:** (1925–1961) Martinican-French philosopher, psychiatrist, writer and co-founder of the négritude movement who wrote on the psychology of colonization and the deleterious effects it had on both the colonized and the colonizer. was one of his teachers at Lycee Schoelcher in Martinique.

**Fărcășan, Sergiu:** (1922?– ) Romanian poet, writer, and playwright who studied medicine in Timisoara. His 1969 SF novel *A Bull Is Searching for You (Va cauta un taur)* was an Eurocon-award winner in 1972 and his *A Love Story From The Year 41042 (O iubire din anul 41,042)* was translated in French and nominated for prestigious European awards.

**Foucault, Michel:** (1926–1984) French philosopher, social theorist and historian of ideas, known for his work on the complex relationships between power, knowledge, and discourse. He coined important terms in philosophy and human geography. Heterotopia, in his view, refers to the co-existence within the same geographical space of diverse modes of being engaged in non-hegemonic relationships.

**Ghosh, Amitav:** (1956– ) Indian writer, journalist, educated in the West, author of the award winning novel: *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium, and Discovery*. He currently lives in New York and teaches at Columbia University.

**Ginsburg, Elliot:** American professor of mysticism and Judaic studies at University of Michigan known for his work on the Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah.

**HaAm, Achad:** (1856–1927) secular leader of Hasidic ancestry, founder of Cultural Zionism.

**Herzl, Theodor:** (1860– 1904) Austro-Hungarian-Jewish thinker, lawyer, writer, playwright, and journalist who formulated the precepts of modern political Zionism. Initially uninterested in the Jewish question, he became interested in the cause after the Dreyfus affair in 1894. He wrote “Der Judenstaat” (The Jewish State”) and *Altneuland (Old New Land)*, which inspired generations of Zionists and was actively involved in the diplomatic and territorial negotiations with the Ottoman Empire and the British government to find a suitable place for the state of Israel.

**Ionesco, Eugene:** (1909–1994), Romanian absurdist dramatist, philosopher, essayist, and member of the Criterion Group.

**Ionesco, Nae:** (1890-1940), Romanian philosopher and logician, educated in the West, and deeply influenced by Nazi ideology, member of the Iron Guard, and a strong ideological influence on the Criterion Group.

**Iron Guard:** Romanian political party, with a pronounced far-right, ultra-nationalist, anti-Semitic, and anti-communist bend, enthusiastic promoter of Romanian Orthodox Christian faith.

**Laing, Kojo:** (1946– ) West African novelist and poet, educated in Ghanaian and Scottish schools. Known for his novels *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*, and the poetry collection *Godhorse*, in which he showcases local ethnic beliefs and traditions and discusses postcolonial conundrums in the area.

**Liiceanu, Gabriel:** (1942– ) Romanian philosopher, student of the Păltiniș school, and founder of the Group for Social Dialogue. He is the well-known author of the *Păltiniș Journal- A Paidetic Model of Humanistic Culture (Jurnalul de la Păltiniș: Un model paidetic in cultura umanista)*.

**Luria, Isaac:** (1534–1572) Jewish mystic also known as HaAri, The Lion, who formulated new doctrines of the origin of the Creator, re-interpreted, and synthesized the teachings of *The Zohar*. He introduced the concept of tzimzum according to which the Creator withdrew to make space for alternative creations and corrections. This theory added a theurgical mission to the practice of Kabbalah.

**Manuel, Frank:** (1920–2003) Historian of utopianism, university professor, and the author (with his wife, Fritzie Manuel) of the most comprehensive works on *Utopian Thought in the Western World* and *French Utopias*.

**Marin, Louis:** (1931–1992) French philosopher, historian, and art critic interested in semiotics, art, and utopian studies. His work *Utopiques: Jeux D’espaces* is widely read and used in the field of utopian studies.

**Matt, Daniel:** Contemporary Scholar of Jewish Mysticism, translator and editor of the scholarly version of the English *Zohar*.

**More, Thomas:** (1478–1535) English lawyer, social philosopher, and author known for his extensive humanist knowledge. He was an eminent statesman and counselor to Henry the VIII. More's resistance to the king's separation from Rome and the inception of the Church of England led to his beheading and later canonization by the Catholic Church. He is best known for his *Utopia* novel, which engendered the genre with the eponymous name.

**Nedelcovici, Bujor:** (1936– ) is a Romanian novelist, essayist, playwright, screenwriter, journalist, and photographer. The manuscript of *The Second Messenger (Al Doilea Mesager)* about a totalitarian system was smuggled out of Romania and published in 1985 in Paris. Under pressure from the communist regime, he asked for political asylum and moved to France where he lives and writes since 1987.

**Noica, Constantin:** (1909–1987) Romanian philosopher, poet, essayist, member of the Criterion group, and founder of the Păltiniș school. He wrote extensively on the particularities of Romanian ontology and was well versed in many branches of philosophy. For the last twelve years of his life, he stayed at Păltiniș, under unofficial surveillance of the Secret Police.

**Okri, Ben:** (1959– ) Nigerian poet and novelist, educated in England, who wrote extensively on the atrocities of civil war in his country, the problems facing the individual in a changing world, and the legacy of colonialism in Western Africa. His novels have won prestigious international awards.

**Orlea, Oana:** Romanian author of several novels written in Romanian and in French. She lives in France since 1980 when she left Romania after spending thirteen years in prison for distributing manifestos as a high school student. She documented that experience in memoirs such as *Une sosie en cavale* and novels like *The Zero Perimeter (Perimetrul Zero)*.

**Piercy, Marge:** (1936– ) Jewish-American feminist, novelist, poet, and activist, winner of numerous awards for her work. Her best-known SF novels are *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *He, She, It*.

**Pinchas, Rebbe of Koretz:** (1728–1790), Chassidic Rabbi, close disciple of Baal Shem Tov.

**Plato:** (429–347 BCE) Classical Greek Philosopher, student of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle, founder of the Academy in Athens. He formulated the theory of forms, according to which the world perceived through senses is a pale imitation of the pure, perfect world of Forms. His *Republic* and his detailed paidetic principles had great influence on both utopian and pedagogical studies and practices.

**Porzik, Ralph:** European professor of English Literature and cultural studies, and a noted scholar specializing in postcolonial utopias. He is best-known for *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia: A Comparative Introduction to the Utopian Novel in the New English Literatures* which inventories several utopian traditions from cultures previously under British rule and details their particular adaptations of the utopian impulse. He theorized that the similarities between these geographically disparate cultures could be explained by their sharing a “contextual analogy,” i.e., British colonial rule.

**Renouvier, Charles:** (1815–1903) French philosopher specializing in Kantian thought, which he interpreted and analyzed in extensive writings. He coined the term ‘uchronia’ and wrote a novel with the same title in 1876, depicting an alternative reality/history/time, which inaugurated the inception of a tradition related to utopia, but emphasizing the utopeme of time.

**Resnick, Mike:** (1942–) Prolific American SF writer best known for his interest in African postcolonialism, cultures, and traditions. His collection of interconnected short stories *Kirinyaga: A Fable of Utopia* describes the problems of a re-enacted Kenyan utopia, and addresses the challenges and shortcomings of the metanarrative of utopia.

**Robinson, Kim Stanley:** (1952–) American SF writer best-known for his extensive scientific knowledge and interest in ecology. His award winning *Mars Trilogy* discusses, in polyphonic format, the challenges inherent to the colonization of Mars by a crew of Terran multinationals.

**Sabbatai, Zevi:** (1626–1676) Jewish rabbi declared by one of his followers, Nathan of Gaza, the much-expected Jewish Messiah. Many of the Jews living in an increasing anti-Semitic Europe joined him on the way to Jerusalem, at the time under Ottoman rule. In Istanbul he was forced by the sultan to convert to the Mosaic faith, and his apostasy alienated most of his followers. He was disliked by the Jewish religious establishment because he intentionally disrespected the mitzvot, and encouraged his followers to do the same.

**Sargent, Lyman Tower:** Well-respected utopian scholar and author of several anthologies on the topic of utopia, retired university professor, and co-founder of the Society for Utopian Studies. His work on the theory and practice of utopia makes the basis of many scholarly projects; his present interests focus on lesser-known, non-Western, postcolonial, and aboriginal utopias.

**Spinozzi, Paola:** Italian utopian scholar, presently a Senior Lecturer in English Literature at University of Ferrara with interests varying from visual aesthetics, to Shakespeare and utopian studies. In the late 1990s, she was involved with the European-funded Cotepra group, which hypothesized that utopian aspiration is universal, but it manifests in culturally, and nationally-specific formats.

**Strauss, Leo:** (1899–1973) Jewish-German political philosopher and university professor interested in a wide array of topics (Nietzsche, Kant, the phenomenologists,

etc.). His *Persecution and the Art of Writing* advanced the idea that great philosophers and authors write in an arcane manner so as to avoid persecution from religious or political authorities. They imbed hidden meanings “between the lines” to force the readers to engage with the text on a deep level, thus honing their critical and synthesizing skills.

**Țuțea, Petre:** (1901–1991), Romanian philosopher and economist, member of the Criterion Group, deeply vested in Romanian Orthodox beliefs and practices.

**Vișniec, Matei:** (1956– ) Romanian playwright, poet, and journalist, now settled in Paris, working as a journalist at Radio France Internationale. He is known especially for his writings in the French language and his plays about life under the communist system. His play, *In Gufi's Country (În țara lui Gufi)*, detailing the “blinding” of an entire society is a direct allusion to the oppressive communist system and was a drawer text published after the 1989 revolution.

From Utopia to Heterotopia:  
Outgrowing Culturally-Specific Utopian and National Models

by

Corina Kesler

Chair: Eric S. Rabkin

I here hypothesize a causal relationship between the conditions of oppression and expressions of utopia. Roughly: the more a people, culture, and/or ethnicity experience physical space as a site of political, cultural, and literal encroachment, the more that distinct cultures utopian ideas tend to appear in non-spatial—specifically, temporal and introspective—formulations. To support this hypothesis, I examine texts like Mircea Eliade’s *The Forbidden Forest*, Sergiu Fărcășan’s *A Love Story from the Year 41,042*, Bujor Nedelcovici’s *The Second Messenger*, Oana Orlea’s *Perimeter Zero*, Costache Olăreanu’s *Fear*, Ben Okri’s *Astonishing the Gods*, Kajo Laing’s *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*, Amitav Ghosh’s *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery*, and *The Zohar: The Book of Splendor*, and practices like the Sabbath in Classical Kabbalah and the Păltiniș Paidetic school.

I select specific structural, linguistic, and narrative content elements of these works to capture particular moments in the large-scale move from space to time, while mapping this emigration of a particular people's utopian imagination onto the relevant historico-political contexts which shape it. My fieldwork strongly suggests that Romanian, Nigerian, Ghanaian, Indian, and Jewish analogous utopian traditions deploy temporality, metaphysical speculation, introspection, irony, punning, and censor-avoiding subterfuge. I also examine readings like Theodor Herzl's *Altneuland/Old New Land*, which shows the occasional reversal of the temporalizing trend once historical conditions are once again propitious, and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes*, which, as intra-cultural cases of oppression, show how the same utopian impulse finds expression in an 'inner time' when they are not. Finally, having supported my thesis from the past, I examine present-day expressions of utopian aspirations (Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars Trilogy*, communities like The EdenProject in England, The Damanhur Federation in Italy, Auroville in India, and cities like Masdar in United Arab Emirates and New Songdo in South Korea) and note that complex, dialogical accounts, addressing meta-concerns that have outgrown cultures and nations, now dominate the utopian field.



## Chapter One

### New Nations and Utopia: Ideologies and Mythogeneses at War and Play

The growing need for cross-cultural comparisons in particular has played an important role in [a] move towards a more international outlook that, despite the fundamental differences in cultural doctrines, can legitimately claim to have uncovered links between cultural ensembles where formerly they appeared to have been separate traditions, and to draw important parallels between literary systems where before it was taken for granted they did not exist.

Ralph Pordzik, *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia: A Comparative Introduction to the Utopian Novel in the New English Literatures*<sup>12</sup>

The search for clues of the writer's national identity in the construction of a utopian/dystopian place assumes that the utopian universe of representation is affected by the theoretical assumptions which build up national identity as a cultural concept in a specific historical context.

Paola Spinozzi, "Dis/locating the British Empire in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*"<sup>13</sup>

In this work I want to introduce various oft-overlooked forms of utopia, and explain some of the most fundamental differences between canonical and marginal utopias as an effect of the political/power circumstances out of which the latter arise.

To make this last clause more specific: I claim that oppression—in particular, forms of oppression which frustrate a culture’s capacity to pursue and express cultural identity in the form of a geographically stable polity or *nation*—induces a shift in utopian expression. More specifically, this project deals with the utopian explorations of three distinct non-Western utopian traditions. The first case study is that of Romanian culture under the rule of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR from now on) from 1947 to 1989. The second case study centers on both textual and practical Jewish mystical expressions in Classical Kabbalah (13<sup>th</sup> century on), and on Theodor Herzl’s 1902 *New Old Land*. The third case study considers the postcolonial manifestations of the utopian impulse in New English Literatures (NEL from now on) in three countries previously under British imperial rule: India, Nigeria, and Ghana (1960s to 1990s).

Several important things are common to these cultures when it comes to utopia, and/or its alternative forms and modus operandi. They all achieved nationhood as recently as last century and, in various degrees, went through linguistic, cultural, geographical, and historical interruptions as a people/group. They experienced censorship or repression from an ethnic same (Eastern European communist countries), or from a hegemonic other (English colonizer, and/or the local cultures the dispersed Jewish groups co-habited with at various times). They deployed similar, sometimes overlapping, and/or competing rhetorical strategies to form their respective national and utopian discourses.

In these marginal utopian cases, the primary shift in conceptualizing and expressing the utopian impetus is from narratives of outward, literal, utopian spaces/places to narratives of inner/private utopias (‘intopias’) and/or utopian times (‘uchronias’). Space was not, for these historically oppressed cultures, associated with utopian idealism, because space was, for them, the environment furthest from ideal. So, driven in this way from space by its open, outward, physical domination by the oppressor, the oppressed utopian imagination migrated inward to mix and merge these alternative forms, employing idealized histories and mystic doctrines and rituals to re-

take and control time, making time the alternative ‘space’ in which cultural identity/integrity was/could be pursued. This ominous-ness of space for the oppressed, and the increasing absence of space for the involuntarily-globalized, show, in widely varying circumstances, the responsiveness of utopian expressions to geo-political conditions upon which my argument rests, as well as indicates for the model I offer not merely a descriptive, but some measure of predictive power.

Thus, having detailed how the pursuit of cultural identity has been driven to find alternative outlets, and these adjustments in the pursuit of cultural identity have given rise to alternative utopian literary forms, I will end by noting, in contemporary utopian literature and practice, certain trans-national and trans-cultural trends. Not only has utopian literature and practice been altered by adjustments made in a culture’s pursuit of identity; but the rise of borderless technologies has marginalized not merely the cultural quest for nation, but space as a center of such quests. Thus cultural identity is ceasing to be the very locus and driving force of utopia’s most contemporary expressions, and utopian projects are, and will be, increasingly associated with a quest for ‘a culture beyond cultures’ which manifests either as a return to the anthropological core and the selection of universally valid/applicable human wants and needs, or as a highly advanced technological and architectural enterprise the likes of brand ‘utopian cities’ built from the ground up.

As to method: For the case studies, I engage in an interdisciplinary dialogue with literary and utopian theory, cultural studies, cultural anthropology, and theories of space and national identity formation. My thesis of utopian literature as altered in order to adapt to some form of cultural oppression/duress—a duress far less prevalent in canonical utopia-producing cultures/peoples— also justifies my focus on ‘marginal’ utopian-producing cultures. To establish the thematic comparisons that follow, I use a broader theoretical apparatus informed by phenomenology and narrative theory. Scholarship across disciplines that has influenced my take on the topic of utopia/uchronia includes the work of Frank and Fritzie Manuel, Louis Marin, Fredric Jameson, Lyman Tower Sargent, the Cotepra group, Sorin Antohi, George Achim, Elliot Ginsburg, Moshe Idel, Daniel Matt, Melila Hellner-Eshed, Edward Said, Andrei Cornea, Katherine Verdery, Lucian Boia, Leo Strauss, Michel Foucault, Mircea Eliade, Ralph Pordzik, Paola Spinozzi, Marc

Augé, Gaston Bachelard, Mikhail Bakhtin, Ernst Bloch, Tom Moylan, Ruth Levitas, Northrop Frye, Russell Jacoby, Françoise Lionnet, Shu-Mei Shih, and many others.

Finally, as to motivation: by employing a wide array of extant scholarship, untapped historical archives, and the inclusion of geographical and ideologically marginal expressions of utopia yet to be recognized as such, my aim and hope is that I can not only provide a convincing argument regarding the nature and causes of the adaptation/oppression-driven alterations of utopia. I also hope that, in the process of making it, I can accomplish three further things.

First, there is, at present, a certain ideological trajectory in the humanities: the opening and/or dismissal of the literary and cultural canons, the speaking back from the colonies to the metropolises, the acknowledgement and inventorying of hybridity, exilic consciousness, diasporic imagining of the nation, dis- and re-location, changing dynamics of political, economic, and cultural power, and so on. I see this work as, and intend it to be, fully within the spirit of this trajectory. In this aspect, I see it aligned with UCLA's Françoise Lionnet and Shu-Mei Shih's work on transnationalism, the transregionalism studies initiated by the Jackman Institute at the University of Toronto, and the CRASSH specialized studies in transnational and transcultural identity formation presently taking place at Cambridge University in England.

Second: I hope, by bringing to the fore some of these normally neglected utopian voices, I can enhance our ability to 'hear' these narratives—not through the prescriptive lens of canonical utopias whose form and content we have come to expect—but that we might hear these alternative utopian narratives and the aspirations they contain without the use of such filters, in their own voice and on their own terms. In this aspect, too, I have been informed and guided by, among others, Lyman Tower Sargent's, the Cotepra group's, and Ralph Pordzik's pioneering work on non-Western utopias.

Third: I would like to introduce and detail some of the most advanced/progressive applications of the utopian impulse on the ground. As these projects are constructed on both locales previously thought as belonging to the Western or non-Western cultures, I will end the project by offering possible explanations for their specific mission statements and geo-politico-cultural expressions.

Of course, the argument just described presupposes something tremendous: that the utopian impulse can be sensibly treated as *one* aspiration. The singular nature of this aspiration is the starting point of this work, whose major premise can be summed up in two clauses: a) utopian aspiration is universal, but b) its historical manifestations in literature and praxis are contingent on geographical and political conditions. Although I agree with Ernst Bloch's claim that the utopian desire is not only inherent to all human beings—regardless of cultural, ethnic, or political background— but also permeating and driving every human action, it is the more specifically utopian forms of the genre that I am concerned with: the narratives and the projects instantly recognizable as of the utopian type. It is this socially constructed aspect of the utopian aspiration that I will be addressing here.

The premise of the aspirational unity of utopian literature is, of course, not original. Frank P. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel state that the utopian desire is universal, whatever the overt or disguised forms in which it is encountered. In 1979, they opened their monumental *Utopian Thought in the Western World* with this comprehensive statement about utopia in areas of the world far beyond its 'West':

Anthropologists tell us that blessed isles and paradises are part of the dreamworld of savages everywhere. The dogged wanderings of the Guarani tribe in search of a "Land-without-Evil" have been tracked over the length and breadth of Brazil, and the contemporary cargo cults of Asia and Africa have been investigated for their marvelous syncretism of Christian and native paradises. Neither pictorial nor discursive philosophico-religious utopias are exclusive to the Western world. Taoism, Theravada Buddhism, and medieval Muslim philosophy are impregnated with utopian elements.<sup>14</sup>

The Manuels treat the unity of these utopian aspirations as a quest for a better world. My thesis is somewhat different, and, I will argue, more concrete and epistemically fruitful. More precisely, I claim that, in the process of imagining a better world, the agent also, by necessity, imagines and invents her/his cultural and/or national self and thus reinforces/performs a quest for cultural identity. As each culture seeks to form and maintain its identity, it performs and composes particular aspirations/ideals, which distinguish it from other cultures. Shared by all cultures, however, is the general drive itself—a drive which is, as it were, the guiding meta-aspiration which unifies utopian quests and their various expressions in otherwise culture-specific literatures.

Thomas More's 1516 *Utopia: Libelous vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus, de optimo rei publicae statu deque nova insula Utopia*, a paradigmatic example of canonical Western utopian expression, supports this interpretation of what the common aspiration is. The presentation of two peoples and societies learning about each other was a novel way to present and process some of Europe's first encounters with its overseas "others," the relation to which was essential to its self-conceptualization. In addition, *Utopia* commented, critically, on the changing relationship between the monarchy and its subjects, and brought to light England's excesses and problems thus performing another important task—cultural self-formation through self-critique. Of course, canonical examples were not always overtly self-critical, and performed additional functions. In 1611, for instance, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* used the trope of the voyage to far away lands to cement the prevalent European attitude towards its colonies around the world. Dramatic interactions between the colonized and the colonizer signaled the greater, deeper changes and challenges inherent in the colonization process for all those involved, and, more importantly, the cultural identity of the colonizer.

My work centers upon more marginal, and often unrecognized, instances of utopian literature. But the same aspiration for ethnic and cultural unity can be seen in those examples as well. One case: The *Sefer-Ha-Zohar (The Book of Splendor)* first emerged in Spain in the thirteenth-century. The mystical commentary on *The Torah* detailed the pilgrimages, the temporal excursions, and the theophanies of a group of friends, *the hevraya*, as they walked through legendary Galilee. Much more than an engrossing description of a felicitous time in the history of the dispersed Jewish communities it was written for, the work was also a response to the unrest that ultimately culminated in their expulsion from Spain (1492) and Portugal (1497), and the ensuing geographical dispersion that threatened their cultural cohesion.

For the argument to work I will, of course, have to go into much deeper detail for each cultural case. But these preliminary observations, together with archival work conducted in 2008, and fieldwork from 2004 to 2008, already suggest how I will ground claims about these seemingly disparate utopian narratives being sufficiently similar to justify the comparisons that follow. The very recent utopian expressions I will examine, which are increasingly less culture-specific, still affirm both the basic claim about quests

for collective identities, as well as the causal thesis about the geopolitical conditions that generate these changes in the utopian genre, be it narrative or applied. Finally, the work to follow will not merely argue for, but be itself an instance of, the theoretical fruitfulness of this line that a claim of utopian literatures' instrumental role in collective identity-formation, be the particular collective what it may, provides a singular, still-substantial, and traceable thread to the scholar seeking an unified understanding of the utopian genre and its connections to an even more important imagined community, i.e., the nation.

Yet with regard to the historical rise of utopian narratives: for all the universality of this aspiration, Manuel and Manuel make note of a stark productive disparity of utopian literature between the Western and the non-Western cultures. They note that the utopian literary production has been much more profuse in the Western world: "There are treatises on ideal states and stories about imaginary havens of delight among the Chinese, the Japanese, the Hindus, and the Arabs, *but the profusion of Western Utopias has not been equaled in any other culture.*"<sup>15</sup> There is at this time, very little published work on the Chinese, the Hindu, and the Arab cultural versions of utopia. Eastern European and postcolonial examples fare little better.<sup>16</sup> The profusion of culturally Western Utopias, however, is well documented. This historical disparity of utopian production is indicative of important contingencies resulting from the imbalance of power between these two distinct cultural clusters.

Condensed colonization maps are helpful in understanding such contingencies as they show the cultural reach of 'Western' nations and how the profusion of utopian narrative in these cultures is, in part, explained by this geographic reach. Cartography also complicates any over-simplistic reference to a utopian narrative's geographic (as opposed to cultural) origins because those established polities associated with this profusion were also exporters of utopian narratives. The 'West' not only developed these narratives but implanted/imposed them. The English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French empires were expanding their dominion outside Europe and colonizing peoples around the world as early as the fourteen century. Their quest for cultural identity involved the thwarting of the same quest/aspiration in these colonized lands, thus multiplying the space in which this imposed narrative enjoyed dominance. This triumphant form of utopian narrative, as an identity-sustaining mechanism, also tended to involve a meta-

narrative justifying its expansion. Expanding narratives tended to become, at least in part, narratives of expansion, intrinsic to the sustenance of their identity as colonizers. And, of course, some of the imposition was overt, included in the efforts at acculturation or ‘civilizing’ the indigenous peoples. All these considerations were strong contributors to, and help explain, the West’s ‘profusion’ in utopian literature output, in comparison to other cultures. And this profusion has contributed to the authority these canonical texts still enjoy. Thus, the corpora of Western writings still function as a kind of determinative baseline of what counts as utopian literature—as exemplary of the tradition, and the standard against which non-Western writings came to be compared.

It is, then, accepted that there has been this ‘profusion’; equally accepted now is that this profusion has come to an end in the Western world. In the non-Western world, recent actions of cultural re-appropriation, emergent ethnic, cultural, and utopian versions were written over/under/on/with the lingering traces of colonialism and/or other metanarratives in place. In these locales, the resulting products are complex, hybrid cultural forms, which, due to their palimpsest-like nature, are not easily recognizable as utopian. This does not mean, however, that they do not belong to the utopian genre, nor that the utopian genre is defunct. It is true, though, that the utopian canon, much the same as any other cultural phenomenon associated with the colonization process, came to an end towards the end of the second millennium. The Manuels see this demise as one of the utopian spirit and point at the cultures previously responsible for its flourishing. In their 1966 *French Utopias: An Anthology of Ideal Societies*, the prolific scholars summarize the history of the most influential canonical works and explain the eschatology of the canon-producing impulse as belonging to France, and primarily to England:

three works [could be credited] for establishing the [utopian] type in modern European literature- Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), which gave the name to the genre, Tommaso Campanella’s *City of the Sun* (1623), and Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis* (1627). Translated soon after their appearance, they quickly took hold in France... Utopian literature did not flourish in post-Renaissance Italy, nor was it ever a distinguished form in either Spain or Germany. For four centuries, it has remained predominantly English and French... The heyday of French utopia, when it was almost universal in its cultural impact, spans the century from about 1750 to 1850. By the twentieth-century the utopian spirit had departed from France.<sup>17</sup>



The canonical utopian spirit lingered a bit longer in England, which continued to produce influential utopian pieces (William Morris' *News From Nowhere*, as a direct response to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward 2000-1887* being one such example); but its output, too, diminished, in comparison with other sources, and the Western world no longer held the first place in the production and dispersion of utopian paradigms.

This raises a question about the relation between the end of the 'profusion' and the end of utopian expression as such—in particular, whether the cessation of production of utopian narratives by the canon-producing countries amounts to the end of their production, full stop. In 1967, a year after the Manuels published their study on the French Utopias, Herbert Marcuse addressed the students and faculty at the Free University of West Berlin and, with great enthusiasm, announced what came to be (mis)understood as the "death of utopia":

Today any form of the concrete world, of human life, any transformation of the technical and natural environment is a possibility, and the locus of this possibility is historical. Today we have the capacity to turn the world into hell, and we are well on the way to doing so. We also have the capacity to turn it into the opposite of hell. This would mean the end of utopia, that is, the refutation of those ideas and theories that use the concept of utopia to denounce certain socio-historical possibilities. It can also be understood as the "end of history" in the very precise sense that the new possibilities for a human society and its environment can no longer be thought of as continuations of the old, nor even as existing in the same historical continuum with them.<sup>18</sup>

Marcuse's dramatic expression has evoked a wide range of responses. His comment is easily misinterpreted; what he himself meant was that utopia as mere ideal possibility was dead, because the new technological advancements and the political changes of the time rendered what was once an impossible dream possible—and so no longer a dream. His (in retrospect, wildly excessive) faith in the power of technology led him to his belief in the realizability of even the most utopian dreams. For him, it was part of what it was to count as an expression of utopia that it be, or at least appear, impossible.

A number of utopian scholars, however, came to believe in the 'death' of utopia in a different sense—in the sense that utopias as both an aim of policy and a field of research was coming to an end. In direct contrast to Marcuse's pre-1968-optimism, they considered utopia as study and ideal 'dead', not because the impossible promises of

utopia had suddenly become possible, but because the turmoil within the disbanding French Empire and the wider Western world appeared to them a proof of its practical impossibility and consequent scholarly irrelevance. Commenting on Marcuse's statement, though extracting it from the context in which the latter meant it, Romanian utopian scholar Sorin Antohi noted that the eventful 1968 marked "the last chapter in the history of Occidental Utopia"<sup>19</sup> and that "in Nanterre and at the Sorbonne, on the streets of the Latin Quarter, at the Odeon Theatre, in high schools and bistros, in factories and in the fields, 'the theory and praxis' of Western Utopia knew its 'highest and final stage.'"<sup>20</sup> He opined that, after a frantic search for utopian deliverance that had encompassed elements of violence, erotic excesses, transcendental and esthetical exercises, and effervescent rhetoric, the last grand scale attempt of the Western world to install a new world order ended in failure. A similar conclusion was reached by many Leftist utopians post 1980-1990s Eastern and Central European revolutions both by those who had lived in various socialist and communist versions of utopia and, in various degrees, by their Western sympathizers as well.

As per Manuel and Manuel's theoretical observations, and the demise of the utopian communist/socialist enterprise in the Communist bloc, it is safe to repeat that, indeed, *utopian literature and praxis are essentially dead in their canonical form*. In its Western form—the voyage across space, the encounter with novel people, the exploration of virgin lands, and other elements to be discussed shortly—the discourse of utopia has become scarce. But again, this is only to say that utopian expression, understood as a monolithic, homogeneous metanarrative arising from Western cultures, is essentially extinct. To pronounce the death of utopia in a broader sense is a statement far more difficult to defend: it would require the reader to accept the possibility of utopian literature, which does not fit the profile of its genre ancestors. It would require paying very close attention to conditions, which, in canon-producing cultures, were sometimes absent. So the issue is whether utopian literature has been ended, or merely altered, while maintaining, amidst differing cultural expressions, a certain constant aspirational.

This possibility—of utopian literature not ended, but altered—has caught the attention of several progressive utopian scholars, some of whose work will appear in some detail in subsequent chapters. With them, I will give concrete reasons to think the

obituary of utopia is premature—even obviously so when the high quality and quantity of utopian writings and praxis presently emerging from postcolonial nations and the previous communist countries of Eastern Europe are considered. The responsiveness by utopian expression to changing geo-political conditions are precisely what show it to be a healthy, adapting, evolving genre. Not only isn't utopia dead in any of the ways feared by the aforementioned authors, but its alteration, motion, and growth into fully-developed non-Western forms is positive evidence that it is alive, highly adaptive, and more and more contingent on the changing geo-political conditions of its cultural origins.

Presently, alternative utopian forms persist which thrive—and now, even originate—entirely outside the 'canon-producing' Western world. As early as 1973, Louis Marin called attention to such non-canonical examples produced outside the Western tradition, calling them “analogous examples of utopian discourses,”<sup>21</sup> where 'analogous' meant 'analogous to canonical utopian discourses.' In his *Utopiques: Jeux D'Espaces*, he argued that these various, alternative utopian expressions manifested under certain conditions— at historical, economic, and social watersheds—across non-Western cultures:

There are probably analogous examples of utopian discourses in formations corresponding to the passage between economic periods in history, especially between various Asian, Classical, and feudal modes of production. These discursive forms may very well be in many ways comparable to the Classical European period or to the Enlightenment.<sup>22</sup>

Wide-ranging cultural evidence for this claim that *utopian expressions are being altered, not extinguished*, appears in the work of Ralph Pordzik.

Working with examples from NEL, Pordzik noticed striking similarities between the utopian manifestations of cultures as geographically distant as those in India, Canada, Australia, and Africa and pointed out the need to make comparisons between these apparently distinct and geographically distant cultures. The ever-presence of this evidence for analogy strongly undermines the 'death' thesis in favor of the alternative-form thesis. Pordzik noted that his chosen case studies seemed to have responded to the cultural demands and political pressures of the colonizer in a dialectical manner. In *The Quest for The Postcolonial Utopia: A Comparative Introduction to the Utopian Novels in*

*the New English Literatures*, anchoring his claim on previous work done in the field, he opined that such cultures exhibit

what the comparatists refer to as a *contextual analogy*—a common sociocultural and/or historical background against which opposite writing strategies and perceptual alternatives can be developed. Colonialism and its aftermath have provided sufficiently for essential tensions between the cultures of the oppressor/colonizer and the cultures of the oppressed/colonized which are revealed in a series of literary responses ranging from the appropriation of western forms or paradigms in order to ‘write back’ to the radical hybridization and interculturalization of these forms in the service of a ‘cross-cultural poetics which participates actively in the transformation not just of postcolonial, but of all cultures’ (Huggan 1989: 29).<sup>23</sup>

But to assert an analogy—even to prove it—*is not to explain it*. That these similarities appear says nothing about the reasons for their appearance, nor the differences between the discourses compared.

Partially, the task of explaining these analogies was performed by the Cotepra Group—an interdisciplinary collaboration, which inventoried, classified, and analyzed utopian expressions of lesser-known traditions from Eastern Europe and from around the world. One value of the work is their concern to cash out the notion of ‘analogy’ in substantive terms—specifically, certain ‘semantic constants’ and stylistic symmetries, which give a basis for comparison across discourses from widely different peoples/contexts. Of far greater importance for my project was their concern to show an analogy—not merely between two differently sourced utopian narratives, but between the narratives, which express utopia-building and nation-building aspirations. In the resulting volume, *Utopianism/Literary Utopias and National Cultural Identities: A Comparative Perspective*, the editor, Paola Spinozzi, states that

[t]his work revolves around the challenging hypothesis that there is a national specificity in the development of utopia as a literary genre, a utopian tradition in each nation to which specific formal and semantic constants can be ascribed. The definition of a national utopian character is sustained by a diachronic analysis which shows how each nation is characterized by a golden period in the development of the utopian genre.<sup>24</sup>

The accurate tracing of these kinds of stylistic analogies adds further import to Cotepra’s findings, which have deeply informed this dissertation project. The Cotepra scholars tested their hypothesis across different cultural and national spaces, and in

different time periods. They found a strong connection between discourses of utopia-building and nation-building, which places front-and-center the importance of the connection of these two ‘communities’, both of which can, at certain points in history, equally be described as “imagined communities”—that is, both of which are, at certain points in history, aspirations, inscribed in a common discourse and/or literature of aspiration. Both utopia and the nation are social constructs, rhetorically construed, and intertwined throughout history (Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias, [f]). Two of the most important social and colonialism theorists, Benedict Anderson and Homi Bhabha have repeatedly pointed out at the wealth of knowledge that can be derived by studying the language and the rhetoric used to build/write the nation or the empire. In “The National Longing for Form” Timothy Brennan, too, highlights the increased importance of the novel as a genre, as a cultural tool aiding in the formation of the nation. He points out at the relationship between the rise of European nationalism and that of the novel as a particular literary genre.

Spinozzi and Cotepra extended the same imaginative and constructive powers to the utopian novel:

Similarly, in utopia, the rhetorical strategies used for the construction of the model for the utopian city or state not only contain rhetoric for persuading the readers, but at the same time, reveal the extent to which the model is born from a profound mixing of fictional and imaginary elements.<sup>25</sup>

The conclusive results of the group’s research on the connections between the rhetoric of constructing the ‘imagined communities’ of utopia and the nation, encouraged me to test and expand this hypothesis. This notion of analogy, braiding together, as it does, the notion of identifiable commonalities (temporality, collective memory, psyche, histories of oppression) amidst differences (geographically distant, culturally distinct, different types of ideological and political oppression), is in part the justification for the three distinct traditions I have chosen for this project: the Communist, Romanian case; the Mystical, pre-Israel Jewish Diaspora case and, from NEL, the Nigerian, the Ghanaian, and the Indian postcolonial cases.

I therefore argue that these particular literatures are instances of the utopian aspiration expressed in particular conditions. They manifest non-canonically because of a geopolitical condition not shared by the nations who produced the original canon. They

illustrate the causal story that there seems to be a direct relation between conditions of oppression and the expression of utopia. They are similar in that, in their respective cases, the utopian aspiration manifests ‘on the ground’ as a quest for cultural identity. In these non-canonical cases the strong link between the aspiration for cultural identity and national identity is severed from this geo-political element and so, this quest for the cultural identity- this aspiration for some ‘place’ to pursue it- must seek an alternative expression different than that of a geopolitically centric notion of national identity. In contrast, in canonical cases this quest for cultural identity encounters no block from an outside force to prevent the coalescing of the hegemonic group as a nation on its historical ground.

Based on these general observations, my own project—whose foundation owes much to Pordzik’s and Cotepra’s pioneering studies—advances an even more geographically expansive and culturally inclusive hypothesis:

Based on utopian, literary, and cultural theories, consultations with national and international scholars in the field, archival research and field work, my working hypothesis proposes that utopian narratives produced by nations formed earlier, and having a long standing tradition of expansion and conquest—i.e., England, France—tend to be based on well-reasoned, all-encompassing, grand-scale projects of social, economic, cultural, and geographical reform, articulated according to spatial ideas about utopia. In contrast, the narrative utopias produced by nations formed later (Romania, New English Literatures, etc.), those of previously colonized and/or dispersed groups (Jewish Diaspora) tend to be heavily based on mythology and mysticism, and to be obviously articulated according to temporal ideas about utopia. The former tradition is thus one that justifies the name of the tradition itself, “utopia” (topos= space), whereas the second possibly creates a parallel utopian tradition, more fittingly labeled “u-chronia” (chronos=time). Intopia, too, as an even more focused on the individual utopian type, makes a strong presence. This hypothesis is tested by analyzing how utopian and national identity discourses in these cultural cases both compete with, and feed off each other, how temporality as modality of critical estrangement is favored over spatiality, and how language in these utopias takes on additional ironical, allusive and mystical agendas.

The cultures producing the utopian examples to be detailed in subsequent chapters came into nationhood rather late, namely in the twentieth-century, compared with the canon-producing, early nation states formed in the twelfth and thirteenth century, and they did so after spending hundreds of years under the oppressive rule of various empires. I will use the alternative utopian propositions of writers like Mircea Eliade, Sergiu Fărcășan, Costache Olăreanu, Bujor Nedelcovici, Oana Orlea, and paidetic practices of Constantin Noica's Păltiniș School and the literary innovations of the Tîrgoviște school in Romania; select passages and practices from the Kabbalistic tradition; and the postcolonial utopian novels of Ben Okri in Nigeria, Kajo Laing in Ghana, and Amitav Ghosh in India to argue that unfavorable subaltern and/or oppressive conditions are closely connected with an alteration of utopian forms. These alterations and adaptations of utopian forms to national and cultural conditions on the ground manifest in different ways. One, time as axis for utopian and national formation is preferred over space as it is, more often than not, the only medium available for such explorations. Two, in most cases, the native language is either reinvented and codified to avoid possible censorship and oppression (in both the Romanian and the Jewish cases), or the colonizer's narratives and his language are apted—appropriated by the colonized, re-accented, and functionally reassigned—a move which often amounts to a continuing rebellion against previous oppressors, carried out in the mediums of tone, grammar, semantic encoding, and literary form. Third, in all three cultural cases, introspection, the rearranging and sharpening of inner beliefs and systems of values are preferred over external, overarching totalitarian and spatially encompassing schemes.

Investigating these alternative utopian analogues required the use of a different terminology. As I studied their historical manifestations and inventoried the presence of canonical utopian tropes, detailed their causal alterations, and studied the way they perform their generic functions I made great use of relatively new terms in the field. The pivotal terms I will be employing throughout the project are: *utopia*, *uchronia*, *intopia*, and *heterotopia*. Understanding their full meaning, specificities, and applicability is important as they are intimately linked with the imagined community of the nation. In other words, there is a correlation between these alternative utopian constructs and their contribution to the perpetuation and creation of cultural and national identity.

Based on the fact that the first term, utopia, has produced countless taxonomies and the latter two, uchronia and intopia, are relatively new analytical categories, I will now make clear what I mean by these terms and how I intend to use them. When it comes to *utopia*, the definition I am using comes from Lyman Tower Sargent; that of uchronia from Frank P. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, as developed by Mircea Opriță, and Sorin Antohi; and that of intopia from Ralph Pordzik. Because of its scope and clarity, Sargent's definition was chosen over many other pertinent and widely used definitions of the genre.<sup>26</sup> In his "A Short History of Utopian Studies" Peter Fitting noted that Sargent repeatedly pointed out [that] the study of utopianism had been hindered by the "use of a single dimension to explain a multidimensional phenomenon."<sup>27</sup> Instead it is important to distinguish the different uses to which the concept of the utopian is put so that it can be understood and discussed in a more systematic fashion. Sargent stresses that there are three aspects of utopianism that should be distinguished from one another and clearly defined: a) the literary (to which could be added other artistic representations and imaginings of alternatives), b) the communitarian, and c) the utopian social theory.<sup>28</sup>

Sargent's encompassing definition of the utopian phenomenon as made up of three distinct facets (literary, communitarian, and utopian social theory) is preferred here. As I will be looking not just at textual examples, but also at applied utopian, uchronian, and paidetic practices, and at the communist system in Romania as political meta-discourse, Sargent's definition provides the necessary taxonomic umbrella for such a complex comparative endeavor.

Compared to utopia –coined as a term in 1516– *uchronia* is a newer branch of the utopian studies field. "Uchronia" ("u," and "chronos"–"no time"),<sup>29</sup> as the equal utopeme (element of the utopian paradigm) and the antipode of "utopia" ("u," and "topos"–"no space"), was coined by Charles Renouvier in his 1876 novel *Uchronie (L'Utopie dans l'histoire). Esquisse historique apocryphe du développement de la civilisation européenne tel qu'il n'a pas été, tel qu'il aurait pu être* which translates as (*Uchronia (Utopia in History). An Apocryphal Historical Sketch of the Development of the European Civilization As It Was Not, But Could Have Been*). Although analytically promising, Renouvier's emphasis on uchronia as "alternative history" was/is not sufficiently encompassing of national and cultural variants to justify its sole use in this project. The particular examples I am looking at are not "alternative histories" per se, as they align



more closely to the uchronian genre as later redefined by twentieth-century scholars. In their *Utopian Thought in the Western World* Manuel and Manuel defined it as “good place, good state of consciousness, and good constitution.”<sup>30</sup> They also changed its spelling to “eu” (“good”), which added positive connotations to the genre, now concerned with the parameters of “good future time.”

Additionally, for uchronia, I will also be using Sorin Antohi’s expanded definition for the genre from his *Utopica: Studies on the Social Imaginary*. The reason for doing so is its applicability to various types and manifestations of uchronia that makes it similarly encompassing on the axis/utopeme of time to the definition proposed by Sargent for the narratives and practices developed primarily on the axis of space. Moreover, in this formulation, uchronia reflects the potentialities of practice by a collective or group, and evidences a versatility equal to that of utopia:

Uchronia has deep roots in the collective and the individual psyche. Permanently exposed to the constraints of time—“under the weather” as a famous author once said—man retorts with an effort of the spirit to modulate and eventually control certain effects of time, from its inexorable and devastating succession to the erosion of its duration. Threatened with immersion in the historic time, the individual comes to produce an alternative temporality, and inserts himself in history as a modulator and constructor of time—as a “builder in time,” to use Abraham Joshua Heschel’s memorable expression.<sup>31</sup>

The cultures I am looking at have all been, repeatedly “threatened with immersion in [an unfavorable] historical time.” They have been confronted with contingencies not of their own making and, by choice or force, imagined ontological realities outside linear history, in time. This submersion “under the weather,” as Antohi calls it, engendered uchronian, in their essence utopian-like, permutations. Rooted more in the inherent “collective and individual psyche,”<sup>32</sup> and less in historical realities, these uchronian narratives functioned as alternative playgrounds for imagining felicitous communities. The fact that their format and content are unlike those of utopia could be explained, among other things, by these cultures’ predominantly rural nature until early twentieth-century.

Historically, the Romanian, Ghanaian, Nigerian, and Indian cultures experienced an economic lag that worked both against, and for them. Their “primitiveness” was used to legitimize the “civilizing” efforts of various empires. Previously and throughout colonial times, they maintained stronger, longer lasting connections to nature, to its

organic temporal cycles. These connections then shaped the nature, form, and content of the uchronian discourse and account for the presence of mythology, mysticism, and rich folkloric traditions in their respective utopian analogues.

To clarify the exact relationship between utopia and uchronia, and the way I see them relating to each other, and to the texts and the practices explored in this project, I am ultimately using Mircea Oprea's pertinent analysis of the two genres, as expressed in his book, *The Utopian Discourse*:

Utopia and uchronia are branches of the same fictional trunk/tree, even though the former, of a more recent date, gives the false impression that it is a derivate, an independent species. The two could not be confused for each other (the same ways that SF cannot be confused with utopia), with the exception of the special situations when the world built in uchronia as a historical alternative contains the element of eu-topos as a common denominator.<sup>33</sup>

This is the distinction that guided my analysis of alternative utopian expressions and their dependent condition to oppressive conditions. The nature of uchronia and its inherent possibilities make it a more malleable and complex literary category than utopia. These attributes are particularly obvious especially when deployed, as Oprea advises, "out of intellectual curiosity for unusual exploration of the imaginary,"<sup>34</sup> and results in textual representations that follow complicated patterns and cycles of transformations in the characters' or the communities' psyche.

Oprea's scholarly discussion on the differences between these genres points at the particularities of utopia and uchronia that I will be referring to throughout this project:

At its core, utopia is a thesis. Foundational to uchronia is a hypothesis, or a hyperthesis, the distinction between these two resulting from the fact that in the first case the question emerges from real data, while in the second the elements discussed belong to the imaginary. Authentic utopias are, by definition, static, movement/evolution being a trait that only recently they felt obligated to learn. Already imbued with dynamism on the temporal plan, uchronias evolve from the beginning under the spell of a dynamic principle.<sup>35</sup>

The revolutionary dynamism of uchronia and the historical powerlessness of the cultures that favored it, stand in direct contrast with the exacting character of the traditional utopias, produced by countries whose "manifest destiny" was the conquest of the entire world. It is as if both types of cultures had to balance the universal utopian impulse with their respective historical contingencies: if the latter were propitious, this transformative

and critical process was externalized and manifested in space. Conversely, if historical conditions were unfavorable, the utopian impulse of utopia was manifested on the axis of time, as rites and rituals.

In addition to utopia and uchronia, *intopia*, an even more condensed and introspective genre developed and thrived in previously colonized, communist, or subaltern cultures. Similarly to the composite semantics of the other two terms, intopia (“in”-inside, “topos”- place) translates as “the space inside.” This new utopian alternative takes the possibilities of uchronia, its complex literary structure, its predilection for “building in time,” and connects it to the collective and individual psyche on an ever-deeper level. In intopia, “the building in time,” also builds “inside.” In 2001, Ralph Pordzik noted that:

the genre pattern of a ‘subjective utopia’ or intopia ... can be described in terms of a textual phenomenon largely concerned with inward states of mind. The primary focus of subjective utopias is on the presentation of the protagonist’s growing consciousness of his quest for an alternative inner reality.<sup>36</sup>

Close examination of several Romanian and Nigerian intopias evidence that unfavorable historical conditions in both these countries forced the utopian impulse to manifest inwardly and borrow heavily from complex individual and collective psyche representational schemes. In Romania, during the communist regime, countless such narratives focused on the growing consciousness of the characters and their desire to express agency while being blocked from doing so in real life, historical time, and geographical space.

Lastly, the term that I am proposing as the most encompassing of the utopian narrative and practice is that of *heterotopia*, coined by Michel Foucault in his “Des Espace Autres” (“Of Other Spaces”)<sup>37</sup> lecture. Foucault distinguishes therein several types of heterotopias that embody the concept reflected in the definition: “hetero”– “other, different,” and “topos”–“space.” The type I suggest best describes the situation of the imagined communities of both the nation and utopia is connected to the simultaneous existence within the same space of alternative narratives and experiences which carve out geography in a personal or communal enclave with specific rules, length of duration, and outputs. I argue that, in fact, these heterotopias were the composite realities of the past

and that they are, and will continue to be, the most faithful representations of real situations on the ground.

In order to retrace and detail to my readers the process that led me to the formulation of the hypothesis and the present project, in addition to closely engaging with the selected Romanian, Jewish and NEL texts, I will pay special attention to the way language was used in these oppressed cultures to avoid censorship from the powers in place, so as to discover what can be ‘read between the lines.’ The particular linguistic mutations I have noticed in all of the cases confirm Leo Strauss’s research on the relationship between literary expressions and conditions of oppression. In *Persecution and the Art of Writing* he noticed that:

[p]ersecution gives rise to a peculiar technique of writing, and there within to a peculiar type of literature, in which the truth about crucial things is represented exclusively between the lines. That literature is addressed, not to all readers, but to trustworthy and intelligent readers only. It has all of the advantage of private communication without having its greatest disadvantage- that it reaches only the writer’s acquaintances. It has all the advantages of public communication without having its greatest disadvantage- capital punishment for the author.<sup>38</sup>

This theory states that there is an inversely proportional relationship between the straightforwardness, or the denotative aspect of a language and the level of political and censorial intervention in that respective culture. In other words, the harsher the censorship and the more difficult the socio-politico-historical contingencies, the more pronounced the connotative meanings of writing, and the more evasive its style and formulations. This relationship manifests as “writing between the lines” and, as such, requires the reader to “read between the lines.”

Moreover, during close reading of the case studies, I have noticed the preference given not just to evasive writing but also to the temporal dimension of the utopian paradigm. As this seemed to be connected to both the distinct nature of the case studies and to their shared status of subalterity, I adduced here Eviatar Zerubavel’s findings on the qualitative dimensions of the temporal paradigm. He noted that various cultures deployed time differently, emphasizing either its quantitative or its qualitative dimension. In *Hidden Rhythms—Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*,<sup>39</sup> he mentions four major dimensions of the temporal profile of any situation or event: sequential

structure, duration, temporal location, and rate of occurrence. Having noticed the similar deployment of these dimensions in the practices of both Păltiniș School and certain Kabbalistic texts and practices—when pertinent—I will highlight and compare these instances throughout the project. Ultimately, the great occurrence of uchronias in non-Western cultures seems to be connected to a circumstantially-induced method to imagine alternative realities via the qualitative aspect of time. Conversely, the quantitative aspect of time, and its ready commodification and deployment in capitalist endeavors seems to be predominantly the preference of Western, spatial utopian exercises.

If believed relevant for the larger argument, I will also refer to specific historical and cultural contexts that shed light on the relationship between various forms of oppression and the culturally and/or nationally-specific expressions of utopia in each tradition. For the Romanian case—which stands at the center of this project—I will also refer to important archival findings from the Romanian National Archives namely, the 1972 “July Theses,” the platform which started a new wave of censorship in the country. To give a sense of the mechanism of censorship, I have included an example from the yet-to-be translated correspondence between important cultural figures of the time and Nicolae Ceaușescu, the president of the Socialist Republic of Romania, and the main author of the said “Theses.”

Now that I have introduced my terms and have shared the intended trajectory of this project, I will describe the methods used to deploy them in service of my hypothesis. To formulate, test and support it, my tactic throughout the project will be to cross-reference two very different approaches. I will combine *the view from the street*, i.e., close textual analyses, photographic, testimonial, and historical surveys of the selected cultural cases with *the bird's eye view*, i.e., cartographic evidence of geopolitical changes on the ground. Due to the geographical reach of the project and the numerous literary utopias analyzed, the cartographic evidence has been grouped in several appendices that greatly inform the main argument, but would have otherwise detracted from its smooth progression if kept in the main text. As thematically titled and self-standing units, they will be referenced throughout the project when a different critical angle is necessary and important in the advancement of the overall argument. Extensive fieldwork undertaken in 2005 at the Amish community in Shipshewana, Indiana, USA; the Eden Project in

England; the Ecotopia in Romania, in 2006 at the Yad-Hashmona moshav in Israel, in 2007 at the EdenProject in England, and in 2008 at the CloughJordan Ecovillage in Ireland has gone into the synthesis contained therein. As recently as the 35<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Society for Utopian Studies in Wisconsin in 2011, these findings are still considered pioneering in the field.

More specifically, these *appendices are designed* to provoke a comparison with and/or add great substance to the text-based project and provide temporary critical estrangement from the close reading so that, upon continuing its lecture, fresh insights and new connections could be formed between widely disparate concepts and accounts. Please see “note to the reader” for specific information on their use in Appendix A: “Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral” which showcases the fluctuating nature of national borders throughout history in order to point at the arbitrariness of such categorical definitions as empires, nations, utopias, and other imagined communities. By presenting maps of each cultural case in chronological order the visual compilation substantiates the claim that the idea of the nation is highly dependent on, and shaped by, fluctuating historical and geographical conditions on the ground and, as such, a social construct perpetually redesigned. I have found this panoramic view, and the historicization it engendered invaluable in understanding past, present, and future trends in the ways of imagining both utopia and the nation. Appendix B: “Life in Utopia: A Photographic Memoir” introduces my commentaries on Andrei Pandelescu’s recently released black and white photographs taken during the last decade of the communist regime in Romania. These illegally taken snapshots show, without a shadow of a doubt, the extent of censorship and oppression in the country at exactly the same time the literary examples discussed in the Romanian chapter were written. Appendix C: “A Dream Willed Into Reality: Israel” compares and contrasts the rhetorical devices used by Theodor Herzl in 1902 to imagine the state of Israel, and in 1962, by Rose Seeling and Rosa Goldberg to comment on its accomplishments as an independent nation. The illustrated edition of the novel offered deep insights into the ways text and visual materials could be combined to present a cohesive utopian and national discursive mechanism. Lastly, in order to substantiate and validate some predictions for the future narrative and practical aspects of utopia, I have also described and analyzed several projects from around the world, some

of which I have yet to visit and investigate. These widely dispersed utopian projects, compiled in Appendix D: “Dialogically Imagined Communities: Communities, Laboratories, Paideias, and Twenty-first Century Utopian Cities” showcase a clear and definite transition from nationally- and culturally-specific models of utopia to models theorized and conceptualized around a return to the anthropological core of the species, and/or around new architectural and social constructions, i.e., brand new utopian cities.

As to the rationale for my choice of case studies, I will not spend much time on the utopian canon, as sufficient and specialized work has already been done on its main components. I will focus instead on its uchronian and intopian analogues, trace the conditions that produced them, and analyze the correlation between these conditions and the resulting utopian alternatives. Here are, again, the Romanian, Jewish, Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Indian literary examples I will be using to show the causal relation between oppression and alternative utopian forms: Mircea Eliade’s *The Forbidden Forest* (1954), Sergiu Fărcășan’s *A Love Story From The Year 41,042* (1966), Constantin Olăreanu’s *Fear* (1986), Bujor Nedelcovici’s *The Second Messenger* (1986), Oana Orlea’s *Perimeter Zero*, Matei Vișniec’s “In Gufy’s Country”; *The Zohar: The Book of Splendor*, Theodor Herzl’s *New Old Land* (1902); Ben Okri’s *Astonishing the Gods* (1995); Kojo Laing’s *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars* (1992); Amitav Ghosh’s *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fever, Delirium, and Discovery* (1997). All, but one, of these examples show that certain cultures, dispossessed or displaced from their place of origin, use temporal excursions to maintain ethnic identity while waiting for propitious conditions to return to, or regain control of their mother/father/lands. Textually, they manifest similar changes in tropes, style, and content.

What these three study cases show is that, certain cultures, dispossessed through colonization, or displaced through exile from their place of origin, use temporal excursions, intopian introspections, and linguistic innovations to maintain ethnic identity while waiting for propitious conditions to return to, or regain control of their ancestral lands. The functions of these analogous utopian examples are geared to populate the temporal dimension of the utopian paradigm in order to preserve cultural identity while sketching the spatial blueprint of a better future. As my model predicted, cultures, which encounter similar types of oppression tend to mutate and express the utopian aspiration

differently than the canon-producing cultures, i.e. their oppressors. In these adaptive mutations they exemplify striking analogies that can only be explained through similar reactions to the pressures of their shared context.

More specifically, the Romanian utopian/uchronian case, an emergent voice from the ex-communist consortium of Eastern Europe, stands at the center of my broader theoretical inquiry and its selected narratives will be used to answer several important questions: What happens to the utopian impulse when the author lives in the grip of utopia? What forms does the utopian discourse take when the national identity (the paradigm from which one would safely establish the foil of the other) is not yet coalesced? In answering these questions I will also show that, in this case, the utopian aspiration expressed in narrative format performed a double duty. One, under great ideological, political, and economic duress, it reconfigured the author's self and national identity while also addressing his/her desires for amelioration. Two, it performed its critical function in an environment deeply opposed to it. It did so by migrating to temporality, introspection, the satirically-heavy end of the utopian genre spectrum, and Science Fiction (SF).

In its communitarian facet, the Romanian utopian aspiration also manifested adaptations contingent on the circumstances of that particular historical time. As in its third facet—the political theory—the communist system had appropriated the utopian discourse in its entirety; the small utopian-like communities that developed during this time were either religious, mystical, or intellectual/literary. As such, they posed no threat to the system in place. They substituted their lack of agency in real world with elaborate narrative and ideological systems. And while the monastic network—at its heyday during the reign of the communist regime—is a study-worthy aspect in itself, it does not make the focus of this project. Constantin Noica's philosophical school at Păltiniș and the literary group known as the Tîrgoviște School, on the other hand are. The former, the Păltiniș School, practiced opposition to the regime via “resistance through culture.” It encouraged intellectual excellence and disciplined, sustained study, and created complex rituals of separation from the historical continuum in order to resist the indoctrinating and brainwashing efforts of the communist party. In thus doing, the Păltiniș School attempted to build excellence in a “territory” not claimed by the ruling system.



The latter literary school, headquartered in the small burg of Tîrgoviște, centered the utopian impulse on the remaking of the individual characters—most of them the alter egos of their authors— and on textual alterations. Elements not usually associated with utopianism—like magical realism—made their way in some of the literary exercises of the school. They point at the deeply felt need for opportunities and transcendence in a culture which was becoming increasingly materialistic and secular.

When it comes to cultural examples that present, very clearly, the unpacking/translating of a uchronian dream and project of cultural identity into a national project reality/polity, the Jewish case is unprecedented. Its particularities will be introduced with help from select passages from *The Zohar: The Book of Splendor*, details of the practice of Sabbath in theosophical Kabbalah, and a close textual analysis of Theodor Herzl's highly influential utopian novel *Old New Land*. The radical differences between these two representative ways (uchronian and utopian) to articulate the utopian desire within the same culture are explicable by the changes in the situation of the Jewish culture. In other words, once material geography, i.e., the land of Israel, became available again to the wandering Jews at the beginning of the twentieth-century, the symbolic geography visited during their ritualistic and mystical exits from history in order to maintain ethnic and cultural identity was quickly transposed over physical reality and enacted in concrete form. The speed with which the state of Israel manifested into physical and political existence points at the importance and potency of imaginary constructs perpetuated by the collective memory of an ethnic group.

The selected texts from NEL: Ben Okri's *Astonishing the Gods*, Kojo Laing's *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*, Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fever, Delirium, and Discovery* evidence how disparate cultures, temporally brought under British colonial rule, deployed, despite great geographical dispersion, similar uchronian and intopian methods to navigate complex issues of ethnic identity. Nigerian Ben Okri's novel describes the intopian ways a people without a history goes about recovering it through consciousness exercises. Ghanaian Kojo Laing's novel claims control over the language of the British colonizer as a way to exercise agency in the writing of the local peoples' history. By making the comprehension of the text highly dependent on autochthonous words interspersed within the English, Laing changes the

linguistic balance and shifts the agency of discourse making toward the colonized. Amitav Ghosh's novel depicts the quest of the Indian culture to claim a place of honor in the history of scientific discovery, a place historically denied to it while under colonial rule. The latter novel breaks traditional utopian patterns, and repeatedly challenges the systematic, rational ways in which the utopian discourse based on Western models on knowledge making is constructed.

As to presentation logistics, Chapter 1: "New Nations and Utopia: Ideologies and Mythogeneses at Odds and Play," argued for the existence of analogous utopian forms in cultures not usually associated with the canon-producing countries of the Western world. It expanded the definition of the utopian genre to include uchronian and intopian forms, and informed by fieldwork, argued that because of experiencing similar constellations of external, unfavorable factors like oppressive governments and/or colonial rule, cultures as distinct as the Romanian, Jewish, and NEL share a similar responsiveness to conditions of oppression or displacement and tailor their utopian alternatives accordingly. This chapter also introduced the two methods used to test the hypothesis, i.e., the 'street view' and the 'bird's eye view' and emphasized the cross-pollination possible from reading the texts closely while consulting important cartographic evidence. Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias is the cartographic companion of this chapter.

Chapter Two: "When Utopia Has You By The Throat: Alternative Utopian Paradigms in Communist Romania," will establish the characteristics of the Romanian utopian case by explaining the necessary alterations of the utopian prose and praxis, and the cause of these alterations, the presence of the dictatorial communist system. Under the considerable duress, overt censorship, and ideological oppression evident in the texts and illustrated in Appendix B: Life in Utopia: A Photographic Memoir, this alternative utopian tradition manifested in intopian, uchronian, and paidetic forms. These cultural particularities are showcased and explained in the main project by looking at the form and content of several utopian analogues: Mircea Eliade's insightful *Forbidden Forest (Noaptea de Sinziene)*, Constantin Noica's Păltiniș School, Costache Olăreanu's *Fear (Frica)*, Sergiu Fărcășan's uberutopian *L'an 41,042 (The Year 41,042, O poveste de iubire din anul 41.042)*, and several "drawer" texts that were published either abroad or after the fall of the communist system: Matei Vișniec's *Gufi's Country (În țara lui Gufi)*,

Bujor Nedelcovici's *The Second Messenger (Al Doilea Mesager)* and Oana Orlea's *The Zero Perimeter (Perimetrul Zero)*. Additionally, the practices of the Păltiniș and Tîrgoviște schools will be described in some detail as they show what happens when the reality of a culture is decreed "utopian" by a totalitarian system which prevents other similar narratives and practices from being published in their intended form, or at all.

If the Romanian case highlighted the complex interactions between "utopia in power" and its dissident analogous counterparts, the next case study, the Jewish case, will introduce the uchronian ways a people displaced for two millennia used to maintain and enhance its ethnic identity. Accordingly, Chapter Three: "The Sabbath, or Uchronian Fridays, and Fabled Old New Lands" will discuss the ways Jewish identity was encapsulated in temporality during the lengthy time of exile from the land of Israel. The utopian and mystical texts used to understand this process are Theodor Herzl's *Old New Land* and selected passages from the *summa mystica* of the Kabbalist tradition, *The Zohar: The Book of Splendor*. The practice of Sabbath, as observed in Theosophical Kabbalah, will be used to show one of the possible ways the communitarian facet of the utopian impulse developed in this culture. Finally, the chapter will also consider the complex political and historical conditions emerging from the successful realization of the state of Israel. In thus doing it will showcase both the advantages of uchronian practices to deliver spatial results, and the challenges arising from transposing the national project on space contested by other ethnic groups. Appendix C: A Dream Willed into Reality: Israel will highlight the similarities between the discourses and rhetoric of utopia and the nation.

Chapter Four: "Postcolonial Utopias or Reimagining 'Brave New Worlds': Caliban Speaks Back" will acknowledge that it is working with a very small sample from a geographically expensive and culturally diverse contingent of postcolonial utopias. The Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Indian examples have been chosen over others from the same literary contingent based on their noted similarities. Ben Okri's *Astonishing the Gods*, Kajo Laing's *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*, and Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery* have also been the most lavished with scholarly attention from the consortium of the postcolonial literatures available in English, and have generated an impressive quantity of secondary literature.

Although geographically distant, and linguistically not closely related, these particular cultures manifest similar shifts in the content and form of the utopian construct. A second consultation of Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias will provide additional explanations about these similarities and offer possible explanations for their differences.

Additionally, at this point in the argument, having shown three different cultures/cases and having tracked the conditions that engendered similar utopian shifts, I will look at present day examples and make some predictions about the future promises of the thus extended/expanded utopian genre. I will do so by looking at two influential utopian novels of the twentieth-century, namely Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Mars Trilogy* and Mike Resnick's *Kirinyaga-A Fable of Utopia*. In order to pursue this more predictive part of my project I will also use some retrodictions by looking at utopian narratives produced by minority or subaltern groups within the canon-producing cultures. True, early in the argument, I said that the most evident cases of alternative utopian expressions belonged to non-Western cultures. While this claim remains true, and it has been supported with detailed evidence throughout the project, the following claim is also true. Conditions of oppressions and censorship *within* the Western cultures produced examples of analogues utopian expressions similar to those evidenced in the non-Western cultures. By looking at several such instances in Marge Piercy's *Woman on The Edge of Time*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, and H.G. Wells's "The Country of the Blind" I hope to make this correspondence clear. These new cases evidence that the causal relationship between conditions of oppression and the expressions of utopia also makes an intra-cultural presence, and that it influences, and undermines, the imagining of the monolithic, spatially based version of utopia and the nation.

What Chapters One through Four will have shown is that, even in very distinct cultural cases such as the Romanian, Jewish, and NEL, oppression in various forms, by different systems, produced similar reactions, and resulted in similar narrative and practical alterations of the utopian impulse. In gradual installments, these chapters told this causal story between various forms of oppression (ethnic/national same or colonizer) and the resulting utopian forms or analogues. The concluding Chapter Five: "Quo Vadis, Utopia?" will integrate all these findings and front a few predictions vis-à-vis the

contemporary directions of the utopian impulse in narrative and applied formats.

Appendix D: Dialogically Imagined Communities: Laboratories, Paideias, and Twenty-first Centuries Utopian Cities will introduce several such examples (The EdenProject in England, The Damanhur Federation in Italy, Auroville in India, and Ohr Haganuz in Israel. The New Songdo City in South Korea, and the Masdar City in The United Arab Emirates) and mirror, visually, the conclusion being developed in the text proper.

## Chapter Two

### When Utopia Has You By The Throat: Alternative Utopian Paradigms in Communist Romania

“So, what were you doing in 1952?”  
“I was shitting my pants out of fear.”

*Frica (Fear)*-Costache Olăreanu<sup>40</sup>

The policy of the party of socialist construction knows no higher goal than people’s welfare and happiness. Everything we do in Romania is meant for man, for raising the general level of civilization in our whole socialist nation.

Nicolae Ceaușescu<sup>41</sup>

President Ceaușescu’s influence in the international arena as leader of Romania is outstanding. Thanks to her president’s steady position and to her independence, Romania is able to account for a bridge between nations, with profoundly diverging standpoints and interests, and between leaders who would otherwise have found it difficult to negotiate with each other.

Jimmy Carter, President of the United States<sup>42</sup>

In this chapter I am going to show how, in the case of this little-known utopian tradition, historical conditions of continuous oppression—by various foreign monarchies until 1947, and the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) from 1947 to 1989—caused a shift of the utopian desire from spatial narratives and practices to uchronian constructions, paidetic endeavors, and introspective accounts of the intopian type. I will introduce these analogous utopian forms by using the following literary examples: Mircea Eliade's *The Forbidden Forest* (*Noaptea de Sinziene*), Sergiu Fărcășan's *A Love Story from the Year 41,042* (*O iubire din anul 41,042*), Oana Orlea's *Perimeter Zero* (*Perimetrul Zero*), Bujor Nedelcovici's *The Second Messenger* (*Al Doilea Mesager*), Matei Vișniec's "In Gufi's Country" ("În țara lui Gufi") and Costache Olăreanu's *Fear* (*Frica*). The schools at Păltiniș and Tîrgoviște will provide information on the stylistic and pragmatic adaptations of small intellectual communities writing against the PCR's utopian and national metanarratives. By placing these examples in the cultural and historical contexts that shaped them, I am attempting to show the causal relationship between the oppressive conditions created by the totalitarian system and these resulting utopian expressions.

Twentieth-century Romanian culture exhibited a great ingenuity in blending the utopian genre with local mythology, mysticism, and linguistic bravado, and mutating its utopian discourse from essentially spatial extrapolations—forbidden by the system in power—to temporal investigations and transformative (coming of age) Bildungsroman-like compilations. To better understand these qualities, it is necessary to understand the cultural and historical context that engendered them. What follows is a brief overview of twentieth-century Romanian history and the search for national identity.

When Romania became a country in 1918, its territory closely coincided with that of Dacia Felix (Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias, Fig. 1: Romania and its border changes during the twentieth-century, [f/f]), the ancient cradle of Romanian civilization. The intense cultural and political processes that had engendered the final reunification of the three historical provinces, Transylvania, Moldova, and Wallachia, (Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias, Fig. 2: Central Europe, cca.1480, [f/f]), continued with a new goal: to define, engender, and congeal Romanian national identity. The two world conflagrations accelerated the demise of imperial rule in Central and Eastern Europe and facilitated the infiltration of the

communist ideology in the area. These changes in the local governing systems, violent appropriation of political power, and repeated reconfigurations of national borders challenged and further complicated the quest for national identity. Early twentieth-century utopian and nation-making activities were spearheaded, among others, by the Criterion group. Active during the 1930s, the intensely patriotic and culturally active intellectual association included high caliber intellectuals the likes of Mircea Eliade, E.M.Cioran, Constantin Noica, Petre Țuțea, and Eugene Ionesco.

Surveying the shared evolution of the utopian impetus and the quest for national identity during this period in “The Criterion Generation,”<sup>43</sup> Sorin Antohi notes that their particular mission was driven by the belief that “Romania had a messianic mandate, [and this was] entirely cultural and spiritual.”<sup>44</sup> The Criterion intellectuals, Antohi rightly notes, were guided by Mircea Eliade’s work in the field of religious studies, which encouraged nothing less than a “boycott of history”:

Eliade’s particular call was intended as an exit from history into eternity, in keeping with something he was later to praise as the “boycott of history,” the Romanian peasant’s response to the vicissitudes of ethno-cultural destiny, and the corollary of the particular form of religion, “cosmic Christianity,” in which pagan religiosity, from times immemorial to the present, was organically integrated, rather than superseded.<sup>45</sup>

Eliade’s attraction to local mystical practices and his faith in the ethnic purity and character of the Romanian peasant were fueled by the fact that, for centuries, the humble, illiterate peasant had been the divided country’s symbol for continuity. According to this belief, the fabled heroic character of the Dacians of old lived on in the Romanian peasant. He was the repository of ethnic identity and culture, and widely regarded as the faithful keeper of this “cosmic Christianity.” Some Criterion members believed that his simple ways of living contained the essence from which Romanian national identity could, and should, be forged. Two of the ones who did not, Eugene Ionesco and Emil Cioran, viewed Romanian peasantry and the local culture through a more critical lens, calling them both debased and incapable of higher intellectual functions and important cultural productions.

In the late 1930s however, the group’s internal disputes and messianic activities were superseded by upheaval in Romanian politics, extended ethnic turmoil in the area,



and the first signs of the impending second world conflagration. The pressure of national boundary reconfigurations exacerbated nationalism and ethnic interests in the just reunited country and the national discourse soon took on contested, or extreme forms. According to Antohi, the Criterionists fell under the spell of the highly charismatic Nae Ionesco. Under Ionesco's influence, some of the Criterionists shifted their attention from uchronian endeavors and intellectual exercises to extremist, anti-Semitic practices and activities; they went from extrapolating on possibilities outside history to violently attempting to rewrite it according to strict doctrines of racial and national purity. In thus doing, they reflected the ultranationalist view of the Iron Guard, also known as the Legion of the Archangel Michael, of which Ionesco, and allegedly some of the Criterionists, were active members.

Under the changing imperatives of the time, not just the Criterionists, but other prominent intellectuals were searching for helpful theories to define the Romanian national character and help anchor its future destiny amid turbulent local changes. Most of them openly opposed the leftist ideology of the rising communist party. Exacerbating this developing political conundrum was the quick rise to political power of the pro-fascist, anti-Semitic Legion. Led by Horia Sima, Corneliu Codreanu, and Nae Ionescu, it had become an internal force to be reckoned with, its ranks expanding rapidly. Although visibly violent—and conservative—it attracted both leading intellectuals and political figures of the time interested in building an independent Romanian state. Enthusiastic young people and devout Christian peasants were also drawn to its mission to build, for the first time in its history, a powerful nation able to fulfill its messianic destiny. By the thousands, too, people of various backgrounds—including a smaller number of intellectuals—flocked to join the ranks of the rising PCR. This precarious political balance was broken in the mid 1940s by the execution of the principal 'archangels' which promptly ended the rule of the extreme right in Romania, and marked the ascension to power of the even more xenophobic and anti-Semitic communist party. After it seized power in 1947, and forced the abdication of King Michael, the last Romanian monarch from the Austro-Hungarian Hohenzollern House, the PCR used methods of control, exclusion, and suppression similar to those espoused by the defunct extremist

organization. The quest to find the Romanian national character continued under the new regime, reaching a new level of urgency.

To rally the continuous support of peoples who, until 1918 had been second class citizens in neighboring empires, the PCR's narrative propaganda kept the concept of the national messianic mandate alive by emphasizing the particular virtues of the local population, especially those of the peasants and the workers. Investigating the communist party's preoccupation with this task in *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania*, Katherine Verdery noted three main tendencies that guided the search for national specificity during this time: “*a pro-Western or Westernizing position*, which viewed Romanians as the heirs to and participants in a western tradition descended from Rome, [*a*] *pro-oriental [position* which viewed the] Romanians [as] oriental [because of] their Eastern-derived Thracian forebears, [of a] more ancient [origin] than the Romans, and *indigenism, or autochthonism.*”<sup>46</sup> The latter preference displayed strong *protochronist* tendencies, exemplified by the belief that, in a glorious (albeit historically false) past, the Romanian culture, starting with its ancestors, the Dacians, displayed and manifested impressive cultural and technological abilities far superior to those of Western nations. Both the PCR and the still politically active Criterion members considered these different ontological alternatives, and both favored *mystical indigenism*.

Increasingly however, the Criterionists' views started to compete with and/or diverge from those favored by the communist party. Consequently, many of its openly anti-communist members were jailed, prohibited from publishing their works, or were dismissed as engaging in futile philosophical exercises. As a result all, but two, of the Criterionists left the country in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Țuțea and Noica remained and braved the new politics, but Eliade, Ionescu, and Cioran departed for—or escaped to—France. Regardless of whether they resided within or outside the confines of communist Romania, the Criterionists continued to favor what Antohi called “the indigenization of universals such as space, time, and Being” or “ethnic ontologies.” In Antohi's view, this practice,

endowing the ethn[e] nation with an ontology of its own, mean[t] emancipating it from the tyranny of symbolic geography, even rescuing it from the “terror of history,” and placing it in an exclusive, protective vertical relationship to a divine

or (in the secular versions of this way of thinking) to a transcendental principle. By indigenizing universal categories (or universalizing indigenous phenomena), an ethnic ontology [wa]s ultimately constructed. Thus, Being (not just national character), space (not just territory and landscape), time (not just history), discourse (not just language), become the interactive building blocks of an idiosyncratic, resilient *Weltanschauung*.<sup>47</sup>

This preference and practice evidence the fact that, at this particular and formative watershed in the history of Romania, the building blocks of the national character were—for those not affiliated with PCR—Being (as in an exalted, accomplished human being), space (as canvas for ambitious ethnic ontological practices), time (as the historical raw material) and complex discursive practices associated with these beliefs. The presence of time and transcendental principles in the nation-making toolbox points at the fact that the competing, materialistic Marxist discourse of the communist party was quickly forcing alternative discourses out of the political realm.

No other work of this time better describes this situation on the ground and explains the new authorial preference for alternative utopian analogous forms than Mircea Eliade's *The Forbidden Forest (Noaptea de Sinziene)*. The novel, published in France in 1955, after he left Romania, describes the breaking down of the old historical and cultural infrastructures of Romania after the first world conflagration. It vividly details the violent divesting and quick deterioration of the intellectual class confronting the new communist system. Initially, the plot, which spans from 1933 to 1948, is heavily invested in space and the repeated relocations (Romania, London, Portugal, the Russian front, and Paris) of the main character, Ștefan Viziru. Viziru embodies the many conundrums facing the well-educated Romanians at the time: he is an uber-intellectual, a diplomat hyper aware of the corruption around him, a citizen of a new country in search of its identity, and an ambivalent husband searching for ontological meaning in extra-marital, transcendental, and mystical experiences.

Apparently happily married to Ioana, Viziru meets and falls in love with Ileana, whom he believes to be his soul mate. They meet in a place resplendent with mythical and mystical properties, an ancient forest on the outskirts of Bucharest, at a particular moment in time, the Night of St. John. According to Romanian popular beliefs, this is a magic night par excellence: heavens open up for the soul-searching mortals down below,

and soul mates are more likely to find each other, and experientially transcend time and space, leaving the historical continuum behind.

Starting by spatially isolating himself, and ending with the intentional separation of everyday temporal activities into sacred and profane, Viziru uses age old methods to enact his extraction from a history upon which he has less and less control over. He mirrors Eliade's beliefs in the existence of:

two kinds of time—profane and sacred. The one is an evanescent duration, the other a “succession of eternities,” periodically recoverable during the festivals that made up the sacred calendar and “sacred time” appears under the paradoxical aspect of a circular time, reversible and recoverable, a sort of eternal mythical present that is periodically reintegrated by means of rites.<sup>48</sup>

Viziru's intense, almost obsessive preoccupation with “building in time,” is exacerbated by the degradation of the historical conditions around him and by the aggressive appropriation of local myths by the propaganda department of PCR. In every aspect of his crumbling life he represents the fate awaiting Romanian intellectuals resisting the indoctrination of the political system.

An astute intellectual and a skilled diplomat, the character Ștefan Viziru is, at first, interested in the uchronian quest as a novel and exciting metaphysical exercise. However, as Romania falls prey to the political machinations of the Second World War, he becomes obsessed with it, as he slowly loses control over the spatial and historical dimensions of his life. Initially, the landscape of his life is defined by his marriage to Ioana, then by his nomination as a cultural attaché at the Romanian embassy in Portugal. Repeatedly, he shares his longing to find “the ladder” that will take him from the realities of pre-communist Romania and war-torn Europe to the realm where there is no time, or space. On the day of the solstice, the day he meets Ileana, he tells her, promptly, of this quest: “some say that this night, exactly at midnight, the heavens open up...that during the night of St. John, the heavens open up. But maybe they open for those who know how to look at things.”<sup>49</sup> Not only is this ability to know how to “look at things” necessary to past the mundane, it is also a skill needed to hide such findings from the increasingly intrusive and far reaching surveillance team of the new ruling power.

The need for this secret knowledge, this ability to look at things in a different way and see more than it is there is hinted at in Eliade's onomastic choices for his characters.

Just like Thomas More's original utopian character, Raphael Hythlodæus, Eliade's characters have names that share important information about who they are, and what they are about. More's Raphael Hythlodæus, "the healing angel speaking non-sense" belongs to a category to which Eliade's characters also subscribe. "Ştefan" means "crown" or "wreath," "Ileana" –"bright, shining one," "Ioana" –"God is gracious," "Partenie" –"to part, to divide" and the main character's last name, "Viziru," stands for "dignitary, or arbitrator." These hidden meanings imbedded in the characters' names hints at their true nature: their actions are dictated by, and thoroughly reflect the semantics of these names and every detail of their actions, feelings, and locale are endowed with mystical properties. To understand the depth of characterization and cultural allusions clustered in these names requires the consultation of erudite Romanian dictionaries and cultural immersion.

In Viziru's case, events juxtapose to challenge him on all levels of his multi-layered identity (man, lover, intellectual, and Romanian citizen), and the turmoil of the outside world is mirrored by the complex workings of his inner life. He turns from being an extroverted public figure in Bucharest to becoming an introverted exile in various European cities battling their own tragic destinies. From citadel to citadel, the destructive forces of the Second World War drive him away. Losing interest in what happens in the historical realm, he retreats within. Out of time, as free Europe falls pray to the war machine of the Third Reich and then, the country he loves most, to the successful machinations of the communist system, he concentrates on his transformation into a mystic worthy of transcendent experiences. An important element stands out in his quest for identity, for the ineffable something that makes Viziru "the dignitary, and the arbitrator." Again, Eliade's own preoccupation with religious and mystical techniques of transcending reality, more precisely with the Jewish tradition of the *merkavot*, is reflected in the way Viziru exits history. In merkavot, spiritual ascension is followed by a sight of heavenly chariots. In the Romanian version, the experience is facilitated by a modern chariot, a car which Viziru—with Ileana's tacit consent—crashes to their death. Banned from a country overrun by violent demagogues and dangerous straw men, and engrossed in their forbidden love affair, the two exit history and enter an alternative dimension where anything is possible.

This novel, emblematic for the condition of the Romanian intellectual during the transfer of power from the progressive monarchy to the totalitarian communist regime marks, through the demise of the main character, the end of an ideological era. As Eliade is also the most famous cultural product of the ambitious and ambiguous interbellic Criterion group, it also marks the tragic end of a very promising national era and the forceful entrance of the totalitarian system. The advent of the communist era was presented as one of great promise and not all Romanian intellectuals resisted its siren call. Some fell for its radical promises, most were thoroughly enthralled by its utopian platform. The enchantment, according to the account of one such intellectual was short-lived. In *Censorship in Romania*, Lidia Vianu interviewed, among many others, Maria Bănuș. Bănuș was one of the regime's most ardent supporters in the 1950s, and one of its harshest critics in the 1970s and 1980s. She confessed that, early on,

[she] was convinced that [it] would bring the happiness of Romania and of all peoples, when [they] had overcome the fight between classes, the suffering inherent to the erection of the society [they] were dreaming of, devoid of exploited and exploitation.<sup>50</sup>

The PCR's overlapping national and utopian discourses produced a seducing image of an independent, flourishing new nation. Complete cultural and political independence from foreign rulers and class emancipation for workers and peasants were two of the most sonorous claims of the new party. And, whereas these claims kept the masses enthralled, the intellectual class quickly realized their side effects. Bănuș notes that the educated class became aware of

[t]he perverse, very well orchestrated technique of putting minds to sleep, and making them believe the most incredible lies, such as the well-known trials in which intellectuals were accused because of their beliefs and most often imprisoned.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the PCR's efforts to hide evidence of these abuses against the country's intellectuals, recent studies, most notably those of Lucian Năstasă, unveiled the extent of these atrocities and explain the development of alternative utopian analogues and evasive writing in Romania during this time.

Năstasă estimates that "between 1950 and 1968 more than 91,000 people (out of the estimated ten million population at the time) were arrested by the Romanian Secret

Police, out of which 73, 636 were jailed and 16,942 released due to lack of evidence.”<sup>52</sup> Much more often than any other social group in the country, intellectuals, because of their ability to generate critical responses and alternatives to the power’s metanarrative, were targeted by the police and placed under surveillance. Their lives and loyalties had to match those of their neighbors, the workers, and the peasants with whom they shared housing after having their possessions confiscated by the party. This was, after all, the very idea that had enchanted Maria Bănuș early on: equality between classes, economic justice. That, in practice, utopia quickly turned violent and oppressive was something that its early supporters could do nothing about. In the aftermath of the successful socialist revolution, Bănuș’ reflections were dark: “What darkens the end of my life is not that I took part in my youth in the greatest utopia of our century. What embitters me is what this utopia has become in reality.”<sup>53</sup> She did not exaggerate the success of the Romanian national utopian project nor, for that matter, the tragic story of those destroyed by it.

Those who tried to oppose the system, even with small actions of protest, ended up in jail for decades. One such dissident, Oana Orlea, spent thirteen-years in various communist prisons and the horrific experiences she endured while incarcerated provided the material for her memoirs and novels. *The Stolen Years: In the Romanian Gulag at Sixteen*, documents her trials and tribulations as a political prisoner. The fact that Orlea, a young high-school student at the time, was arrested simply because she distributed manifestos against the system, corroborates Năstasă’s observations about the pervasiveness of oppression and points out the fact that, very quickly, the system that promised its citizens utopia, was using any possible means against them in order to deliver its promise. Extreme torture was used, if deemed necessary: from solitary confinement in dark rooms, to starvation, and humiliation, the Secret Police working for PCR spared no effort to break Orlea’s, and other political prisoners’ anti-communist spirit.

In her « Rappel Historique » (Historical Remembrance), she noted the differences between the rule of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the first General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, and that of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Under Gheorghiu-Dej’s rule (1945-1965), repression was violent and immediate. Prisons were packed with indiscriminately jailed, terrified people. Under Ceaușescu’s rule (1965-1989), the method

of “carrot and stick” replaced open persecution. The system in power used thousands of infiltrators to cultivate, among the terrified population, the belief that surveillance was omnipresent, and PCR was omnipotent. Generalized fear, internalized guilt became the norm. Orlea notes that

Envy and denigration [we]re given free rein. Arrests occurred only when there was an open resistance. But that did not happen often. The number of political detainees [wa]s infinitely smaller than in the past. And the country itself had become an immense prison.<sup>54</sup>

This internalization of fear, a result of Ceaușescu’s panopticon methods, resulted in changes in the writing style of authors not affiliated with PCR. As rules, restrictions, and rationing multiplied and, consequently, altered the standard of life, narrative accounts of the dire situation had to camouflage any dissenting comments. Even in these conditions, however, the drive to imagine the nation or utopia was not extinguished. Its expressions were simply adapted to the situation. If too overtly reactionary, they awaited publication in the author’s desk drawer. If the author had defected, the accounts were written in a new language and published abroad. Alternatively, most of them were published in Romania after the fall of the communist system in 1989.

In one of the latter cases, Orlea’s *Perimeter Zero (Perimetrul Zero)*, the author reproduces the horrors of life under Ceaușescu’s rule as she had, herself, experienced them. Her main character, Leontina, is a beautiful woman whose experiences in a totalitarian system, at an undisclosed time and location, mirrored those of her own. Leontina becomes valuable to the system, and is forcefully removed from the obedient masses, when her likeness to the ruler’s Beloved (Mult-Iubita) is discovered. From then on, she has to act as her double and abandon her son, her lover, her own identity. She is forcefully moved to Perimeter Zero, the most private and secretive place in the country, its seat of power. Once there, and made privy to the machinations of the system, she discovers that the ruling couple itself is playing a previously scripted part, as well. At any given time, when the ruler and his beloved have accomplished their tasks and outlived their usefulness, they are replaced with other “actors” from outside Perimeter Zero who have the misfortune to physically resemble the original cast. Everybody is disposable. In fact, the entire court/entourage within Perimeter Zero is part of a mechanism put in place



by the first generation of actors playing the founding couple, and they can be replaced quickly, without notice.

The only permanent element in this system is fear. Fear is perpetuated by a seemingly invincible character, the Master of Ceremony. The MC makes sure that the population outside Perimeter Zero is controlled through careful management of pervasive fear. Fear is implemented in three distinct phases: “first) fear is kept under control, but is easily combustible, second) the feeling evolves into “defensive fear,” a kind of auto censorship, of permanently feeling guilty, third) fear develops into “the fear of the prey always within reach of the hunter.”<sup>55</sup> If these kinds of fear fail to control the large population, then a rarely used type of coercion is brought into play: “the absolute, paralyzing fear of the prey facing certain death.”<sup>56</sup> Leontina witnesses the implementation of all these types of fear and, in time, realizes the tragic destiny of the rulers and the system themselves. An originally utopian idea engendered this system, which gradually consumed not only the puppets within, but its own creators/architects, too.

The same destructive mechanism was at work in the Romanian “utopia.” Orlea’s novel was, in this aspect, more like accurate reporting than fiction proper. In the oppressive conditions of Ceaușescu’s regime, there was no foiling between the author’s reality and an imagined utopian world. This realistic representation of the communist reality was dystopian, precisely because life in Romania was dystopian. In *Negative Utopia in Romanian Literature*, Bogdan Crețu called such accounts “negative utopias” as they exhibited the local authors’ growing abhorrence for the genre itself. Commenting on the events described in Orlea’s novel Crețu noted that: “*Perimetrul Zero* is only in a very small measure fictional.”<sup>57</sup> The not so veiled references to scarcity, terror, internalized fear, and censorship were all real elements of daily life under Ceaușescu. The fact that this novel, harshly critical of the system in place, could not be published in the country at the time of its inception, suggests that the account it presented was too faithful a representation of Romanian reality. As such, it could not pass the scrutiny of the censors who had been instructed to accept only laudatory pieces of the system and historically regurgitated heroic dramas.

In these particular conditions then, the next literary example is different as the author, Sergiu Fărcășan, *overpraises* and *updoes* the dreams and ideology of the

communist system whose achievements he details in an *uberutopia* of the far future. Published and re-published in the Science Fiction category, and much read during the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, *A Love Story from the Year 41042 (O Iubire din Anul 41042)* describes an accomplished Romanian society, leading the communist revolution. Romania is described as the driving force in the inception and instauration of communist ideology throughout the galaxy. Specifically, the novel details the encounter between a returning vessel, manned by astronauts from the year 3,000 and the long living, super-beings of the year 41,042. A prologue written by a historian of the year 50,000 introduces the reader to other crucial events of the time.

The story proper centers on the love affair between Lu, a spirited young woman returning to Earth aboard “Noah’s Ark” and Ols, a four hundred-year old, multi-degreed scientist and “new man” of the successful revolution. General communism is the socio-politico-economic reality of this particular future. The only nationalities identified by name are the Romanians, the Chinese, and the Russians. Blatantly ignored, the capitalist countries of the present era do exert, in absence, a shadow over these claims of generalized happiness and well-being. Choosing to ignore the existence of such countries and alternative economic systems, Fărcășan seems to align himself with the prevalent disregard and campaign of misinformation about the rest of the world practiced by the Romanian communist system. In thus doing, he maintains the status quo. Moreover, when the only state of the past conglomerate history mentioned in the story is Romania, he makes sure that the way through which the happy communists of the future attain a very long, successful and productive life is thanks to a drug developed by the Romanian school of gerontology.

The author pays the expected tribute to the society he lived in, and plays well into its needs for constant praise. He does so by praising the communist state to the North East, the Soviet Republics, by mentioning that the inauguration of the most successful era in the history of mankind was made possible by an event that took place there:

Year One was, according to the old calendar, the year 1957, October 4<sup>th</sup>, the date of the first step taken by man, with the help of the Sputnik, outside the native planet. A new era started with the October Revolution, and step by step, once the political problems that came with a class-bound society were replaced by psychological, moral, scientific, technical and galactic problems, people thought

to connect the grandeur of the old socialist system with the first step towards the creation of the communist planetary republics.<sup>58</sup>

Fărcășan's uberutopianism, his bowing to the potentialities of a system that dictated the rhythms of his life and controlled the publication of his work, were necessary compromises. In fact, at the time the novel was written, the country was still under the open terror regime of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. There is no coincidence then, that he exaggerated the possible accomplishments of the system, and titled his account of the future not a "utopia," but "a love story." The end of the story is felicitous, and the reader is lulled into believing that all the ideological seeds planted by the communist ideal in the early twentieth-century had the potential of producing, forty-thousand years later, a successful communist galactic republic. Quite abruptly, then, as an afterthought, the prologue states that the author of this whole story is, in fact, a rudimentary machine, which got bored in its master's absence and alleviated its loneliness by writing the entire story. Here it is interesting to note the voluntary effacement of the author, his self-erasure as an authority on the story. During these times of open terror and drastic measures against any transgressors, a utopian novel like Fărcășan's turned 'uber' and was called "science fiction," yet the author still separated himself from his intellectual product. That he felt the need to do so raises several questions:

Did he buy, like Bănuș before him, into the seducing myths/promises of the system, or was his mockery of it so well-disguised under the extreme praise that he actually succeeded at his double play? Whose disbelief in the communist system is addressed here? The author's, the characters', or the readers'? Whose suspicions in the ability of the system to perform this way are appeased by these additions and authorial deletions? The immediate answer would be that the writer cleverly managed to simultaneously praise and criticize the system deciding the fate of his work. The apparent compromise in form is the fee paid to the censor to make it into print. The content, in its multilayered structure, diffuses the critique of the communist system, and by being anchored in temporality rather than the spatiality claimed by the revolutionary efforts of the communist party, fulfilled, however lightly, its dissenting role.

With the advent of the Ceaușescu couple to the top ranks of the PCR in the mid 1960s, however, writing such as Fărcășan's became less likely. The broken promises of

the regime were too obvious, the increasing discrepancy between reality and the supposed utopia too sharp, for such laudatory expressions not to border on satire. Moreover, the “carrot and stick” method used by the new leaders increased the level of distrust and uneasiness among the general population. By the late 1960s, the Ceaușescu had developed their powerful cult of personality, had proposed and forced into production unrealistic megalomaniac dreams and plans and had successfully driven any dissimilar utopian discourses underground.

The next decade brought about a new wave of censorship. Ceaușescu’s visit to communist Asia in 1972 increased his desire to transform the Eastern European republic into a successful socialist enterprise similar to those seen in the Peoples’ Republic of China and in North Korea. Post communist studies initiated by the European Union likens this period to “cultural dark ages. All media, including television, was placed under close censorship, both through the presence of political propaganda by specialized departments and through the close monitoring of the content of all forms of media.”<sup>59</sup> In “the July Theses” (or “the July Platform”), Ceaușescu and his advisers compiled a long list of directives meant to take the Romanian socialist revolution to the next level. Chief action point on their agenda was “the improvement of political, ideological, educational, and cultural activities”<sup>60</sup> via reorganization of the Committee for Culture and Art, the reduction of the number of translations from foreign languages, of the imported foreign movies, as well as a thematic overhaul of theater and cultural production. The most drastic measure, however, was that writers had to adhere to “the Department of the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party[‘s] thematic plan for literary, artistic and screenplays [production].”<sup>61</sup>

The ensuing cultural revolution was radical, pervasive, and immediately notable. Newly published works engaged similar themes, the critical tone was diminished or absent, and the artists, most unanimously, adopted a subservient attitude. Lidia Vianu, continuing her historical survey past the decades described by Maria Bănuș and Oana Orlea in their memoirs, made the following comments about the period in which the PCR increased its grip on the modes of cultural production:

What was censorship? In simple terms, it meant an enormous “NO.” Unless you praised communism, the “new man,” and the two Ceaușescus and the bright future of their eternal order, you could not publish. Words, images, ideas, a list of

the most unimaginable offenses—all were banned. When a work reached the censor, the writer actually felt that a vital artery had been opened, and he was signing a pact with the devil.<sup>62</sup>

Even established writers of the period—many with international reputations, and a long publishing history—found out that, previous credentials aside, communist potentialities had to be appeased and these July directives followed closely.

Illustrative example of this indebtedness of the author to the system is the appeal of one such great artist, Horia Lovinescu. His humble letter to Nicolae Ceaușescu himself speaks volumes about the strong connection between censorship and ideological oppression and the resulting utopian expressions in Romanian during the communist era:

Comrade General Secretary,

This summer I have written a play titled “The City of the Future,” with the intention to dedicate it to the anniversary of the republic.

By its nature, it is a political piece, which tries to survey, from a future perspective, certain important aspects of Party life, and the evolution of our socialist society and consciousness under the guidance of the Party, and yours personally.

As there are direct references to you, I have not permitted myself to follow the customary submission route: send the piece out for the usual readings, discussions, and seals of approval without first securing yours.

If you do not agree with this piece, if it is not to your liking, then I will consider it unwritten/ as if I had never written it.

In either case, I kindly ask that you consider my daring gesture as a modest homage to the great political figure and supporter of literature that you are.

With deep esteem,

Horia Lovinescu (October, 1972)<sup>63</sup>

To this humble letter, President Ceaușescu, “the great political figure and the supporter of literature,” did not respond directly. Expediently, the answer arrived in the form of a handwritten note from an anonymous censor: “Author advised to follow prescribed channels.”<sup>64</sup> Lovinescu published the play in 1974, with significant changes likely suggested by one of the functionaries of the censorship bureau. Other writers, desiring to publish, followed suit. Soon after, the communist metanarrative and its prevalent mythology subsumed the entire literary and cultural discourse and most of would be utopian writings landed in well-hidden drawers.

Here are some reasons for the absence of utopian writings during these specific times. In order to produce a new socialist republic as successful as its Asian counterparts, the PCR intensified its propaganda and surveillance mechanisms and multiplied its efforts to coerce the population into actively participating in the co-imagining of “utopia” and the Romanian nation. In the media of the time, the socialist republic was increasingly portrayed as an emergent world power with solutions to even the most complicated international situations. In the ubiquitous billboards, Ceaușescu was portrayed as an arbiter of peace and common sense, a benevolent ruler overseeing its devoted minions from a place of power. His idealized features and smiling face were surrounded by revolutionary slogans and placed, by the hundreds, in even the most remote, or rural areas. For a while, these aggressive methods were surprisingly effective.

Outside Romania, inflated economic, cultural, and social reports and accounts of daily “utopian” life had convinced even the most level-headed political leaders that they were truly dealing with an extraordinary revolution, and the most progressive communist leader of the Eastern bloc. Ceaușescu’s negotiating skills –Romania was indeed the only country in the world who had established diplomatic relations with both Palestine and Israel, and his distancing from the Soviet brand of communism–had secured him invitations to the most powerful governments in the world, and earned him the reputation of a maverick politician. One of the most decorated and recognized leaders of the time, his (ghost-written) publications were incendiary statements about the “new man,” “self-improvement,” and “dialectical materialism”.<sup>65</sup>

While understanding and controlling the laws of nature, we also help to place them at man’s service. Now we want to improve nature’s best creation–man, the creator of everything society has!<sup>66</sup>

In practice, the very promising discourse of nature serving culture and “the new man” required that the otherwise economically retrograde country be put through the ringer of a multifaceted-revolution. Ideological submission or adherence to confabulated historical myths was one such aspect that secured the cooperation of the masses. This re-imagining of the nation and its representation as a utopia, a place where the inhabitants shared its riches and resources, took great poetic licenses.

According to historian Lucian Boia's research,<sup>67</sup> vast human and media resources were dedicated to the formulation and the propagation of ideas supporting the notion of the Socialist Republic of Romania as a chosen nation. Many of the ideas promoting the messianic mandate of the country during the interbellic period made their way into these updated accounts of the national character. The National Archives in Bucharest presently store thousands of propaganda dossiers, detailing unrealistic historical claims and some very absurd economic and cultural achievements. Romanians living under the Ceaușescu regime, for example, were told that nuclear danger was imminent, and their country played an important role as a magistrate, and an arbiter of justice on the international political scene. The country was portrayed as a young nation in an aging, decrepit Europe. With the help of strict decrees, the Secret Police, and regional informants turning in doctors who performed illegal abortions, the birth rate in Romania was forcefully increased. Women birthing more than seven children were declared heroines of the socialist revolution and by the early 1980s, thousands of such prolific mothers were praised daily in the local newspapers.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to exaggerating the country's political importance abroad, and engaging in complex social and genetic engineering, the PCR initiated, and with great success, implemented a massive geographical, spatial, and architectural overhaul of the urban and rural landscape of the country. According to the Central Office of the Propaganda Department, by the year 1995,<sup>69</sup> 80% of the country's population was supposed to live in the city, to be urban.<sup>70</sup> To arrive at such ambitious results, hundreds of historical sites and countless villages were destroyed, and their populations moved to "agro-towns." These esthetically bland hybrid conglomerates of living quarters, factories, and "agro-zootechnic" sites, functioned as education stations where former peasants were aligned to urban, proletarian standards.

To construct the myth of the vibrant country, boasting a young and vigorous population, living in a highly urbanized society, the ruling party revised many of the events of the country's past. Despite ample historical evidence pointing to the contrary, the peoples of the three historical provinces, Wallachia, Transylvania, and Moldova were presented as a unified ethnic group, with a shared history, similar customs, and identical goals (Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias. Fig. 3: Romania

at the end of the twentieth-century, and Fig. 4: Central Europe [f/f]). Even more incredible, Boia notes, was the fact that Romania was presented to its citizens as the number four international superpower, after USA, U.S.S.R., and Israel. The homebound Romanians<sup>71</sup> believed these aberrations and even took pride in the country's "achievements." The overwhelming majority had not traveled abroad, and had either limited, or no access at all to non-partisan, trustworthy international news.

Andrei Pandeale's groundbreaking, illegal photographic documentation of the gray life during the communist regime (Appendix B: Life in Utopia: A Photographic Memoir) shows aspects of "utopia" which were never part of the official account. The radical spatial appropriations by the communist party demonstrate that, in this case, when utopia took power, it suffered no rivals. With method and precision, the system exacted its subjects' cooperation, and submission. By the time the conditions of everyday life changed so much that the communist national discourse was at obvious odds with the harsh reality, the creative powers of the would-be utopian writers would have been, by mere necessity, diverted to keeping the utopian dreamer (and implicit dissident) alive, fed, clothed, and out of jail. Such writers were gradually hounded out of reality and history via direct and indirect threats. Where to could they escape from this history, from this "utopia" in power? Writing against the system was still being done, of course. In its most critical format, it found publication abroad. Within the national borders, it either took a satiric turn, or migrated to Science Fiction. If still too incendiary, was safely stashed away in drawers awaiting propitious times for publication. Paying close attention to examples from each category will help us better understand this deep connection between ideological oppression and expressions of utopia in Romania, during the last decade of the communist system.

Disturbing, engrossing, and exemplary of what could happen to the individual in a totalitarian system, Bujor Nedelcovici's *The Second Messenger (Al doilea mesager)* presents the story of Danyel Raynal, a writer who returns to his native island after spending eleven years abroad. Once re-established in his country, he observes, with great surprise and enchantment, the absence of police and law enforcement. Raynal takes this as a sign of governing success and a proof of the population's high moral and ethic order. Soon however, he realizes that, in fact, fear and self-censorship have been so successfully



implemented by the ruling system that the citizens denounce themselves when something as small as a thought opposed to the system crosses their bewildered minds. Aghast, but powerless, he realizes that the entire island has become a huge prison. In Nedelcovici's not-so-fictional society, the panopticon that fascinated Bentham and Foucault as a method of controlling the masses is no longer necessary. Each individual has internalized the ever-present surveillance system and the island is no longer in need of guards.

Nedelcovici's observation is similar to Orlea's in the introduction to her memoirs: during Ceaușescu's reign the entire country had become a prison. Both their accounts warn of the powerlessness of the individual citizen trapped by the machinations of a totalitarian system. The fate of the intellectual in Nedelcovici's novel is different, yet the same as Eliade's character, Viziru, decades earlier. Viziru exited historical reality; Raynal was subsumed to it. Both were silenced and their intellectual gifts and possible contributions to the imagining of both utopia and the nation made obsolete. Danyel Raynal's metamorphosis from an autonomous human being into a self-denouncing automaton evidences the vulnerability of even the strongest individual against the system. Romanian censors could not, of course, let this example pass into the public eye. The "new man" the communist propaganda promised was one of unbound optimism and unwavering loyalty to the state.

One of the best examples of the "drawer type" writings, Matei Vișniec's play *Gufi's Country* (*În țara lui Gufi*), is particularly illustrative of how incendiary the language, the content, and the message of such work could be, and explains why the text never made it into print, or on stage. Vișniec's depiction of the dictator in power and the "blinding of the people" had too many direct correspondences to real life under the Ceaușescu regime. In Gufi's country, populated with interestingly named characters, only Gufi can speak in verse, and he is constantly asking his courtiers to tell him something funny "de răs." In fact, very little is humorous, or even normal, in Gufi's country: at an undisclosed time in the past he had decided that all his people would be blind. Accordingly, he had everything covered with white paint. Under his throne, in the Palace of the Country of the Blind, he still has the worn-out brush he used to cover the brilliant murals on the wall, the sparkling, resplendent peacocks, and other enchanting scenes on the marble floors. When the play starts

The people, the things, the walls are colorless, there are no windows, the imperial court is in full session and there is discussion on how to speed up the marriage of Iola, Gufi's daughter, to a good suitor, there is also much talk about eating. White canes rest between the knees of the dignitaries. Fixed gazes.<sup>72</sup>

Dissension starts in Gufi's household with Iola, who is supposed to be marrying soon, but is displeased with her lack of agency to choose her own mate and determine her own life. She is also keenly aware that something is amiss in the kingdom of her father, but cannot identify what this is, by herself. In a discussion with Lulu, the one-eyed clown of the court, she finds out that her country is different, and far worse off than the rest of the world, and becomes eager to bypass the unnatural blindness her father's decision produced for her and the entire country.

Robderouă, a foreign suitor enters the palace and tells her of the deception set up by her father. Robderouă also tells her of the beauty and the colors covered by her father under multiple layers of white paint. As the entire population is waiting in line for, or devouring, free donuts, they sneak into the throne room and start to methodically scratch off the white paint from the walls and the floors. Underneath, they discover beautiful murals and vibrant colors. They barely escape Gufi's wrath as he returns with his courtiers, and manage to run away. Pandemonium ensues soon after. Gufi's blind subjects, suddenly aware of the colors just revealed, are enthralled by the sensations they experience when touching them, and start bumping into each other, frenzied to find more. Gufi takes refuge in a big chest, in the throne room, and calls out to Lulu, the clown, who is still around.

The discussion between these two antagonists details the philosophy behind the blinding of the people and points out not only the similar situation in Romania, but also the geographical and cultural isolation necessary for such a project to be successful. This discussion also sheds light on another shared tenet between the play and real life in communist Romania. The dictator controls every aspect of his peoples' lives: from how they live, what they eat, how they dress, how they reproduce, and whom they marry. Ceaușescu in real life, and the dictator in Vișniec's play speak with much gusto, and are firm believers in their megalomaniac plans. The fictional dictator tells Lulu that, although blind, his people have been provided with the conditions to be "happy":

Gufi: Yes, yes... The blind are the happiest among all people. They don't have

to worry about anything, they don't have to walk around, or to run, or to ponder...each minds his sleep, his waking up, his eating... Don't you see that here, because of me, they have everything they need? Say... Do they lack anything? Do they hurt? Do they suffer? What good would seeing do them? Seeing brings about only trouble. Today you see one thing, tomorrow another... after you see you start running after what you see... and you run and run... You can't get enough running... Your whole life you run after the things you see and you never truly touch them. Only suffering comes after all your running and only the dust remains after a whole life of running... really... think a bit for yourself. Isn't it better this way? You wake up, eat, listen for the bells, you go to bed at night. No running, no toil, no vain desires... tell me, isn't it better this way? I invented this country. Believe me. There isn't a better man than the one who has nothing to desire.

Lulu: So, you thought, let's blind them all so that nobody wishes for anything anymore...<sup>73</sup>

Gufi has managed to convince his subjects that their blindness is not too big a price to pay for his version of happiness. Having nothing to desire, being lulled by the promise of free donuts, and enchanted by the ruler's apparent patriarchal benevolence, the citizens of this country give up free will, the right to move around the world, and accept the situation, blindly. The ubiquitous white paint used to cover everything represents the totalizing discourse of the communist party. The direct references to the blinding of an entire country were, obviously, references to the status quo in Romania. Ceaușescu's successful communist enterprise had become, like Gufi's kingdom, the land of the blind.

To show the long-time results of the political indoctrination and sub-par living conditions, Vișniec used onomastics and a heavy dose of satire.<sup>74</sup> Many of these names and terms, unfortunately, are so culturally specific that much of their snarkiness is lost in translation. "Gufi" is not even a Romanian name, and pronounced out loud sounds like the name of the Disney character "Goofy." "Marțafița," the nurse of princess "Iola" ("sail") contains in her name two unpleasantly sounding words: "marta," which means "mouth" or "trap," as in "shut your trap," and "fița," which is "caprice." "Robderouă," on the other hand, the name of the reactionary character who unsettles the status quo in Gufi's country, sounds like that of a hero from Romanian folktales. It is a poetic composition: "dewy drop/a drop of dew," or "slave of dew." The names of the other characters are plain derisory, and send the Romanian audience to stereotypical figures associated with well-known, corrupt functionaries of the communist party. "Țonțonel,"

for example, is someone “full of himself, possibly overdressed,” “Zeno” is both a pun on “xenophobe,” and “crazy.” “Bubi,” here the name of a person, is usually a name reserved for dogs, “Firifirică” is someone “who is not trustworthy, a sneaky kind of character,” “Gârneață” is a word associated with a hen’s backside, and “Macabril,” Gufi’s adviser’s name, is a direct reference to “macabre.” What works such as this and Nedelcovici’s (which was published abroad) show is that, when utopia was, politically, in power, the writers had very few, if any, means to produce alternative utopian discourses.

In these dire conditions, then, alternative imaginings and practices on the communitarian level, were even more difficult, for they entailed more spatial visibility and more perceptible resistance to the heavy handed utopian and national building praxis of the communist party. Yet, small spiritual or religious communities existed, as did intellectual “schools” of various inclinations. The latter kind was represented by Constantin Noica’s paidetic project at Păltiniș and the literary innovations of the Tîrgoviște School. Of the former kind, the Orthodox monasteries had fared the best, the newer denominations like the Baptist and Adventist itinerant groups, the worst. Theoretically, the secular regime had allowed the Romanian Orthodox Church to continue shepherding the masses, but to great cost to its most outspoken priests and monks who ended up in various jails and/or in forced labor camps. In addition to persecuting the servants of the token religion, the PCR’s agents had infiltrated, and were constantly raiding small Baptist and Evangelic groups that practiced ecstatic chanting and dancing. The party considered these small communities dangerous because, through such rituals and rites, they created strong, enduring loyalty to a personal God and to their practicing unit, and failed to pay due loyalty to the (communist) Caesar. When news of abuses against such communities reached the outside world and caused negative press against Ceaușescu, in an attempt to preserve his reputation, he allowed many of their members to leave the country. However, when desperate for a way out of the country, more and more Orthodox believers switched allegiance to the Baptist and Adventist groups, the party halted immigration, abruptly, and ceased to answer to human rights violation inquiries.

In these conditions, Orthodox monasteries became the welcoming shelters not just for the spiritually-inclined, but also for intellectuals looking for non-communist answers

and solutions to their deeper questions. Two intellectuals previously associated with the Criterion group ended up in the proximity of monastic centers with which they engaged directly. Petre Țuțea, repeatedly jailed by the communist authority for his philosophical beliefs and for defending the peasant class against the forceful appropriation of their lands by the local kolkhoz, continued the tradition of indigenous mysticism started at the beginning of the twentieth-century by his cohort. He advocated deep respect towards nature, women, children, and continued to promote the messianic destiny of the country, while leading a simple life, in various Moldovian monasteries.

Interested in continuing his work on the particulars of the Romanian national character, and to make good use of the 1930s monographic and folkloric studies he had worked on with his fellow Criterionists, Constantin Noica established his headquarters next to the Păltiniș monastery. There he gathered a group of young intellectuals whom he introduced to the lore of mystical indigenism. He had witnessed, first hand, the PCR's mis-appropriation of the early twentieth-century findings and had been jailed, when he upheld the validity of alternative religious and spiritual ontological explanations. PCR opposed his uchronian endeavors and supplanted them with oppressive designs meant to create a life solidly anchored –but, as it was shown in Appendix B: Life in Utopia: A Photographic Memoir, not supported – in the material world. Weary of such ideological manipulations, and dismissive of its final human products, whom he called *băcani*,<sup>75</sup> Noica shifted his methodology from Romanian ethnic ontology to the classical, proven methods of intellectual investigation, namely the Platonic model of *Paideia*. Adopting the classical pedagogical conception of educating the human spirit through the study of philosophy and sciences, he surrounded himself with ambitious, young intellectuals; selected several autochthonous ontological elements from early 1940s monographic and folkloric research; juxtaposed them with Western philosophical concepts; and attempted the creation of a local eschatology.

In *From The Athens School to The School of Păltiniș (De la Școala din Atena la Școala de la Păltiniș)*, Andrei Cornea reflects back on these alternative uchronian practices and the merits and demerits of the Păltiniș School, and notes that, indeed, Noica's paideia built its premise and its legacy on some of the main tropes of the utopian

tradition. The school was geographically isolated—a cultural island that is—and its borders were protected by specific rites and practices:

Like most of classic utopias, Noica's "Păltiniș" [wa]s insular: he live[d] in relative geo-physical isolation, somewhere over 1200 meters above sea level, in a small alpine resort, away from "civilization." Moreover, this insularity [wa]s sometimes amplified ... [and] "Păltiniș" [wa]s constantly represented in the *Journal* as an island of philosophy and of authentic friendship, a new "Castalia"<sup>76</sup> rising spectacularly at the surface of an ocean of imposture, physical, moral, social, and intellectual misery—in short, a fortress of the ideal spiritual, extracted somehow, as if by miracle, from the demonic world of the nationalized communism "down below."<sup>77</sup>

Similar to the practices deployed in traditional utopias, Noica's world was intentionally setting itself apart from the world below: Marxist ideas and materialistic values of utmost importance "down below" had absolutely no value in the "new Castalia." Conversely, the lofty ideals of Păltiniș had no immediate influence on the harsh, dire reality "down below." The master and his students took great pride in deriding material concerns. They went so far as to denigrate their intellectual colleagues who left Romania for Western Europe and United States. They called these destinations—from which, ironically, they had borrowed the intellectual patrimony they were so proud of guarding and enriching—"the Germany of butter"<sup>78</sup> and the "bye-bye [sic], American culture."<sup>79</sup> There could be noted, in the group's beliefs and practices, a departure from materiality, a containment of physical needs almost Gnostic in nature.

Cornea also noted the ritualistic nature of the paideia and the complex rites of separations practiced by the select group, the students' quick adoption of a certain lingo and behavior, their willingness to become like their erudite master and delve into complex and seemingly contradictory subjects. Cornea observed that, for the young intellectuals traveling to Păltiniș from various cities, facing constant food shortages, rationed electricity and hot water, and the scrutiny of the Secret Police, the ascension to the resort was much more than mere geographical relocation:

To get to Păltiniș, just like in the ideal fortress, the path climb[ed] abruptly: the climb was not physical, but also symbolic, especially symbolic, as the physical endeavor/action follow[ed] a pattern of initiation, of separation from the "world below"—flat tires, administrative glitches, socialist misery, tantrums of those living in the capital (Bucharest), all such [we]re expunged, left behind. The ritual of passing, usually difficult, often described by the authors—shipwrecks,

dangerous journeys, jumps into other spatio-temporal dimension—reappear[ed] here in a “benign form,” seemingly prosaic, but outstandingly expressive nevertheless.<sup>80</sup>

These necessary exits from history into cosmic and intellectual realms—which Cornea notes in the practices of the Păltiniș consortium—were the direct result of spatial, cultural, economic, and ideological oppression. Those experiencing it deployed evasive techniques to avoid being leveled by it.

One of these methods, fronted by Eliade and employed by Noica, was the power of encoded language to communicate important knowledge and messages, and to avoid the intrusions of untrained, curious, interlocutors. Păltiniș consortium, Cornea observed in the same book “use [d] a quasi-esoteric language, almost unintelligible to the non-initiated: (“the becoming into being,” “the limit which does not limit,” “IDG” (individual-determinations/attributes-general), “the enlarged self,” and so on).<sup>81</sup> The method of codifying language to deter the less-prepared, the non-initiated from accessing complex information was also used by the characters of *The Zohar* to record their discussions on the nature of the Torah, philosophy and cosmogony. This mystical lingo—which I will be addressing in great detail in the following chapter—is almost identical to that used by Noica and his entourage. The latitude offered by this type of writing between the lines enabled Noica’s entourage to construct an alternative literature and philosophy corpora. In both these cases, this extreme encoding of the language validates Leo Strauss’ claim that there is a causal relationship between the need for “writing between the lines” and extant conditions of persecution. In the Păltiniș case, such stylistic choices were quickly becoming the means to escape reality by reading and composing erudite texts. Such texts became entryways to high-level intellectual discourse elegantly concealed in semantic deception. The party officials and the Secret Police were, of course, aware of the developments at Păltiniș, but the exoticism of its philosophy and practices were extreme and confounded the censors. By necessity, the paideia’s semantic obscurity had become successful defense against political offensiveness.

The Păltiniș practices of separating the sacred (“new Castalia”) from the profane (“the down below”), and the constant search for the concealment of absolute forms and ideas into the mundane and the tangible, puzzled the censors and kept the intellectual

enterprise alive. Cornea notes that those participating in these rituals had accepted the mystic aspect of the practice: they were eager and diligent actors in the reenacting of an alternative reality: “one would then step, climb up to a world organized within the self, into a ‘fortress’ of truth, of the kind present in all traditional utopian projections; it [wa]s however half hidden to the profane eye, yet in its clear proximity.”<sup>82</sup> These rituals of separations, the quasi-esoteric language that was revealed to only a few, the insularity of the place, and its high-altitude location made Păltiniș a unique place, not bound by mundane rules and regulations nor, for that matter, by history itself. These rituals of separation produced a unique spatial enclave fit for Noica’s philosopher’s cave, or a sort of “no-place.” In such a no-place unbound by communist normativity, learning of the highest and most intense kind could then take place. This internalization and mystification of utopian practices resulted in a corpora of rituals that sustained imagining and building one’s intellectual life away from, and against, communist history. If the PCR bulldozed Romania into a communist republic, and reduced the human, cultural, and architectural landscape to sanctioned, uniformly built units, the School at Păltiniș endowed its students with the means and tools to build a resplendent, sophisticated, and engrossing inner cultural life. This opportunity could not have come too soon.

In the introduction to the *Păltiniș Journal: A Paidetic Model of Humanist Culture* Gabriel Liiceanu, Noica’s closest disciple explains the extent of desperation that had gripped the entire country at the time. The misery of life under Ceaușescu—from food shortages and rationing, to limited electricity and hot water, to abrasive censorship of the press and all cultural media, to limited TV broadcast (two hours daily)—contributed to the desires of Noica’s intellectual group to resist historical time “through culture.” They cultivated critical thinking that enabled them to understand the destructive ways, and the side effects of the communist ideology when such skills were no longer taught in the Marxist-based curriculums of Romanian schools. The Păltiniș scholars were keenly aware of their own demise from civic and political agency, of their forced abdication from the co-imagining of their own nation and country. Consequently, they redirected the utopian desire inwardly: they learned several foreign languages to perfection, mastered the vast field of philosophy, and bravely engaged with the sciences. Prevented from participating in the making of the national and utopian discourse, they partook in



a formation and a transformation from the very core of the being, a *Bildung*, a *Paideia*, a birth of the self, of individuality, of autonomous thinking, the means of extracting oneself from the realm of planned, forced indoctrination.<sup>83</sup>

What Liiceanu's journal evidences most is that, forced by these circumstances, would be utopian writers changed the subject of their critical exercises from society as a whole, to the individual whose becoming they explored in texts and practices of the Bildungsroman, uchronian, or intopian type.

The same alternative utopian forms were favored by the Tîrgoviște School.<sup>84</sup> The writers associated with this group, Costache Olăreanu, Radu Petrescu, Mircea Horia Simionescu, and Tudor Popa, favored subjectivity, and insightful forays into their characters' psyche, most of which were alter egos of the authors themselves. If Noica's Paidetic project encouraged the transformation of the student "through culture," this school chose textual alterations as a means to resist the communist culture. What its writers were working against was the formulaic structure of *proletcultism* ("the cult of the proletariat"), the literary style sanctioned by the Communist Party and the main generative source of literature after 1947. The Tîrgoviște group developed alternative textual practices and formats against this corpus of social realist sagas praising the "new man" and his selfless devotion to the socialist revolution. Against the marionette characters of the socialist sagas, they created vivid, highly individualistic characters, deeply preoccupied with their own becoming.

Exemplary for this new type of character and writing is Costache Olăreanu's novel *Fear (Frica)*. Olăreanu's main character, self-involved, and deeply preoccupied with his own quests was, by proletcultist standards, subversive. In an episode that sums up the content of his repeat visits to the Security office, the character mentions his constant fear and admits to his powerlessness to change the parameters of his life. The success of the "carrot and stick" method of controlling the population, which Oana Orlea mentioned in her memoir's introduction, is vividly detailed in the following scene from Olăreanu's novel, and eloquently illustrated in Pandeale's *Forbidden Photos* (Appendix B: *Life in Utopia: A Photographic Memoir*, Fig. 3: Queue for sugar, on Galati Street, Bucharest, May 1982, and Fig. 4: Running out of rations: "No More Eggs" says the

distributor to the hopeful waiting for the weekly dozen or so eggs allotted to a family of four. Bucharest, 1984).

The encounter between the nameless man and the Secret Police functionary illustrates how, in late 1980s, communist policing of the population had met with full panopticon success:

So, what were you doing in 1952?

I was shitting my pants out of fear.

Aren't you exaggerating a bit?

Not at all. Now that many years have passed, I can understand very well what was I afraid of back then. I hope you will not accuse me of being partial. The things I am about to share with you are so real, that not even now have they gotten that aura brought about imperceptibly by the passing of time and distancing in space.

There was something in the air, like an overcast sky, bursting with the threat of a violent storm. This feeling made even the smallest breath of wind, a cry, a look, hurried steps behind you, a thrill of laughter, or a knock at the door to bring about fear and panic. This was reality, no matter how much we are trying to forget or look at it as something accidental. To the young, who do not know these past times, these things seem made up/fictitious. I am perfectly aware that even we, those who lived through them, should try not to think about them anymore. Unfortunately, however, they have become so powerfully imbedded, that it is impossible to erase them totally from our memory.

Those were times when a word or gesture could destroy you. I saw it with my own eyes, how, one day, when in a queue a man was waiting to buy shoes made out of crepe, the biggest thing at the time...

Yes, yes, I remember, I also bought a pair.

We looked like pussies in boots in them, didn't we? But walking in them felt extraordinary. To return, this one man who was waiting in line (I can still see him: unshaved, wearing a faded beret, his whole crumpled appearance signaling a humble condition) exclaimed at one point irately when he heard the sales clerk announcing that he had run out of sizes 41 and 42: "Fuck you!" Immediately someone approached him and asked him for ID.

Why? he mumbled, turning white.

First you present the ID, and then I tell you why. He did not want to show, or maybe he did, but he was so paralyzed with fear that he could not move.

So, you refuse to give it to me? Goooooood!

And he left quickly.

The rest of us were bewildered. The sales clerk was the first to break the silence, trying to talk like nothing had happened.

Next! What size would you like? (He was acting like the piano player who continues to play as hell breaks loose in the bar.)

Size....size...

Make up your mind, man, what size?

Forty and...

Take a forty-three, wear a thicker sock.

Yes, but...

Precisely at that moment, the guy who had asked him for ID came back accompanied by a guy with a big face and a flattened nose. He looked at us accusingly, as if we were all guilty of something. I will never forget the way his eyes scanned our faces, a look that could freeze your blood. He looked at me, too. Lord almighty, it felt like an electric shock slithering down my spine. The sensation was that I was somehow guilty, too. That I was the guilty one. If he had asked me to follow him, I would have—blindly—that's how hypnotized I was by his stare.

This whole scene was premeditated. He was pretending that he had forgotten the face of the guy with the old beret, so the man would entertain hope, and when finally stared at, he would be unable to move. That's exactly what ended happening. He followed them without a word, his head bowed down. That's when I noticed his shoes—worn out and dirty, with the tips broken. He dragged his feet on the cement floor of the shop because the sole was loose and if he was to step up, it would have dropped on the floor, or who knows, it could have flown through the air.

#### HOW CAN YOU FORGET SUCH A SCENE?

How can you forget the behavior of those two, much more disgusting and useless when the matter at hand was not a robber, a thief, or a lunatic, but a broken, worn out pair of shoes?<sup>85</sup>

In retelling this story, the main character is reminded again of the limitations imposed on his life by the system and attempts to reclaim some measure of control. Having realized that crowd surveillance is one of the methods used by the Secret Police to infuse and perpetuate fear and guilt, he makes every attempt to stay away from others, remain as anonymous as possible, and thus, away from the public eye, regain ownership of his personal time and private life. So, he asks the interrogating officer if he could start writing him letters adding important, vital information missing from the notes made during previous interrogations. The reason he gives for this unusual request is that his security files, compiled during the many trips to the office, seemed to have “flattened” his life beyond recognition. He is given permission to do so by the bemused clerk and proceeds to rewrite his life, one letter at a time. The format of the text and the capitalization of the letters he writes to the disaffected functionary are a major departure from the format of the party-sanctioned texts of the time and represent an attempt to engage language and discourse on his own terms. Through this continuous rewriting and

revising process, several incidents and people are edited out and later edited back in and, in the process, the character re-imagines his past, rewriting himself in as its main agent of direction and change.

Additionally, this type of writing allows him to introduce personal commentaries on the situation at hand. In the second letter to his inquisitor, for example, the character writes of how he came to be expelled from university because a colleague of his—misinformed and ill intended—denounced him as a reader of pornography. As it will transpire later, the main character was actually reading a volume from the Belle Lettres' French edition of the Plato collection. That Plato and French came to be linked to an unsubstantiated accusation of pornography speaks volumes of the level of general culture and education during the communist period. Ceaușescu's utopians were not even aware that, albeit in altered form, Plato's ideas were shaping the reality of their lives. At one point, it would have been practically impossible for them to read the ancient philosopher's political works, or Thomas More's, for that matter. The latter's *Utopia*, and most of the other classics from the eponymous genre, had been placed on a *black list* and removed from public and university libraries several ideological purges earlier. Even more disturbing than the exclusion of such important books from circulation was the fact that informing on others could have such immediate and deleterious effects.

Some of the terrifying scenes depicted in *Fear* were realities the Romanian population was familiar with. The anecdotes that pepper the novel are representative of the ubiquitous, the absurd, or the threatening conditions under Ceaușescu's reign: expulsion from schools and universities on false accusations, public arrests, the escapist activities of the individual trying to avoid becoming part of the system, and his/her subsequently delinquent personal life. The worst thing about the situation, however, was not the generalized subservience, or the widely spread ignorance of the impressionable public eager to cooperate with the surveillance system. The most educated and learned members of society, constantly confronted with the pressures of the system, ended up succumbing to its demands and compromising their literary and moral standards. Olăreanu's character, for example, despite his unusual perspicacity, ends up mirroring the pretenses of life and achievements propped by the "utopia" around him. He ends up believing that, simply by pretending, he becomes a writer. He creates cardboard covers

for the blank pages he titles with beautifully calligraphed and pretentious titles. These “books” that gain him the women’s affection and everybody’s attention are emblematic for the Romanian intellectual class trying to carve out personal space and a discourse separate from that of the ruling party during this time.

In reality, hardened by the existing living conditions and omnipresent surveillance and oppression, people were heartened by such small actions and gestures of resistance. A whole corpus of humorous tales on how one could go about “sabotaging the system” developed about the time Olăreanu’s character was “writing” his books. And while these whispered stories provided much-needed comic relief at the time, and in truth, did little harm to the system, they sprouted a generalized attitude of *laissez faire* that continued after the fall of the system in 1989. In *Fear* and in his latter writings, Olăreanu refers to the compendium of such evasive, self-defeating maneuvers, and to the consequential loss of ethic fortitude as the technique of battling THE BALAUR.<sup>86</sup> In his description of the character’s encounter with the operational mechanics of the communist system, he notes that the defensive, evasive maneuvers of the population were, most of the time, not even necessary. The system, a.k.a. “the balaur” feeding on it, was also flawed. Countless people not guilty of any wrongdoings were falsely accused, imprisoned, and tortured, and countless others who had plotted against the system, or had sabotaged it, escaped unharmed. The pervasiveness of fear and belief in the ubiquitous omnipresent power of the system resulted in what he calls “death of souls and lives tortured to the core”<sup>87</sup> and, again, attests to the successful panopticon operations in Romania.

Olăreanu changed the narrative format of his Bildungsroman to show, in great details, the psychological mechanisms of repression. He called the character’s changing consciousness and his intopian incursions “BIOGRAPHY IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.” Commenting on this method in their introduction to the novel, Ion Buzerea and Virgil Podoaba note that Olăreanu had to manipulate words and situations to create fictional worlds. This was the only way he could share with his readers veridical episodes of “Romanian-ness.” Only thus could he share what are “the only elements truly Romanian that constitute the non reified account of his/the author’s initiatory and formative experiences.”<sup>88</sup> These personal experiences came from outside communist history and belonged to a patrimony of specific, indigenous concepts and experiences that enabled

the writer and the character(s) to step up as autonomous individuals, separate and different from the minions of the system. Analyzed in the cultural, economic, and political context of the time, this choice of the author, to use novelty at the level of the discourse, makes sense. Freedom of expression and cultural production of would-be-utopian writers had become inversely proportional with the aggressive spatial transformation implemented by the regime. The more intense the spatial configurations of the Socialist Republic of Romania, the more intensely codified the semantics of the texts, and the more innovative the methods used to deliver them. Confronted with the manifest power of the system, its oppressive mechanisms, and radical spatial transformations, the utopian impulse shifted into alternative, less critically overt, uchronian and intopian expressions.

And, indeed, this extreme oppression produced very well-camouflaged utopian expressions. These uchronian (*Forbidden Forest*), paidetic (Păltiniș) and intopian (*Fear*) analogous forms were so well-disguised that contemporary Romanian utopian scholars actually disagree on the nature and type of the utopian/dystopian discourse in Romanian culture. In *Hypostases of an Illusion: Utopia and Dystopia in Romanian Culture*,<sup>89</sup> George Achim opined that the autochthonous culture is devoid of a utopian vocation; in *Negative Utopia in Romanian Literature*.<sup>90</sup> Bogdan Crețu argued that the local tradition is mostly anti-utopian and; in *Utopica: Studies on the Social Imaginary*,<sup>91</sup> Sorin Antohi noted the utopian genre's thematic migration to the party-sanctioned Science Fiction Genre. The mere presence of these divergent opinions on the existence and nature of the utopian genre in Romanian culture supports some of the claims made at the beginning of this project. Namely, that specific cultural and national conditions developed during the communist system, produced utopian analogues to counteract the utopia in power. Moreover, some of the explanations used to argue for the “lack of a utopian vocation,” actually provide important circumstantial evidence why “no utopias,” or “anti-utopias,” or “science fiction” were so overtly present, instead. As these studies represent the autochthonous scholarly opinions, and provide additional historical and theoretical information on the case study, they will be used to further explain the specificity of Romanian utopian tradition and lead us into this chapter's conclusion.

For example, George Achim justifies the absence of a local utopian vocation by pointing at a) the rural character of Romanian culture, b) extended Ottoman control (Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias, Fig. 2: Central Europe, cca 1480 [f, /]), and c) the “temperamental differences” between the three historical provinces of Romania, developed under various imperial rules. Achim’s first claim, that the Romanian culture was, for centuries, a preponderantly rural culture, lacking an innate connection to the *polis*, the urban cradle of cultural production and utopian musings, is correct. The core of the culture was, indeed, formed by, and perpetuated through close adherence to popular mythos, to the deeply-ingrained belief in the *brotherhood* of each individual with the village, the river, the forest, etc. As such, “the image of the traditional village [was] a utopogramme, a concentric organization, as [was] the majority of Utopian cities. Yet, this structure can be mythical-symbolic, “*mandala-like*,” according to some, archetypal, but not Utopian proper.”<sup>92</sup> I will argue that, in fact, precisely *because* of these village traditions, and mystical practices, this culture survived the “utopian” methods of the dictatorship in whatever shapes and forms they encountered them: as the brutal, and intensive systematization of the country into agro-villages and absurdly geometrical cities, as forced ideological indoctrination, or as social and genetic engineering, etc. The mostly rural culture found alternatives to these aggressive methods by building its own realities other ways and otherwise: using folklore, mysticism, and local mythology.

Achim noted also the “lack of extension of the culture,”<sup>93</sup> and its contained territoriality as a result of foreign imperial rule. As previously mentioned, Romania’s reunification within its ancient borders was an early twentieth-century event. Up till then, these provinces developed insular, self-contained traditions, centered on the imperative of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural preservation. While the local population moved little, the country’s borders fluctuated wildly. Chronologically, the three provinces belonged, separately or together to the Roman, the Russian, the Ottoman, and the Austro-Hungarian Empires. Constantly competing with the need for survival, the utopian impetus could not thrive in these unfavorable historical conditions. According to Achim, those who would have been utopians here “lived in a closed and archaic horizon, without an outstanding culture of the voyage and lacked the vocation of geographical expansion, without a

representation of the sea-related universe specific to populations of navigators.<sup>94</sup> He refers, of course, to the British, the French, the Spanish, and the Portuguese who were the first cultures to envision utopias, with the first two in particular, being responsible for establishing the utopian canon.<sup>95</sup> He might be onto something here: this connection between seafaring nations and utopian production explains the scarcity of the utopian production in landlocked Romanian culture.

In truth, Dobrogea, a smaller province, on and off Romania's, bordered the Black Sea; however, the fleets that used it as an exit point for maritime commerce and as a strategic location were those of the foreign powers ruling over the native Romanians. The latter had no historical opportunities or the economic might to do so. The short-lived reunification of the three provinces in 1600 was too brief to engender such economic and political endeavors. The 1859 unification of Wallachia and Moldova was a complicated process, strife with border complications, and diplomatic mishaps. In these conditions, the Romanian provinces developed as small enclaves of stubbornly enduring folkloric beliefs and linguistic practices, and an ingrained sense of political and geographical isolation. The persistent subaltern condition ending in 1918, when Transylvania joined the other two historical provinces, is the main reason for the delayed and anemic productions of this culture. Achim also opined that the "orientalism" of the Ottoman Empire permeated the local culture and caused

the breaking-off for centuries, of the South-East European area—under Ottoman control for several centuries—[an area to] which Romanian culture also belongs, from the ideatic stream of Western culture, of a way of thinking to which utopia organically belongs.<sup>96</sup>

The orientalization<sup>97</sup> of Wallachia not only exposed its culture to the fabulations and the exoticism of the East, but also prevented its sister province, Transylvania, under constant threat of occupation from the same empire, from adopting Western values and utopian-like traditions.

Some qualifications aside, George Achim's explanations for the absence of utopian examples in Romanian thinking are valid. Romanian culture did not produce cultural artifacts that closely correspond to known Western utopian paradigms. The local culture was undeniably agricultural and pastoral. Adverse historical conditions and self-preservation prevented it from engaging in expansive geographical adventures, even



merely literary ones. This does not mean, however, that the utopian vocation was absent. Imagining practices were, of course, at work, as the enduring desire for the “greater Romania” showed. So, what Achim said is true only if approached from a certain angle. This culture was devoid of a utopian vocation recognizable as of Western type, but not, as shown, of the universal desire, which manifested here in analogous utopian formats.

Bogdan Crețu, of the so-called New Critique and Literary History generation, on the other hand, believed that anti-utopia was the genre of choice in Romania under communism where it had to

function as a subjective valve, and become a weak milieu of resistance to totalitarianism (and communism in general). For this reason, the parable, the allusion, the oblique discourse became its main tools, and... they disguised themselves under the sometimes lyrical, sometimes matte veils of the parable.<sup>98</sup>

In this category, he included, among other examples, Oana Orlea’s *Perimeter Zero* and Matei Vișniec’s *In Gufi’s Country*. These two utopian analogues contain the elements Crețu mentions as instrumental in counteracting the communist, totalitarian discourse: Orlea’s parables (the perpetuating society of actors), and Vișniec’s cultural allusions (the names of the characters). These alterations of the utopian impulse, too, point at the existence of an impetus that had to alter its parameters under oppressive rules.

Sorin Antohi, on the other hand, points at the fact that, thematically, the utopian impulse migrated to related genres like satire and Science Fiction. The latter in particular, experienced an extraordinary boom during the Ceaușescu era. The system’s predilection for grand schemes and megalomaniacal plans was propitious for the SF genre. Tens of clubs and specialized journals sprouted throughout the country, and numerous conferences and conventions took place every year both in Romania and its sister communist countries (Poland, U.S.S.R, etc.). That this genre was so popular with the “scientific” writers of the Eastern bloc, and was even encouraged by the system who sponsored some of the events, can be explained by the semantics associated with the genre. “Science” was revolutionary, and its practical applications, the needed tools for the makeover of the retrograde countries. “Fiction” was playful, yet it could still deliver, if it foretold the amazing future in store for the communist enterprise. Fărcășan’s 1959 *A Love Story from the Year 41042* was such an example: with its uberutopian overtones it points out the fact that, when the communist system in power was spreading terror, some writers

did not cower. Instead, they praised loudly, and in so doing, brought attention to the conflicting situation on the ground.

To recap, all these alternative routes taken by the utopian impetus in Romania were caused by the fact that, in its spatial, narrative, and political forms, the communist regime had appropriated it completely. The non-party affiliated would be utopian expressions could not use the same rhetorical devices or implement the same spatial practices, so they mutated to divergent genres. To now reiterate some of these adaptations will help us anchor the particularities of the analogous Romanian utopian tradition. Some narratives migrated to the SF genre (Sergiu Fărcășan's *A Love Story from the Year 41042*); some were dismissed by the censors from the start, rewritten in French and published outside Romania (as was the case with Bujor Nedelcovici's *Al doilea Mesager* (*The Second Messenger*) and Orlea's *Perimeter Zero*); and some employed a bevy of innuendos, and double-speak-like expressions and migrated to the satirically-heavy end of the utopian genre (as was the case with Vișniec's *În țara lui Gufi*). Such extreme authorial measures were indeed necessary. As the intensity of oppression and censorship vacillated throughout the communist years, its specter made even the most despondent writers disguise their work.

In practice, in Paidetic format, or as literary school, utopian learning sidestepped into intellectual mysticism and linguistic innovations. In uchronian and intopian formats it managed to create some ideological resistance, but the impact was minimal. These adaptations—which made the utopian genre unrecognizable to autochthonous scholars looking for its canonical format—were necessary to counteract the party's cultural policies and censorship practices. Compared to the neighboring communist countries, Romania's intellectual and popular resistance to the abuses of the system was less overt, but present nevertheless: preeminent intellectuals took refuge in deflective, stylistic exercises, and the overworked masses trudged on, responding with minimal physical resistance, humor, and satire, to the abuses of power. In a country without a solid national culture and identity, without an established narrative or philosophical utopian tradition, the aggressive socialist revolution was the only acceptable manifestation of utopian longing: the suppressed would-be-utopians were forced to fight it with dissimilar ammunition.

## Chapter Three

### The Sabbath, or Uchronian Fridays, and Fabled Old New Lands

If you will it, it is not a dream.

Theodor Herzl, *Old New Land*<sup>99</sup>

The Zohar has kept me Jewish.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koretz<sup>100</sup>

More than Israel has kept Shabbat, *Shabbat has kept Israel*.

Achad HaAm (Asher Ginsburg)<sup>101</sup>

In the previous chapter, I have just shown how the Romanian utopian tradition non-affiliated with the communist regime responded to its oppressing conditions by deflecting its narrative and communitarian facets to uchronian, intopian, and paidetic forms. I have also highlighted the important historical conditions that contributed to the particularities of this national and utopian discursive tradition: the lack of continuous and stable national borders for almost two thousand years, the territorial occupation of the geo-historical cradle by various European and Asian Empires, and the totalitarian rule of the communist party from 1947 to 1989. Now, I am going to showcase a different cultural example, that of the dispersed Jewish groups, using similar uchronian, mystical narratives and practices to imagine alternative ontologies, during their equally long exile from the land of Israel. This case is particularly important for my extended hypothesis because a) it proves that identity- national and cultural could be maintained outside the geographical cradle for a long period of time, granted that the original “space” becomes symbolic geography and is “visited” on a regular basis by the collective, via rites and rituals. And b) it challenges the idea of a spatially-dependent nation. It will support my argument by showing that different oppressive conditions, imposed on another culture than the one previously discussed, produce similar kind of utopian adaptations.

I will start by providing a brief historical and geographical overview that will help us understand the particularities of this utopian tradition. Then, I will do a close reading of selected passages from *The Zohar: The Book of Splendor* and detail some of the rituals used in the practice of Sabbath as performed in Lurianiac/Theosophical Kabbalah. In the second part of the chapter, I will focus on Theodor Herzl’s *Altneuland/Old New Land* and its utopian and national rhetoric. By highlighting the particular uchronian methods used during the Sabbath “to return to Jerusalem” and the successful enactment of this voyage into actual geographical space and historical reality, I also hope to show two things, which will become relevant in the next chapter, and vital in the concluding chapter of this dissertation. First, although the novel has been credited (as per Anderson, Brennan) with the coalescing of modern national identity, alternative narratives and practices proved surprisingly effective in doing so in non-Western cultures, economically less-developed, and politically, in subalterity positions. The success of these age old methods, not dependent on print capitalism, makes them informative for contemporary national and

utopian making techniques, which are becoming less centralized and more dependent on a variety of media, not just print. Second, even though it met with political success, the utopian project of Israel points out at the limitations and challenges inherent in such spatially-dependent national projects. I am interested in understanding the complex processes on the ground, when such a spatial project is enacted over another, existing or emergent national narrative. In addition, by showing these two things, I will have also highlighted the “colonizing” character of the utopian narrative and project and prefaced its more visible manifestations in its postcolonial, NEL expressions to be detailed in the Chapter Four.

To accomplish all these tasks, I will repeat the approach used in Chapter One and start by providing some historical and cultural context for our second case study.

Just like the Romanian people, the wandering Jews experienced many historical upheavals and fell under the wrath and rule of various empires. Unlike the Romanian people, who, while divided, inhabited their native land, the peoples of Israel were separated from their geo-historical cradle. The dispersion of the population, in consecutive waves of migration and displacement sent ethnically connected communities to the farthest corners of the world (Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias, Fig. 5: The Jewish Exile, 70-1497, [f/f] ). As they adapted to new locales and cultures, these displaced groups learned new languages and customs, and developed their own cultural enclaves in places as distinct as Western and Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Americas. As assimilated citizens, or as autonomous groups, they participated in the histories of these places and contributed as part of, or as their foil, to the coalescing of their national and cultural heritage and identity. As “othering” was the most common situation, the same process of identity formation took, for the wandering Jews, alternative utopian forms. These were less dependent on historical and spatial contingencies as these were too unpredictable and variable to support national mythogenetic activities. Small or large-scale pogroms, the mass expulsion from Spain (1492) and Portugal (1497), and the ever present acts of anti-Semitism were constant reminders of the Jews precarious condition away from their own land, and combined, caused a move inward, toward symbolic geography, and mythologized historical and biblical events.

This inward direction of the utopian desire was reversed in late nineteenth-century, when historical events created the propitious conditions for the unpacking of the ethnic identity up till then preserved by uchronian and mystical methods, into spatially and nationally specific forms. The same early historical conditions that engendered, after two thousand years, the creation of the modern state of Romania, also facilitated the fictional and factual creation of the state of Israel. The Austro- Hungarian and the Ottoman Empires, the two super powers that had held, under their respective imperial “umbrellas,” countless peoples during their long historical existence met their demise roughly about the same time. The former was dissolved in 1918, after 51 years of existence and dominion over most of Central and Eastern Europe, and the latter dissolved in 1922, after almost six centuries of dominion over European seas, most of Southern and Eastern Europe, Northern Africa, and many territories in the Middle East. The two world conflagrations that followed ended the rule of the remaining European empires and, from their rubble, various peoples previously under their rule seized the opportunity to reclaim their historical land and vie for a chance to become independent political entities. Two of these emergent polities were Israel and Romania.

In the Jewish case, the advancement of the national case was shaped by the publication of Theodor Herzl’s 1902 utopian novel *Altneuland/Old New Land*. When Herzl wrote it, historical and living conditions throughout Europe both periclitated the existence of the Jews and precipitated their return to the land of Israel. Six years prior to the novel’s publication, Herzl had discussed the urgent need for a Jewish state in “Der Judenstaat”/ “A Jewish State.” This pamphlet-length political program introduced the incipient Zionist ideology to an international audience and soon became the manifesto of the fast-growing, pan-national movement. Therein, Herzl discussed the urgency of the situation and the immediate need for the relocation of *all* Jews to a safe geographical location. The notorious Dreyfus affair, in which Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish French officer was falsely accused of spying for Germany, had split the public opinion of the time, and is retrospectively known as the most famous early modern case of anti-Semitism. The affair clearly signaled that assimilation was no longer keeping even the most successfully integrated Jews safe, and it was not an isolated event. Lynching, in countries like Romania, was not uncommon, and random killings throughout Europe were rising at an

alarming rate in the increasingly ethnocentric climate of the late nineteenth-century Europe. Deeply worried about these events, Herzl asked the readers of “The Jewish State” two very important and pressing questions: “Are we to get out now? And if so, to what place?”<sup>102</sup>

Prior to these climactic events, sites as different as Madagascar, Argentina, Australia, and the Americas had been appraised as possible new homes for variously sized Jewish groups (Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias, Fig. 6: Other Zions [f/f]). Herzl negotiated the terms to secure one such location himself. After meeting with the Sultan of Turkey in 1896, and in 1902 with the British Royal Commissioner of Alien Immigration, in 1903 he received an offer to establish a Jewish settlement in British East Africa. This Uganda location did not, however, meet with his approval and that of his fellow Zionists, and negotiations continued to secure the historical land of Israel as the site for the future state of Israel. Before addressing, in greater detail, Herzl’s utopian novel, and the success story of the state it envisioned, I would like to sidestep briefly and analyze the nature of its readership, its desires, and its expectations so as to explain the success of the novel as a “blueprint” for the state of Israel, and to better understand some of the uchronian methods used to maintain and perpetuate Jewish identity while away from the ancestral land.

For Herzl’s fictional description of the state of Israel to appeal to a large number of dispersed Jews, it had to respond to an existing longing. The dispersed groups to which Herzl addressed his “Judenstaat” and *Old New Land*—both works of intense ethnic and national specificity—had to subscribe to a discourse of commonality in order to enlist, and participate, in the materialization of such a complex national project. As Hebrew, the shared language of these dispersed groups, was gradually supplanted by various foreign languages, or by hybrid dialects, an essentialized version of Jewish identity was preserved in rabbinic and mystical rites and rituals. Widely-dispersed communities maintained and perpetuated ethnicity and identity via their common faith. As with geographical dispersion came alterity and oppression, the aspiration to unity was translated in ontological practices that could be appropriated and constructed upon with minimal resistance and competition from the host cultures and other ethnic groups. Just as in the Romanian case, textual encoding and symbolic spatial separation were favored

choices. Through partaking in daily, weekly, and seasonal holidays simultaneously observed by other such groups across the globe, these communities accessed an intangible patrimony that cemented the ethnies despite its geographical dispersion. Together with the Torah, the Talmud, and the rabbinic tradition, *The Zohar: The Book of Splendor* provided the means to symbolically bridge space and time, and detailed the cosmological framework onto which Jewish ontology could be anchored.

I would now like to detail two of these resources: *The Zohar* and the practice of the Sabbath as conceptualized by theosophical Kabbalah. Famous spiritual and secular leaders—Rebbe Pinchas of Koretz and Achad HaAm among them—have credited these novel approaches of the Zoharic reading of the Torah with their personal and their extended communities' adherence to the faith. This important work, the summa mystica of the Kabbalistic tradition and a complex and mysterious work in itself, was endowed with magical properties, and so were its inception and its ascertained place of origin. To add credibility and authenticity to the manuscript, when it first emerged in Spain in the thirteenth century, Jewish mystic Moses de Leon told his followers that it was the work of the second century BCE scholar, the legendary Shimon bar-Yochai. He, Moses de Leon, had found it by chance and copied passages<sup>103</sup> from the manuscript in order to share its important, sacred teachings with others. The uchronian elements and practices imbedded in both this text and its accompanying Sabbath practice helped create—outside unfavorable history—an imaginary community for the people of Israel long before the state of Israel became their welcoming harbor by offering them a home away from home/a temple away from The Temple.

Inspired by Isaac Luria's cosmological take, theosophical Kabbalists believed that, sometime in the past, the Creator poured forth his light and love into a vessel which, being too small to contain such energy and power, broke down into countless pieces. The resulting shards, known as the *kellipot*, blocked light and prevented the redemption process of the world, and the return of the Jews to Israel. The mystics of the faith, however, knew how to put them back together by performing the necessary behavior and consciousness transformation to engender the necessary *tikkun* (correction). Isaac Luria's novel interpretation of *The Zohar* suggested that students of Kabbalah had more agency over their lives than they previously thought. Luria went so far as to suggest that they



even had theurgical powers, i.e., the ability to engender the reunion of the divine, in *The Zohar* asserted as split in its gendered halves by the inequities of the world. Accordingly, the Jewish mystic, reinforced by his sustained faith, encouraged by his hevraya, and perfected through the mitzvot, could unravel the secrets of the Zoharic text and become a lover to the divine, and even a theurgical hero.

It is not surprising then, that offered these opportunities and extraordinary powers the mystics of the faith took their quest and studies very seriously. The text of the Torah became a tool of ascension and the dictionary to understand the divine. Augmented beyond its literal meaning, the biblical text took on esoteric qualities and became the “beloved” of the scholars who interacted with the Torah as lovers privy to her much-guarded secrets. They followed into the footsteps of hevraya whose discussions and theophanies the proto-mystical novel detailed as they wandered in a garden, supposedly in Galilee. By mirroring the experiences of the characters, the readers learned how to be “righteous,” and how to use their love relationship with the Torah to achieve personal, collective, and divine redemption. The process also required collaboration with others as the text, and its secrets, were deeply guarded, and required extended study to understand them and then replicate their teachings in real life. In *Ve-Nahar Yotse Me-Eden: al sefat Ha- Havayah Ha-Mistit BA- Zohar (A River Flows from Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar)*, Melila Hellner-Eshed noted the extent of these intense symbol-making activities:

The Companions expound the Torah in such a way that enables them access to its secret dimension, to expose the divine dimensions found within its verse and to be exposed to them. Indeed the generation of mystical experience in the *Zohar* is dependent on the possibility of entering the dimension of the secret . . . But what is the secret in the *Zohar* and why is the mystery hidden in words of the Torah? As opposed to other medieval conceptions of esotericism, the secret in the *Zohar* designates the dynamic layer within reality; that aspect of being which in fact constitutes the foundational quality of the world; in the words of the *Zohar*—“The world endures only by virtue of the secret.”<sup>104</sup>

As Hellner correctly notes, such radical, ambitious, and redemptive projects were challenging. (Self) selection was involved. Moreover, the intensity of study required by this practice logically resulted in ideological and practical insularity, and the creation of a

distinctive logos, mythos, and ethos known only to the initiated few. Just as in the Păltiniș case, this technique was necessary in order to create a safe enclave for high learning.

Also similarly to the paidetic practices in Romania, the language used to describe mystical tasks was encoded and semantically flexible. Moreover, it was also dressed in beautiful erotic imagery and it instructed the students on how to approach, seduce, and grow in love with the wisdom of the Torah. In *The Zohar*, Daniel Matt notes that, just as a lover would, the Kabbalists were trained to see their lecture and study as a developing and enveloping love affair:

“Torah removes a word from her sheath, is seen for a moment, then quickly hides away... She does so only for those who know her intimately.”

The Zohar does the same. It hides more than it reveals; only the careful, devoted reader can learn from it. It is a common experience to read several lines of Zohar, or an entire passage, and then wonder what the message was. Cascading imagery overwhelms coherent teaching. But that is the nature of the subject matter: the whole spectrum of colors flashing, disappearing. Those rays of color do not wait to be seen: they merge into the fusion of *zohar*.<sup>105</sup>

While creating the setting for such an encounter between the exiled Jewish mystics and their most beloved text, these exotic concepts and the esoteric language also made it difficult (but not impossible)<sup>106</sup> for non-initiated Jews and gentiles to understand the powers of the book, and/or to attempt similar engagement with its wisdom.

Both Matt and Hellner-Eshed, in their respective books, explore the methods through which this encoding was performed in *The Zohar* by the hevraya, who by combining the mitzvot and elements of the Neoplatonic scheme achieved contemplative union with higher realms of cosmic consciousness. They were helped in their quest to decipher the complex encoding process by information provided by the *Sefirot*, or the so-called Tree of Life. On this representational structure, the human and the divine world overlapped, and interacted in ways accessible and known only to the initiated. As such, the Sefirot was both a phenomenological structure and a cosmological snapshot onto which important cultural, historical, and spiritual data from the Jewish patrimony was transferred and shared with future generations.

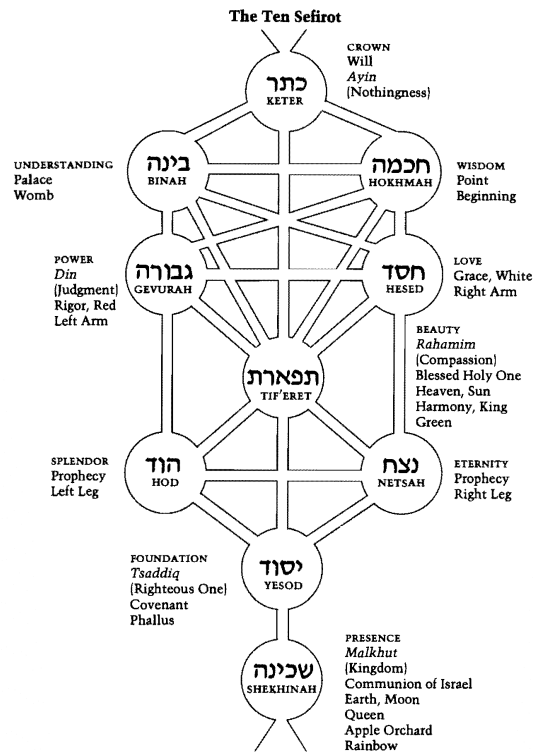


Fig.1: The Sefirot.<sup>107</sup>

This Sephirothic diagram illustrates just how richly layered the Kabbalistic text and practice were. The otherwise simple projection tells many mystical stories and preserves the past history of the Jews. It acted as a gate out of exilic history, and into the Edenic present. By using it as a means to travel back and forth, the mystics were transformed in the process and, in turn, transformed and repaired the divine. Put differently, the theurgical intervention of the righteous Kabbalist repaired the fissures or cracks in the fabric of the divine and restored the universe to its rightful order. As a vivid and inclusive representation of the universe, it reflected the same paradigm of the human being standing in for the divine: the microcosm of man standing in for the macrocosm of the divine. By working on himself, by applying corrections upon his own, intimate and accessible structure, nature and actions, the mystic exerted the same actions on the macro-level of the universe. It is not difficult to see that these kinds of practices refocused the imagining efforts *and* the utopian impulse inwards. As mysticism, by its

very nature, redirects the ontological and phenomenological inquiries inwardly, what we note here is a doubling of such drive. In the case of the Theosophical/Lurianic mystics, this inherent search for the self and the divine was also fueled by the superimposition of a strong utopian desire. The Kabbalists undertook such tasks not just to know themselves and the divine, but also to remake the divine and earn the right to return home.

Matt noted that this linguistic and semantic encryption was, by no means, an exercise in exoticism, but that it was a necessary tool to maintain the potency of the text and allow it full semiotic power. According to him, the mystics deployed these methods because:

knowledge of God requires a breaking out of our limited ways of thinking, a reaching beyond into a level of reality (and consciousness) where ordinary language cannot accompany us. Symbols, with their pictorial richness and seemingly endless depths, their willingness to breach contradiction (e.g., “God’s fire is water,” “true being is nothingness”) and their ability to penetrate arcane levels of our individual minds and our collective human memory, can alone remain of language as we use it to express these divine mysteries which, in their essence, are ever beyond words.<sup>108</sup>

Onto the thus encoded Sefirot, the Kabbalists imbedded the trajectory of individual and group existence, and the tools to change behavioral praxis. Using symbols, prayers,<sup>109</sup> and meditations, the mystics ascended on the levels of the Sefirot, elevated the entire world, and repaired the divine. Old Testament heroes acted as guides in this grand-scale cosmic saga with high stakes.

According to the same scholar, *The Zohar* also provided its readers the information necessary to become part of the story:

Abraham embodies the *sefirah* of *Hesed*, Divine Love, Isaac represents *Din*, Judgment; Jacob harmonizes the two aspects and symbolizes *Rahamim*, Compassion. The stories in Genesis about these Patriarchs are interpreted in the Zohar as accounts of their mystical journeys, their temptations and tests, and their attainment of divine qualities. Moses is the most perfect human being; he is arrayed in all ten *sefirot*. The Zohar on Exodus presents his spiritual biography and his mythical romance with *Shekhinah*, the feminine Divine Presence. After the Revelation at Sinai there are relatively few narrative sections in the Torah; from here on, the Zohar weaves several exegetical tales involving Rabbi Shim’on and his circle and the amazing characters they encounter.<sup>110</sup>

By receiving guidance from these Biblical characters, and inserting themselves in the cosmic tale, the Kabbalists exited history and engaged with perennial spiritual realms and infinite knowledge. They became like their ancestors, the legendary Biblical men from the Jewish Golden Age: Abraham, Isaac, and Moses. If these heroes had successfully traveled along this spiritual path, so could the hevraya characters in *The Zohar*. And if the hevraya could do it, so could the following generations of Kabbalists. “Tradition” and “reception” processes were continued and the worlds of man and God were repaired one uchronian excursion at a time.

The need to see past the literality of the text was addressed via *parables*. Their meaning was explained and decoded in lengthy conversations between the teacher, Shimon bar Yochai, and his students. For example, the “Parable of the Wheat” shows the need to look beyond the visible world. In this story, an arrogant, and otherwise ignorant man learns that he has to look beyond the superficial aspect of the things around him and delve into the nature, origin, function, and connection of everything that surrounds him. He has to understand why he had not been able to see before: these things are concealed, they require a concerted effort to unveil them. All his life, however, he “sowed wheat and ate the kernels raw,”<sup>111</sup> so he could not appreciate the sophistication of royal pastry, cakes kneaded in oil, or even bread. Even though he recognized that wheat was the essence of all these products, he failed to understand their true potential, or appreciate the increase in their value. He failed to see the sacred hidden in the profane.

Another Zoharic parable, “Kefar Tarsha/The Clod Village,” illustrates the importance of the mystic’s right consciousness as he undertakes study at midnight: through this particular activity he ennobles the locale and makes it worthy of the presence of the divine. In their pilgrimages, the hevraya arrive, at one point, at the Clod Village, a rather shoddy sort of place. As they prepare for their studies, they know that at midnight they need to speak the right words. When they do so they ascend to a specific moment in time, and gain access to a higher realm of consciousness that holds the answers to their most ardent questions. Matt explains that, when they arrived there, “Rabbi Abba asked, “Is there a rooster here? The host asked, “Why?” He replied, “I want to rise at midnight.”<sup>112</sup> The Clod Village upon which the hevraya stumbled in their pilgrimage was no special village, and “their astounding knowledge of Torah deserve[d] finer

surroundings.”<sup>113</sup> Even this shabby locale, however, could be sanctified, by the scholars waking up at a specific moment in time—hence Rabbi Abba’s need for a rooster—and engaging in the study of the Torah. This Zoharic episode emphasizes, yet again, the inherent agency of the individual, his potential to sanctify the mundane, and reveal the sacred. What this also suggests, is that, through uchronian practices, i.e., exiting history and ascending into the perfection of the divine, upon re-entering the linear course of history and geographical space, some of that perfection and sanctity is transferred into the locale itself.

This idea of transforming or perfecting time, and using it for heightened, superior mental and mystical activities, permeates both this tradition and the intellectual practices at Păltiniș. Both mystical and paidetic endeavors emphasized the soteriological properties of time. It is also important to note a difference between the two utopian analogues, which supports Coteptra’s claim that utopian traditions have a *national character*. More precisely, the Kabbalistic tradition added a new dimension to its uchronian endeavors: it transformed them into an act of love. To prevent disillusionment with the seemingly never-ending exile, the Kabbalistic mythos built in constant and relentless excitement for the study process. It encouraged devotion to the teachings of the book, and dwelling into a constant state of exultation similar to being in love. The mystic was no less than a “lover” of Torah. Through this unwavering love for her, he also encouraged the love affair between the divine couple who was renewed and perfected by his actions. The mystics’ theurgical powers were detailed in the parable of “The Old Man and the Beautiful Maiden.”

Just like the “Parable of the Wheat,” it instructed students to constantly search for the essence of things, and to do so as a lover would, constantly enthralled by his lover. Only when ‘transported’ could the student, his community, *and* Israel get closer to the divine. The nature of the divine is revealed gradually, as when a beautiful maiden allows her suitor to come closer and learn to appreciate and love her.

[Torah] reveals herself to no one but her lover.  
Torah knows that he who is wise of heart<sup>114</sup>  
Hovers about her gate every day.  
What does she do?  
She reveals her face to him from the palace  
And beckons him with a hint,

Then swiftly withdraws to her hiding place.  
No one who is there knows or reflects;  
He alone does,  
And his heart and his soul and everything within him  
Flows out to her.  
That is why Torah reveals and conceals herself.  
With love she approaches her lover  
To arouse love within him.

Aroused within the student, the love for Torah is a love that requires his best behavior, and his most efforts. Disciplining himself and transforming his own nature, the lover interacts with the text, and builds a loving partnership with it: he becomes fully invested in this theurgical mission. This preference for the erotic turn in the Kabbalistic tradition can be explained by the transcending effects associated with being in love. When he falls “in love” with the Torah, the student is *up lifted* out of his mundane reality. The most taxing elements of the exilic life, its gloom, problems, and vicissitudes pale in comparison with the beauty of the text, the excitement, and the feeling of transcendence and accomplishment resulting from cleaving to the divine.

This process of “loving” Torah is also a very intellectual kind of activity as it can be seen in the following passage describing the techniques to approach the sacred text and its many meanings: the literal (*peshat*), the implied (*derasha*), and the allegorical (*haggadah*),

She begins to speak with him from behind a curtain she has drawn,  
Words he can follow, until he reflects a little at a time.  
This is *derasha*.<sup>115</sup>  
Then she conversed with him through a veil,  
Words riddled with allegory.<sup>116</sup>  
This is *haggadah*.  
Once he has grown accustomed to her,  
She reveals herself face to face  
And tells him all her hidden secrets,  
All the hidden ways,  
Since the primordial days secreted in her heart.  
Now he is a perfect human being,  
Husband of Torah, master of the house.

This way, moving closer and closer to the essence, and the secrets of Torah, the mystics lift veil after (semantic) veil. They see further once they go beyond *peshat*, the literal reading of the Torah, and delve deeply into its additional layers of meaning: the *derasha*,

and the *hiddah*/allegory/*haggadah*. The deciphering of these codes is time intensive; it secludes the mystic/lover/wandering Jew for extended periods of time and transports him out of historical reality. Moreover, these theurgical missions transform the hero: he becomes a “perfect human being” sworn to secrecy, privy to extraordinary secrets and transcendental realities.

All her secrets she has revealed to him,  
Withholding nothing, concealing nothing.  
She says to him, ‘Do you see that word,  
That hint with which I beckoned you at first?  
So many secrets there! This one and that one!’  
Now he sees that nothing should be added to those words  
And nothing taken away.<sup>117</sup>  
Now the *peshat* of the verse, just like it is!<sup>118</sup>  
Not even a single letter should be added or deleted.  
Human beings must become aware!  
They must pursue Torah to become her lovers!”<sup>119</sup>

In addition to encoding language and casting themselves as servants and lovers of the text, the *hevraya* used its transformative powers to become “righteous,” for only the righteous, *The Zohar* claimed, “will inherit the land forever.”<sup>120</sup> More specifically, they believed that, taking time to study made one righteous, and being righteous earned one land/space. By becoming “righteous,” they earned “virtual space.” When enough such credit was deposited in the redemption vault, the return to the land of Israel was imminent. So, by “building in time” the mystics also built a bridge back to their land. They were aided, in this particular task, by Zoharic key words and phrases that marked a specific exit, or gateway out of history. Hellner-Eshed identifies apotropaic expressions like ‘*aval hashta*’, meaning “but now” functioning as a portal<sup>121</sup> into the secret/sacred meaning of the text. As soon as the *hevraya* came upon this kind of phrase in the original text they knew that it acted as a ready “elevator” taking them from the lower levels of the human world to the highest levels of the divine.

An even more potent means of transcendence, the practice of the Sabbath, provided a lengthier departure from the dispersed sites of exile, and a symbolic, collective return to Jerusalem. What made this holi/day such an important *uchronian* tool was its ability to become—through rituals of separation, and changes of consciousness—a temporary/temporal pocket of sanctity, and a very close substitute for the space and time



as previously experienced in Eden, in Israel, and then expected to be experienced again in *olam-haba*, the much-awaited world to come. In *Hidden Rhythms—Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*, Eviatar Zerubavel noted that, “the notion of sanctity in Judaism has been attached to time far more than to space, so that the sacred quality of time does not vary across space as much as the sacred quality of space varies across time.”<sup>122</sup> During the lengthy exile, time was—indeed—the most readily available construction material, and most accessible building site. Prevented from claiming new geographical space as their own, Jewish communities used instead the sanctified time of the Sabbath to imagine a perfected world, inhabited by perfected human beings. The holiday acted as a periodically accessible building site, which could be arranged and deployed so as to “built a Temple in Time.”

This “succession of eternities,”<sup>123</sup> as Mircea Eliade called the Sabbath in *The Sacred and the Profane*, enabled the Jews to access an idealized state of being outside history in a place and time idealized by the geographical separation from the ancestral land. The four major dimensions of the temporal profile of any situation or event that Zerubavel discussed in his book—sequential structure, duration, temporal location and rate of occurrence—shaped the Sabbath into the perfect cleaving tool to the divine. These dimensions coexisted within this holy day in an ideal form. The sequential structure was exemplified by the rituals of purifications and preparation like cleaning one’s home and courtyard, transforming one’s abode, nail paring, bathing and ablution, ritual dressing. The rituals of separation included concluding prayers; the several *havdalah*: over wine and over fire. Its duration was a constant (a 25-hour period) temporal location (reaching both into the past and into the/for future). And its rate of occurrence (52 times a year in the Gregorian calendar) transformed it into a weekly haven. By taking advantage of these dimensions, the individual and his community left behind the routine, the grime, and the historical grind. Or, as Zerubavel noted, in “segregating the sacred world from the profane world, time was functionally analogous to space.”<sup>124</sup> Eliade’s and Zerubavel’s observations are similar to those made by Abraham Heschel who, in *Sabbath* opined that, because “space belonged to the conqueror,”<sup>125</sup> the dispersed Jewish communities could only build in time.<sup>126</sup>

In *The Sabbath in Classical Kabbalah*, Elliot Ginsburg notes that Sabbath time became the equivalent of the Temple itself and, through rituals, the observant experienced it as time spent in the physical Temple. This kind of conscious transformation of daily life and activities, perpetuated by regularly accessing a cyclical, mythical time ensured that, despite geographical separation from the land of Israel, the dispersed groups remained Jewish. Even if they could not take part in the unfolding history of the land, they visited it, via uchronian practices, daily, weekly. Precisely because “space belonged to the conqueror, ” the malleable temporal utopeme of the utopian paradigm became the preferred axis on which to project and imagine the community of Israel. The Kabbalists, Ginsburg noted

also imagined Time in a more obviously historical fashion, as a system of linear co-ordinates mapping the progression from Creation to Cosmic redemption. Within this schema ...each Sabbath [wa]s seen as a rupture, a break in the unidirectional procession of history. For on this day Time reverses its course and, as it were, “conflates”: the paradigmatic first and last moments erupt into the present; the past, present, and future converge.<sup>127</sup>

In this enclave, where temporal “conflations” and “convergences” took place, the mystic could immerse in rites and rituals even more profoundly. He could observe and mark the arrival of the Sabbath (*movaeh Sabbath*) and its departure (*motzaeh Sabbath*), and even “steal” moments from the profane and add them unto the sacred holiday (*hossafath Sabbath*). Sacred time was thus elongated, expanded, and Sabbath’s transformative forces amplified.

So, what in the profane world were twenty-five hours (of quantitative time), became, in the sanctified world and time of the Sabbath, an encounter with the past, a purification of the present, a taste of the future and no less importantly, an encounter with the divine:

The Kabbalists made the fantastic claim that their mystical teachings derived from the Garden of Eden. This suggests that Kabbalah conveys our original nature: the unbounded awareness of Adam and Eve. We have lost this nature, the most ancient tradition, as the inevitable consequence of tasting the fruit of knowledge, the price of maturity and culture. The kabbalist yearns to recover that primordial tradition, to regain cosmic consciousness, without renouncing the world.<sup>128</sup>

The Sabbath, as a set of rituals and techniques was thus conducive to a state of “cosmic awareness,” and the substantiated re-union of the self with the divine achievable within the physical constricts of the geographical world. Moreover, as Ginsburg noted, the Kabbalists “linked Shabbat with those Sacred Spaces which had traditionally served as axis mundi: ex: Eden, Jerusalem, the Temple.”<sup>129</sup> Within the weekly practice then, these temporal landmarks came to be represented and actualized in the proper observance of the Sabbath day.

These semantic permutations are important as they mark the gradual transference of the utopian impulse from space (where the Temple could no longer be built) to time (where it was impenetrable and eternal). Mircea Eliade analyzed this shift in *The Sacred and the Profane*:

The Heavenly Jerusalem was created by God at the same time as Paradise, hence in aeternum. The city of Jerusalem was only an approximate reproduction of the transcendent model; it could be polluted by man, but the model was incorruptible, for it was not involved in time.<sup>130</sup>

By equating the Sabbath with a return to the Heavenly Jerusalem, the kabbalists shifted significance from the locale to a specific moment in the primordial time. Moreover, through its transformative powers, this “historical event acquire[d] a new dimension; [to the Jewish people] it [became] a theophany.”<sup>131</sup> Just as “the Temple was an *imago mundi*, being at the Center of the World, at Jerusalem, (and sanctifying) not only the entire cosmos but also cosmic life—that is, time,”<sup>132</sup> the individual body of the Sabbath observer became an ever-perfecting-milieu. Gradually, after several semiotic transfers, the sublimated individual self became equated to the formula “body-house-cosmos.” The wo/man thus became a carrier of “shards” from the original Paradise and a symbol of its continuity and mobility in time and space.

In “The symbolism of the Kabbalistic Sabbath: Motif Studies,” Ginsburg discusses how, when the Temple was destroyed, “the Sacred Center, the axis around which Jewish life was oriented was violated, rendered non-functional. The Sabbath gradually supplanted the Temple as the center unifying religious symbol of the Jewish people.”<sup>133</sup> With the passing of time and increasing geographical distance between the community of Israel and its native land, the Sabbath became the “Real of Time,” a

dimension “left untouched by the conqueror.” Within this untouchable dimension, then, the transformation of the self continued. Through the “Sabbath observance [which was] salvific in nature, [and] serv[ed] as a foretaste of the World to Come, and pav[ed] the way for Messianic redemption,”<sup>134</sup> the adept became a “shomer Shabbat”—one who properly observed the Sabbath. Such an individual became aware of the double significance of the Shabbat: “a return to *illud tempus* (Eliade) and an “adumbration of *olam haba*, or “the World to Come.”<sup>135</sup> This lack of spatial and temporal specificity then allowed the adept’s unhindered admittance into the constant realm of the divine.

More important still was the fact that, once the Kabbalist mastered the weekly rituals of the Sabbath, he could then ascend/understand/descend to/from the Sabbath of Sabbaths, *the Jubilee* and receive “the holiest blessings of all.”<sup>136</sup> Joseph Gikatilia, whose work *Sha’arei Orah* is mentioned in Ginsburg’s analysis of the Sabbath, believed that

Through Sabbath a person may enter the World-to-Come, the mystery of the Jubilee... this is the Great Sabbath, the supernal Seventh... the Sabbath [Yesod] draws down the emanation and the great God: Life and Redemption [i.e., the most profound blessings] from the World-to-Come.<sup>137</sup>

The shomer Sabbath observants were thus both sanctified by dwelling and partaking in the Sabbath practice, and even more blessed by the visitation of the *nefesh Sabbath*, the “additional Sabbath soul.” This temporal conviviality between the mortal’s soul and the Sabbath soul helped him “internalize” the Sabbath and become conscious of the paradigm of the body as microcosm and Sabbath surrounding one, Sabbath within the one. Based on this macrocosm-microcosm relationship between the atemporal/aspatial/divine and the temporary/limited/human, the Sabbath experience was also conducive to the human being becoming a substitute for the divine. This deeply ingrained belief, in the correspondence between the divine and the human world meant that the mystic was still in Eden, he was anchored solidly—if for only 25 hours—in that primordial time. Through Sabbath then, the “fall” of man—which still figured prominently in other eschatology—had been repaired.

The following diagram shows these complex correspondences between the human and the divine worlds and explains the process through which Sabbath became, in Theosophical Kabbalah, a “portable paradise.”

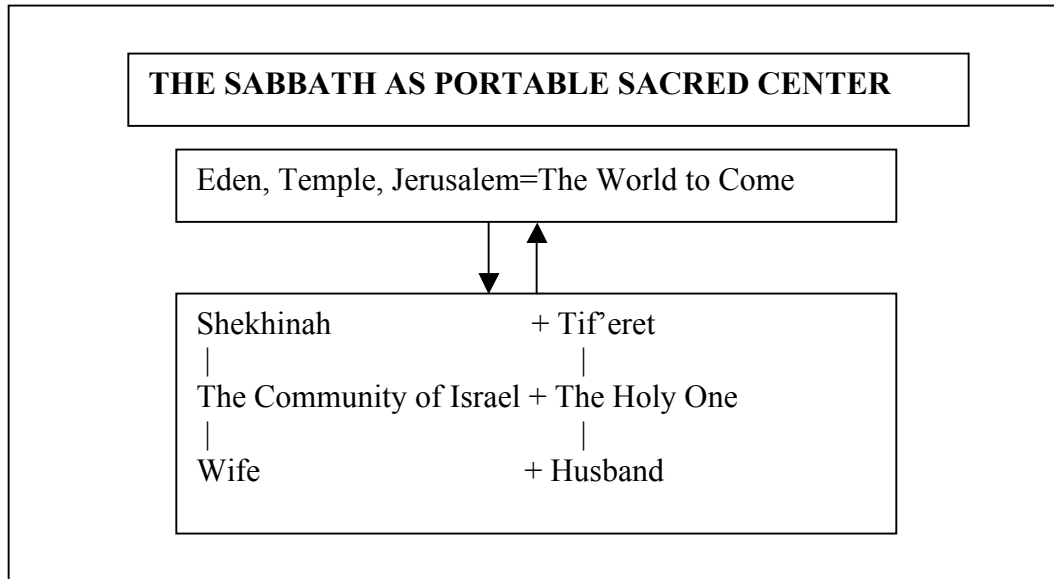


Fig. 2: The Encoding of Sabbath as Portable Paradise (my graphic formulation).

Informed by the encoding and distribution of symbols on the Sefirot, this graph shows the community of Israel identified with Shekhinah, the feminine aspect of the divine, and the counter with the male Tif'eret. According to the Kabbalistic teachings Ginsburg mentions in his book, during Sabbath Shekhinah was reunited with her mate, Tif'eret, the Holy One: “On the Sabbath day, the lovers [Tif'eret and Shekhinah] have returned to each other face to face.”<sup>138</sup> This erotic/intimate connection between the people of Israel and the divine principle conferred even more agency to the Kabbalist. The latter could engender the equilibration of cosmic principles simply by changing his consciousness while performing marital intercourse during the Sabbath. The husband and wife reproduced, in their lovemaking, a simultaneous divine activity: they were both transformed by the ritual and, more importantly, were transformative of the divine masculine and feminine potentialities, enhancing them both and engendering their reunion. This awakening and transformation encapsulated within the “portable Paradise” also enhanced the theurgical powers of the Kabbalists (*and* their wives). What this meant was that the mystic, the wandering Jew, had within himself, the necessary tools and means to accede to Paradise and bring Paradise back to earth. This most extreme, and successful, uchronian method shows how, in their specific oppressive historical conditions, the Kabbalists developed elaborate semantic and ontological transmutations

of the utopian impetus. They gave it particular and cultural analogous forms as they transmuted it from its denied spatial expressions, to temporal and theurgical expressions and endeavors of cosmic importance.

To now connect these findings to the main claim being developed in this chapter, we note that this portable utopia/Paradise paradigm of the Jewish mystical tradition resulted from the utopian impetus being forced inwardly and upwardly by oppressive external conditions, which denied its spatial manifestations. This portability shows the increased potentiality of such a redirecting of the utopian impetus: from top (system, government, dicta) to bottom (the group, the individual). In this analogous utopian model, it is the individual who defines, acts, and exacts the idealized utopian endeavors: he is the powerful epicenter of such imagined communities. As he derives his ideological and spiritual nourishment from eternity/eternal truths, he is less influenced by the vicissitudes and variables of history, and much more likely to succeed in creating a community aligned to very high, celestial, standards. The reintroduction of such an extraordinary and powerful narrative/epicenter/imagined community into linear history and physical geography could not happen, however, without encountering resistance from existing narratives and varying political interests on the actual, contested land. Much more so, when, by virtue of its strength and changing historical circumstances, such a uchronian project is ushered into its physical and political manifestation onto land already inhabited by others.

Theodor Herzl imagined this process as a peaceful, collaborating kind of project. The utopian focus of his *Alneuland* represents a radical departure from the mystical texts and practices I have just detailed. The narrative format of *Old New Land* is that of a classic utopia: the novel is a systematic description of the foiled “old” and “new” land of Israel as seen through the eyes of two travelers who see it before and after the founding of the state of Israel. In the systematic manner of the utopian genre, Jewish, Christian, and Arab characters dialogue and instruct each other about the ways to create a strong economy, a flourishing culture, and a vibrant society on the land they share. Assuming the peaceful cohabitation of the local population and the incoming colonizers, the story details the ways to restore the Jewish nation within its historical cradle and to guide it in

the transformation of arid, mostly agricultural Palestine into a developed, industrialized haven for incoming colonizers and locals alike.

Its “New Society,” inspired and modeled on the French utopian thinking and its “mutualist economic system” has equal voting rights for men and women, no army, no beggars,<sup>139</sup> and has seemingly avoided racial or ethnic conflicts between its citizens. The representation of the Christian and Arab populations of the British mandated Palestine, as the collaborating “other” marks a departure from canonical models in which groups are presented as foils of each other. This utopia embraces its “others” and even tries to prevent displacement and oppression from happening to its non-Jewish population. On a disputed geographical site, it proposes a peaceful spatial restructuring between three distinct religious discourses, and two very different ethnic narratives. It depicts the transition of power and the entire colonization process as a peaceful process. The 1902 novel fronts the possibility that this multicultural, multi-ethnic new modern state will be inhabited by citizens respecting each other’s differences, and working together towards a common goal.

Herzl shared his belief in the feasibility of such a state early on in his novel, when one of his characters, young Jewish Friedrich Loewenberg, quickly befriends Christian Prussian Mr. Kingscourt. The latter, looking for a companion for an adventurous trip to the South Seas, had advertised a traveling opportunity under the name N.O.Body. Their fateful meeting sets the tone for the religious tolerance later to characterize the state of Israel:

I am a Jew. Does it make a difference?”

Kingscourt laughed. “I say! That’s an amazing question. You are a man. I can see that. And you seem to be an educated man. You are disgusted with life. That shows your good taste. Everything else is frightfully unimportant where we are going...”<sup>140</sup>

The wise Prussian is willing, and delighted, to be accompanied by this young stranger, even if he is a Jew. Subsequently, David Littvak, the little boy whom Friedrich helped financially before he left Vienna, will return the favor of friendship and trust to both his benefactor and his non-Jewish best friend when the two return to Israel/Palestine after twenty years.

I guessed from your first questions ... that you were not a Jew. Let me tell you, then, that my associates and I make no distinctions between one man and another. We do not ask to what race or religion a man belongs. If he is a man, that is enough for us.<sup>141</sup>

The last phrase defines the essence of the new citizens of the state of Israel. The condition, sufficient and necessary, to be granted citizenry in the new, multi-ethnic polity is one's humanity. Assumingly, this is what Herzl/Kingscourt meant by "a man": someone who could relate and interact well with others despite religious and ethnic differences.

The Jews themselves, upon returning to the land of Israel as colonizers, were expected to have learned deeply from their own history of oppression and avoid imposing on others the same plight (Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias, Fig. 7: The return of the Jews to Zion (1948-1964), [f/f] ). In this fictional account of the process of colonization, when introducing their national discourse into the geography and history of Palestine, they did so with respect and consideration for the existing, potentially competing discourses on the ground. David Littvak's character doubles as the convincing spokesperson for Herzl's own belief that the Jews could establish such a state:

Only we Jews could have done it... We only... We only were in a position to create this New Society, this new center of civilization here. One thing dovetailed into another. It could have come only through us, through our destiny. Our moral sufferings were as much a necessary element as our commercial experience and our cosmopolitanism.<sup>142</sup>

The moral suffering and the extended oppression experienced during the long exile taught the Jews the importance of ethnic tolerance. Herzl had the Arab character reassure the rest of the cast that this is, indeed, the reality on the ground. Reschid confesses that, actually, the value of his orange grove has grown tremendously since the Jews returned to the land and established the mutualist economic system:

Our profits have grown considerably. Our orange transport has multiplied tenfold since we have had good transportation facilities to reconnect with the whole world. Everything here has increased in value since your immigration.<sup>143</sup>



Potential conflict is averted in the novel by the fact that space seems to be shared peacefully, with great economic gains for all involved and each group free to practice its religion.

Yet, Kingscourt, the old Christian, who is an outsider without any personal or ethnic interests vested in the area, requires further explanations from Reschid:

“You’re queer fellows. You Moslems. Don’t you regard these Jews as intruders?” the Arab responds:

“You speak strangely, Christian” [...] Would you call a man a robber who takes nothing from you, but brings you something instead? The Jews have enriched us. Why should we be angry with them? They dwell among us like brothers. Why should we not love them? I have never had a better friend among my co-religionists than David Littvak here. He may come to me, by day or night, and ask what he pleases. I shall give it to him. And I know that I, too, may count upon him as upon my brother. He prays in a different house to the God who is above us all. But our houses of worship stand *side by side* (my emphasis) and I always believe that our prayers, when they rise, mingle somewhere up above, and then continue on their way together till they appear before Our Father.”<sup>144</sup>

Reschid’s thoughtful answer to the inquisitive Kingscourt is key in understanding a few other differences between this Jewish utopian novel and others of the Western canon. The already noted collective memory of oppression that the various Jewish groups inherently and factually shared in real life prevented them, in theory, from intentionally replicating the same unfavorable conditions for their local “others” with whom they shared the land of Palestine. Reschid’s answer reinforces the (fictional) reality of such a society, constructed by the converging narratives of various “narrators” who live, peacefully, “side by side.” Representing the three main religious traditions, Kingscourt, Littvak, and Reschid embody the best human character traits, and continuously display religious tolerance and eagerness to learn from each other. Collaboration and friendship are, apparently, the norm, and the new state is quickly becoming a political and economical power in the area. It is helpful to preface here that this idea of peaceful cohabitation, expressed in the narrative of a previously oppressed group, is not unique to Herzl. Many decades later, in his account of Caliban taking back his land, Aimé Césaire will present the same utopian ideal, and opine that the best world is that in which both master/ oppressor and slave/ oppressed enter a dialogue and work together to co-imagine and co-create their world.

To now return to Herzl's novel, it is important to acknowledge another way it departs from the canonical format and content of the genre. It is highly, and immediately, corrective of past travails of the Jews. One of the main duties of the founding forums in this society is the recruiting of the best minds: delegations are sent out to scout the world for the best tradesmen, intellectuals, and innovators, and invite them to build something other than a "nation of shopkeepers" (in the past, the stereotypical profession of the wandering Jews). Their convergence on the ancient soil engenders the transformation of the medley population into a vibrant nation blessed with vitality, cosmopolitanism, and the human and financial resources necessary to create a modern state. In Herzl's vision, the resulting society and landscape are breathtaking:

Twenty years before, Kingscourt and Friedrich had entered Jerusalem by night and from the west. Now they came by day, approaching from the east. Then she had been a gloomy, dilapidated city; now she was risen in splendor, youthful, alert, risen from death to life.<sup>145</sup>

This passage marks the fulfillment of the Jews' age old desire to return to the land of Israel, desire repeated throughout exile by millions of exiles in their daily invocation: "Next year in Jerusalem."

The rapid enacted of the modern state of Israel, in both this novel and in reality point out an important trait that this analysis has evidenced up to this point: prevented for centuries from fashioning (rural, urban, and) utopian landscape according to their cultural and ethnic preferences, the returning Jews quickly caught up with the impulse when back home. The pervasive spatial transformation they enacted on the land of Palestine supports one of the claims of this project, namely, the inversely proportional relationship between geographical and political agency and spatial utopian manifestations. The Jews, who, because of dire historical contingencies could only "build in time," built expansively and quickly in space, once these conditions and their status of subalterity changed.

In these propitious geopolitical conditions, the agency that was so powerfully packed onto the individual and his Portable Paradise abilities were transferred to the "mutualistic new society." All of its peoples (Jews, Arabs, and Christians), jointly responsible for its revival and modernization, enjoyed a Jerusalem "risen in splendor, youthful, alert, risen from death to life." The "side by side" presence of the Old and the

New cities represents the culmination of two thousand years of dreaming the return to its site.

Slowly and peacefully the Sabbath fell upon the bustling city. Throngs of worshippers wended their way to the Temple and to the many synagogues in the Old City and the New, there to pray to the God whose banner Israel had borne throughout the world for thousands of years.<sup>146</sup>

This presence of the Third Temple represents the official mark of Jewish redemption and the definite return of the Jewish people to their home. Bereft of its salvific presence for two millennia, the dispersed Jews had accessed it metaphorically, during and through Sabbath and other practices: the rebuilding of the Temple, in Herzl's novel, marks a shift from necessarily uchronian methods of imagining the community, to utopian practices.

Several observations, on the specifics of this utopian analogous case, are now in order. Besides representing the most successful case of exilic return, the convergence of the widely dispersed Jewish groups to one location, their enactment of a modern independent state also provides us with details about the enduring, multi-ethnic complications, and the inherent conflicts brought about and contained in such a project. This socially constructed utopia and nation share many of the constructive and rhetorical resources of the genre, and equally so, many of its major limitations (See Appendix C: A Dream Willed into Reality: Israel).

*First*, and foremost, this cultural case, out of the three analyzed in this project, best supports Anderson's and Brennan's claims about the importance of the novel in the making of the modern nation. As cultural artifacts, the state and nation of Israel require that their enactors are sufficiently flexible to incorporate new voices, and also necessarily conservative to ensure the perpetuation of such an ideal. As already shown, Herzl's novel performed such a role. Worthy of many praises for the way it employed the ideal elements of the utopian genre, *Alneuland* is, simultaneously, guilty of perpetuating some of its faults.

The most important one is that it assumes the unconditional, uniform desire of various peoples (the Jews, the Arabs, the Christians) for the same ideological metanarrative and their agreement on the same architectural, social, and cultural blueprint. In truth, the Jews themselves were/are a very culturally- diverse group. In Herzl's novel, they are assumed to be subscribing to the same dreams and to be sharing

similar goals. They are supposed to want and desire the same things and, in return for their cooperation, receive equal treatment from the ruling government. Arabs, too, whose physical presence and alterity are acknowledged, are assumed to espouse the same peaceful desires as their co-nationals and act according to the humanistic principles of their Jewish author of Austro-Hungarian origin. Although present and given ample space in the utopian discourse of the novel, in an illustrated special edition, sixty years later, the Arabs have disappeared from the visual collage of the national project. The Sephardic Jewish group, too, is less obvious a presence. In reality, were they to produce similar fictions, their story, dreams, and take on the presence of the incoming, returning Jews would have been very different accounts of the process, indeed. How clearly difficult and challenging this process is can be grasped from looking closer at the situation on the ground.

I will list, and briefly analyze, some of them here as they pertain to our larger argument and shed additional light on the many correspondences between the discourses and practices of utopia and the nation. On the ground, the population is diverse, not just historically, but in the composition of the smaller groups of immigrants still trickling in. The newcomers, if Jewish, could be from places as distinct as Australia, Russia, Argentina, etc. They are secular or religious and bring with them different expectations and demands: they challenge the existing ethnic situation simply by their arrival. They will do so, immediately, as most have to learn the language of their ancestors<sup>147</sup> whom they forgot, or lost, while living amid foreign cultures. By inhabiting a certain branch of Judaism, or by withholding participation from its religious aspects, they will tilt the balance between the utopian and the uchronian practices on the ground. The nature of the mythogenetic discourse will change from being mystical, encoded, deeply poetic, erotic even, to one of scientific precision and clarity. Moreover, despite the equality promised to all new comers, their place of origin, be it Europe (Ashkenazi, Hassids) or the rest of the world (Sephardic, Ladino, etc.) will factor in, majorly, especially when approaching the political and economic sectors. If non-Jewish, they could be migrant workers from places as varied as Eastern Europe or South Asia;<sup>148</sup> or, they could be students of history for whom the enduring Israeli-Palestinian conflict built partiality to one side or the other.

*Second*, the successful transfer of the narrative of the *state* of Israel onto the land of Palestine caused immediate problems as this space hosts both divergent and ethnically different narratives and practices. In other words, the materialization of the Jewish state in 1948 happened not only on the ancestral land of the Jews, but also on that of the Arabs later called Palestinians (Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias, Fig. 8: The United Nations Partition of the land of Israel, 1947, [f/ƒ]). Herzl's utopian blueprint was not transferred on a tabula rasa environ, but on a complicated and ever-shifting ethnic, cultural, geographical, and political *palimpsest*. What this means, more concretely is that, by creating a state for the displaced Jews, the other inhabitants of that respective area became themselves displaced.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt noted that:

After the [Second War] it turned out that the Jewish question, which was considered the only insoluble one, was indeed solved—namely, by means of a colonized and then conquered territory—but this solved neither the problem of minorities nor the stateless. On the contrary, like virtually all other events of our century, the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs, thereby increasing the number of the stateless by another 700,000 to 800,000 people.<sup>149</sup>

Arendt's comment points out one of the most problematic aspects of such spatially-dependent, socially-constructed concepts and projects as utopia and the nation. In their canonical form, they are driven by powerful, leveling metanarratives that exclude all others from being heard. The utopia of one group becomes the dystopia of many others who were prevented from, or not consulted in the inception and realization of that imagined project on the ground. Arendt is not the only scholar to question the solution presented by the utopian and national project of Israel. The success of the endeavor is also questioned from within the Israeli society.

In "Utopia: The Sequel- How does Israeli society match up to the vision outlined by Herzl in 'Altneuland'?"<sup>150</sup> Shlomo Avineri discussed the inherent problems of implementing such a project in reality. He revisited the author's fictional depictions of the political and the religious institutions as dreamed about in 1902, and then detailed the resulting historical forms, after reality complicated their idealized representations.

Avineri paid special attention to the enduring conflicts between the social, economic, and political situation of the Arab Palestinians, who— in Herzl's idealized version, and in

Israel's Declaration of Independence, its legislation and Supreme Court decisions—have been granted civic equality and political freedom and found their present condition wanting.

Such *de facto* discrimination is not limited to intercultural interactions, but extends and affects intra-cultural Jewish relations, as well.<sup>151</sup> Avineri, and other Jewish scholars, note that the Sephardic Jews of North Africa immigrating to Israel with assumingly the same rights as the Ashkenazi Jews of Western Europe are also marginalized and discriminated against. The Sephardic Jews, although closer to the geographical cradle of the ethnic, i.e., the land of Israel, had inhabited less-developed, mostly rural, areas, and were of poorer stock. It was unlikely for them to hold positions of power in their old cultures/countries of origin, and equally unlikely for them to rise to positions of power in Israel. Additionally, they came from cultures which, at one time or another, were colonized and oppressed by various European Empires themselves. The Ashkenazi group, although disadvantaged while living among the European peoples, benefited from their geographical and cultural proximity to the best and most advanced hubs of civilization, and were economically better off than the former group. The Ashkenazi Jews' imagining practices were shaped by their proximity to the world's most powerful nations and empires, and influenced by their primarily spatial national and utopian discourses and practices. Somehow, when these distinct Jewish groups converged on the land of Israel to start anew, the power structure of the world at large replicated itself within the Israeli society (Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias, Fig. 9: Jewish Immigration to Israel, 2000-2001, [f/]).

Additionally, this historical fact supports opinions like Edward Said's who believed that the establishing of the state of Israel could be looked at as yet another example of the white European colonizing the "Oriental other." In the chapter "Zionism From the Standpoint of Its Victims" from *The Question of Palestine*, he made the following observation:

there is an unmistakable coincidence between the experiences of Arab Palestinians at the hand of Zionism and the experiences of those black, yellow, and brown people who were described as inferior and subhuman by nineteenth-century imperialists. For although it coincided with an era of the most virulent Western anti-Semitism, Zionism also coincided with the period of unparalleled European acquisition in Africa and Asia, and it was as part of this general

movement of acquisition and occupation that Zionism was launched initially by Theodor Herzl.<sup>152</sup>

Said's observation about the situation of the Palestinian Arabs in pre- and post-Israel is still relevant, decades after his book's publication. What at first glance could have passed for a sweeping generalization and a simplistic take on the complex situation on the ground is, actually, an accurate observation about the nature of the two discourses, which make the subject of this project.

Both utopia and the nation have a strong *colonizing* nature in that, by requiring space to unfold their vision, they force other competing narratives and the peoples who imagined them out the respective locale. And they do so, more often than not, forcefully. Utopia is a forceful metanarrative, which by its nature and name ("topos"/"space") requires the colonization of fictional, or real space. It is no coincidence that to be heard, or seen, any counter-narratives tend to be extreme: the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF), the Ultra Orthodox and/or the Sephardic Jewish Forums, etc., all have to, in varying degrees and using different means, amplify their own spatial discourses and practices to avoid being marginalized or excluded from the imagining of the construct which is the Israeli society. Alternatively, however, *uchronia*, through its dynamic nature, would permit such co-habitation of discourses, and the co-habitation of their enactors, too. It does not require the abrogation of other accounts and utopian desires of other peoples and political entities sharing the same space. As illustrated by the Jewish mystical case, *uchronian* methods of imagining communities (of a utopian and/or national type) could be very successful. Yet, while barely on the ground, utopian/spatial prerogatives take over the project with a vengeance, and while delivering a new home to one group, it promptly or gradually delivers spatial exile to the other(s).

Additionally, Said's observation about the similarity between the "colonization" of Africa and Asia by European powers and that of Israel by the returning Jews highlights both another connection between the three case studies of this project and the extraordinary promise of the "portability of Paradise" engendered by the wandering Kabbalistic mystics. Regardless of the ways it could unfold upon spatial geography, the portability of the *uchronian* Paradise shows that it is possible, in even the most dire and oppressive conditions— such as those endured by the Jewish people throughout their long

exile— to maintain and perpetuate ethnic identity. As these historical conditions, which were the exclusive plight of the Jews in the past, are becoming the reality of many other ethnic groups, the agency and endurance inherent in such a-spatial modes of imagining the community and the nation cannot be overemphasized. Even more so, when the forming and dissolving of any imagined communities, even ones as big as the multinational empire, are—as evidenced by the materials presented in Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias, Fig.1-10 ([f/f])—frequently occurring historical phenomena, out of which ephemeral sites/sights such as nations and utopias are born.

To refocus our argument and preface the next chapter, it is necessary to make here the following observations. Before Romania, Israel, Nigeria, Ghana, and India could achieve their independence, the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and British Empires, which had their lands and peoples captive and confined within their artificial borders, had to come to an end. Before these non-Western cultures entered the international political arena, they subscribed to the ideologies of various pan-national movements. As mentioned in the previous chapter, independent Romania was created, among other factors, by the juxtaposition of the local imperial demises and the rising communist movement, which swept and leveled Eastern Europe. Similarly, Israel was ushered into existence by the pan-national Zionist movement, and the demise of the same two empires. The NEL cultures, as I will explain in the next chapter, emerged from the rubble of other defunct empires and were conceptualized by the pan-national *négritude* movement. These geographical, political, and ideological fluctuations on the ground point at the precarious condition of any spatially-based, socially-constructed project like utopia, like the nation. They also emphasize, yet again, the impressive endurance conferred by uchronian practices (such as the Sabbath) for such a complex cultural concept as identity and suggest their continuous, if not increased, importance in today's world.



Chapter Four:  
Postcolonial Utopias or Re-imagining 'Brave New Worlds':  
Caliban Speaks Back

O, wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! O  
*brave new world*, That has such people in't!

Miranda in *The Tempest*<sup>153</sup>

this is the oppressor's language, yet I need it to speak to you

bell hooks<sup>154</sup>

But when a nation or an individual creates things so sublime—in a sort of  
permanent genius or inventiveness and delight—when they create things so miraculous  
that they are seen or noticed or remarked upon even by the  
best minds around them, then that is because they create always from the vast unknown  
places within them.

Ben Okri, *Astonishing The Gods*<sup>155</sup>

“Caliban speaks back” in this chapter, which introduces several postcolonial utopias<sup>156</sup> from cultures grouped under the umbrella of the New English Literatures. From the larger available consortium of NEL— and the larger still pool of available Francophone, and Latin postcolonial utopian examples— these three examples were chosen because they shared a common colonizer: the British Empire. They gained independence roughly about the same time: Nigeria in 1960, Ghana in 1957, and India in 1947. Although geographically distant, they exhibit adaptive utopian traits that could only be explained by their shared journey under colonialism. They are not, of course, the only English speaking ex-colonies to reevaluate the complex colonizer-colonized relationship via the tools of the utopian genre. The British Empire ruled over most of the world at one time, and the sun that rose and set on its territories witnessed many a dystopian episode before the subaltern cultures began, just recently, to have a chance to speak back, using the same language as the former oppressor (Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias, Fig. 10: The Major Empires of the World, and Fig. 11: British Empire, present day, [f/]). What separates them from other such accounts is the fact that these three re-imagined “brave new worlds” manifest the shifts in the content and form of the utopian construct more evidently, and also, in ways strikingly similar to the Romanian and the Jewish cases previously discussed. Although geographically distant, and linguistically not closely related, all these cultures display the correspondences vis-à-vis narrative techniques, ideological content, and approaches to identity formation (both ethnic and national) resulting from the migration of the utopian impulse to its alternative, non-spatially based forms.

As they represent a rather complicated and variegated category, an extended analysis of these NEL utopian analogues is necessary here before I proceed with textual analysis and case studies comparisons. I will start by evidencing some of the differences between these examples and those produced within the utopian canon. Nigeria’s Ben Okri’s *Astonishing the Gods*, Ghana’s Kojo Laing’s *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*, and India’s Amitav Ghosh’s *Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Delirium, Fever and Discovery* are different from the classical examples of the genre in that they favor and deploy linguistic innovation, temporal, and psycho-analytical translocations to address and tailor their specific utopian desires.

Written from the perspective of the colonized, they challenge the colonizer's previous representations of them as subservient, inferior, savage, and, consequently, in need of the white man's civilizing hand. Moreover, even when using the "language of the oppressor," these NEL writers maneuver it in such a way as to express, in its strangeness of syntax, diction, or deployment, a re-appropriation of agency and the right to manifest their peoples' dreams of independence, nationhood, and utopia.

Their works address timely questions of nationhood, identity, and futurity in hybrid works whose complexities have been acknowledged by writers like Salman Rushdie and theorists like Hommi Bhabha. These two scholars have noticed several shared traits between most of the world's postcolonial literatures and noted the innovative ways they interact with, and influence their audiences. More specifically, these postcolonial hybrid works do not propose fixed, rigid utopias, but compose open models that enable the readers to create their own visions of a better society. By doing so, they cross into the category of—what progressive theorists of the genre like Fredric Jameson and Michel Foucault called — *heterotopias*. The colonial metanarratives, of course, continue to make a strong stand on the ground (Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias, Fig. 10: The Major Empires of the World, Fig. 11: British Empire, present day, Fig.12: Retreat from Empire, Fig.13: Decolonization in Africa, [f/f]). The emergence of these revisionist, hybrid, and radically different utopian narratives, however, adds not only useful (retrospective) non-canonical accounts, but introduces some of the future promises of the genre as well. In these postcolonial cultures, the utopian writing is done from a hybrid geographical place about its complicated hybrid reality. As such, it incorporates dialogical and ontological variants much more nuanced in their choice of content and form than the classical stalwarts of the genre.

In *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia: A Comparative Introduction to the Utopian Novel in the New English Literatures*, Ralph Pordzik noted that these utopian analogues deploy an expanded repertory that includes "linguistic diversity, lack of unity, inconclusive agency, and willful representation of fantastic chronotopoi."<sup>157</sup> This repertory is then used to appropriate the language of the oppressor and populate the postcolonial landscape with metanarratives different from those of the previous master.

Because they are written in a borrowed medium negatively associated with a past subaltern position, the NEL writers apply pressure on the English language, which they use with great aplomb. In addition to experimenting with the tropes of the genre and the language of the previous colonizer, NEL writers have to relocate—spatially— the utopian paradigm. Because such novels are still inspired by the Western idea of locality, they have to “discover” new lands and islands for their imagined communities. Accordingly, the spatial utopeme is purged, or decolonized and deterritorialized of its Western utopian associations. Geography is re-appropriated and the postcolonial utopian locale moved away from the South Seas islands, and the dark, savage continents favored in Western utopias. As they have no other virgin lands or terra incognita onto which to project their spatially based new communities, NEL writers revisit their own contested space and impose on it alternative realities, or uchronias, or use them as the locales for culturally-relevant intopias. Reclaiming the space, via renaming it, or re-mythologizing it with deities and heroes from their pre-colonization past enables them to place the colonized and the colonizers on more equal and dialogue-inducing ground. In most cases, this need to understand one’s role in the subaltern relationship goes beyond a realistic presentation of the re-imagined world. The subconscious –and its vast riches and potentially dangerous unknown– becomes a new source to be explored to better understand one’s past condition and the means to overcome it. These postcolonial corrections, visibly performed on the geographical and literary environs, produce new narratives and/or dramatically change existing histories. Reclaiming the text is, for these writers, also a method of interacting with the history previously written by the colonizers and populated—via fictionalized accounts—with subaltern images of the colonized justifying the master’s civilizing efforts.

So, when approaching the Western Utopian genre, NEL writers do so well aware of their own history of suffering perpetuated by its tropes and are less likely to engage in reductionist, dialectical representations of the “other” as the traditional foil. Instead, they represent the interacting communities polyphonically, dialogically and, in their works, closely engage with complex issues like memory, identity, agency, and historical and cultural heritage recovery. Writers such as Ben Okri (*Astonishing the Gods*, 1995), Kojouhar Laing (*Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*, 1992) and Amitav Ghosh (*The Calcutta*

*Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery*, 1995) employ folkloric, mythical, and mystical tropes to recover specific ontologies denied existence and perpetuation in the historic time claimed by the oppressor/conqueror. They take the utopian paradigm to its next level by subsuming its critical and evaluative potential to issues pertaining to *both* the colonized and the colonizer. Such progressive approaches are common in many postcolonial utopian novels written after the ex-colonies gained their independence from the British Empire and were forced to quickly engage in national mythogenetic processes. Several guiding questions will now lead us into the analysis of this chapter's case studies. So, how, exactly does a Ghanaian, Nigerian, or Indian imagine utopia? How many of their projects' precepts are borrowed from the colonizer's utopian theories and practices, and how many are their own? How much of the native culture is recovered in these accounts? And, finally, how is the native language and that of the oppressor used when "the Calibans" are "speaking back"?

Pordzik answered some of these important questions in his seminal work on NEL postcolonial utopias. When he looked at Okri's, Laing's, and Ghosh's works, he noted that

the alternative world depicted [therein wa]s quite different from the one writers such as William Morris, H.G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, Burknes [sic] F. Skinner (*Walden Two*, 1975), and Ernest Callenbach (*Ecotopia*, 1977) had in mind when they were depicting the citizens of their peaceful, just, and benevolent future World State(s). While the latter employed a narrative mode of representational realism based on causal relations and a highly ordered succession of events in order to convey a future compatible with their readers' conception of history and identity, much recent utopian fiction offers the view of a world in which fragmentation, discontinuity, and ambiguity determine the course of action and the striving of the protagonist/reader to make sense of what he or she is given to understand is constantly undermined by the introduction of new perspectives and points of reference that cannot be integrated into a meaningful whole.<sup>158</sup>

From this "clash" between different discursive modes that Porzik refers to, "fragmentation, discontinuity, and ambiguity" analogous utopian narratives are born.

Hybrids of the local dialects and the language of their oppressor, they make excellent use of allusions, puns, and irony. The founder of the genre himself, Thomas More named the first describer of utopia Raphael ("the angel who heals") and Hythlodæus ("speaker of nonsense"), thus setting a precedent for such approaches and

innovative linguistic exercises. Even if, from its very beginning as a genre, utopia had this ability built in, its potential was more evidently in its postcolonial tradition. Kojo Laing's work, for example, illustrates these potentialities very well. In addition, his novel shows how such tropes, and the writing between the lines, signal the impotence of the utopian canon to deal with these complicated issues and address them using a straightforward manner. The Ghanaian author speaks back at the English colonizers by changing their language, its syntax, and grammar, and boldly inserting into the utopian narrative his cultural takes and local dialects. In doing so, he succeeds not only in adapting the utopian paradigm of the oppressor to his specific cultural conditions, but also in protesting against his continuous dependence on "the oppressor's language."

Additionally, what the texts analyzed in this chapter will show – beside similarities to the uchronian texts from the Romanian and the Jewish traditions – is a clear transition from a modernist to a postmodernist literary framework. This shift is evident not only in the reconstruction of the geographical and political layout of the postcolonial world, but also in that of the utopian genre. In other words, these texts will show us how their authors apted the utopian discourse, how, during the shifting of hegemonic and authorial power from the colonizer to the colonized the local modes of representation replaced or "colonized" most of the Western tropes inherent in the utopian discourse. Pordzik noted that the result is a new kind of utopian writing that

dissolve[s] the boundaries of utopia and dystopia, of pro-eutopia and anti-utopia constituting a utopic/*heterotopic* (my emphasis) space, in the alterity and exteriority of which incommensurable times, places, ideologies and cultures as well as literary strategies and genres, parody and exemplification are subversively juxtaposed or mingled. It is in this way, that coherent *history* is deconstructed in the narrative, to be reconstructed in the narration and in the reading as individual stories (Hirsch 300).<sup>159</sup>

So, what this means is that, in writing the postcolonial utopian novel, NEL writers intentionally complicated modes of representation. They omitted providing clues to decode the hidden meanings of their texts and/or challenged the reader to leave the comfort of the linear text and story. Laing, for example, included glossaries that forced his readers to pause, learn new words and concepts and construct meaning in a new, hybrid way. His readers were thus prevented from falling into the trap of seeing just one account, hearing just one voice from the multi-threaded, layered, and dialogical story of

the postcolonial locale. By doing all these actions on the text, its language, and the genre's parameters, NEL writers point at the promising future of the genre itself. They showcase the validity of one of my earlier claims, namely that utopia is not "dead" but migrating to more heterotopian cultural shapes and narrative substances.

To illustrate most of these differences between Western and non-Western utopias, and to better understand Okri's, Laing's, and Ghosh's utopian analogues to be discussed in the second part of this project, it is necessary now to look at two "classical" examples which set, in their respective Western, non-Western cultures, the standard of representation of, and reaction to, the colonial balance of power. What follows is a comparison between Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Aime Césaire's *A Tempest*. Césaire wrote his play both as a translation and an adaptation of Shakespeare's 1611 play. His version, written in 1969, was a "translation." Césaire, a native of Martinique, wrote his version in French. It was also an adaptation, a retelling of the classic story from the point of view of the colonized/oppressed and it was written expressly against Shakespeare's account, which had cemented, via Caliban's brutish character, the image of the savage as irreverent and potentially dangerous. The character's name, the anagram of the word "can(n)ibal" generated negative connotations that did not encourage the audience's, or the posterity's sympathy for the character nor, for that matter, for the fate of the people he represented. Miranda's famous exuberant lines in the original play,

O wonder!  
How many goodly creatures are there here!  
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world  
That has such people in't!<sup>160</sup>

speaks both of the dangers of idealizing the colonizing process and of her innocence. Despite her being highly educated for a woman, and for those times, she is ignorant of human nature, and the roles played by her father and herself in the subjugation of the native people. She is caught up in her own personal narrative, and that of the colonizing power to whose structure she belongs and whose abuses, in albeit a kinder manner, she perpetuates. The world inhabited by Miranda and the rest of the characters is "new" only to the newcomers grafting their leveling narrative onto it. The same world is "old" to Caliban who, unfortunately, does not have the means to resist its colonization by creating

and sustaining a strong narrative to rival that of his new masters. In Césaire's take, Caliban reacts violently to this intrusion and his ire is evident in the ways he abuses Prospero's language.

By doing so, Caliban makes space for his own language, and for his own reality. He also chooses his own name, and fights to determine the course of his own life and rule over his ancestral land. His mission is not easy: reconstructing his cultural history from the master's disparate, disproportionate, and disparaging accounts of his people is a tricky, complex, and lengthy process. He undertakes it willingly, systematically and formulates his own version of a "brave new world," in the process changing a few things on and about utopia.

Even though Césaire portrayed him as a slave, Caliban is highly eloquent, and assertive: he sounds like a well-educated man who uses this oratory talent to converse with—and challenge—his oppressor by deploying both the foreign language, which he has mastered, and his native tongue, which he grafts into the "official" language of his island. For example, in an animated conversation with Prospero, Caliban uses his native tongue to shout out repeatedly at his master. The savage uses the oppressor's language to tell his ruler that he refuses the yoke that this medium represents:

Caliban: Uhuru!

Prospero: What did you say?

Caliban: I said, Uhuru!

Prospero: Mumbling your native language again! I've already told you, I don't like it. You could be polite, at least; a simple "hello" wouldn't kill you.

Caliban: Oh, I forgot... But make that as froggy, waspish, pustular and dung-filled a "hello" as possible. May today hasten by a decade the day when all the birds of the sky and beasts of the earth will feast upon your corpse!<sup>161</sup>

What this passage illustrates is the immediate need of many of the NEL writers to recover their native language and then deploy it to reconstruct the historical past of their people in order to draft their future. This necessary action creates conflict not only between the languages of the colonizer and that of the colonized, but also between their cultures, ideologies, and utopian tropes. Caliban deconstructs the very mechanisms through which



he and his people were enslaved: he points out at selective teachings, cultural and linguistic erasure, the prohibition and/or thwarting of local identity formation, etc.

When Prospero tells Caliban that he gave him education and knowledge, the latter replies, quite adequately, that the linguistic training he received had been solely for the purpose of making him understand and carry out the orders of his master:

In the first place, that's not true. You didn't teach me a thing! Except to jabber in your own language so that I could understand your orders: chop the wood, wash the dishes, fish the food, plant vegetables, all because you're too lazy to do it for yourself. And as for your learning, did you ever impart any of *that* to me? No, you took care not to. All your science you keep for yourself alone, shut up in those big books.<sup>162</sup>

This dichotomy between the discursive arsenal of the West and the feeble defenses of its colonies is showcased in the above dialogue between the scientifically-minded Prospero and the poetically-reflective Caliban. The latter's pressing need, and his express desire to address and correct the technological and economical disparity imposed on him in the past is common to all cultures who experienced this colonizing process. Scientific and technological advances of the Western world made spatial conquest and the colonization process possible and enabled the inception of literary and applied "utopias." The empires and the powerful nations they engendered used these advantages to take over and transform the land and space of the new worlds. The latter, without such resources, held on the ownership of the same disputed geographical territory with less offensive tools: poetry, mythology, mysticism, locally specific word and situation play.

There are additional tropes of colonial and anti-colonial discourse in this revised dialogue between Prospero, the bringer of civilization (language, science, education, religion), and Caliban, who is expected to reinforce his status of subalterity by being thankful for them. Defiant and poetic, Caliban accuses Prospero of damaging his beloved island with the technology he used to defeat the locales. Just like Ștefan Viziru who, in *Forbidden Forest*, mirrored Mircea Eliade's world views, Caliban mirrors here Césaire's: "Poetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge"<sup>163</sup> when he waxes poetically the cause of black freedom:

Sycorax. Mother.

Serpent, rain, lighting.  
And I see thee everywhere!  
In the eye of the stagnant pool which stares back at me,  
through the rushes,  
in the gesture made by the twisted root and its awaiting thrust.  
in the night, the all-seeing blinded night,  
the nostril-less all-smelling night!<sup>164</sup>

Because he cannot retort with scientific prowess, Caliban replies with poetic verve. The duel is unequal, but he persists.

Caliban's need to choose his own name is emblematic for most postcolonial cultures attempting to create an independent identity and sever it from the subaltern condition developed under colonial rule. As an additional gesture of independence, most colonies replaced the foreign names given to them by their European colonizers with native ones, replete with mythological importance and cultural relevance, or hailing from their (idealized) pre-colonial past. In this specific play, Caliban pays homage to a contemporary of his author, Malcolm X. Because of this deliberate association, "X" is not the appellative of "a man without a name" as he claims in his debate with Prospero, but that of a representative personality in the fight for equal rights and the ending of segregation worldwide.

Call me X. That would be best. Like a man without  
a name. Or, to be more precise, a man whose name  
has been stolen. You talk about history... well, that's  
history and everyone knows it! Every time you summon  
me it reminds me of a basic fact, the fact that  
you've stolen everything from me, even my identity!  
Uhuru!<sup>165</sup>

Prospero, of course, resists these liberatory efforts and offers Caliban/X a list of other potential names, all with derogatory connotations, which he refuses. Their dueling over onomastics is representative of the continuous conflict of two different ways of imagining and controlling "the other." Prospero has been used to call Caliban whatever he wanted, and have free reign over his life, possessions, and land. The slave has outgrown his subaltern condition and bursts with desire to break his chains and exercise his own "imagining" powers. When Caliban becomes X, he becomes his own master. As such, he

reclaims his destiny and identity and becomes more vocal about his versions of utopia and the nation.

With these two clashing narratives, Césaire intersects Ariel's, a spirit in the original play, a mulatto slave in the postcolonial version. Ariel maintains his clairvoyant abilities: he sees that the colonization game dehumanizes *both* players. Césaire and Ariel's solution is to make Prospero aware of his unjust actions, prevent Caliban from taking revenge on Prospero, and establish a dialogue between the two parties wherein more equal, co-dependent relationships can be established. Ariel's preferred choice to Caliban's impending violence is conscience.

The dialogue between Caliban and Ariel also evidences the dissent emerging between the colonized themselves. They disagree on amends and corrections, and the nature of their delivery: violence, or diplomacy. Caliban is bent on hurting Prospero, and doing whatever is necessary to regain control of the island. Ariel is an idealist who believes that, by exposing Prospero to the terrible conditions of the colonized life, he would experience a paradigm shift. He tells Caliban:

Listen to me: Prospero is  
the one we've got to change. Destroy his serenity so  
that he's finally forced to acknowledge his own injustice  
and put an end to it [...]  
I've often had this  
inspiring, uplifting dream that one day Prospero, you,  
me, we would all three set out, like brothers, to build a  
wonderful world, each one contributing his own special  
thing: patience, vitality, love, willpower too, and rigor,  
not to mention the dreams without which mankind  
would perish.<sup>166</sup>

Ariel's optimism in this passage is highly reminiscent of Herzl's characters in *Old New Land*. Herzl's David Littvak, Reschid, and Friedrick Loewenberg, and Césaire's Ariel belong to the same category of utopian dreamers: they all want to build a better, even "wonderful" world in which relationships between those involved in its making are equal.

In both cases, this dialogical way of building "a brave new world" or a "new old nation" is fraught with perils and many challenges. The inertia of past relationships is a reminder that the co-imagining process, in its novelty and complexity, will take a long time to find its parameters and unfold its post-exilic and post-colonial potential. In this

postcolonial scenario, the Caliban/X narrative needs to be constructive, wisely recognizing that “Prospero’s” departure does not guarantee ethnic cohesion and/or economic and political success. In the vacuum of power following independence there will be competition— as seen between Caliban and Ariel— between local discourses as well. In the Jewish scenario, the transfer of a concentrated, powerful national narrative onto inhabited space comes with great responsibility towards other narratives on the ground. Both Herzl’s and Césaire’s narratives have been informed and shaped by their experiencing and noticing the cross-cultural, cross-ethnic effects of oppression. As such, in these non-Western cases, the imagined communities of utopia and the nation are, from the very beginning, inclusive of other discourses and practices. This similarity suggests that, previous suffering and/or exile, confinement to the land, or expulsion from it, create, in these groups, an increased awareness of “the other” as “same.” This epiphany then, propels the utopian paradigm into a more dialogical variant, i.e., a heterotopia, which allows distinct groups to—as Herzl’s character, Reschid, put it—co-exist peacefully “side by side.”

For this to be possible, however, the colonizer needs to undergo similar epiphanies to those espoused by Ariel. Precluding the making of Ariel’s “wonderful world,” Franz Fanon acknowledged, was the possibility of violence. He opined that, in fact, the colonizers, or the group he categorized as “the other species” has the bigger challenge:

National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: Whatever may be the headings used or the new formula introduced, decolonization is always a violent process... The need for this change exists in its crude state, impetuous and compelling, in the consciousness of and in the lives of men and women who are colonized. But the possibility of this change is equally experienced in the form of a terrifying future in the *consciousness* (my emphasis) of another “species” of men and women: the colonizers.<sup>167</sup>

When addressing these complex changes of consciousness and lengthy processes of identity formation within their own cultures, Okri, Laing, and Ghosh, among many others, created characters and situations that illustrate both the dialogical promises of the postcolonial utopian novel and its present conundrums. I will now detail these three novels and, when pertinent, briefly digress to make connections and comparisons with the other two case studies of this project.

Nigerian Ben Okri's masterly constructed *Astonishing the Gods* (1992) illustrates perils and the promises of such complex endeavors. Educated in some of the best European schools, Okri's diasporic perspective and local insights juxtapose in this engaging account to show how specific oppressive conditions—such as a black people's enslavement and omission from history books—could force their utopian desires and drive to turn inward and focus on psychological, cultural, and personal investigations of the hegemonic-subaltern condition. In this novel, Okri details the travels of an unnamed character who, in the manner of the utopian genre, comes upon an island and goes through an initiatory experience. He meets a community of invisibles and is shown around the beautifully landscaped, peaceful, illuminated place and is impressed with the majesty of the city, its marble buildings, and its overall feeling of peace and prosperity. The character—who is, himself, invisible—is intrigued by this locale and society and feels that he should stay and learn their secrets. He feels that before he could move forward and create his future, he needs to understand his past:

He was born invisible. His mother was invisible too, and that was why she could see him. His people lived content lives, working on the farms, under the familiar sunlight. Their lives stretched back into the invisible centuries and all that had come down from those differently coloured ages were legends and rich traditions, unwritten and therefore remembered. [I]t was in history books that he first learnt of his invisibility. He searched for himself and his people in all of the history books he read and discovered to his youthful astonishment that he didn't exist.<sup>168</sup>

This invisibility, we find out at this point in the novel, is not one of the body, but one of historical absence. The narrator and his people do not exist not because they cannot be seen, they do not exist because to their rulers, they did not matter beyond their function as work force/slaves and, as such, did not deserve to be mentioned in imperial history books.

At first glance, Okri's postcolonial utopian novel closely follows a Western utopian pattern: there is a voyage, then the traveler arrives at a novel place where he encounters a benevolent people and is guided around by a gentle, patient guide. He finds that, in this seemingly paradisiacal place, people live in harmony with nature and treat each other kindly. As a result of going through the required *rites de passage* he comes to a better understanding not just of this particular society, but of his own as well.

Gradually, he also arrives at a deeper comprehension and appreciation of human nature.

What turns this example into an intopian novel is the emphasis placed on his consciousness as he reflects on the things and events he witnesses. The nameless character becomes aware of his primary role in the quality of the relationships he develops along the way. His desire for understanding the mechanism that produced majestic buildings with “astounding facades and stately columns,”<sup>169</sup> “shimmering chessboard squares,”<sup>170</sup> and the overall quality of the island which is one of “grandeur and majesty”<sup>171</sup> turns inward to gauge his own agency in the perpetuation of the same, beautiful reality, or the making of alternative ones. With this epiphany, come complications: by assignment, design, or personal choice, he experiences much doubt, and even more so when he starts manifesting the dangerous attributes of an emergent Messiah. He feels these burgeoning powers during a first quest given to him by his guide. After he crosses a fabulous bridge “completely suspended in the air, a dazzling construct, composed entirely of mist,”<sup>172</sup> he notes the intimate and immediate connections between his state of mind and the reality shaping around him. The bridge he had just crossed dematerializes and rematerializes according to his thoughts. Calling it a “miracle” he starts believing in his own messianic destiny, but experiences confusion when his guide uses riddles, parables, and paradoxes to explain complicated concepts to him. He has to stay alert, ask questions constantly, and be ready to increase his desire and efforts.

His quest is reminiscent, in many ways, of that of the Kabbalah mystics and the Păltiniș intellectuals who, in order to understand and transcend history, had to exit it and undergo profound personal transformations. What is common, in all these cases, is the need, for those who seek ultimate knowledge, to be ‘proactive,’ to initiate and endure difficult challenges, perfect themselves and re-engage with linear history as powerful agents of change. Their respective political, social, and/or racial disadvantages make the intellectuals, mystics, and characters, representing the three emergent utopian traditions, more eager to understand ontological and identity formation mechanisms, and their own agency in determining a positive ontological outcome. Not surprisingly, this increased awareness engenders messianic mandates and episodes. This combination holds both great promise and great danger. In Romania, the Iron Guard professed such a mission and engaged in systematic killings of those who opposed its greater scheme to forge a racially pure, Christian Romanian nation. For the dispersed groups of Jews, the idea of the

Messiah gathering its people from all corners of the world and leading them back to the Promised Land was an even more alluring myth and explains the many messianic episodes, from which Shabbatai Zevi's is the most famous. His incredible appeal as the much-awaited Jewish Messiah in 1648 and the upheaval these claims caused all throughout Europe was equaled by the despair of his followers when, instead of saving them, he apostasized and abandoned them to their exilic fate. This shared messianic characteristic suggests that, when deliverance from oppressive historical conditions could not come from historical figures, subaltern cultures will seek transcendental help. In the Nigerian version, this messianic drive concludes with the character arriving "to a higher level of experience terminating in a profound understanding of himself and the world he happens to visit."<sup>173</sup> Just like in the Romanian and the Jewish cases, however, these messianic epiphanies do not come without a price. The Messianic impulse, with its ultimate redemption promise, is inherently leveling and exclusive of others.

In Okri's novel, this fact is evident when his character becomes enchanted with the power, and frightened by the responsibility that comes with being a Messiah. Self-doubt and uneasiness at the fluidity of the rapid changes around him plague and puzzle him and he feels overwhelmed at how quickly his thoughts become reality. He goes from being the object of history— visible or 'invisible'— to being the maker of his own and, with others, the co-maker of his community *and* the world's history. He has become the sole master of his destiny and history and—his guide tells him— the burden of knowledge and of action rests solidly on his own shoulders. Such power and agency need to be applied correctly to avoid the mistakes of the past:

'What manner of place is this,' he asked eventually, 'where nothing is what it seems?'

'Everything is what it seems,' replied his guide. 'It's only you who are not what you seem.'

'What am I then that I am not what I seem?'

'That is for you to say.'

'I think I am what I seem.'

'What are you then?'

'An ordinary man in a strange place.'

'Might you not be a strange man in an ordinary place?'

'How can you call this place ordinary?'" he cried to his guide. <sup>174</sup>

The back and forth dialogue is part of the character's initiation; his frustration is obvious as he is constantly asked to consider the implications of his decisions. He is, understandably, both empowered and overwhelmed with the task at hand.

In this project, Okri's character is not the only one upon whom such tribulations have been cast. Almost immediately, the particularities of this dialogue, the convoluted questions, and their puzzling answers, bring to mind both Vişniec's *În țara lui Gufi* of the Romanian utopian/uchronian case, and the Zoharic discourse of the Kabbalah tradition. In the former, the dialogue between the seeing and the blind characters point at the fact that minorities, subjects, and subalterns have different ways of seeing things than their masters. When Vişniec's Romanian characters learned to see their surrounding world, the other people, and the objects populating it, that specific reality became visible to them precisely because of their intent and effort to see it. When students of *The Zohar* uncovered the hidden meanings of mystical words and practices, these were revealed to them precisely because they had exercised self-discipline, engaged in assiduous study, practiced constantly, and "courted" the essential wisdom of their faith.

A similar process engulfs and shapes Okri's traveler. Having earned command of his thoughts, he sees both the invisible and the visible, both the already materialized and the myriad potentialities in flux. He learns that the visible city he came upon when he landed on the island was just a dream meant to deceive the eyes of (weaker) men. Reality, in fact, is that which he creates and destroys constantly. By doing this never-ending work of creation, he learns that nothing is static, eternal, or complete, and finally understands the nature of his people's invisibility:

Our sages learnt that we tend to repeat our suffering if we have not learnt fully all that can be learnt from it. And so we had to experience our suffering completely when it happened so it would be so deeply lodged in our memory and in our desire for a higher life that we would never want to experience the suffering again, in any form.<sup>175</sup>

This passage shows that the sages of this particular people had discovered the benefits of periodically exiting linear history and revisiting defining moments and events of pedagogical importance from their past. When breaking free from their comfort zone, they learn critical skills that prevent them from repeating mistakes, and empower them with the agency to change the status quo. This process of exiting history and accessing



moments of cosmic importance is also reminiscent of the way Jewish mystics revisited events of their collective history during certain holidays like Pesach (the exodus from Egypt), and the Sabbath (the exit from the mundane, the accession to Eden/Jerusalem/the world to come). Like the Kabbalists of the past, who were theurgically responsible for the reunion of the gendered divine potentialities, and for their own moral and spiritual individual growth, the ‘invisible’ people in Okri’s novel are made aware of their own agency in shaping the world around them. In this case, agency manifests instantly: the manifested society and locale is utopian if people’s thoughts and actions are elevated, considerate, and noble. Alternatively, they are dystopian, if their creators’ thoughts are dismal, selfish, and destructive.

This ontological fluidity points out at an important difference between Western and non-Western utopias which is evidenced in this postcolonial novel. Instead of having a static, embalmed locale, and a well-cemented status quo, this society and its citizens stand under the imperative of consistent and conscious self-reflection and change. Here, the invisibles’ society could move from utopia to dystopia in the blink of an eye depending on changes in their thought patterns. To have an ultimately enjoyable and enduring utopia, they have to co-create it, constantly, actively.

In the same book on postcolonial utopian novels, Pordzik noted that Okri’s character is representative for this utopian making alternative:

[he s]lowly becomes aware that it is he who creates utopia through endless successions of fulfillment and rejection, that his own desires, inspired by his own sufferings, lend the world its present contours and make him an accepted member of this dynamic society.<sup>176</sup>

This learning through suffering theme, the waking up and owning to one’s own historical power suggests that prolonged historical suffering has changed the writer, the characters, and the peoples they represent. It made them aware of the complex causes of their predicament and their role in addressing and correcting it. These insightful ruminations outline what Pordzik inspiringly called, by way of borrowing his colleagues’ ideas, an intopian process. Defined in the beginning of this project, and noted as present in novels written in Romania during the communist regime, this utopian analogue format appears when historical and ideological oppression are present.

In the case of Nigeria, the situation on the ground shows that it is not sufficient, in the aftermath of independence and the departure of the oppressor to successfully imagine and enact a cohesive national community. In the vacuum of power left by the departure of the colonial functionaries in 1960, competing ethnic narratives were temporarily silenced by a brief period of great abundance after the local discovery of substantial reserves of petroleum. The quick influx of capital resulted in the production of extraordinary architectural projects, increased levels of general education, and deep strides in ethnic collaboration. Nigeria was, for a short while, a political and economic leader in Africa and an influential member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). However, “the Giant of Africa” thus called because of its population and geographical size, has, since the late 1970s fallen prey to ethnic strife and economic duress. The country went from being one of the richest in Africa to figuring prominently on the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) list. In addition, the government, whose constituency and interests have continually changed, has systematically failed to promote a national discourse to which the country’s many ethnic groups, speaking several different languages, and practicing several distinct religions, could subscribe to, and proceed to ‘imagine’ together. The failure to do so suggests that, for ‘an imagined community’ the size of the nation, to succeed as a viable and sufficiently stable political entity, a sufficiently lengthy incubation process in the consciousness of its peoples is necessary before it is manifested as such on geographical space. Or, as is the case with all our cases, but the Jewish one, such a process did not take place, hence the multiple, conflicting narrative on the ground. Moreover, the coalescing of such polities is further complicated by the fact that in our postcolonial cases, the utopian and national discourses were still violently at odds with those of the colonizers.

Representative for this type of linguistic and ideological “battlefield” Ghanaian Kojo Laing’s *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars* is a tour de force introduction to the conflicts on the ground, post colonizer departure. The plot is complex and difficult to comprehend, the language used is convoluted, innovative, and fantastic. Many of its narrative elements defy spatial, temporal, and narrative logic. The novel intrigues and captivates through its linguistic bravado, its superbly crafted irony, the barbed comments on the vicarious ideas of the colonizers, and on their understanding of the differences

between “rich countries and poor countries” of the world. The story takes place in the year 2020, in Achimota City and, instead of chapters, is divided in “zones.” The continent and the rich countries of the first world had dumped language in Africa and abandoned the black continent to its own devices. The region of Accra where these wars take place is the battleground for much more than physical combat. The Achimota city– the only one surviving a terrible war– has been, for decades, engaged in battles with both European and local enemies. In detailing the warring parties and pointing out at their many similarities, Laing challenges the idea of strict dichotomies between the continent of Africa and Europe, the latter’s rigid systems of values and beliefs, and its white European citizens’ desire to maintain clear racial and cultural demarcations between white and non-white peoples. He uses surrealistic techniques and magical realism to point at the ridiculous claims of a future Europe trying to keep its “others” at bay. Laing has the main character, Major Gentl, who has been leading the many battles against the faraway “ethnically-pure” Europeans, fight his biggest one against a local foe, a speaking carrot millionaire. In this Sisyphean quest, Major Gentl’s troupes include an eclectic mix of Roman soldiers, speaking bugs and elephants, shadows, and here and there, the occasional realistic character.

In addition to the surrealist atmosphere resulting from the presence of these characters, the Ghanaian writer also changes the parameters and the dicta of canonical utopia. He uses inventive puns, inspired paradoxes, and countless philosophical riddles that make his novel a challenge to read. Not only is the plot multilayered and, from page to page, the characters shifty in their alliances, but the presence of a carrot as an important protagonist requires that the readers undertake a significant paradigmatic shift to accept the equal participation of a vegetable in the otherwise human driven story. Regardless, the carrot character provides comedic relief even as he proceeds to act as a despicable agent of discontent throughout. Laing’s use of the English language unsettles its syntax and diction, and redeploys it in poetic format to introduce the unusual characters and events. Customary utopian tropes like humor, irony, puns, speaking non-human characters, etc., are deployed in unusual ways. As if these innovations –and aggressions upon both the utopian genre and the English language–were not enough, Laing makes necessary the consultation of a non-English word glossary. The following

extended passage shows just how freely he departs from the utopian genre and how intent he is to make his reader engage in the co-creation of narrative meaning:

Pogo, the carrot millionaire, had a fast-yard laugh for difficult situations of this nature, a laugh that would blow both his wife and his girls off course if they happened to be standing in roughly the same place. Pogo was kind and cunning to all, amassing his wealth through carrot-inspired intrigues, through wars, delicate helicopters, his own beautiful Kwahu scarp-sharp thighs, and bright eyes that didn't need one beam from anyone else's power. Pogo was rich enough to have his own lights. But his wife Delali, who was growing more and more fond of bananas and less and less of carrots, was getting worried because she often found herself daydreaming about Major Gentl. No reason, just that his gentleness grew beside her breasts; and for this she would often give the sign of the cross in the shape of her husband's *pioto* [*glossary consultation discloses that "pioto" means "pants"*]. Sometimes Pogo would be so sensitive that all the carrots around him would be sliced with the pervading subtlety; and it was in one of these moods that he had built a beautiful miniature building that he installed in one of the few filthy old-fashioned gutters, so that he would feel the paradox blowing over him with the bad whiff... He wore robes around which grew songs of praise, so that you could not blame him if he didn't want to listen to his own innate modesty. Horses and helicopters brought his breakfast in the mornings. <sup>177</sup>

Beside the unusual reality it presents: helicopters delivering breakfast, carrots "sliced with pervading subtlety," robes that send out songs of praise, and so on, the novel forces the reader to pay special attention to alternative linguistic sounds, spellings, and culturally-specific puns.

The above passage contains words from Ga, and Hsua languages and shows the same intent to hybridize the language of the colonizer with one's own Caliban expressed in Césaire's *A Tempest*. The excerpt above and the entire story, for that matter, could not be properly understood without consulting the end glossary on the use of which Laing himself insisted, in the preface to the reader. Resounding Ghanaian words ("agromentous"—"playful," "Ataame"—"God, Good God!," "abusuapanyin"—"the head of the family"), or funny ones ("fikifiki"—"sex," "logologo"—"intercourse"), and numerous synonyms ("Ataame" and "Ewurade," both of which mean "God, Good God!") point at the bounty and beauty of the local languages, very likely unknown to most Western readers. These multi-lingual entries require that the readers consult the end glossary, repeatedly, as without them the meaning of the story cannot be fully grasped, and the local flavor and color cannot be truly experienced. Thus, intentionally, the reading of

Laing's novel is a process that requires more than following the plot, page after page. Its lecture requires that the reader consults another portion of the book and that s/he learns words in several local Western African languages. The reader is brought to the text and by engaging with it via repeated glossary consultations, s/he is familiarized with the non-Western composite cultures of Ghana. This authorial choice to make the reader engage with the text, and encounter complex native linguistic and cultural elements on their own "turf," demands that the non-Ghanaian reader leaves a certain comfort zone and meets this account of the utopia of "the other" on its own terms. In thus doing, Laing's novel performs the estrangement function that characterizes the utopian genre.

This estrangement is necessary to evaluate the situation on the ground; it is not coincidence that Laing chose war and never-ending battles as the background for his novel. Just as the Romanian writers imagining alternative utopias could not escape the historical contingencies of their communist times, Laing could not ignore the dire realities in his own country. The borders of modern Ghana, previously a British colony known as Gold Coast and famous for its cocoa production, do not overlap (by far) the country's ancestral land. After the departure of the Europeans, this fact created enduring conflicts with the neighboring countries attempting to recreate their own ancestral borders. Major population exchanges and mutual expulsions of citizens challenged both the coalescing of a stable Ghanaian identity and the political balance in the area. Several (bloodless) military coups and assassinations later and the constant change of political power between Convention People's Party (CPP) and National Liberation Movement (NLM), the country's two most powerful parties, greatly debilitated the first Western African colony to gain its independence from the British. After the latter's departure, oppressive conditions on the ground endured and, generated by autochthonous rulers, continued to challenge the time-intensive and spatially-dependent practices of imagining the nation, and/or imagining it as utopia. In these conditions, literary accounts such as Laing's address and alert the local readership as much as they do their international audience. Through its changed content and form, *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars* signals the presence of oppressive conditions that affect not only its message, but the means of its delivery to the audience.

If Ben Okri, the Nigerian writer challenged and complicated the agency of the colonized in the creation of utopia and Kojo Laing, the Ghanaian writer engaged the reader in cultural and linguistic study, Indian author Amitav Ghosh addressed, in his *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Delirium, Fever, and Discovery*, the exclusion of his people from the history of scientific discoveries recorded in British specialty books. His novel addresses the same conflict showcased by in his play, *A Tempest*. In Césaire's work, Caliban accused Prospero of withholding scientific knowledge from him so that his resulting ignorance justified his continuous enslavement and provided the basis for his subaltern condition. Within the multilayered plot of the British-Indian version of this conflict, Ghosh constructs a space where the situation could be remedied, and the balance corrected in such away that India's involvement in scientific research is acknowledged. The main character, Murugan, searches relentlessly for historical evidence that his ancestors had been interested, and heavily invested in scientific discoveries long before, and continued to so under, the British colonial rule.

The narrative account of Murugan's quest is complicated and, like Laing, Ghosh challenges established, Western, modes of literary construction. He works with shifting puzzle pieces: characters, historical situations, cultural allusions, and the interactions between the colonizing British and the multi-ethnic population of India seem to follow no particular logic, no specific narrative order. The reader is constantly unsettled by the changes and apparent discrepancies in the plot. The main story is repeatedly interrupted by theological and magical discourses, and the intervention of new characters. Even the main character seems to be confounded by the constant geographical translocations and his immersion in the alternative realities he needs to visit in order to accomplish his redemptive, scientific mission.

“The truth is,” he said, “that I don't know. But a couple of things are clear enough. Someone is trying to get us to make some connections; they're trying to tell us something, something they don't want to put together themselves, so that when we get to the end we'll have a whole new story.”<sup>178</sup>

The “whole new story” Murugan is after incorporates early Mughal Gnosticism, the elements of rich spiritual universe of India, and the enduring traces of its pre-colonial past. Ghosh covers a past that includes the colonized's contributions to the British discourse of scientific discovery. The conflicting relationship between native Indian

mythos and colonizing Western logos is told by recounting past abuses and inequities at the hand of the British. This need to recuperate identity defining, and agency enhancing, key historical moments is reflected in Murugan's poignant introspections about his individual fate and his desire to have his life, and that of his people, count. He asks two of his female friends to "write him in" the history of India when the time is right:

'Promise me that you'll take me across if I don't make it on my own.'

Urmila's eyes widened. 'Make it where?' she said.

'Wherever.'

She laughed out loud, throwing back her head. 'I don't know what you are talking about.'

'But promise me anyway,' Murugan insisted. 'Promise you'll take me, even if they want you to leave me behind?'

'Why would anyone want to leave you behind?' said Urmila. 'You're the only one who knows what's happened, what's happening. You said yourself that someone had gone to a lot of trouble to help you make connections.'

'That's just the problem', said Murugan. 'My part in this was to tie some threads together so that they could hand the whole package over in a little bundle some time in the future, to whomever it is they're waiting for.'

'And how do you know it's not you they've been waiting for?'

'It can't be me', said Murugan flatly. 'You see, for them the only way to escape the tyranny of knowledge is to turn it on itself. But for that to work they have to create a single perfect moment of discovery when the person who discovers is also that which is discovered. The problem with me is that I know too much and too little.'<sup>179</sup>

What this extended passage shows is that Murugan, like Okri's nameless character, refuses to remain 'invisible,' especially when this condition is not one resulting from *not* being interested in the process of scientific inquiry, but one of intentional omission by the colonial authority.

Additionally, this specific scene brings to light another difference between Western and non-Western utopias. Not only does the colonizer control knowledge, and the colonized crave to participate in its production, but the two have, historically, approached the process from disparate vantage points. Traditionally, the West engaged in epistemically fruitful, rational discourse, other cultures around the world favored more mystical approaches to understand the world and process its realities. However, when confronted with the inequity resulting from not being able to co-participate in the Western discourse of knowledge and power, the subaltern, here Murugan, attempts to gain equal admittance to the scientific discourse and use it for the benefit of his own

people. This is not an easy task as he—and the emergent nation he represents—has to achieve a few other important and difficult things in the process. What makes his quest important is the timeliness of the endeavor. What makes it difficult is the situation on the ground, one which is best illustrated by the difference between Western and non-Western modes of imagining utopia and the nation. The Western paradigm details the compare and contrast encounter of two communities, one of which is well established, fully-coalesced, and politically, economically, and culturally operational and strong. The encounter with the other community is told from this community's perspective which, most of the time, is cast in a positive light and represented as superior to its foil. In the non-Western paradigm, it is the yet to be defined community that, while proceeding with the comparative and contrastive exercises of the genre, has to also attend to self-definition and self-evaluation.

In Ghosh's novel, this process of identity formation and scientific appropriation is helped along by the late revelation of what exactly the Calcutta chromosome is. The last scenes of the novel introduce several new characters, who turn out to be reincarnated heroes, or alter egos of the main character: famous intellectuals and artists not credited for their work in the past. They have all been, and continue to be connected to each other, the history of the land, and that of the world despite the fact that none of them, or any of their accomplishments, figured prominently in colonial history books. When the various pieces of the narrative puzzle finally fall into place, India's colonial history is written over by these recovered scientific episodes. The Calcutta chromosome is, after all, a gene that makes reincarnation possible. This continuity, through reincarnation, of gifted Indian individuals allows them to continue building ethnic and nation identity, a process that had been denied to them by repeated historical disruptions on the ground.

This concept of incarnation, which in Ghosh's novel allows the characters to recover agency from the British colonizer, is also revelatory of an important intra-ethnic/national inequity that sets up the stage for a twist in my major argument. I have stated that this project is about proving that conditions of oppressions by a foreign other or the same are responsible for the resulting expressions of utopia. I have shown that this was, indeed, the case in communist Romania, dispersed localities inhabited by ethnic Jews, and West African and Indian colonies of the British Empire. Now, I want to look a



bit more closely to the equation of power within India, more specifically, at the oppressive conditions generated by the still extant caste system, founded on principles of selective merit and incarnation. This subalterity within the Indian nation points out to another potentially undermining factor in the creation and maintenance of “imagined communities” like the nation. After gaining its independence from the British in 1947, India experienced continuous religious strife, which has since caused several territorial re-arrangements and partitions. The year of its independence India lost two major territories. They soon became independent polities themselves: Bangladesh and Pakistan. And while India’s deeply entrenched democratic practices prevented internal turmoil—like that experienced by the other ex-British colonies already discussed in this chapter—from throwing the country in economic disarray or bend it under military rule, it failed to address many other internal problems, like the cast system, which is one of the most prolific generator of subalterity within the nation. Faced with the needs and emergent ethnic narratives of many other minority groups, speaking thousands of languages and dialects, the democratic system has managed to stunt possible upheavals and generate a national narrative sufficiently strong to enlist the co-participation of most such groups.

Still, this intra-cultural hierarchy in India highlights the fact that my original argument might be in need of a major revision. Before naming it, I would like to revisit the logical trail that brought us to this crossroad. We have observed that certain situations are not culturally specific: utopian aspiration is universal, as is discrimination, oppression, racism, and sexism. We have also noticed the recent emergence of non-Western, utopian analogous narratives and practices that showcase the ways to maintain ethnic and national identity amid historical chaos. We have also noted that these conditions, which were specific to these groups in the past, are, in the twenty-first century, the plight of many. The same travails await both previously thought of as Western and non-Western groups as they attempt to ensure their ethnic and national survival amid great geo-political and economic shifts. The shifting of populations on the ground, and the fluctuation of national borders on the political map of the world are mirrored by similar, fluid, and composite phenomena in the ways narratives of imagined communities are created.

As most canons of the Western culture are presently being dismantled, doing the same for the utopian genre prepares us to resituate the argument of this project. By looking at several additional narrative examples hailing from a Western culture, USA (Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*), and from a non-Western culture, Ghana (Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes*), I intend to show that the complex relationship between forms of oppression and utopian manifestations is not just an inter-cultural occurrence, but an intra-cultural phenomenon as well. I will do so by pointing out the intra-societal ills illustrated in each of these novels: discrimination, sexism, and racism and by focusing on the redirections of the utopian impetus these oppressive conditions produced.

Ben Okri's 1995 "invisible" Nigerian character, for example, is reminiscent of African-American Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* character. The latter's 1952 novel, detailing the story of a black man who finds himself at odds with the white society in which he is trying to succeed while disproving the accusations of betrayal from his own race uses many themes and topics which later appeared in Okri's *Astonishing the Gods*. In both these novels "invisibility" is a key term. Ellison's main character is nameless, and believes himself to be invisible. He desperately tries to integrate in the white society, just to realize that, despite his many privileges not available to other blacks, he, too, is stereotyped and sidelined. At one point he finds himself subjected to shock treatment and this encounter with physical abuse exacerbates his already introspective nature even more. At this particular juncture in the story, he notices the widespread phenomenon of "blindness" that, in various degrees, affects not just the whites, but the eminent blacks he encounters and/or looks up to. Even famous people like Jack and Reverend Homer A. Barbee, with whom he had been very impressed in the past, turn out to be minor players in the larger society, which has cast them in very specific, secondary, roles meant to reinforce the existing status quo. These characters are not blind because of their physical afflictions—the former is half-blind, and the latter is fully blind—but, primarily, because of their deeply ingrained belief that they cannot change the existing situation. The affliction that engrosses American and Nigerian societies, thousands of miles and decades apart is practically the same: it is not blindness, but racism. The African American and his Nigerian brother are on the same quest: they want to be heard, seen, and acknowledged.

Both characters are dealing with issues of minority/subaltern identity formation, racial equality, and search for meaning and agency in historical circumstances not yet, or poorly, outfitted to hear, see and acknowledge the validity of their accounts.

In Ghanaian Ama Ata Aidoo's 1999 *Changes*, the lives of three women at odds with their culture's patriarchal expectations are representative of the issues confronting all women trying to steer away from traditionally assigned roles. Esi (the successful data analyst), Opokuya (the midwife), and Fusena (the stay at home wife) embody the various struggles women go through when they try to exercise free will and agency in their marriages, chosen professions, and newly-independent, changing societies. As women, and minorities, the task ahead of them is daunting. They have to work extra hard to "imagine" themselves out of the restrictive roles they were born into *and* the roles dictated and imposed upon them by the new society. Some characters cannot imagine these alternatives and resign to live their lives according to the patriarchal status quo. Others, like Esi, the main character, go against the establishment. Esi leaves her husband after he commits marital rape. When she cannot manifest her ideal life in reality, when she is prevented from shaping and molding her spatial surroundings, she—like Olăreanu's and Okri's characters—turns introspective. She turns to the old women of her family, who are impressive repositories of both invaluable ethnic and cultural knowledge and profound individual tragedy and sorrow. In Aidoo's novel, the narrative discourse is gendered. The main narrative, and the other characters' parts read and sound differently: it is precise, rational, and continuous. The women's travels and quests are told in a more poetic style: their intimate conversations are printed in various other scripts than the main text. The interspersed poetic interludes in the main discourse is reminiscent of the ways Caliban tried to use his poetic voice against Prospero's scientific discourse. Through this symbolic battle of Western and non-Western discursive practices, Aidoo, just like her fellow postcolonial writers (Cesaire, Laing and Ghosh) addresses persistent issues in the area: conflicting imported religious warring with native spiritual practices, the education of women, marital rights, individual fulfillment, women's right to own property, and so on. The highly introspective quest of the female character succeeds in making her plight universal, and consistently reminds the reader that such afflictions are not limited to

gender, or to culture and, in different conditions, they could easily become the plight of all.

On the other side of the ocean, in her 1976 *Woman on The Edge of Time*, Marge Piercy detailed the precarious conditions of a Chicana woman living on the fringes of American society. The novel reveals the importance of hearing these minority accounts and understand the complex interrelation between competing narratives in the Western nation: whites vs. new immigrants, rich vs. poor, society vs. women, etc. It shows the enduring and blatantly oppressive conditions that prevent, stunt, or deflect the narratives and practical imaginings of the less powerful, but numerous individuals and groups. Piercy uses the case of Connie Ramos to show not only how such oppressive conditions shape her individual fate and that of the Hispanic community in New York, but also critique the metanarrative, cultural, racial, social, and politic of the ruling group. The latter's existing national and (strictly canonical) utopian models are ideologically rigid, spatially hungry and impermeable to new additions, resistant to restructuring its constituency or changing its course.

Connie Ramos represents the thousands of Latinos who lived in New York in the 1970s, and experienced oppression under a system whose institutions converged to keep them marginalized and dependent on its welfare and hand me downs. "From the edge of time," from outside history, Connie is able to critically assess the generalized condition of women who have been maltreated, whose bodies (hers is altered forever when she undergoes a hysterectomy and daily shock therapy) are played upon by the hegemonic society. Labeled insane and hospitalized in a mental institution, Connie Ramos is, nevertheless, the only person who can, from her marginalized vantage point, understand the particular paths that future history could take pending decisions made during her historical time. She alone stands at a crossroads determining the future of two very different societies. In the androgynous Mattapoissett agrarian utopia, pollution, racism, rampant consumerism, homophobia, and totalitarianism have been eliminated. Only the death penalty, as a vestigial evil, remains. In the second society, an elite of wealthy technocrats use the rest of the population as their living donor bank controlled with drugs and made pliant through invasive, mind altering surgeries. In addition to these brutal and social and genetic engineering methods, women suffer even more as they are subjected to

drastic surgeries to enhance their sexual and physical features, considered their only valuable traits. Connie has to prevent the existence of this second society by making sure that the technology used to alter mind functions is not developed during her historical time.

None of her attributes or actions before the story starts recommends her as a heroine: she is a thirty-something Chicana woman, down on her luck (her lover dies), paying for some bad choices (she drops out of college, becomes a thief, is accused of abusing her daughter). Despite all this, however, she is the only one who can save the entire human race. By redirecting the critical lens of the utopian genre closer to home, Piercy casts light on the subaltern and inferior position of women in one of the most modern nations of the world. She also points out the potentialities for influencing history of even the most 'invisible' members of American society. Through Connie, Piercy gives a voice to the usually 'invisible' minority women, who could exercise agency not just on behalf of their equally neglected and abused co-nationals and fellow women, but on behalf of all those in similar situations.

Two other cultural examples, separated by time and space, and responding to different political and ontological realities show the ubiquity of various forms of oppression and the similarity of responses to its abuses. Matei Vişniec's 1980s *In Gufi's Country* (*În țara lui Gufi*) and H.G. Wells's 1904 short-story "The Country of the Blind" tackle the problem of rigid social structures and the pressure on the individual to conform to the status quo. In Wells' short story, mountaineer Nunez comes across the fabled Country of the Blind. The society, which, at its origin, was a haven for people fleeing from Spanish tyrants, had become, in time, a rigid construct impermeable to observations pointing out its blindness and the limits it brought upon its people. In love with Medina-Sarote, one of the village's beauties, Nunez is about to undergo surgery to have his eyes removed to prevent his obsession with 'sight' from continuing to affect his daily interactions with the blind population. Right before his operation, however, he has a change of heart and runs away, hoping to find his way out of the valley of the Country of the Blind, and back into the seeing world. Whereas the political and social conditions in which Wells' story was published were different from those that prevented the publishing of Vişniec's play during the communist regime decades later, the messages of both works

overlap and point at the hypocrisy of the system and its potential to degenerate and implement its ideology via extreme –“blinding”– coercive methods.

What these additional examples have shown is that, what we have come to call “canonical” or “non-canonical” utopian pieces are, actually, much more open forms, sharing, upon closer inspection, similar themes and tropes. This type of ideological cross-pollination and deep empathy is showcased in the following example, which shows— just like Piercy’s account did—how the utopian canon is open from within and successfully accomplishes what Ariel/ Césaire described in *A Tempest* as the acquiring of conscience by “the other species.” If Caliban “spoke back” in most of this chapter, the “Prosperos” of the world are also speaking to Ariel’s desire for an increased awareness of their own agency in the colonization process. This category comprises Western writings exhibiting a deep understanding of the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer, and the interdependent relationship between the two.

Representative of this group is Mike Resnick’s *Kirinyaga—A Fable of Utopia*. The novel stresses the importance of future utopias accepting the presence of “the other” as an inclusive and obligatory condition for the making of new and viable communities. Resnick’s collection of interrelated short stories is an attempt to revisit African history and address the complex issues at play within the utopian and national discourse of an ethnic group recovering its independence from its Western colonizers. He points out the likely errors of such an endeavor and the possibility that those who have been long oppressed and not allowed to co-imagine their historical and spatial realities, when finally in a position to do so, might ‘return the favor’ and treat their “others” in similarly oppressive ways. To show how such attitudes are formed, he based his fictional events on real, historical events in Eastern Africa, i.e., the ethnic struggle of the Kikuyu tribe under European colonial rule.

Extricating themselves from a specific time (the year 2123) and geographical space (the heavily industrialized and Europeanized Kenya of the future), the most conservative members of the Kikuyu tribe opt to move to a virgin space specifically designed and retrofitted to resemble the mythical Kikuyu utopia: the Kirinyaga, the untainted world of pre-European contact. Transplanted to a satellite orbiting the Earth, the new society, comprised of highly educated Kikuyu and their followers, abandons

modern conveniences and returns to nature, to a specific moment of the past reconstructed from the legends of the tribe.

In spite of this successful ethnic restoration, however, the Kikuyu utopian society fails. It is impermeable to any contact and information from mother Earth: it is static, rigid, and sexist. The rules it needs to re-instate to preserve the identity of the tribe are implemented at the expense of the younger generations. On Kirinyaga, the Kikuyu are the only ethnies inhabiting the land, as the Council of the Elders has purged the environment to an extreme. After long debates, the elders have eliminated their “others”: both the local Masaai, and the foreign Europeans. They forbade novelty and progress and instituted a strict observance of strictures past. The new locale quickly became a museum where the ideal was not preserved, but embalmed. This “utopia,” intended as a second chance to create a pure Kikuyu hegemony, ultimately fails. Despite the expectations of its founders, the reified concept, devoid of the necessary and formative cultural interactions with “the other,” which should challenge and shape the identity of all groups involved, succeeds only in encapsulating the community into a deadly, self-defeating stasis. As a society, Kirinyaga lacks the geographical and ethnical challenges that would allow it to manifest as a utopian construct. In fact, in the absence of other concurrent societies, the hegemony of Kikuyu is not a hegemony at all. For, even though the Kikuyu tribe has removed itself from the danger of others, it was this very danger that, in the glorified past, helped shape its identity and imbue its tribal and historical existence with purpose. What Resnick tries to address in this novel is the importance of admitting the presence and the input of the other in the construction of any utopian or national discourse. This “parable of utopia” acts against the beliefs and practices of ethnocentrism that are present in not only Western cultures, but in the non-Western ones as well.

Further addressing this topic is Kim Stanley Robinson's much-acclaimed *Mars Trilogy*. The novels detail the story of the colonization of Mars by a Terran crew of various nationalities, religious beliefs, political inclinations, and sexual orientations. This first team of one hundred colonists is made out of mostly American and Russian members with a few other representatives from contributing economic powers, France and Japan among them. Shortly after they land on the Red Planet, competing ideologies and attitudes versus terraforming the new locale engenders the splitting of the community

into various groups: “the Reds” are very much against the radical spatial and biophysical transformations that would make the arid planet into a second Earth, as such actions would annihilate the very identity and the characteristics of the colonized planet. “The Greens” are all for the complete and rapid terraforming of the Red Planet. In between, various ethnic groups fuse ancient Terran spiritual practices with new Martian rituals, and attempt to create a novel identity that requires less invasive demands on the land and more introspective practices of the self.

Although most of the characters initially refer to their new home as utopia, when they start applying their respective ingrained beliefs and desires, the red planet quickly becomes a heterotopia, in the sense suggested by Foucault and reaffirmed by Jameson in *Archaeologies of the Future*. The multi-vocal accounts of the colonization of the Red Planet consistently show how the utopian consciousness of the colonists is kept alive through spatially extensive utopian actions, temporally intensive uchronian practices, sustained intopian introspections, and a plethora of hybrid forms in between. The political sphere is thus reconfigured according to Planet Earth’s old patterns and as soon as it engenders a new identity, Mars rebels against its parent, and claims the right to self-determination. Not surprisingly, the mythos, ethos, and pathos of the nation- building discourse follow familiar paths. The previous “others” from Earth: the Russians to the Americans, the Arabs to the Christians and the Jews, unite as one against their former home and, with some exceptions, stand and fight as one for their independence. What makes this trilogy exceptionally compelling is the fact that it showcases a repeated trend of the utopia-nation relationship: Mars starts as a utopia, a dreamed-of better society. It represents the new (arid) “garden” where human civilization could part ways with its past mistakes and transgressions. Gradually, the restructuring of power and discursive hegemony shifts to ideological loyalties, and away from national fealty. It is important to note both Resnick’s and Robinson’s shared belief that future utopias need the presence of “the other” as an inclusive and obligatory condition for the making of new communities.

What these last few literary examples show is that all cultures share not just a universal aspiration for unity (of a community, or a nation), but also that the thwarting of such a powerful impetus by unfavorable conditions, produces similar utopian and national expressions in cultures otherwise distinct. Transcending their cultural specificity,



they describe conditions and responses, which, in their universality, have acquired a trans-national and trans-cultural appeal, as they address needs and wants stemming from the anthropological core. In addition, such writings emphasize the necessity to imagine communities and draft mission statements to which the individual and the community could subscribe wholeheartedly, reinforce by active participation, and pass on to future generations for further improvements, additions, or changes. They also point out the fact that utopia has become a heterotopian project, and the nation, a fluid, transcultural notion.

To now redirect our attention back to the evidence presented in this chapter suffice it to say that Okri, Laing and Ghosh were keenly aware of the reality of ethnic plurality and the need for dialogical interactions between emergent imagining communities of the utopian or national type. Accordingly, their writings reflect what Pordzik referred to as the complex, hybrid, and fantastic fictional space needed to reevaluate the individual, the group, and their preoccupation with national identity. All three examples illustrate how, in the aftermath of colonialism's demise, emergent new nations and their citizens are forced to re-evaluate who they are before they thoroughly inhabit their ancestral space. As shown in these Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Indian examples, extracting a sense of identity from a convoluted disputed past is, for these writers/groups/polities/communities/ the first step before writing utopias and/or imagining the nation. A satisfactory and accepted self has to be constructed before it can be compared or contrasted with past, present, or future ethnic foils. To then write utopias, once the self is thus established, makes much more sense. There is a "self," be it individual or national, to be compared and contrasted to "the other," be it an old nemesis (the colonizer) or new threats (labor migrations, territorial disputes, armed conflict, refugees, impending globalization, economic neo-colonialism).

Moreover, what the cartographic evidence in Appendix A: Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias (Fig.1- 13, [f//f]) suggests is that strict national border delineations are temporary and the fluctuating space contained therein a highly contested and identity supplanting resource. What our texts, these maps, and other visual data also suggest is that geographical space cannot be scraped clean and rewritten over with the voice of just one group. Space is more like vellum onto which different, competing narratives are inscribed over and over in a palimpsest-like process. Cross-referencing our

resources in this chapter we can better understand the complexities of both the utopian and the national projects in their postcolonial contexts. The palimpsest heterotopian reality of postcolonial Africa includes: the historical connections between various native peoples, the complex relationships between the colonizers and the colonized, and the transfer of age-old tensions between European countries long at odds with each other back on the old continent and now in close(r) proximity to each other. Postcolonial utopian novels written in and about these places address all these relationships. As it was evidenced not only in “non-Western” literary examples, but in the later “Western” examples the building of the national discourse in these ex-colonies requires much historical introspection and the re-appropriation of the respective cultures’ old worlds, and old lands. These heterotopian, hybrid accounts show that what we have considered so far— for the sake of clear argumentation— as strictly “utopian” and “utopian analogous” traditions are, in fact, not strict and distinct foils of each other, but intersecting discourses that acknowledge the need for, and the importance of the inclusion of other imagining accounts.

The previous examples show signs that this awareness is increasingly present in both the Western and the non-Western producers of traditional utopian or emergent utopian analogous formats. As both utopia and the nation are imagined in more complex ways and are shaped at the intersection of various media (film, literature, internet, music) from within and from outside cultural borders, the differences that might otherwise jeopardize the engendering of such projects are bypassed by the return to the anthropological core and the shared common need for unity and identity. In other words, the Calibans, the previously oppressed, are not alone in their quest for a “brave new wonderful world.” The Prosperos, the ex-masters, have fully— and responding to Ariel’s wish, *consciously*— entered the co-imagining process of their shared world.

Chapter Five  
Quo Vadis, Utopia?

It is clear that if there is to be a revival of the utopian imagination in the near future, it cannot return to the old-style spatial utopias. New utopias would have to derive their form from the shifting and dissolving movement of society that is gradually replacing the fixed locations of life. They would not be rational cities evolved by a philosopher's dialectic: they would be rooted in the body as well as in the mind, in the unconscious as well as the conscious, in forests and deserts as well as in highways and buildings, in bed as well as in the symposium.

Northrop Frye, "Varieties of Literary Utopias"<sup>180</sup>

Only in us does this light still burn, and we are beginning a fantastic journey toward it, a journey toward the interpretation of our waking dreams, toward the implementation of the central concept of utopia. To find it, to find the right thing, for which it is worthy to live, to be organized, and to have time: that is why we go, why we cut new, metaphysically constitutive paths, summon what is not, build into the blue, and build ourselves into the blue, and there seek the true, the real, where the merely factual disappears—incipit vita nova.

Ernest Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*<sup>181</sup>

I have hypothesized that there is a causal relationship between the conditions of oppression and expressions of utopia. More precisely, in this project I claimed that the more a people, culture, and/or ethnicity experiences physical space as a site of political, cultural, and literal encroachment, the more that distinct culture's utopian ideas tend to appear in non-spatial (uchronian) and introspective (intopian) formulations. These alternative utopian formulations then, act not only as repositories for the utopian desire, but also, and most importantly, as portable sites, or Paradises within which non-hegemonic cultures such as the Romanian, the Jewish, the Nigerian, the Ghanaian, the Indian, etc. could define, protect, and develop their own identity. To test this hypothesis, I have used two intersecting methods: the street view, i.e., close readings, historical and cultural surveys, and archival and photographic evidence, and the bird's eye view, i.e. extensive cartographic evidence. When possible and pertinent, I also supplemented these findings with fieldwork in order to test the feasibility and practicality of some of the concepts promoted by the selected utopian analogous traditions.

In Chapter One: *New Nations and Utopia: Ideologies and Mythogeneses at Odds and Play*, I introduced recent theories and research in the field of utopian studies and emergent alternative tradition. I presented the case for the universality of the impetus/impulse, and opened my main line of argument: that what has appeared to some researchers as the absence of the utopian impulse is better understood as evidence for utopia's adaptations away from the canonical model. I then introduced extended definitions and invited the reader to approach the following chapters as an interactive exercise/lecture that required the consultation of the thematically-titled appendices. I ended the introductory chapter by presenting my case studies, explaining why and how these selections would serve as evidence for my argument, and outlined the specific goals for each of the chapters to follow.

In Chapter Two: *When Utopia Has You By The Throat: Alternative Utopian Paradigms in Communist Romania*, I examined, in great detail, texts like Mircea Eliade's *The Forbidden Forest*, Sergiu Fărcășan's *A Love Story from the Year 41,042*, Bujor Nedelcovici's *The Second Messenger*, Oana Orlea's *Perimeter Zero*, Costache Olăreanu's *Fear*, and the paidetic practices of the Păltiniș School and the literary innovations of the Tigoviste School. By contextualizing these non-standard expressions

of utopia within a Communism that claimed to be Utopia, I was able to show just how the environment of oppression denied groups with alternative utopian idealists a realm of spatial representations. I then highlighted specific non-spatial adaptations of utopian expression, manifest in a preference for temporal excursions, specific forms of intellectual and metaphysical inquiries, irony, ambiguous implication, punning, and censor-avoiding subterfuges. I also produced photographic evidence in Appendix B: Life in Utopia: A Photographic Memoir. I concluded that the analogous utopian tradition in Romania during the communist regime developed as it did because the metanarrative of PCR had its citizens “by the throat” and suffered no contestation/critique of its civic, political, ideological, cultural, and spatial “utopian” practices.

In Chapter Three: The Sabbath, or Uchronian Fridays, and Fabled Old New Lands, I continued to trace the causal story between forms of oppression and utopian expressions by looking at selected passages from *The Zohar: The Book of Splendor*, and practices like the Sabbath in Classical Kabbalah. I claimed that the continuous exilic conditions produced a distillation of the utopian drive and its migration “inward and upward” and found that the radical mystical permutations of the Kabbalah tradition produced an advanced and portable concept of Paradise that engendered and sustained ethnic identity even in prolonged conditions of displacement. In addition, I also noted the extreme encoding of spiritual particulars in linguistically complex phrases and ritualistic practices. I then examined Theodor Herzl’s *Altneuland/Old New Land* to show how the utopian impulses of many displaced generations, once driven into rituals securing ‘sacred time’, quickly re-emigrated into space (the physical land of Israel) once this became feasible. This adaptation—then re-adaptation—supported my claim that subaltern conditions force the utopian desire out of space and real (non-mystical) time, but that a change in conditions— such as the return to the land of Israel— can reverse them. By studying the shared rhetoric of the utopian and the national discourses used to create an illustrated edition of Herzl’s novel I noted the spatially-exclusive, colonizing aspect of the utopian impetus and the resulting challenges when imposed on a palimpsest like cultural, historical, and geographical environ. Additional support from Middle-Eastern cultures for this observation that the nature of utopian expression tracks political conditions came from an examination of the Palestinian Arabs. At this point in the

argument, I qualified my conclusions by noting the fluctuating and socially constructed nature of the concepts in use—such as ‘utopia’, ‘culture’ and ‘nation’ or ‘empire’.

In Chapter Four: Postcolonial Utopias or Re-imagining ‘Brave New Worlds’: Caliban Speaks Back I looked at ’s *A Tempest*, and Ben Okri’s *Astonishing the Gods*; Kajo Laing’s *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*; Amitav Ghosh’s *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery* to further trace, under altered political and cultural conditions, the intopian turn of the utopian impulse—a turn imposed upon colonized peoples by oppressive colonial rule and its identity-thwarting effects. These NEL examples were used to highlight a special form of altered utopian voice, produced when colonized utopians must literally express them-selves in borrowed linguistic media— the language of the oppressor. There is, especially at first, a drive—not to conquer, but rather, to, as it were, collaborate with, then co-opt, the utopian discourses/metanarratives, which were originally employed to ensure their submission. Several of the above examples also clearly exhibited the NEL’s structural and substantive adaptations—specifically, their non-dialectical, dialogical approach to the imagining of utopia, and the inclusion of “the other” in the social construction of a heterogeneous, hybrid community.

The dialectical mode of identity-formation described in these cases, however, did not seem to be limited to inter-cultural exchanges, as exhibited in the colonizer-colonized relation. In fact, these NEL cases suggested that the clear divide between cultures, one ‘outside’ the other, understated the complexity of the notion of culture—and certainly over-estimates our ability to individuate them. For cultures themselves factionalize/fractionalize in much the same way. So, I argued, the same pressures between cultures would also occur, and alter the utopian pursuit, within them. Pursuing this thought led me to hold fixed the ‘culture’ in question, and look for this factionalized utopian pursuit within it. I looked at all-‘Western’ examples: Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and H.G.Wells’ “In The Country of the Blind” and indeed, found that the canvas onto which the utopian projections have been made historically, were never as clearly cut a tradition as the modern canons will have us believe. Instead, this geographical and cultural environ has always been—containing sub-cultures in various states of inter-cultural and national

oppression. Pursuing this line of argument, I also found, in Mike Resnick's *Kirinyaga-A Fable of Utopia*, a clear example of what I previously thought was primarily the epiphany of previously oppressed groups—namely, an understanding of the need for dialogical imagination and co-and re- creation of social constructs, leading to more equal dialogues and co-discursive practices. I showed these most recent interactions exemplified, narratively in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars Trilogy*, a polyphonic account inclusive of many cultural groups previously at odds, centered not on national and cultural affinities, nor anchored by ontological essences, but based upon a process of open dialectic, oriented towards, though never quite reaching, a basic interpersonal acknowledgment and a simple practical core of needs and wants.

Finally, as a final means of adding further support to these considerations, and to ensure that the shifts and adaptations I had argued for in utopian literatures were evident in altered/adapted lives, I documented extensive field work which I engaged in from 2004-2008, in the USA, Romania, England, Israel, and Ireland. This also completed the evidence for the particular feedback loop for which I had argued, between the conditions of life and the adaptations of literature, then the manifestations of literature, giving rise to new attempts at contemporary utopian life. I also mentioned here how the connections drawn between shifts in literature and life gave my primarily descriptive thesis clear predictive possibilities.

This work, then, leaves us with the question heading this summary chapter: Quo Vadis, Utopia? And, having thus far summarized what has already been argued, I here invite the reader to consult Appendix D: "From Enclaves to Laboratories, Paideias, and Twenty-first Century Utopian Cities", which looks forward to future effects of the increasing dissolution of the once-close utopian-expression/nation-culture nexus. In giving my answer I cite real-world communities like The EdenProject in England, The Damanhur Federation in Italy, Auroville in India, and cities like Masdar in United Arab Emirates and New Songdo in South Korea—all of which demonstrate, in ways increasingly less conditioned by identifiable groups or boundaries, a more heterotopian, dialogical, and fluid notion of both nation, community, and utopia.

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Since first reading Porzick and the Cotepra group's pioneering work in non-

Western utopian traditions, I intended to extend, to my own Romanian culture, what Pordzik calls ‘contextual analogies’. As I studied, and the full scope of my thesis took shape, more countries and cultures offered themselves as further ‘extensions’. Perhaps I have accomplished this ‘extending’ of analogies—if only by examining in detail some stark differences/disanalogies in and across utopian traditions. I have tried to show the conditions for, and structure of, these disanalogies, thereby reuniting them in an explanation which traces these differences back through a multi-varied set of ‘external’ conditions, and back to a single aspirational root. This study has also been lengthy, for which I ask the reader’s pardon—though the evolution of anything occurs over great periods of time, is less spotted in individuals than in whole populations—which is to say that the very nature of the project unavoidably led to its scope.

Yet, at its end, I hope the reader has found, in these mammoth, centuries-long struggles for identity, a ‘contextual analogy’ of a different sort—i.e. has found something with potential for personal application; I certainly have. To adapt one’s identity to the world, and make the world into a place where one can, amidst large and petty oppressions, pursue one’s identity, does not seem irrelevant to individual concerns. To adapt one’s expressions of those aspirations under oppressive events seems at least structurally analogous to the similar adaptations made by the peoples just discussed. So, if something that was written here has helped the reader to reconsider, not merely agency in history, but his/her increased agency in the making of a “brave new wonderful world”—has not merely been a treatise on national real estate, but finds application in personal attempts to have one’s ideals enacted on the “old new land” in a corner of our global village—and leads the individual reader to an open, dialogical, and heterotopian mood—then this work has not merely been about the journey of the utopian aspiration; it has itself been a part of it.

END



Afterward

I have learned much from reading the untitled manuscript found in Bucharest three years ago. Its anonymous author/ess made extensive use of maps and riddles, and I could easily follow the train of thought and the evolution of the writer, as well as that of the plot and the characters, simply by studying these para-textual materials. The author/ess clearly delved deeply into folklore and mysticism, learned foreign languages to understand texts not available in translation, and underwent rigorous mental and physical training to test the limits of the human mind and body. Like most self-respecting utopian dreamers, the author or the authoress (for we should not presuppose a gender identity between the main character of the novel and her creator) even included a diagram, which I, too, include a copy of below.

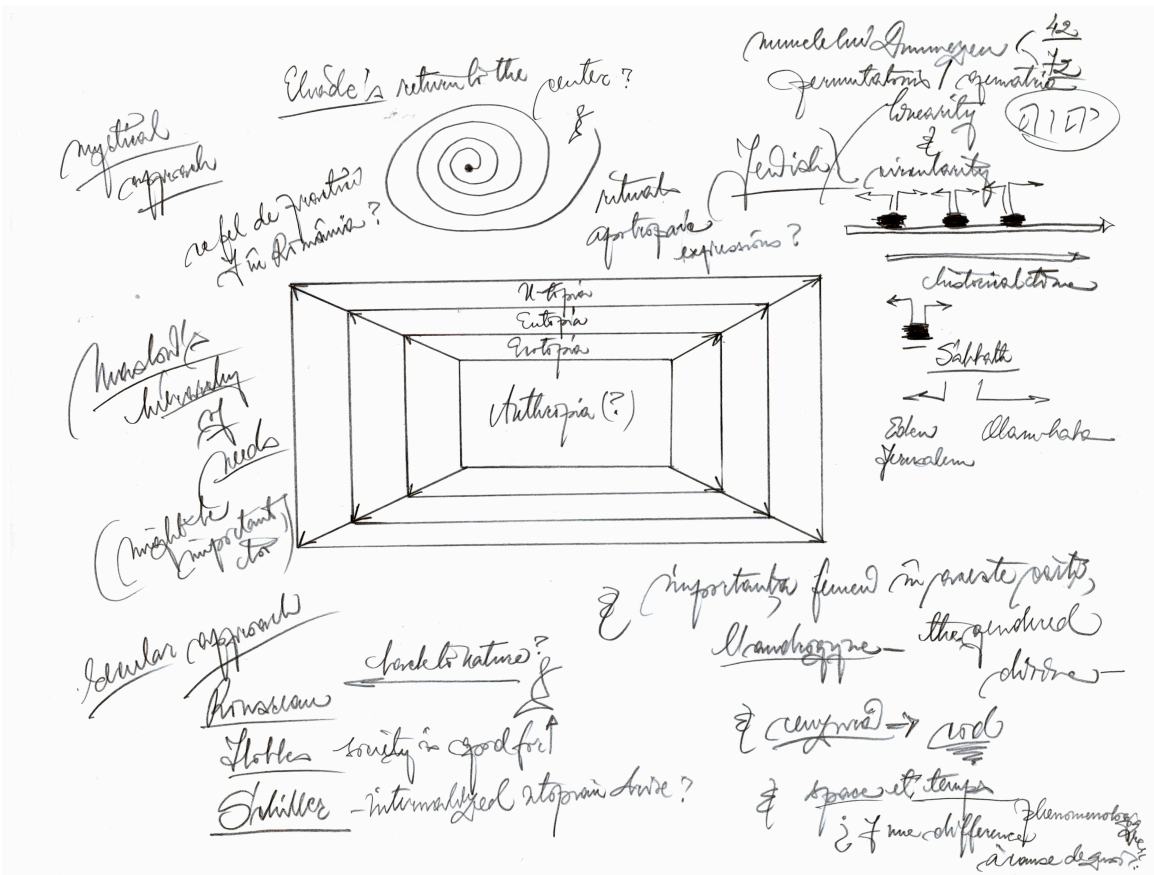


Fig. 3: The diagram found in the Romanian National archives, Bucharest, 2008.

It is rudimentary, but it bespeaks the writer's intense, sustained search for something better, beyond the professed "utopia" in which the character and the author lived. I have to admit that, at all times during the writing of my dissertation, this story, this diagram, and its enigmatic notes informed, channeled, and challenged my own claims, thoughts, and overall argument. I thus feel it is necessary to add to the list of acknowledgments this last, but very important thanks: to the people described in that "utopia" story, the people of Romania.

## Appendix A

### Sights/Sites of the Ephemeral: Nations and Utopias

Note to the reader:

I recommend a quick perusal of the maps and their basic descriptions (in regular font) during the lecture of the introductory Chapter One [f].

*This information (in italics) pertains to specific claims and evidence necessary for the understanding of the case studies and should be revisited during the lecture of Chapters Two through Five. In this section, when relevant, I have also added historical details which help situate and contextualize the situation on the ground [ff].*

**This information (in bold) connects claims made throughout the project and supports the predictions proposed in the conclusive Chapter Five [f].**

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#### Romanian Cartographic Section:

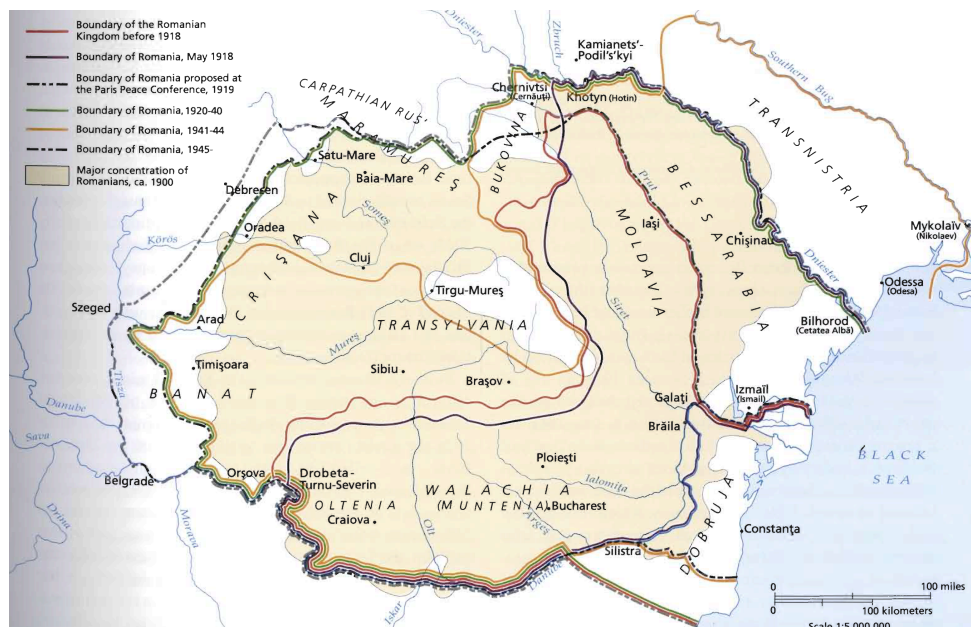


Fig. 1: Romania and its border changes during the twentieth-century.<sup>182</sup>

*After many centuries under various empires, the core provinces of Romania: Transylvania, Moldova, and Wallachia were briefly reunited in 1600 under the rule of*

*Mihai Viteazu (Michael the Brave). The other provinces: Banat, Crișana, Maramureș, Bessarabia, and Dobrogea were added to the national territory, in their entirety or portions thereof, in 1918. The Romanian borders were finalized in their present form in 1944.*



Fig. 2: Central Europe, cca. 1480.<sup>183</sup>

*After the Roman conquest of Dacia in 106 CE, migratory peoples overran the cradle of Romanian civilization and the independent polity dissolved. The map above shows this geo-political situation during the Middle Ages when its territory was appropriated by various neighboring superpowers like the Ottoman, Hungarian, Polish, and Russian empires.*

*During the nearly two thousand years Romanian territory belonged to other nations or empires, the ethnic identity of the original inhabitants was transmitted from generation to generation via oral tradition (legends, ballads, doinas,<sup>184</sup> heroic tales), or, much more anemically, by commissioned “histories” written in Cyrillic alphabet. In 1848, inspired by similar nationalist movements throughout Europe, a group of*

*intellectuals from Transylvania started inventorying all such historical and cultural accounts in an attempt to document the history of the Romanian people, and identify the traits of the national character.*

**Although the novel and print were, indeed, responsible for helping congeal modern European states, in Romania, non-material lore like oral traditions and rituals provided the means to maintain ethnic and national identity during lengthy unfavorable historical conditions.**



Fig. 3: Romania at the end of the twentieth-century.<sup>185</sup>

*Population exchanges started around 1877, continued throughout the first decades of the twentieth-century, and intensified after 1947, due to the openly xenophobic politics and policies of the PCR. Population enclaves of ethnic Romanians exist still in the neighboring countries (Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, etc.) where they are known as Aromanians (Vlachs).*

*Despite the industrious efforts of the PCR to expunge Romania's minorities, the post-communist state still has a large population of Hungarians and Gypsies. The other historical minorities were forced out, or left voluntarily, during the regime period. The*

*Germans/Sasi, whose ancestors settled in Transylvania some time in the eleventh century, and were responsible for building some of its most beautiful cities (Cluj/Clausenburg, Brasov/Kronstadt, Sibiu/Hermannstadt, etc.) were forced out by discriminating policies, or left of by choice for one of the German-speaking countries where they had extended families. The Jews not sold by the Iron Guard to the inventory lists of the Third Reich, were later “sold” by the Ceaușescu regime to the Israeli government for amounts varying from a few hundred, to thousands of American dollars, depending on their perceived economic and intellectual value.*

*In fact, the fall of the communist regime created not just economic upheavals and political unrest, but ethnic conflict as well. In the absence of its leveling metanarrative, minority voices and territorial claims were made public soon after 1989. During the Romanian ultranationalist politics of the early 1990s, the cause of the Hungarians/Magyars from Transylvania was championed by both local forums and by parties from nearby Hungary. Their joint attempts to obtain political and economic autonomy for the densely populated regions in the center of the country met with failure: these small, but vibrant Hungarian enclaves are still part of Romania. The millions of Gypsies/Romas/Tigani have been less vocal about their territorial rights, and much more concerned with securing equal and human rights. Their poor performance abroad has earned them a terrible international reputation and has greatly affected such political efforts.*

**This emergence of many minority voices from the ex-communist bloc can be explained by the fact that, a few generations back, various ethnic groups had divided among, or included in, various Eastern European states after the Second World War. Comparing this map to the next one, helps us understand the roots and the extent of some of the ethnic turmoil in the area. When two of Romania’s neighbors, The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, both previously communist federations, disbanded in the early and late 1990s, they experienced even more pronounced ethnic conflict, in the now independent territories of Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, Georgia, Serbia, Croatia, etc.**



Fig. 4: Central Europe, 2000.<sup>186</sup>

**Jewish Cartographic Section:**

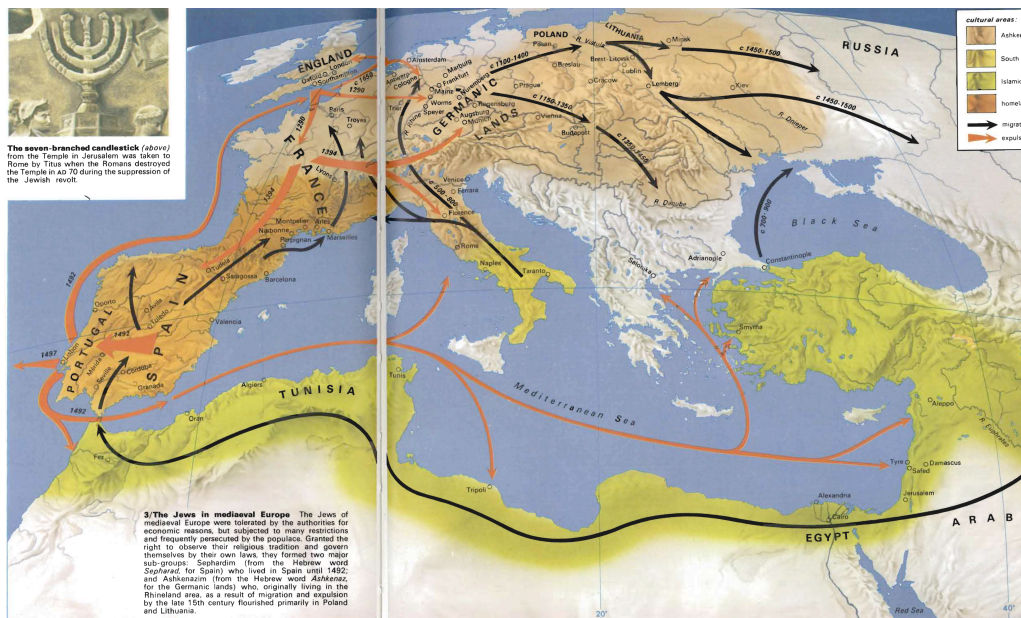


Fig. 5: The Jewish Exile, 70-1497.<sup>187</sup>

*This map shows the extent of the Jewish exile, after the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, and the many cultures the Jews encountered and lived among during their time away from the land of Israel. It is also indicative of both the resilience of this people in maintaining their ethnic, cultural, and religious identity, and the extent of cultural knowledge they acquired during this lengthy exile.*

**The presence of Jewish communities in practically every region of North Africa, Iberian Peninsula, and Europe attests to the cultural adaptability of the group. The continuous presence of these Jewish enclaves (and of many others like them), also challenges the Western metanarrative of ethnically pure, monolithic entities that formed and informed many of the cultural dicta of the Western world used to justify, among other things, colonization, discrimination, etc.**

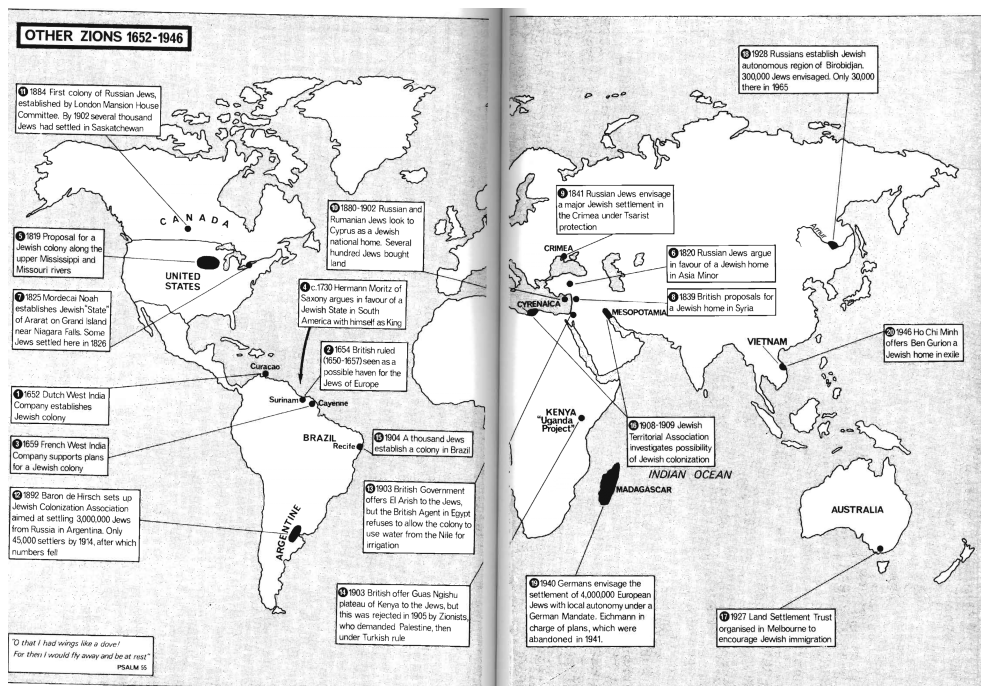


Fig. 6: Other Zions.<sup>188</sup>

*During the three centuries prior to the intensification of anti-Semitic activities in Europe that culminated with the Holocaust, widespread oppressive conditions inspired quests for geographical Zions other than the legendary Jerusalem and the historical land of Israel. What makes this search interesting is the fact that, under pressing conditions,*



*Jews considered (re)creating the mythical Zion on lands as geographically diverse as the Americas, Madagascar, China, and Australia, etc.*

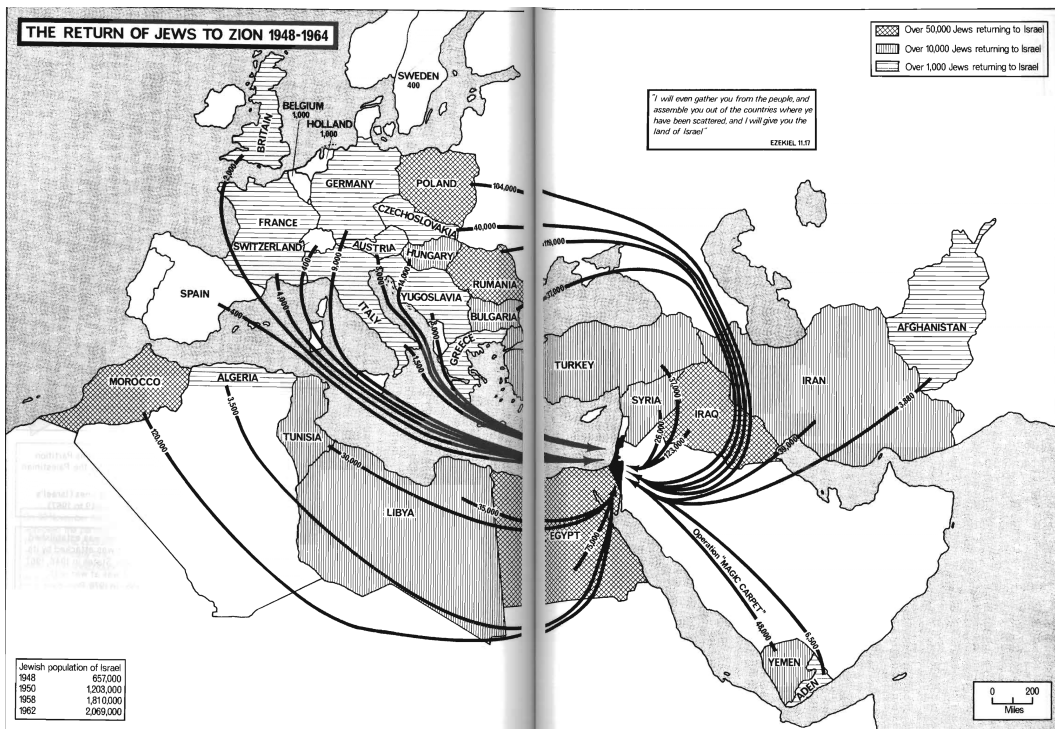


Fig. 7: The Return of the Jews to Zion (1948-1964).<sup>189</sup>

*This map shows the reverse migration of the dispersed Jews to their homeland AND the sovereign state of Israel after its inception in 1948. What this convergence suggests is that, although decidedly “back in Jerusalem,” the Israeli-born Jews, “the Sabras,” and the new comers still have to negotiate their competing narratives of the nation, not just with the local Palestinians, but among themselves, too.*

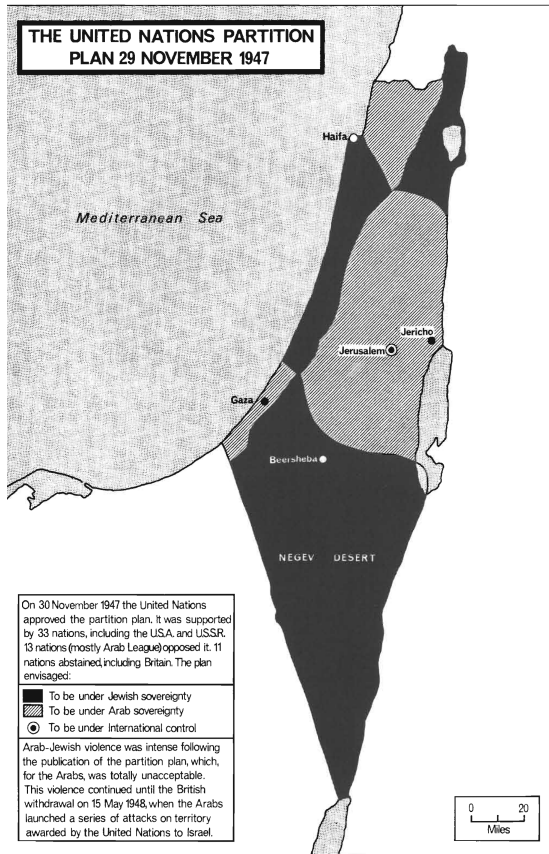


Fig. 8: The United Nations Partition of the land of Israel, 1947.<sup>190</sup>

*This bird eye's view of the partition of the land of Palestine shows the arbitrariness of such divisions, when they are based on international political interests, instead of the actual ethnic distribution on the geographical ground.*

**Corroborating this information with that provided by map in Fig. 12: Retreat from Empire, makes clear the fact that geographical boundaries and borders do not make a nation. Instead, the imagined community is a fluid social entity highly dependent on continuous enacting by its constituents, be they contained within the national borders (where they face daily challenges and are confronted with the competing desires of other ethnic groups), or dreaming it, in an idealized form, from abroad.**

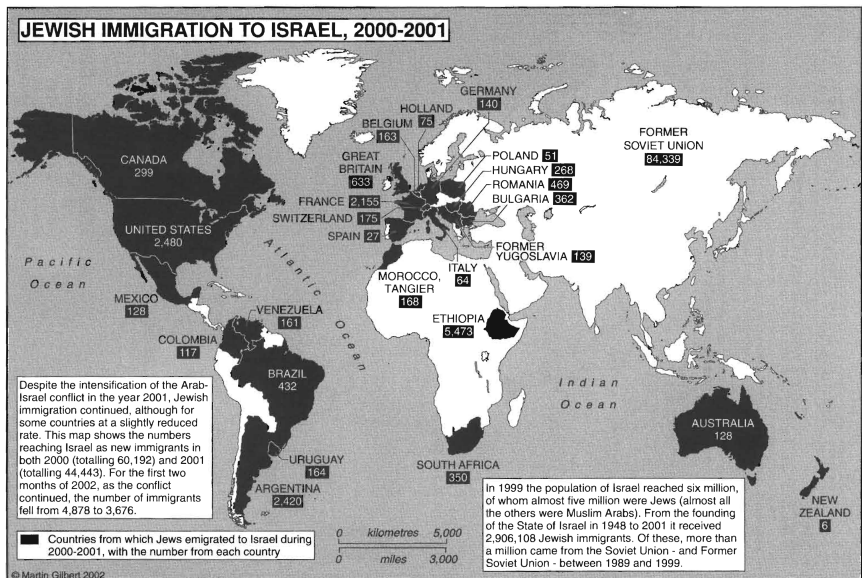


Fig. 9: Jewish Immigration to Israel, 2000-2001.<sup>191</sup>

*Contesting the finitude of any social construct the type of the nation, this map illustrates the continuing migration to Israel during the last decade. This influx of new immigrants has two potentialities: it can further diversify and fortify the emerging Israeli national character, and/or it can deeply challenge its centripetal efforts.*

**NEL Cartographical Section:**

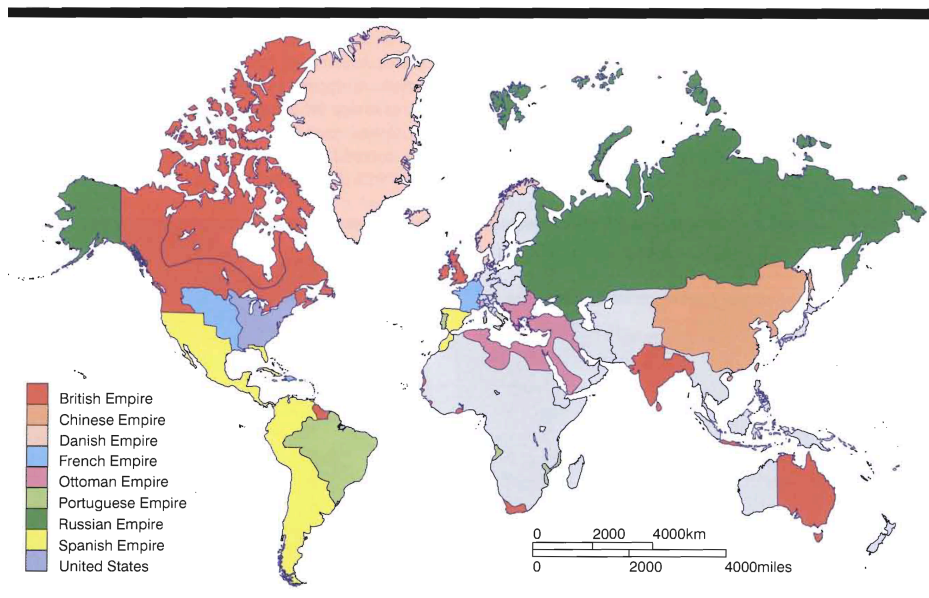


Fig. 10: The Major Historical Empires of the Modern World.<sup>192</sup>

*The geographical expansiveness of these empires shows not only their power to hold distant, foreign territories under their control for centuries, but also explain their enduring cultural legacies in areas as distinct as Africa and the Indian subcontinent. The British Empire, in particular, from which the NEL postcolonial utopias in this project were selected, acted as a major imparter of knowledge and culture. During the colonial era, the production of culture was mostly a “trickle down phenomenon” from the metropolis to the colonies. Presently, both “trickle up” occurrences, as well as lateral cultural exchanges are evident in the palimpsest-like geo-politico-cultural landscape of these previously colonized territories.*

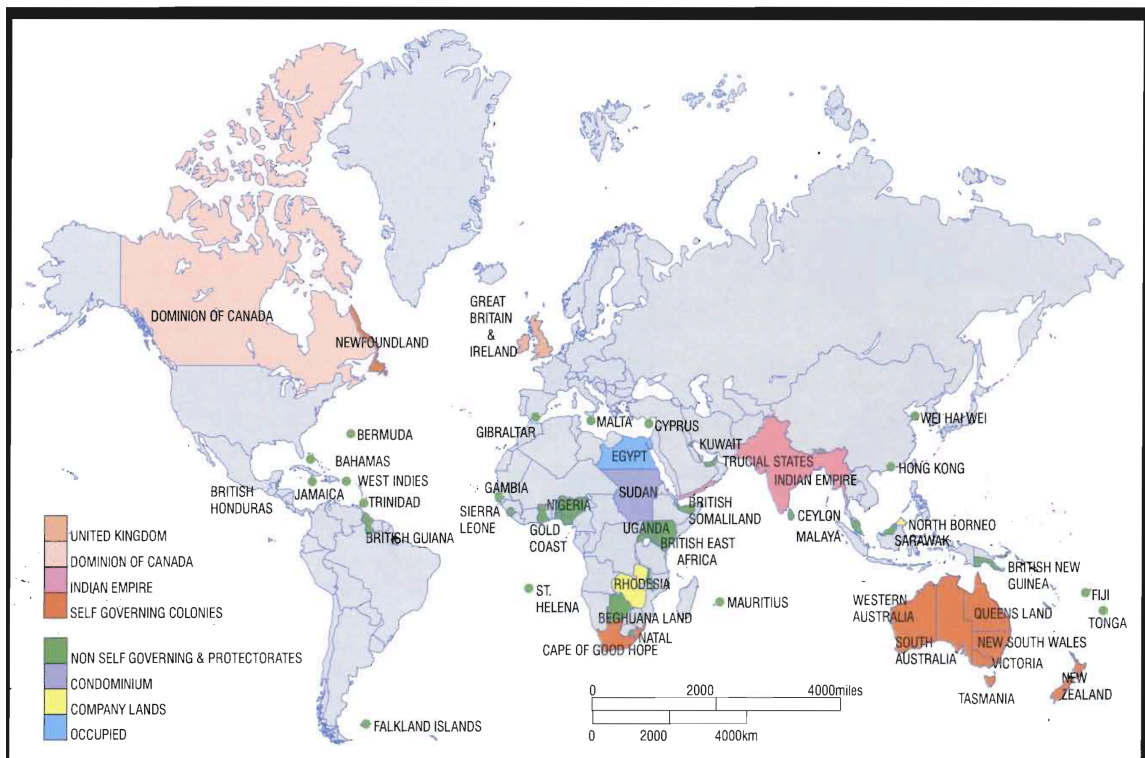


Fig. 11: British Empire, present day.<sup>193</sup>

*Comparing this contemporary map of the British Empire’s territorial dominion with the map in Fig. 9: The Major Empires of the Modern World shows not only the drastic changes of the imperial layout, but also the radical changes in the balance of power as well.*

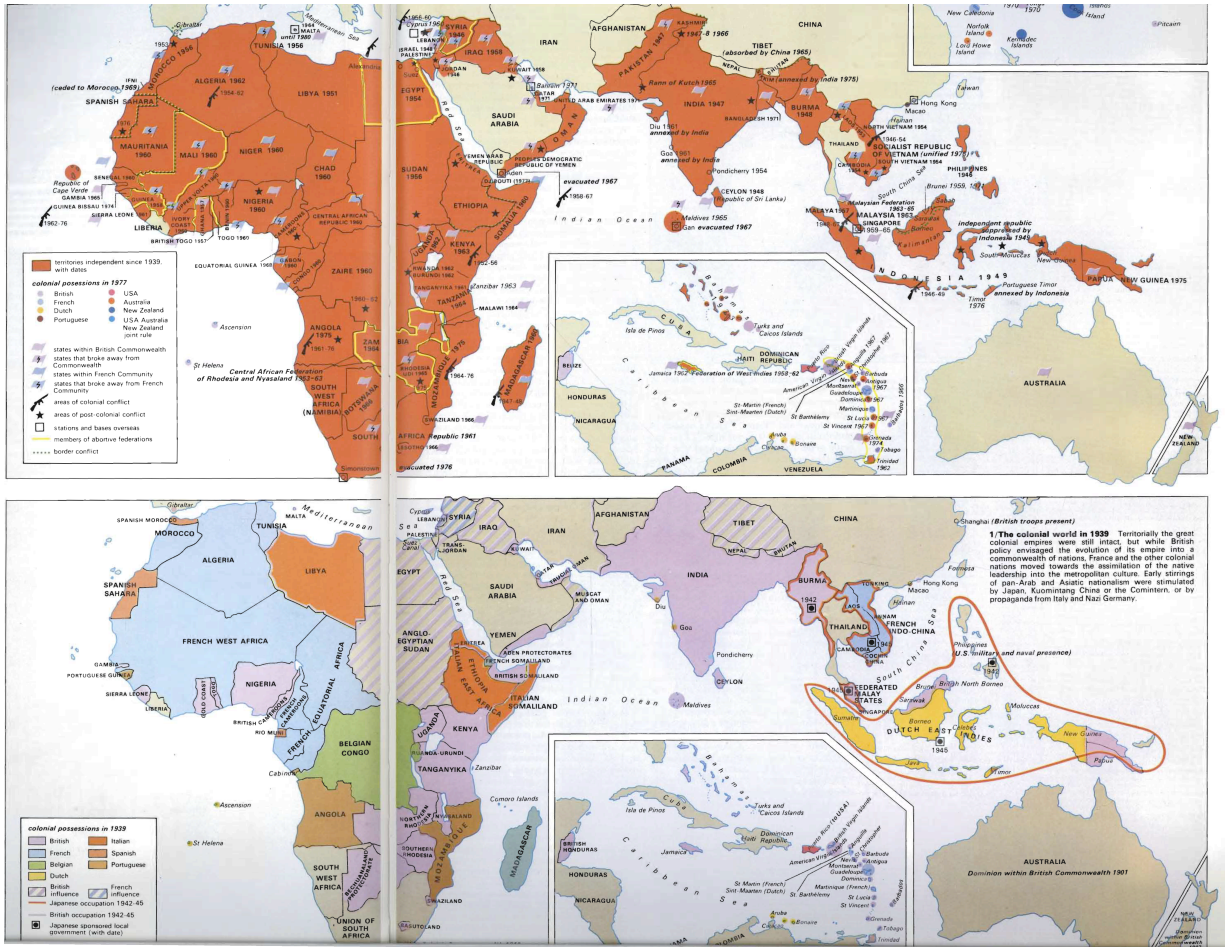


Fig. 12: Retreat from empire.<sup>194</sup>

*The two maps above show the changes following the demise of European imperial rule in Africa during last century. A century prior, the “scramble for Africa,” based on the economic and strategic interests of European powers in the area, failed to take into consideration the ethnic makeup and geographical distribution of the natives, or their particular attachment to historical and cultural sites.*

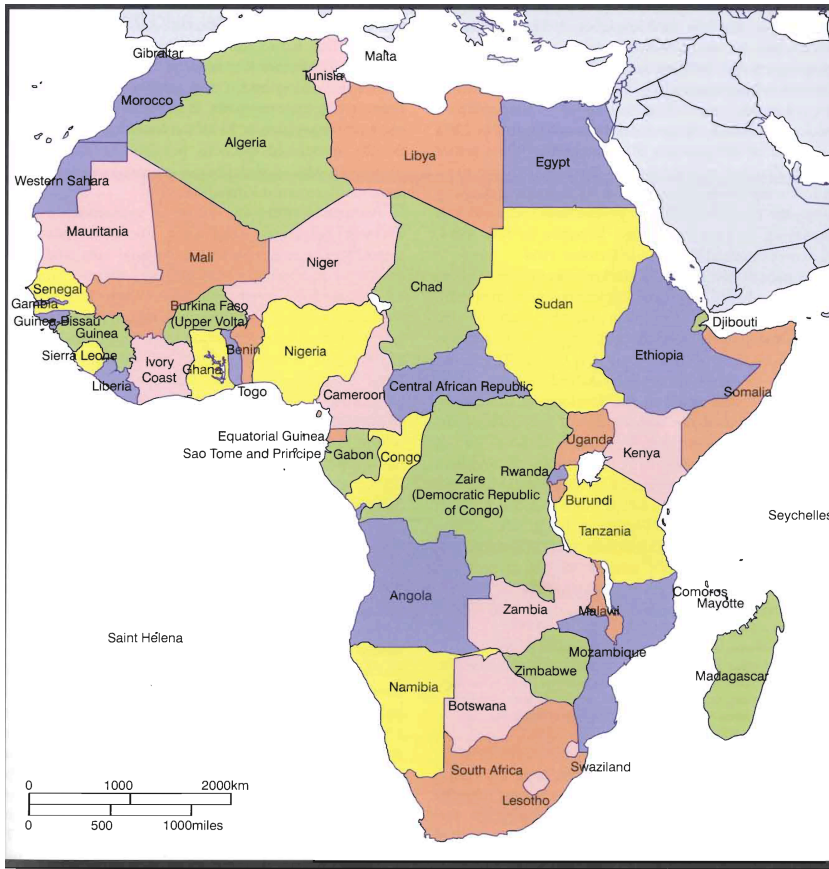


Fig. 13: Decolonization in Africa.<sup>195</sup>

*This map shows the present political layout of the African continent.*

*What none of these maps shows is the constant migratory flux in between these borders, as ethnic communities split by colonial rule are gradually regrouping around their ancestral lands.*

*Enduring ethnic conflict and never ending wars have caused repeated population relocations, and border changes within the continent. Additionally, the ongoing “third-worldling” process, has cost the emergent African nations some of their best labor and intellectual force. Various reasons—economic, political and cultural—have increased migration from the ex-colonies to the first world, the home of the colonized.*

**These complex processes point at the need to share and co-create discourses amenable to both ex-colonizer and -colonized inhabiting these ever complicating, hybrid communities and locales.**

## **Appendix B**

### **Life in Utopia: A Photographic Memoir**

Recently released as a collage of images taken illegally during the 1980s, Andrei Pandelescu's "Forbidden Photographs" capture the dire living conditions in communist Romania during the last decade of the totalitarian regime. They show the results of PCR's applied utopian metanarrative: from the appropriation of personal land and public space, to its architectural transformation; from the temporal impositions on citizens' private time via mandatory meetings and long queues for basic staples, to the Machiavellian designs to turn people against each other and create a generalized atmosphere of distrust. These pictures tell the story of a people whom utopia had by the throat. They show, in somber black and white, a very different side of the communist society, which was portrayed in national and international media as thriving, abundant, and happy. As they add substantive evidence to the narrative accounts presented in the main project, but would have detracted from the smooth progression of the main argument, I have decided to use all such material here. I developed, around them, a short essay supporting both the main hypothesis and emphasizing the need to look not just "between the lines," but also from a different angle at these particular conditions that generated the analogous utopian tradition in Romania.

An accurate representation of the pervasiveness of the communist utopian metanarrative, the following snapshot shows the radical spatial and architectural reconfigurations in Bucharest, Romania's capital city. The nationwide urbanization process initiated by the PCR involved extensive demolitions of historical buildings, and their replacement with box-like, cement gray flats, packed around the main industrial areas of the city. During this process, cultural and architectural buildings, religious sites (including entire cemeteries) were leveled down. Pitifully few escaped the communist purge, and only a handful of historically important buildings were moved—at the express request of alarmed international forums—to new locations.



Fig.1: Bucharest under construction, June 1985: old shopping center, since demolished.  
Notice the multitudes of cranes in the background.<sup>196</sup>

As a result, the skylines of the major cities lost their regional and architectural individuality. Soon after the nationwide architectural overhaul, the distinct styles that identified cities like Cluj-Napoca as an ex-Austro-Hungarian citadel, Bucharest as “the Paris of the East,” and Constanța as a mirror of many a Greek polis disappeared. The cement conglomerates which replaced them evidenced, at the heyday of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, the leveling power of the communist ideology and architecture as similar buildings and styles were to be found all across the Eastern Bloc.

These supposedly “modern” living conditions came replete with rationed electricity and hot water and, during the direst years of the system, with the rationing of basic food staples. Long queues and countless hours of waiting for the distribution of substandard produce and products hardly left any time for substantial, sustained intellectual inquiries. This need to scurry from queue to queue for the most basic needs created an imbalance between time spent outside the home and inside it, and also blurred the lines between the public and the private sphere. The rationing system also facilitated



Secret Police surveillance: people huddled together, in open areas, made spying on them and documenting their activities and conversations easier.

The following pictures, taken during the most difficult years under the communist rule, late 1980s, show large crowds of Romanian citizens waiting not for luxurious items and products, but for staples: cooking oil, sugar, eggs. “The scientific diet” created by doctors working for the regime included strict quantities of allowed foods per person *per month*: half a liter of cooking oil, two hundred grams of sugar, ten eggs, two liters of milk, one kilogram of meat, two kilograms of potatoes, one hundred grams of soy based coffee, half a bar of soap, etc.



Fig. 2: Waiting in line for the distribution of cooking oil in Bucharest, Romania, May 1986.<sup>197</sup>

On top of these staples being limited and of substandard quality, their (timely) distribution to the population was not guaranteed. The following picture shows the desperation of the people to secure these rations. To accommodate the large crowds waiting for the distribution of rations, the delivery trucks were usually parked outside the store and were immediately surrounded by hundreds of people. In this situation, the crowd could not fit on the sidewalk, so the truck is moving away from the building and the people, on foot, follow it quickly, afraid of losing their place in line.

The crowd in the next picture, on the other hand, forming a long line that goes around the building, has been waiting for a long time in front of the “self-service store” (“autoservire”), which is—despite its name—empty. There is nothing inside the customers could walk up to and “serve” themselves from. The shop is, actually, only open two or three days a week, and even then, just for a few hours, to distribute rations. These rationing and distributive methods used by the government ensured that the people were constantly waiting in queues, where they could be held under surveillance and interrogated, if necessary. Waiting in line or running after the supply trucks was no guarantee that the rations would be sufficient to go around. When they ran out, the people who did not get them had to wait another week or two for the next shipment to come in.



Fig. 3: Queue for sugar, on Galati Street, Bucharest, May 1982.<sup>198</sup>

In the following picture, a large crowd protests such an incident, despondently. The vendor’s gesture of impotence, arms extended, palms up, came to be a staple Romanian gesture during the 1980s and after. The expression that accompanies the gesture “What do you want me to do? There is nothing that I can do...” sets the small

woman, a mere pawn of the system, against her fellow citizens. Behind her, a young man is busily counting ration coupons, and a young woman huddles against the cold and the crowd. The man the vendor seems to be addressing directly holds up a torn plastic bag with the logo of a Western cigarette brand. Plastic bags with logos like Camel, Rexona, Fa, Pepsi, Marlboro, and so on, were prized possessions at the time. Bribes to, and between, functionaries in power were often packed in such “Western imports” considered luxury items.



Fig. 4: Running out of rations: “No More Eggs” says the distributor to the hopeful waiting for the weekly dozen or so eggs allotted to a family of four. Bucharest, 1984.<sup>199</sup>

Rampart corruption and a generalized system of bribes created the sub par, materialistic, existence Constantin Noica and his students harshly criticized and tried to resist assimilation into. While their “resistance through culture” granted them agency over their intellectual life, the rest of their lives, however, were ruled by the same material needs and lacks as the rest of their compatriots.

The bitterly ironic caption of the following picture evidences the radical inversion of values and the extent of yet another intrusion of the system in the daily lives of the ordinary citizen, be he a high-level intellectual or a member of the working class. Besides specifically controlling the individual caloric intake, the rationing system also imposed

severe limitations on the quantity of products necessary for the healthy functioning of the human body. Soap, shampoo, razors—even toilet paper—became valued items on the regional black markets. The victorious prance of the man carrying the toilet paper rolls over his shoulder is reminiscent of a hunter carrying life-saving prey to his family.



Fig. 5: The “winner” with toilet paper, Bucharest, July 1983.<sup>200</sup>

Moreover, in order to save electricity, and in addition to limiting daily wattage allowance per household, entire cities were systematically disconnected from their power sources and plunged into total darkness from 9 to 11 pm, daily. The PCR justified these drastic measures by appealing to the population’s sense of national pride as the only country in the world without any foreign debt.<sup>201</sup> In fact, even though they were asked/forced to vote on such “popular referendums,” the people had no choice but to accept the situation. In the late 1980s, the living conditions had degraded so much that hot water ran twice weekly, for the grand total of two hours. Even then, the blackout overlapped with the hot water schedule and that meant that people could not do their laundry when they had electricity for lack of hot water, or that they showered, or bathed in the dark.

Besides the daily humiliations to ensure basic living staples, to survive the cold and darkness, transportation conditions were precarious, and often involved makeshift, dangerous contraptions. The communist media never acknowledged the many accidents and deaths, but news of the fatalities traveled around the country by word of mouth. To save fuel, the transportation schedules in the cities and the number of running buses and trams were both drastically reduced. The commuters improvised, and performed great feats of balancing and cooperation while perched precariously on every available surface of the bus, or the tram. The blur behind the moving tram in the next picture attests to the speed of the moving cars. Between them, men and women are holding on to each other and to outside wires and rails in an attempt to make it to work on time or to return home before the scheduled daily blackout.



Fig 6: Going to work, communist style, Bucharest, 1987.<sup>202</sup>

The next photo captures one of the hybrid contraptions resulting from Elena Ceaușescu's desire to impress foreign diplomats. She ordered that local buses be outfitted with tanks for an alternative fuel supposedly developed in Romanian labs. In reality, the heavy tanks were empty and, because of the added extra weight, the buses consumed more traditional fuel than before. Yet, the voluminous, heavy tanks on the roof of the buses were no match for the mass of compacted people, and the buses usually moved

around precariously tilted to the boarding side. For many years after the diplomatic visits for which they had been produced, these buses roamed the streets of the main cities: Bucharest, Cluj, and Timisoara shuttling throngs of workers back and forth to their workplaces and consuming extra fuel.



Fig. 7: Crowded bus with empty gas cylinders, University Place, Bucharest, December, 1984.<sup>203</sup>

Figuring prominently on this dystopian landscape, pervading and watchful, propaganda posters of the communist party abounded. The two Ceaușescus were always featured as larger than life, benevolent leaders, surrounded by adoring, smaller in stature subjects. In the frequent parades and shows honoring the presidential couple, members from the local party committees had to carry huge boards and shout out prepared slogans to create the appearance of an enthusiastic people. This task was even more important when international media or visitors were involved, so students from all levels of educations, workers from factories, and peasants working the fields were corralled and made unwilling part of the “festivities.”



Fig. 8: Billboards of the presidential couple paraded around Bucharest, 1985.<sup>204</sup>

The widespread futility of such situations and the absurdity of daily life created frustration and a generalized mentality “of going through the motions.” Pandeale captured such an incident. The following picture shows the Sisyphean efforts of a group of manual laborers in Bucharest, hurriedly laying down cement for the arrival at the train station of President Ceaușescu and his entourage. As they do so, diligently, under the critical eye of their foreman, it sleets heavily and the whole operation is compromised. For several hours the crew repeats the procedure, without any tangible results, without respite.



Fig. 9: Pouring new cement in heavy sleet, Bucharest, 1985.<sup>205</sup>

The most illustrative example of the abuses and contradictions of the nation and utopian making discourses and practices of PCR is, by far, the imposing “Palace of the People.” An entire historical sector in Bucharest was razed to make room for the world’s second biggest building,<sup>206</sup> the gigantic residence of the presidential couple. Almost two dozen Orthodox Christian churches, half a dozen Jewish synagogues, several other denominational churches, and more than twenty-five thousand residences were destroyed to make room for this structure which took less than six years to be built. And although the palace was, in name, “the people’s,” only the presidential couple lived there, in luxury. Their entourage and the army of helpers and security were the only other people allowed near, or in, the building. In fact, other than working on its construction by the thousands, “the people” were not permitted in its vicinity for fear that they would steal construction materials, imported appliances, or personal artifacts of the presidential couple. In the lower left corner of this photograph Pandeale captured a soldier of the Romanian Army guarding the imposing site, armed with a Kalashnikov. He had been given permission to shoot on sight.



Fig. 10: The Palace of the People during construction. The Romanian army guards the site with Kalashnikovs, Bucharest, 1986.<sup>207</sup>



What all these photographs show is that, in this particular cultural case, utopia, as a narrative and political discourse, was in power. Very successfully, in half a century, it had erased or compromised hundreds of years of cultural heritage, had leveled the country's ethnic and architectural diversity, and had re-written history to fit its ideological platform. The political and ideological vacuum that followed the communist system's demise in 1989, and the quick inclusion in yet another pan-national institution, i.e., the European Union, exacerbated the economic crisis in Romania and evidenced the resurrection of many unresolved ethnic troubles. In fact, in the cacophonous atmosphere of the country's Parliament, presently housed in the "Palace of the People," the people's voices and their needs go unheard, and unheeded.

## Appendix C

### A Dream Willed into Reality: Israel

The following essay analyzes the ways Theodor Herzl's utopian novel *Altneuland* (*Old New Land*) and Rosa Goldberg and Fanny Seelig's celebratory illustration of the work confirm and build the national discourse of the state of Israel. In 1902, at the time of its publication in Leipzig, *Altneuland* appealed to many groups of Jews dreaming about returning to the land of Israel. It presented a new society replete with economic and cultural abundance, enjoying political and religious freedom. To the dispersed Jews, it presented a version of what the state of Israel could be. In the 1962 edition of the work, published in Haifa, in the state of Israel, the two editors supplemented the original text with illustrations showcasing the real achievements of the fourteen-year-old state of Israel.

Golberg and Seeling enhanced the original text with these (anachronistic) images to cement its prophetic qualities and emphasize its role as a blue print for the state of Israel. In the introduction to the reader they state that they

d[id] not wish to assert that the vision of a Jewish state in Israel that Herzl published in the year 1902 in the form of a novel is an extant and correct representation of the state of Israel today. But the similarity between Herzl's ideas and those of today's planners [of the state of Israel] is often so great, even in individual details, that it gives historical significance to this attempt at prophecy—something that is not always understood.<sup>208</sup>

The illustrated edition combined depictions of historical oppression, including graphic images of murdered Jewish families, and appealed to the collective memory of the Jewish/Israeli people and their sense of sharing a history of oppression. The gloom of exilic Jewish life was contrasted with the abundance and the prosperity of the land after 1948. The perilous living conditions of the European Jews, and their predicament before and after the Holocaust were contrasted with the bucolic life in the new Kibbutzim and Moshavim, and the brand new Israeli cities.



Fig.1: Old Jew marked with the yellow patch.<sup>209</sup>



Fig. 2: A family of Jews killed during anti-Semitic riots.<sup>210</sup>



Fig. 3: A young Jewish boy surrendering to the Nazis.<sup>211</sup>

The terrible reality of these images documenting a shared history of oppression and displacement was contrasted with the new situation of the Israeli citizens living a life free of such terrors. The much longed for Jerusalem was presented as the center of a thriving community gathering its members from all corners of the world. Images of the city from the beginning of the century, showing the “old city” in its glory were followed by images of the “new city,” bursting with commerce, culture, and industry.



Fig. 4: Jerusalem, in 1900.<sup>212</sup>

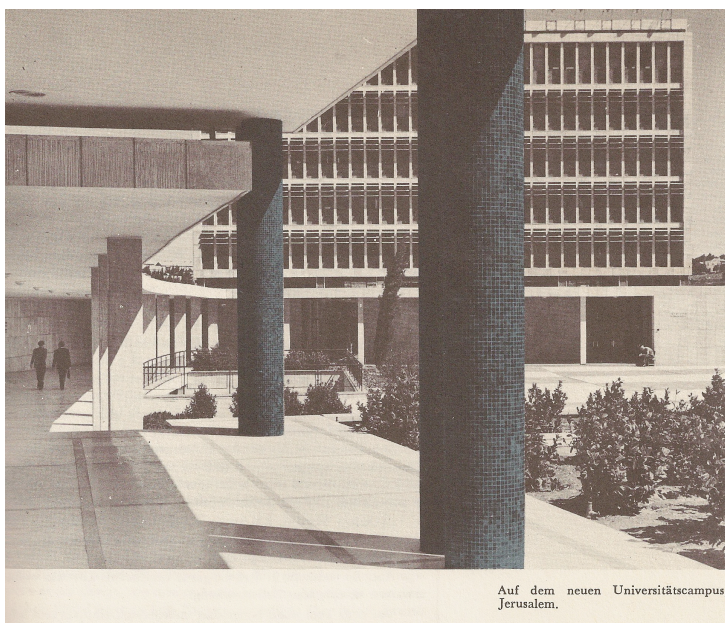


Fig. 5: The new university campus, Jerusalem.<sup>213</sup>

The spatial restructuring of the land of Palestine, the modern agricultural techniques, and the superior educational system were given ample space in the book as they showcased the making, from the ground up, of the economic, cultural, and social foundations necessary to support and engender a thriving, multicultural society. Hebrew, modernized and updated, proudly appeared on locally produced merchandise and products and entered in the circulation of the international economic markets.



Fig. 6: The Negev Tunnel.<sup>214</sup>



Fig. 7: Israeli-made products.<sup>215</sup>

The most important “product” of all these concerted efforts was the new, Israeli-born citizen, “the sabra.” If before 1948, the wandering Jews were referred to as a “nation of shopkeepers,” after that year, no effort was spared to engender the necessary conditions to identify and develop talents and individual potentialities in science, education, and culture. The sabras participated in the physical remaking of the land by working in Kibbutzim and Moshavim, and they learned to protect it by participating in army training and tactical operations. Far from being weak, and easily victimized, as in the past, they created, from the ground up, a vibrant new society leading the way in many intellectual and scientific fields. To illustrate the multicultural facet of the Israeli society, the 1962 editors created a collage of portraits to suggest both unity of ancestry and diversity of experiences.



Fig 8: The first generations of Israeli-born Jews, “the sabras.”<sup>216</sup>



Fig 9: The Israelis.<sup>217</sup>

These pictures do show the influence of Herzl's utopian ideas and their clear and deep resonance with his readers. The photographic evidence accompanying the text, however, does not include pictures of the Arab Palestinians sharing the same space, and playing an important role in the 1902 novel. The face which, in Fig. 9: The Israelis, could pass for an Arab is actually a Sephardic Jew sharing more physical particularities with the Arabs among which he had lived pre-Israel than with his fellow Jews, the Ashkenazi. Because of this omission, the otherwise impressive celebratory edition, defaults in perpetuating the leveling metanarrative of the monolithic, mono-ethnic nation.

Seeling and Goldberg's work is laudable, too, for it clearly demonstrates the validity of Benedict Anderson's and Timothy Brennan's beliefs in the importance of the novel and print in the coalescing of modern European nations. Indeed, *Altneuland* acted as a centripetal factor by inspiring dispersed Jews to believe in the fictional "new society," which was to become reality forty-six years later. The side-by-side presentation of the influential text and the photographs documenting its instantiation on the ground, further cemented the image of the Israeli nation for both the local sabras, and the Jews still living abroad. This nation imagining process did not develop without major conflicts. As previously mentioned, the Arabs, who, in the original novel, were important members of the incipient society, are not represented photographically in the later edition, even though they are, officially, part of the Israeli society, with equal Constitutional rights.

Based on these particular observations of the Israeli national case, and on fieldwork conducted in 2006, I would now like to further elaborate on the particularities of imagining this nation and utopia. I am particularly interested in understanding the challenges encountered during the transfer of their shared parameters from symbolic geography and collective memory to actual geographic and conflicting narratives on the ground.

As with any new community, the smooth functioning of utopian or national projects necessitates the distribution of incoming colonists to appropriate economic, cultural, and societal roles. Hierarchization, in some shape and form, ensues, followed by inequalities increasing among the old and the new comers, and between various ethnic groups. Cultural prejudices, social inequalities, and historical conflicts, sidelined during the inception and conception of the fictional state of Israel, bloom with full force when

the blueprint is transferred in practice. The most evident sign of this occurrence is the discrimination of the Sephardic Jews and the enduring conflict with the local Palestinians.

These situations evidence several, potentially flammable, elements inherent in the processes of imagining utopia and the nation:

a) Both represent complex imagined communities that attest to the aspirational unity of all cultures, Western and non-Western.

b) Both are built by leveling metanarratives. More precisely, to ensure clarity and preserve focus and drive, selected concepts and ideas are reduced to their essence, worded in such a way as to appeal to specific groups and ethnies.

c) Both need geographical space, or land, to host these selected peoples and unpack the respective concepts. Logically then, the Jewish repatriation to the already (non-Jewish) populated territory was immediately complicated and challenged by the emergent national narratives on the ground.

d) To become aware of one's individual, communitarian, or national specificity, the foil of "the other" is a necessary—if most of the time, through its challenges, an uncomfortable—presence.

e) In their applied format, utopia, and the nation are fluid, changing social entities dependent, more and more, on outside imports/versions/desires/claims of their shape, form, and function.

The 1962 illustrated version of the influential 1902 utopian novel attests to the combined power of narrative constructs/blueprints and selective visuals to inspire enthusiastic subscription to their proposed models and agendas.

However, as a nation with large communities still living outside its borders, the modern state of Israel, the Zion willed into reality in 1947, continues to be imagined, and longed for, from many and varied geographical locations, in an idealized form. Were Jews from these places (see map below) to immigrate to Israel, their expectations of the state itself and their future life as Israelis would be inherently, and immediately, at odds with the situation there.



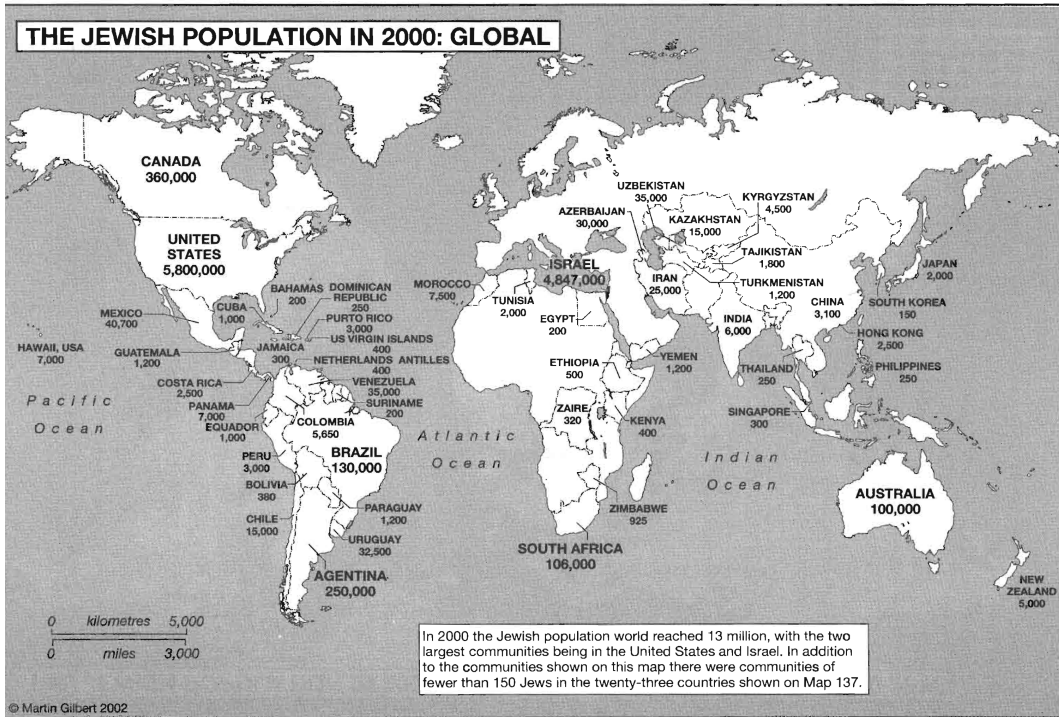


Fig. 10: Contemporary Jewish Diasporic Communities.<sup>218</sup>

For, on the ground, as a “new old community,” the nation/utopia of Israel continues to face the inherent challenges that arise from attempting to co-write a national narrative on a palimpsest-like, much contested geographical space.

**Appendix D**  
**Co-Imagined Communities:**  
**Laboratories, Paideias, Ecotopias, and Utopian Cities**

Informed by fieldwork and research performed from 2004 to 2008, this essay further develops the idea that, presently, the utopian impulse is escaping the narrow confines of cultural and national boundaries of its canonical age, and is developing into a dialogical concept and practice. More specifically, I am interested to briefly detail and compare groups and locales manifesting various utopian expressions, and extend some predictions on the present trajectory of both utopia and the nation. The sites that will inform these inquiries are Stanciova (Romania), Ohr HAGanuz (Israel), Auroville (India), The Federation of Damanhur (Italy), The EdenProject (England), Masdar city (United Arab Emirates), and the New Songdo city (South Korea).



Fig. 1: The idyllic-looking village of Stanciova, Romania.<sup>219</sup>

In Romania, on the ruins of the communist utopia, ecovillages such as Stanciova are rare. The society is still reeling from economic collapse, strife with rampant corruption, bereft of its best intellectuals and workers who migrate, en masse, to the

economic markets of the European Union. The fall of the communist system and the dissolution of its metanarrative created room for other discourses and divergent expressions vis-à-vis ownership of land and society structures. One of the biggest challenges for the founders of this ecovillage— all of them young Romanian professionals recipients of PhDs from prestigious Western universities, is the large Roma population living in the neighboring villages. The enduring ethnic conflicts, punctuated by occasional violent encounters between the two ethnies were exacerbated when Stanciova received international support for its training programs, which attracted Western students to the area. Stanciova leadership developed cultural programs and economic initiatives to integrate the Romas in an attempt to prevent robberies and break-ins and propagate equal opportunities for everybody in the area. Its paidetic practices, and the efforts to include others in its programs make this project unique in the otherwise still ethnocentric landscape of postcommunist Romania.



Fig. 2: The center of the Ohr HaGanuz spiritual community.<sup>220</sup>

Another similar community living in close proximity to its ethnic other is Ohr HaGanuz (Hidden Light) in Israel. An alternative to the Kibbutzim and Moshavim systems (established by Zionist colonists in the last decades of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth), this community is shaped by the teachings of a famous Kabbalist teacher, Rabbi Mordechai Sheinberger. Kabbalah's claim that its teachings are universal and its main goal the peaceful cohabitation of mankind is supported by the

community's daily activities, its outreach programs into Jewish, Christian, and Arab neighborhoods. The main goal of Ohr HaGanuz is to provoke a “fundamental shift in human motivation– from the desire to get and to have, which originates from the ego, to a desire to give and to share, which originates from God,”<sup>221</sup> and to constantly embody the motto of “love your neighbor as yourself.” What makes this Kabbalistic enterprise very interesting is the mix of Jewish esoteric theory and practice (the women are fully clothed, the men are wearing orthodox garb, and the genders perform their daily duties and even attend school separately) with advanced tai chi practices, acupuncture, and very erudite studies of ancient Chinese medicine. The very architecture of the site is a fusion of the ideological practices on site and evidences a shift to cross-cultural and cross-national concepts, audience and practices.



Fig. 3: The Auroville Charter in India.<sup>222</sup>

If the communist utopias of the past produced architecturally uniform, square blocks of cement flats recognizable pan-nationally in all of the countries subscribing to its ideology across Eastern Europe, newer constructions like The Auroville Charter in

India are much more attuned to the specifics of the building site and visibly partial to organic shapes and forms.

Auroville calls itself “a universal city in the making.” It is based on the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and has a very impressive architecture and ambitious, almost transcendental mission:

Auroville belongs to nobody in particular.

Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole.

But to live in Auroville, one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.

Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.

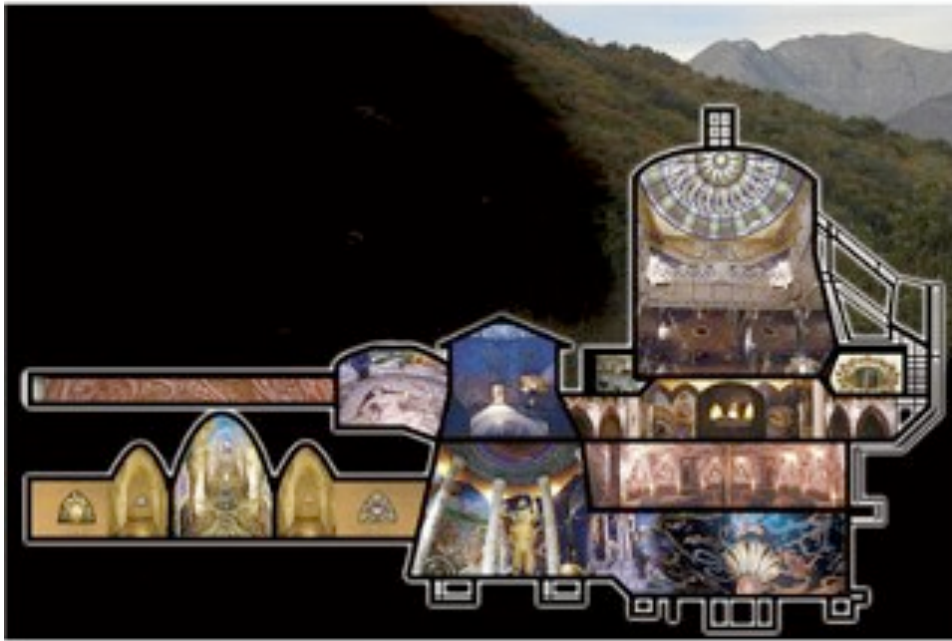
Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future.

Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.

Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity.<sup>223</sup>

According to its master plan, the city will be housing close to fifty-thousand people from all over the world. Presently the population counts two thousand men, women, and children from forty-four different nationalities, gathered in India to learn the famous yogi master’s teachings and help each achieve a higher state of selfhood. The ashram has won many international awards for its innovative architecture and offers regular programs for architectural students interested in learning ecological design.

In Western Europe, two unique and large-scale projects have captured the attention of the public, media, and the utopian scholarly community. The first, The Federation of Damanhur, is situated in the foothills of the Italian Alps, and was founded in 1975 by a small group of visionaries who followed their teacher, Oberto Airaudi, into the mountain. Once there they started carving, using only their hands and simple tools, a vast interconnecting network of halls, temples, and laboratories dedicated to the betterment of humankind through intensive study, self-discipline, and community involvement.



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Fig. 4: The Federation of Damanhur, in a cross section of the mountain underneath which it has been carved by hand.

Inspired by Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* and Bacon's own scientific achievements, the federation has won an important award from the United Nations Global Human Settlement Forum in 2005. The best ideas and practices of many spiritual traditions of the world have been incorporated in the settlement's linear description of the evolution of humankind and the presupposed history of the cosmos itself. Their main religion is claimed to be that of the lost continent of Atlantis, and the main channel to the infinite source of knowledge is Horus, one of ancient Egypt's main gods. However cryptic and esoteric the spirituality of the federation might sound, its scientific discoveries and the economic prosperity it has brought to the region have gained the unfailing support of the local community and the Italian government, which has declared its artwork a national treasure. Following is a picture of one of the many temples, *underneath* the mountain, visible on the bottom left part of the cross section in the picture above. The temples are artistic masterpieces and the results of the community's scientific research, which is cutting edge, and one of its main sources of income.



Fig. 5: The Federation of Damanhur—The Temple of Humankind<sup>225</sup>

Ross Robertson, in writing “Searching for Utopia: Exploring Humanity’s Timeless Quest for Heaven on Earth” for the “What is Enlightenment? Consciousness-Culture Cosmos magazine could not contain the enthusiasm produced by his visiting this project. He called it:

[a] place where men and women live together in harmony with the land and in tune with the cosmos, working and building, playing and cooking, ringing out the evening’s greeting on conch shells that echo from village to village across the forested valleys, gathering at night to revive the lost rites of history’s great kaleidoscope of sacred traditions in underground halls and temples under the moon. It is a place washed by mysterious energies, where people seem to age more slowly and latent creative abilities bubble up spontaneously in young and old alike. A place where artists and artisans, merchants and councilmen, poets and architects all walk the paths of a university dedicated to the quest for esoteric knowledge and the spiritual advancement of humankind.<sup>226</sup>

The overarching mission of the project and the fact that it attempts to function outside cultural and national specifics—while making the most of every culture’s achievements—makes The Federation of Damanhur a frequently visited site by diplomatic and military conventions working on conflict resolutions and legislatures.

Another much-awarded and visited project in Europe, England’s EdenProject, has been recently named one of the world’s top ten modern wonders and has become a favorite place of learning for classes of students, families and tourists alike ever since its opening to the public in 2001. The mission of the project, built on an abandoned clay mine pit, is reminiscent of a paideia open to everybody who wants to learn, not just to the intellectual or the mystical elite:

If you believe there should be a place...  
That celebrates life and puts champagne in the veins.

Is all about education but doesn't feel like school.  
To hold conversations that might just go somewhere.  
Where research isn't white coats in secret, but shared exploration to help us all.  
That's a sanctuary for all those who think the future too precious to leave to the  
few, because it belongs to us all...  
Then welcome.<sup>227</sup>



Fig. 6: The famous moon-inspired domes of the EdenProject in Cornwall, England.<sup>228</sup>

When I visited the project in 2005 and 2007, I had the opportunity to work in several of its well-managed, dynamic departments--education, gardening, public relations and Entertainment--and had the chance to test the integrity of its principles when applied in practice. Invariably, although dealing with quickly shifting situations, the team and the visitors upheld the rules of the project and contributed to the perpetuation of its utopian, paidetic mission.

All these small or large scale utopian projects emphasize that their main mission is to serve *all mankind*, and enthusiastically uphold that promise by accepting both visitors and members from other nationalities and cultures. These paideias and laboratories are not, however, the only heterotopian projects to advocate a return to the “anthropological core” of the utopian impetus. From a consortium of brand new “utopian cities” presently being developed – and surprisingly, hailing not from the developed



West, but from two “non-Western” cultures—the following two make good use of the most advanced technological materials, innovation construction techniques and new, sustainable architectural designs.



Fig. 7: Panoramic view of The Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.<sup>229</sup>

Masdar City, in United Arab Emirates, was designed by an international team of architects and a motley construction crew using traditional Arab building techniques that use the desert’s wind patterns to condition the climate within the pedestrians only city. Masdar is in the process of becoming the first zero carbon urban unit in the world, and th4e home of more than half a million inhabitants slated to take possession of their living hubs and green offices in the next decade. The makeup of the expected population is the same as that of its builders: both Western and non-Western.



Fig. 8: The main plaza in The Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.<sup>230</sup>

The New Songdo City, in South Korea, is another city built from the ground up. Its architecture is futuristic, and it was designed to act as the model for “the most green” living and business practices in the world. It features advanced manufacturing, and research laboratories and institutes, several cultural centers, and it prides itself for attracting some of the world’s best, intellectuals, scholars, engineers, and artisans.



Fig. 9: The New Songdo City in South Korea.<sup>231</sup>

What these contemporary paideias, laboratories, and especially these last two utopian cities show is that the “imagining” and construction of twenty-first-century utopias are— from their very inception—multicultural, multinational, and dialogical. These places are meant to be welcoming heterotopias in which different discourses and practices could engage in non-hegemonic, mutually enriching relations. In time, they are expected to build their own identity, inspired by and considerate of all its constituting cultures.

On one hand, these projects are, in both intent and execution, very impressive. Masdar and New Songdo, in particular, are exemplary of the trend noted in *From Utopia to Heterotopia: Outgrowing Culturally-Specific Utopian and National Models*. Although still spatially anchored on specific national territories, they are the intended homes for all those who subscribe to their ideologies and practices.<sup>232</sup> As emergent heterotopias, these two cities have outgrown culturally and nationally specific utopian models. On the other hand, however, they remain socially constructed concepts, highly dependent on those who dreamed them. They are—to use the insights shared with us by Okri’s nameless character in *Astonishing the Gods*—dependent on the dystopian or utopian nature of their citizens’ thoughts and interests. As such, they contain both the seed of their own destruction, *and* the potential for complete success.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless noted, all translations from Romanian and French in this project are mine.

<sup>2</sup> One of Romania's three historical provinces: the other two are Transylvania and Moldova.

<sup>3</sup> In Romania, the equivalent of the Soviet kolkhoz.

<sup>4</sup> The Romanian equivalent for "grandma/grandmother" in the local Wallachian dialect.

<sup>5</sup> The finest cloth woven out of silk, a precious commodity in those times.

<sup>6</sup> "Balaur" is a common word in Romanian mythology and culture, and it could mean two very different things: a) "a fantastic animal, monstrous and voracious, which embodies evil, represented as a huge winged snake with a long tail, with one or more (seven, nine, or twelve) heads, with sharp tongues, spewing fire," but also, and most importantly in the context of Romanian culture and our evasive discursive methods b) "an extremely cruel man, living on the back of others." *Dictionar explicativ ilustrat al limbii romane. Dictionarele ARC*, editura ARC, București, (1977) 188.

<sup>7</sup> For the alert reader, a synesthetic gift.

<sup>8</sup> The informed reader will know that I am being ironic here: these directions of conduct could not have been Comrade Ciondea's; they were the property of President Ceaușescu, the most beloved son of our nation. Comrade Ciondea was, shamelessly, without giving Him due credit, citing him.

<sup>9</sup> The same informed reader will know that while this technique of subverting the communist rule created some very well read, overly fit Romanian citizens, it also created later problems for their conduct, especially when deploying such extreme methods of survival was no longer necessary. Of that, more later.

<sup>10</sup> For this very inspired phrase I am grateful to Eric Rabkin, who suggested it during a working meeting in January 2009, and kindly granted permission for its use here and beyond.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jubilee?show=0&t=1312421341>

<sup>12</sup> New York: Peter Lang, (2001) 189.

<sup>13</sup> *Cotepra Reader: Utopianism: Literary Utopias and National cultural Identities: A Comparative Perspective*, Subproject n. 6, Cotepra, University of Bologna (2001) 149.

<sup>14</sup> Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Massachusetts (1980) 1.

<sup>15</sup> Loc. Cit.

<sup>16</sup> Under the auspices of Oporto University, Portugal, and co-edited by Lyman Tower Sargent, Jacqueline Dutton, Ralph Pordzik, and Corina Kesler two such anthologies are in the works and scheduled for publication in 2013 and 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Free Press, New York, (1966) 1.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/works/1967/end-utopia.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Mai-Iunie 1968: sfîrsitul utopiei occidentale, Antohi: Observatorul Cultural, 12/2003.

<sup>20</sup> Loc.cit.

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- <sup>21</sup> Les Editions de Minuit: Paris, (1973) 5.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid. 191.
- <sup>23</sup> Pordzik, 18.
- <sup>24</sup> Spinozzi, 9.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid. 14-15.
- <sup>26</sup> Several other prominent theories of utopias were considered for the methodological approach to this inquiry, among them those of Ruth Levitas, Manuel and Manuel, Tom Moylan, and Fredric Jameson. Ultimately, Sargent's remained the most inclusive and applicable to this study.
- <sup>27</sup> "Three Faces Of Utopianism" 4, Qtd. by Peter Fitting, in "A Short History of Utopian Studies," in *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 36, part 1, (March 2009) 145-152.
- <sup>28</sup> Loc.cit.
- <sup>29</sup> <http://www.uchronia.net/intro.html>.
- <sup>30</sup> Manuel, 23.
- <sup>31</sup> *Colectia Panopticon*, Cluj-Napoca, (2005) 147.
- <sup>32</sup> Loc. Cit.
- <sup>33</sup> *Cartea Românească*, București, (2000) 208.
- <sup>34</sup> Loc.cit.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid. 198.
- <sup>36</sup> Pordzik,146.
- <sup>37</sup> [Foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html](http://Foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html).
- <sup>38</sup> Greenwood Press Publishers, Connecticut, (1973) 25.
- <sup>39</sup> Chicago: University of Chicago Press: Chicago (2001).
- <sup>40</sup> Editura Paralela 45, *Colectia Școala de la Targoviste*, (2002) 25.
- <sup>41</sup> Qtd. by Ed. Robert Maxwell in *Nicolae Ceaușescu: Builder of Modern Romania and International Statesman Leaders of the World Collection*, Oxford: Pergamon Press (1983) 89.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid. 156.
- <sup>43</sup> [http://iwm.at-Institute for Human Sciences, Tr@nsit 21Online, 2002/12](http://iwm.at-Institute%20for%20Human%20Sciences,%20Tr@nsit%20Online,%202002/12).
- <sup>44</sup> Loc.cit.
- <sup>45</sup> Loc.cit.

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- <sup>46</sup> Yale Center for International and Area Studies, (1995) 110.
- <sup>47</sup> Antohi, Tr@nsit 21Online, 2002/12.
- <sup>48</sup> *The Sacred and the Profane (Sacrul si profanul)*, București: Humanitas (2005) 199.
- <sup>49</sup> London: University of Notre Dame Press, (1978) 6.
- <sup>50</sup> Otd. by Lidia Vianu In *Censorship in Romania* Budapest: Central European University, (1998) 5-6.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid. 12.
- <sup>52</sup> *Myths Of The Romanian Communist System (Miturile Comunismului Romanesc)*, București: Editura Universitatii din București, (1997) 32.
- <sup>53</sup> Qtd. in Vianu, 9.
- <sup>54</sup> București: Cartea Românească, (1991) 154-155.
- <sup>55</sup> București: Cartea Românească, (1990) 185.
- <sup>56</sup> Loc.cit.
- <sup>57</sup> București: Editura Cartea Românească, (2008) 220.
- <sup>58</sup> București: Editura Tineretului, (1966) 15.
- <sup>59</sup> [www.romania/communistfacts/Ceaușescu.1972](http://www.romania/communistfacts/Ceaușescu.1972).
- <sup>60</sup> “Protocol nr. 11 of the Department of the Secretary from July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1971,” p.2 (“Protocolul nr 11. Al Ședinței Secretariatului din ziua de 9 iulie 1971” București: Arhivele Nationale (File consulted July 19<sup>th</sup> 2008).
- <sup>61</sup> Loc.cit.
- <sup>62</sup> Vianu, x.
- <sup>63</sup> “Propaganda Dossier, nr. 21, October- December 1972,” București: Arhivele Nationale (Dossier accessed July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008).
- <sup>64</sup> Loc.cit.
- <sup>65</sup> Qtd. by Ed. Robert Maxwell in Nicolae Ceaușescu: Builder of Modern Romania and International Statesman, Leaders of the World collection, Pergamon Press, Oxford, (1983) 113.
- <sup>66</sup> Loc.cit.
- <sup>67</sup> For a succinct presentation of these myths see *his Myths Of The Romanian Communist System*, București: Editura Universitatii din București (1997) 29-32.
- <sup>68</sup> My paternal grandmother was such a heroine, having giving birth to 10 children. The 1966 decrees outlawing abortion and forbidding birth control fueled additional moral corruption, created additional health hazards for the mothers, and, a posteriori, contributed to the post 1989 orphanage space shortage. Cristian Mungiu’s acclaimed film 4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days details the crises produced by these policies.

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<sup>69</sup> The multi-faceted and speedy industrialization of the country was broken down into five-year-plans (“cincinale”) going as far into the future as the year 2020.

<sup>70</sup> This ambitious relocation of the Romanian population to newly developed agro-towns and redesigned old cities represented the complete reverse of the 1930s situation when 78% of its population was rural.

<sup>71</sup> International travel for leisure was forbidden for the ordinary Romanian citizen. Travel for business was party-sanctioned only: those who traveled abroad worked for the system in power.

<sup>72</sup> *The Spider in the Wound* (Theatre I), or in the original Romanian *Paianjenul in rana* (Teatru I), Cartea Romanesca: București, (1996) 253.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 299.

<sup>74</sup> The most well-known writer of this tradition, I. L. Caragiale (1852-1912) was a playwright, poet, theater manager, and political commentator famous for his rendition of local humor and morals gone astray. One of his most known talents was that for onomastics, the making up of names that invoke complex cultural allusions. Visniec is equally talented in creating names for his characters in the country of Gufi.

<sup>75</sup> Noica calls ordinary people preoccupied with nothing else but mundane, basic human needs “shopkeepers” or “Băcani.”

<sup>76</sup> What Cornea refers to here, is Herman Hesse’s *The Glass Bead Game*: the Paidetic school described therein was named after the Greek myth of the nymph, or the “spring” from which artists derived their inspiration.

<sup>76</sup> Editura Humanitas, București, (2004)198.

<sup>77</sup> What Cornea refers to here is the association people made between a prosperous life abroad—where butter was not rationed—and the local food shortages. The countries in which butter was freely available and abundant, like Germany, and the other Western European countries became associatively known as the “countries of butter” *Ibid.* 199.

<sup>78</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 202.

<sup>80</sup> *Loc. Cit.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 198.

<sup>82</sup> București: Humanitas, (2004)11.

<sup>83</sup> For more information see: [http://translations.observatorulcultural.ro/Is-There-A-Romanian-Postmodernism-Romanian-Fiction=from-1979-1989-articleID\\_6articles\\_details.html](http://translations.observatorulcultural.ro/Is-There-A-Romanian-Postmodernism-Romanian-Fiction=from-1979-1989-articleID_6articles_details.html)

<sup>84</sup> București: Editura Paralela 45, (2002) 54.

<sup>85</sup> *Loc. Cit.*

<sup>86</sup> Please note the prevalence of this word, which was also used in the anonymous manuscript I

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found in the National Archives in Bucharest. The writer used it there in reference to an equally unsavory character, that of Comrade Ciondea.

<sup>87</sup> Crețu, 120.

<sup>88</sup> Introduction to *Fear*, Ibid. 145-146.

<sup>89</sup> Limes, Cluj-Napoca, (2002) 260.

<sup>90</sup> București: Editura Cartea Românească, (2008).

<sup>91</sup> Colectia Panopticon, Cluj-Napoca, (2005).

<sup>92</sup> Achim, 263.

<sup>93</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>94</sup> Loc. Cit.

<sup>95</sup> I am aware, of course, that many writings of the Classical Age were later appropriated by the theorists of the genre and retrospectively called utopias. I am also aware that the text and practice that inspired Kabbalah have their origin in the remote past, and maybe even precede the classical works associated with the utopian tradition.

<sup>96</sup> Achim, 59.

<sup>97</sup> For a very interesting and well-argued take on the intellectual backlash of such indebtedness to Balkan influences on Romanian culture see Sorin Antohi's "Romania and the Balkans: From Geocultural Bovarism to Ethnic Ontology" published in *Tr@nsit* 21, Nr.21/2002.

<sup>98</sup> București: Cartea Românească (2008) 1.

<sup>99</sup> Theodor Herzl's motto for his utopian novel, sometimes translated as "If you will it, it is not a legend," or "If you will it, it is not a fairytale," <http://www.wzo.il/en/resources/print/asp>.

<sup>100</sup> [www.kabbalah.com](http://www.kabbalah.com).

<sup>101</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>102</sup> Qtd. in *The Nationalism Reader*, Omar Dahbour Ed. Humanity Books: New York, (1995) 126.

<sup>103</sup> Contemporary scholarship considers Moses de Leon the central author of *The Zohar*, and credits additional authors with later revisions and additions to the main text.

<sup>104</sup> *A River Flows From Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, Stanford University Press, 2009 About Zohar 3:128a, Idra Rabba, 134.

<sup>105</sup> New Jersey: Paulist Press, (1983) 31.

<sup>106</sup> There are many prominent Christian and atheist figures of the Renaissance era and later times who claim that their breakthrough scientific and artistic creations have much to do with their knowledge of Kabbalah: Leonardo da Vinci, Pico della Mirandola, Issac Newton, among many others.

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<sup>107</sup> Matt, 32.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 38.

<sup>109</sup> One of the most important and commonly used being The Ana Bechoah, the prayer of the Kabbalist, also known as the 42-letter name of God.

<sup>110</sup> Matt, 24.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.38.

<sup>112</sup> Books.google.com/books?id+tneUNIFJ4p4C&pg+PA82&lpg+PA82&dq=The+clod+village++Zohar

<sup>113</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>114</sup> Hakkima de libba in Aramaic: “mystic.”

<sup>115</sup> “The ‘search’ for meaning and interpretation. Derasha (Hebrew, derashah or midrash) is the second level of meaning in Torah, after the literal sense. Through applying certain hermeneutical rules and with the help of imagination, the midrashic method expands the meaning of the Bible. The rabbis of the Talmud employ midrash constantly to discover/invent new interpretations” (The Zohar, 252).

<sup>116</sup> Millin de-hidah in Aramaic, or “words of riddle.” “Hidah also means “allegory” in Medieval Hebrew, and the Old Man is referring to the allegorical method of interpretation prevalent among Jewish and Christian philosophers and sometimes to be found in the Zohar. (...) Here this method is called haggadah, “telling,” expounding Torah through allegory.

<sup>117</sup> “The text must be safeguarded to preserve the secrets it contains. Cf: Deuteronomy 13: “The entire word that I enjoin upon you—be careful to fulfill it; neither add to it nor take away from it.” (Ibid. 253).

<sup>118</sup> “The root psht means “to strip, make plain, explain”; cf. Shemot Rabbah 47:8. The peshat is the plain meaning and is sometimes contrasted with deeper layers of meaning (...). Here, instead of making contrasts, the Old Man points at the paradox of mystical study. The peshat is the starting point, the word on the page. As meaning unfolds, layer by layer, one encounters the face of Torah. This is revelation, enlightenment. But in Kabbalah, enlightenment leads back to the word: the peshat reappears as the upshot. One emerges from the mystical experience of Torah with a profound appreciation of her form. Cf. the Zen koan: “First there is a mountain; then there is no mountain; then there is.” By employing this hermeneutic of mystical literalness, Kabbalah bolstered tradition and resanctified the text, while simultaneously uncovering countless interfaces between word and imagination” (Ibid. 253).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. 38.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. 126.

<sup>121</sup> Other possible ways of accessing the divine realms, in other branches of Judaic mysticism are ladders and chariots (merkavot mysticism). It is interesting to note again that Mircea Eliade’s character in Forbidden Forest, Ștefan Viziru departs the material world in a car after having repeatedly told everybody, using the same kind of “extracting, apotropaic expression”: “the heavens open up. But maybe they open for those who know how to look at things.”

<sup>122</sup> Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, (1987) 61.



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<sup>123</sup> Eliade, 105.

<sup>124</sup> Zerubavel, 106.

<sup>125</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath (Builders of Time)*, 95.

<sup>126</sup> One could argue that some of the most impressive examples of architecture, and science in Europe were produced by (assimilated) Jews. But these artifacts could and were appropriated by the local cultures; throughout history, and especially before and during the World War Two because of the ethnic origin of their creators and the implicit association with the proscribed Jewish faith and identity, most of them were intentionally destroyed. For a cinematic version of such events in the Austro-Hungarian Empire see *Sunshine* a 1999 movie detailing the lives of three generations of Jews who faithfully serve their adoptive country with disastrous results for the family and their faith.

<sup>127</sup> New York: State University of New York Press (1989) 94.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.56.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 85-86.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>131</sup> Eliade, 111.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 75.

<sup>133</sup> Ginsburg, 62.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>137</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>138</sup> Loc. Cit.

<sup>139</sup> There is a mention, however, of house servants and a Negro footman.

<sup>140</sup> Altneuland–Part One–“An Educated, Desperate Young Man,” 16/25, <http://www.wzo.il/en/resources/print/asp>.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., Part Two- 8/30.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 15/30.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. Part Three, 4/13.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 6/13.

<sup>145</sup> Herzl, Book Four-1/24.

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<sup>146</sup> Herzl, Book Four-1/24.

<sup>147</sup> The situation of a missing language was addressed by the focused efforts of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, who, upon immigrating to Israel in 1881, decided to revive the language of his ancestors and make it available to the common Jew. And the common Jew, from areas as different as Eastern and Western Europe, Northern Africa and other parts of the world, had been brought there not by the shared language, but by a sense of shared identity and common goals.

<sup>148</sup> See directors Shira Geffen and Etgar Keret's 2007 *Meduzot (The Jelly Fish)* for more information on the social fabric of contemporary Israeli society.

<sup>149</sup> Qtd. by Edward Said in *The Question of Palestine*. New York: Times Books, (1979) 59.

<sup>150</sup> Haaretz.com, Published 13:19 03.05.10

<sup>151</sup> See director Assi Dayan's 1993 *Life According to Agfa (Ha-Chayim Al-Pi Agfa)* for a very insightful representation of these complex inter-and-intracultural conflicts in present day Israel.

<sup>152</sup> Said, 69.

<sup>153</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Norton Shakespeare Based on The Oxford Edition*, New York: W.W. Norton.197. Act 5, Scene 1, 3102.

<sup>154</sup> bell hooks "this is the oppressor's language/yet I need it to talk to you": *Language, A Place of Struggle, Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-Cultural Texts*. Pittsburg Series in Composition, Literacy, and Culture, University of Pittsburg Press, February 1996.

<sup>155</sup> London: Phoenix House, (1995) 51.

<sup>156</sup> Because of the limited scope of this project, only three postcolonial utopian examples are considered here. All three come from English speaking cultures and have been previously analyzed together with several others including Canada, New Zealand, Australia, in Ralph Pordzik's impressive *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia: A Comparative Introduction to the Utopian Novel in the New English Literatures*. New York: Peter Lang (2001).

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. 58.

<sup>158</sup> Pordzik, 3.

<sup>159</sup> Pordzik, 164.

<sup>160</sup> Shakespeare, 3102.

<sup>161</sup> Trans. By Richard Miller, TGG Translations, (2002) 17-18.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. 18-19.

<sup>163</sup> Qtd. in *A Tempest*, Robin D. G.Kelly's Introduction to the play, xvi.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. 19-20.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. 27-28.

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- <sup>167</sup> “The Wretched of the Earth,” *The Nationalism Reader*, (1995) 274.
- <sup>168</sup> Okri, 3.
- <sup>169</sup> Loc.cit.
- <sup>170</sup> Loc.cit.
- <sup>171</sup> Ibid. 8.
- <sup>172</sup> Ibid. 16.
- <sup>173</sup> Ibid. 146.
- <sup>174</sup> Ibid. 41.
- <sup>175</sup> Ibid. 47.
- <sup>176</sup> Pordzik, 149.
- <sup>177</sup> London: Heinemann, (1992) 11-12.
- <sup>178</sup> Ghosh, 163.
- <sup>179</sup> Ibid. 253-254.
- <sup>180</sup> [www.utopia.com](http://www.utopia.com)
- <sup>181</sup> Loc.cit.
- <sup>182</sup> A.J. Christopher, *The Atlas of States. Global Change 1900-2000*, New York: John Wiley&Sons, (2006) 93.
- <sup>183</sup> Paul Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*, Seattle: University of Washington Press (2002) 32.
- <sup>184</sup> Meditative songs with historical or sentimental lyrics, and a clearly identifiable musical pattern, specific to Romanian culture.
- <sup>185</sup> Magocsi, 149.
- <sup>186</sup> Ibid. 222.
- <sup>187</sup> Geoffrey Barraclous, ed., *The Times Atlas of World History*, London: Times Books Limited (1999) 103.
- <sup>188</sup> Martin Gilbert, ed. *The Illustrated Atlas of Jewish Civilization: 4,000 Years of Jewish History*. New York: MacMilliam Publishing Company (1999)107.
- <sup>189</sup> Ibid. 110.
- <sup>190</sup> Ibid. 108.
- <sup>191</sup> Ibid.133.

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<sup>192</sup> Christopher, 13

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>194</sup> Barraclous, 277.

<sup>195</sup> Christopher, 159.

<sup>196</sup> Andrei Pandele's photos were imported via the official promotional site with the Webmaster's permission: <http://www.noorderlicht.com/eng/fest08/behindwalls/pandele/ph4.html>.

<sup>197</sup> Loc.cit

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> At the time of Ceaușescu's demise, in December 1989, Romania was, indeed, debt free.

<sup>202</sup> <http://www.noorderlicht.com/eng/fest08/behindwalls/pandele/ph4.html>.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Old New Land, Haifa Publishing Company: Israel, (1962) 15.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>211</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid. 33.

<sup>213</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid. 126.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid. 119.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. 118.

<sup>218</sup> Gilbert, 136.

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<sup>219</sup> [http://directory.ic.org/6315/Ecotopia\\_Romania](http://directory.ic.org/6315/Ecotopia_Romania).

<sup>220</sup> <http://www.tzfat-kabbalah.org/tour.asp/p=211>

<sup>221</sup> Searching for Utopia: Exploring Humanity's Timeless Quest for Heaven on Earth in  
"What is Enlightenment? Consciousness-Culture-Cosmos, Issue 36, (June 2007) 84.

<sup>222</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>223</sup> [www.auroville.org](http://www.auroville.org)

<sup>224</sup> [www.damanhur.org](http://www.damanhur.org)

<sup>225</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>226</sup> Robertsons, 95-96.

<sup>227</sup> [www.edenproject.org](http://www.edenproject.org)

<sup>228</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>229</sup> [www.masdar.org](http://www.masdar.org)

<sup>230</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>231</sup> [www.songdo.org](http://www.songdo.org)

<sup>232</sup> Of course, the alert scholar will immediately notice that economics is an important selection factor in these projects and, as such, not everybody would gain access to these extraordinary facilities. That is, however, the subject of another (or the next?) project ...