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***THE RATIONALIST CRITIQUE OF UTOPIAN THINKING:
ISLANDS OF FOOLS AND OTHER ANTI-UTOPIAN
CLASSICS****

Keywords: *Utopia; Dystopia; Francesco Doni; Richard Brome; Edward Ward; Jonathan Swift; Gabriel François Coyer.*

Abstract: *During 17th-18th centuries, the pressure exercised by combined critiques due to religious ideology and later on by rationalist mentality rendered utopias suspect to the eyes of many authors. Christian counter-utopists, ranging from Joseph Hall to Jonathan Swift, accepted and adopted the dogmas related to the Lost Earthly Paradise and Man's Cursed City, transforming the utopian space into hell on earth, into monstrous kingdoms that would rival Dante's circles. In turn, humanist counter-utopists, skeptical regarding man's capacity of establishing a perfect society, found other means of expressing their incredulity as well as their sarcasms. They imagined madmen islands and kingdoms of fous, demonstrating, by *reductio ab absurdum*, that the application of the ideals of reason to social programs would only led to nightmarish societies.*

The pressure exercised by combined critiques due to religious ideology and later on by rationalist mentality rendered the ideal place suspect to the eyes of many authors. The Christian counter-utopists, ranging from Joseph Hall to Jonathan Swift accept and adopt the dogmas related to the Lost Earthly Paradise and Man's Cursed City, having transformed the utopian space into hell on earth, into monstrous kingdoms and sinners that would rival Dantesque¹ circles. In turn, humanist counter-utopists, skeptical regarding man's capacity of establishing a perfect society, found other means of expressing their incredulity as well as their sarcasms.

From the sixteenth through the seventeenth century, with the rise of philosophical rationalism, the valorization that the Renaissance thinkers made (metaphorically speaking) of reason and folly underwent a complete reversal. In his *Praise of Folly*, Erasmus saw madness as the dominant value of our world and invited Thomas More to write a *Praise of Wisdom* and imagine an ideal world, placed in a foreign utopian land. The Utopia was exactly this place of wisdom, offered by the English counselor as a counter-model to our mad world.

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¹ See chapter "Les contre-utopies chrétiennes" of Corin Braga's *Du paradis perdu à l'antiutopie aux XVI^e-XVIII^e*

Yet one should notice that this distribution of the roles of the Fool and the Sage, constitutive of the utopian genre, had already been questioned by the first Italian utopist, Francesco Doni, in his *I mondi celesti, terrestri ed infernali degli Academici Pelligrini* (1552). In the dialogues between Il Pazzo and Il Savo, Doni confronts Erasmus and More, or rather the two types of mirror discourses made by the two humanists (Rivoletti 11). Doni's Sage presents the project of an ideal City, while the Fool turns the program into derision. By means of a savory game of reversabilities and ironies, the utopian dream of the former appears as folly, while the contestatory folly of the latter seems commonsensical.

Anxious about underlining the moral and conceptual dimension (in the sense of *conchetto*, game of wit) of his text, Doni adopts an allegorical register. His characters' object of debate is "a vision disclosed by Jupiter & Mome" to "the academic pilgrims". The divine revelation unveils the image of "a new world, called Fol by some and Monde Sage by others" (Doni 204). In this onirical rapture (dream), the Sage World is presented as utopian, in the form of a city for the reasonable man, as opposed to the Mad World that is assimilated to an infernal, anti-utopian realm. The two visions of the academic pilgrims, one positive, sagacious and the other negative, mad, are the utopist and anti-utopist antithetical perspectives of the ideal city.

As a consequence of the ironic inversion, the author of utopias, put into question by God himself, appears as a fool, while the fool, who criticizes the program, appears as a real sage. Doni joins the same baroque movement of "*desengaño*" as Cervantes. The Sage and the Fool correspond to Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. The utopists are placed in the company of the Knight of the Sad Countenance, while the counter-utopists and the more active people play the role of riders, becoming the mouthpiece of the disenchanting vision of common sense. This is how the ideological opponents of utopists (religious men, rationalists or empiricists) succeed in marking them with the label of unreasonable men. Grimmelshausen, for example, in his *Simplicissimus* (1669), considers the utopist of "Narr" (Fool) and a Fantasist (Schleiner 217).

At the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century, the baroque disillusionment spread to all the themes of the grand classical and medieval tradition, poisoning the gullibility of the public. The therapy applied by Cervantes to chivalresque ideals, that quickly ruined the novel genre of chivalry, was reused to discredit the extraordinary and utopian voyages. A map of the world produced by Oronce Fine *O caput elleboro dignum*, representing the world in the head of a fool (a map replacing the face of a person in the attire of a buffoon) satirized the fascination for voyages. Full of geographical phantasms, the head of these kinds of readers had indeed to be treated with hellebore, a plant renowned for fighting folly.

The best example for the baroque satire of the folly of voyages is perhaps the comedy entitled *The Antipodes* by Richard Brome (performed in 1638 and printed in 1640). This was not Brome's first iconoclastic gesture, as he had already ironized what was then the trendy theatre of *high subjects* such as Platonic love and ideal friendship. Similar to Don Quixote, the protagonist of the play, Peregrine, gets contaminated by the "epidemic pseudo sciences" of popular culture. His folly is nourished by assiduous readings of travel literature: "In tender years he always loved to read / Reports of travels

and of voyages” (Brome 227). While Don Quixote’s archetype of the chivalresque genre was Amadis de Gaule, Peregrine’s leader was John Mandeville, the author that Hakluyt hastened to exclude from the second edition of his work *The Principal Navigations*.

Taking John Mandeville as authority and prototype, Richard Brome’s character is unconditionally integrated into the paradigm of enchanted thought. His wit is “in travail” (ancient spelling for “travel”), and he is on a perpetual mental voyage across magical continents populated by monsters, pigmies and giants, monkeys and elephants, griffons and crocodiles, two headed geese and wool-covered chicken, *cynocéphales* (“men with heads like hounds”) and *blemmyes* (“without heads or necks,/ Having their eyes placed on their shoulders, and/ Their mouths amidst their breasts”). Following the footsteps of John Mandeville’s *Voyages*, Peregrine visits the solar trees and the lunart trees, the Grand Khan’s Cathay and Priest John’s kingdom. He lives completely immersed in “Asia’s matter”, as well as in “the oneiric horizon of the Indian Ocean.”²

Another character, Dr. Hughball, summoned to decide upon the nosology of Peregrine’s malady, begins by identifying the nature and typology of the “travelling thoughts” of his patient. He interrogates the patient concerning the voyages of Sir Drake, Thomas Cavendish, Richard Hawkins and Martin Frobisher, real voyagers that are treated with condescendence compared to John Mandeville, armchair voyager that the character takes literally. Doctor Hughball’s medical diagnosis (melancholy by excess of reading “excessive bookishness” applies to the distinction between the two branches of voyage literature of the time: the stories about real voyages and the extraordinary or fantastic voyages. To be sane means to live in the empirical world, refuse improbable or non-verifiable relations and treat them as aberrations. It is clear that Peregrine lives in a different mind paradigm, a medieval one, where there was no distinction between the two types of relations. To put it bluntly, according to the philosophers of the seventeenth century, uncontrollable fantasy was a disease of the soul.

Peregrine is not the only character to suffer from “brain draught”. His wife, Martha, is prey to attacks of changing humor caused by abstinence (“female celibacy”): “For though they have been three years wed,/ They are yet ignorant of the marriage bed” (Brome 228). Naive to the point of stupidity, she has been married for three years and since she has been ignored by her husband, she was oblivious towards procreation (an opportunity for Richard Brome to satirize monastic practices and “superstitions” about the Immaculate Conception). Apart from being worried about his son’s illness, Peregrine’s father, Joyless, suffers from paranoia and jealousy caused by his second wife, the very young Diane. Lastly, another character called lord Letoy is introduced; although he is the one to put in place the psychodrama destined to combat all these “fools”, he does not lack extravagance – he is obsessed with “fashion”, titles, appearances and spectacle. In short, Richard Brome reunites a nice trail of “melancholics”, corresponding to some of the most common typologies systematized by Robert Burton (1621).³

The treatment conceived by Dr. Hughball in order to treat these follies (which were rather Erasmus-like than psychiatric) is of a homeopathic nature (Donaldson 94).

² See Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Âge*; Braga, *Le Paradis interdit au Moyen Âge*, ch. III and IV.

³ See Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

Contrary to the current practice of priests (the period's physicians of the soul), who attempted to extirpate and wipe out obsessions by preaching different virtues, values and attitudes, Hughball stages Peregrine's obsessions by materializing them, bringing them to existence. The cure is a Baroque one, it's paradoxical, as folly conquered by folly, by an excess stretched to the absurd.

Dr. Hughball's patients take their visions to be the real thing and lack the capacity to tell apart fiction from reality. In their case, one could say that "*la folle du logis*" (*fantasy*) becomes "*la maîtresse de la maison*" the lady of the house. The treatment the doctor proposes against this "wild" imagination, which defies both Reason and sensorial experience, is a "cultivated" fantasy: art. During the concert, in the presence of the physician, lord Letoy demands that his band of actors perform Peregrine's exotic fantasies. Through their staging, the comedians take the patient, this "Don Quixote of voyages" on a fictive voyage to the Antipodes. Taking advantage of the fact that the patient could not distinguish between play and reality, Hughball replaces the ill fantasies by theatrical convention. As in Hamlet or other Baroque dramas, the play (within a play) is an efficient instrument by which one can consciously notice the mechanisms of fancy and of thinking.

Through this stratagem, Peregrine is confronted with his own materialized phantasms. If up until then he took part in John Mandeville's extraordinary relations in an imaginary manner, as mental representations "*in absentia*" of the things described, he now has the opportunity to rediscover these representations "*in praesentia*", in an empirical manner, as things (theatrical artifacts) that are accessible to the senses. The two worlds spontaneously separated by a sound understanding, namely the real world of the European *hic et nunc* (governed by what Freud calls "the reality principle") and the fictional world of the Antipodal otherness (under the sign of the "pleasure principle"), are thus put into contact and subjected to empirical experiences of an even degree of consistency.

In order to give the illusion of a real travel to the Antipodes, Dr. Hughball must resort to a trick. Generally speaking, the voyage to the Antipodal world would have implied a long maritime journey; in the play, the 'here' and 'there' are short-circuited, as Peregrine instantaneously finds himself immersed in the Antipodal world that is counterfeited by the comedians. In order for Peregrine to lose any doubts concerning the reality of the voyage, Hughball offers him to drink a sleep potion. Upon waking up, Peregrine is informed that he has slept eight months and that during this interval the whole troupe had arrived on the Southern continent. The physical voyage is substituted by an onirical voyage. Peregrine is convinced that the expedition was real all along, but the fact that his voyage is placed under the sign of sleep suggests that what is at stake is not a geographical displacement, but an inner voyage.

Hughball's stratagem draws together many literary themes that were held in great esteem during the Baroque period, such as "being a king for a day" and "life is a dream". A few years earlier, Calderon de la Barca presented the theatre public his drama entitled *Life is a Dream*⁴, in which Sigismond, a young prince raised in a prison because of a

⁴ De la Barca, *La vida es sueño*.

horoscope prediction according to which he would become a tyrant and a parricide, is named king for a day by his father. The latter does so in order to test his son's reactions, considering he is in the possession of power. Sigismond is put to sleep by a potion of belladone and, upon his awakening he finds himself at court as if his life in prison had been a nightmare. But since he becomes violent, the king puts him to sleep again and sends him back to his cell, suggesting to him that his princely condition had only been a beautiful dream. As he is subjected to these changes that reveal to him that nothing is consistent and stable, Sigismond undergoes a baroque "*desengaño*". Becoming "prudent" and "discreet", this prince of the Counter-Reformation starts envisaging earthly life as a dream and turns his hopes towards God's Kingdom, the only world that is ontologically real.⁵

Peregrine becomes "king for a day". The actors that play the role of the Antipodeans receive the disposition to conform themselves to any demands the patient might have. The protagonist begins to behave like a conquistador. Taking the props, costumes and fake weapons to be the palace of the Southern people, he arms himself with parade equipment and, as Don Quixote had done, fights the opposing forces in order to build himself a kingdom. Crowned "king of the Antipodes", he adopts the role of a sage king, which hastens to issue new rules to ease the life of his subjects. Peregrine becomes a utopian legislator!

Unfortunately, the Antipodes is a world *à rebours* compared to ours (as the cliché goes, the Antipodeans walk with their feet against ours). Richard Brome exploits all the motifs of the medieval theme of "*mundus inversus*" that he had earlier used in comedies such as *The Late Lancashire Witches* and *The Masque of Queenes*. Situated at the opposite end of the globe, the city visited by Peregrine is an "anti-London". In fact, it is the real London viewed by the character as the negative of a film. The actors impersonate bizarre and absurd characters that allow Dr. Hughball to submit his patient to a dysphoric treatment that makes him regard his marvelous adventure through a negative lens.

On par with the concept of the world upside-down, in Antipodean England all is reversed. Police officers don't beat or arrest people in the street, women rule the city and men take care of the household or become prostitutes, the elder husbands or wives invite their younger halves to find a lover, masters obey their slaves, students school their teachers and the young are more cultivated than the elder (a reminder of the Oriental Medieval miraculous races where men live their life in reverse, from old age to youth), poets are well paid, lawyers refuse bribery and only tax the beggars (who are the best orators), a gentleman is trialed for his fidelity and his refuse to commit adultery, the ill give advice to physicians, Puritans profess lies, madmen guide ambassadors, monks teach military art to generals, a basket craftsman tackles cardinal Bellarmin's beliefs.

Although sometimes the inversion of worlds has a satirical touch, targeting European mores such as debauchery, jealousy, corruption or violence, this kind of world lacking an "upward" indicator of the "underneath" is a nightmare-like counter-utopia. Despite the occasionally positive valorization of Antipodal attitudes and behaviors, the

⁵ Cf. Braga, *10 studii de arhetipologie* [*10 études d'archétypologie*], chap. «Visul Baroc – simbol al colapsului ontologic» [The Baroque dream – symbol of ontological collapse].

global non-sense of their actions turns the southern kingdom into hell on earth. Richard Brome revisits the topic of the “*mundus inversus*” in its Medieval variant (the sage world is the “now” of the city and the mundane, while the mad world is a continuation of the carnival and must be done away with as soon as possible), dismissing the Renaissance version of the topic (Erasmus’ *hic et nunc* is the world of fools, while Thomas More’s *other world* is a sage world). By resorting to the medieval version, Brome reverses the Renaissance distribution of the poles of the utopia, since Dr. Hughball’s London appears as a common sense city, while Peregrine’s anti-London becomes the city of aberration. The good of the here and now and the evil of the Antipodal world constitutes the configuration of an anti-utopia.

Peregrine, an enthusiastic utopian voyager enters into a dystopian position from his very arrival at the Antipodes. As he witnesses a series of outlandish events, he begins to feel uneasy. Peregrine asks Hughball “Will you make me mad?” (Brome 297) The physician tries to cheer him up: “We are sailed, I hope, / Beyond the line of madness” (Brome 297). Faced with such absurdities, his common sense forces him to take action. As king (for one day) and (imaginary) legislator, he plans to straighten all these “faults” to the norm of common sense. “Before I reign / A month among them, they shall change their notes, / Or I’ll ordain a course to change their coats. / I shall have much to do in reformation” (Brome 296). His initial euphoric disposition that sustained his appetite for voyaging, exploring and discovering is replaced by an acute dysphory and the desire to change the dreamed (actually nightmarish) world.

In the terms of Baroque poetics, Peregrine experiences a type of disenchantment. The performance staged by Dr. Hughball, as well as the Duc’s play performed for the likes of Don Quixote have the purpose of putting the two “madmen” face to face with their own fancies. The subjective status of the fancies projected by the protagonists onto the outside world enhances the seductive power of melancholic and saturnine imagination. But the moment they are materialized with the help of art and staged as performances, they fall in the category of mundane objects. Even if the internal visions possess a numinous glow, the artifacts and the stage props are reduced to the physical condition of ordinary objects.

Demoted to the same trivial condition of contingency that these “knights of the ideal” want to flee, the knightly or utopian phantasms lose their aura of fascination. The remedy conceived by Dr. Hughball against the voyages obsession consists of the realization (simulated, of course, but no less palpable) of the nomadic drive. The best remedy for utopists is not to contradict them, but help them put into practice their projects for a perfect society and let them contemplate the results. In an empirical reality, ideal constructs that are eudemonic in intent, but chimerical become aborted monsters and nightmares of common sense.

According to an old saying, fulfilling one’s desires announces death. The concretization of Peregrine’s utopian dream, his becoming king and legislator over the Antipodeans leads to the discharging and the disinvesting of his obsessive energies. Dr. Hughball and lord Letoy conceived a psychological cure that foreshadows modern post-Freudian and post-Jungian psychoanalytical approaches. The idea of homeopathic treatment (madness overcome by madness) strays from classical psychoanalysis (that

supposes interpretation, i.e. the transfer of unconscious content to a rational conscious discourse), towards W.R. Bion's methods of "free floating attention" and of Jungian "emotional body process". These methods invite the patient to act upon his drives through fiction and dramatic episodes rather than by rationalizing them.

This is exactly what Hughball does when he invites Peregrine to "travel" with him: "Do not think it strange, sir./ I'll make your eyes witness of more/ Than I relate, if you'll but travel with me" (Brome 239). He asks his patient to symbolize his visions, visualize his fancies and take his folly "to the edge". He sends him on an inner voyage, destined to render manifest his latent obsessions. The role of the physician of the soul (or of the postmodern psychoanalyst) is to catalyze the expression of these fancies and guide the patient towards a way out of the labyrinth. As a shaman, the doctor must accompany the "madman" in his descent into the unconscious and aid him in finding the way out wherever the patient may lose himself. Doctor Hughball is the psycho-pomp guide that leads the patient through the decorum of the psychodrama staged by lord Letoy.

Peregrine's Antipodes personify the character's charged and explosive unconscious⁶, but also the unconscious of the European society that represses its own anxiety and anguish in the geographical otherness. "Reason in the little world of man must dominate over unreason, as in the greater world the upper hemisphere physically dominates the lower hemisphere" (Donaldson 95). The reversal of the common order, of the reality principle, the personification of offspring fears in the primitive or monstrous races are a few mechanisms of the unconscious. The fantastic and the magical contents (and later rationalist and empirical philosophies) had banned from the collective mind make a comeback in Peregrine's "folly". Richard Brome's character is the victim of the grand censorship of the Western imagination that took place in the Age of Reason.

Then what is the psychological mechanism of the protagonist's cure? What exactly had to come his way in order for him to realize the extent of his "illusion"? Did he undergo an empirical experience (the voyage staged by lord Letoy) that unveiled his fancies' lack of substance? Did he cure himself at the moment he departed from the current world in order to spot the otherworld in its evanescent density, in the vacuum of appearances? Our view is that this was not so since the theatre decorum is as palpable and solid as everyday objects. The more Peregrine perceives the material reality of the decorum, the more he feels inclined to confront his visions of the Antipodeans with his perception of the Englishmen. If up until he met Dr. Hughball he had just dreamed of that world, now he is given the chance to experience it empirically.

One can immediately notice that Peregrine's suffering is not an issue of confused perception, but a problem of symbolization, of image interpretation. In Malebranche's terms, Peregrine is not a "visionary of the senses" (for he is always capable of distinguishing the perception of present objects from the images of absent objects), but a "visionary of the imagination", who assigns equal value to both sensuous and imaginative images. According to seventeenth century philosophers, in order to distinguish between the two types of images, one must take as criterion an external faculty, i.e. perception or reason. Since the decorum of the Antipodes consists of perfectly concrete objects that

⁶ The Antipodes are a metaphor of the unconscious.

have the same density as mundane things, the perception criterion cannot assume the role of judging the working of fancy. As a consequence, the sole criterion capable of disillusioning the protagonists can only be reason.

Dr Hughball submits his patient to an intellectual experience. The group of actors embodies a world *à rebours*, boggling and contracting all the principles of reason and of common sense. One can infer that Peregrine's treatment is a demonstration by reduction to the absurd: such is a truly Antipodal world. Faced with absurd mores and characters, Peregrine is confused and embarrassed: "Can men and women be so contrary/ In all that we hold proper to each sex?" (Brome 291) And the sole conclusion he can draw is that "Sure these are dreams,/ Nothing but dreams." (Brome 291) In other words, if reason is the sole criterion for understanding reality and if the Antipodeans' behavior completely lacks logic, what results is that the Antipodeans' experience is not real. Things stripped of logic, lacking rationality, cannot be true!

Peregrine's deduction does not have as immediate effect a feeling of doubt regarding the reality of his "voyage" to the Antipodes; it has a more general consequence, on par with the Baroque vision: that of making him doubt reality and the "grounding" of this world in general. Calderon's Sigismond undergoes the same misadventure as he is obliged to accept his life in prison and the experience of being "king for one day". Thus the prince begins to doubt any sensuous experience. The suspension of spontaneous criteria for judging external reality leads to the collapse of one's worldview. The metaphors of life as a dream, the world as a stage or a fair, of the ephemeral beauty of the rose are the expression of the "weak ontology" advocated by the Baroque *Weltanschauung*.

Doctor Hughball's staging triggers the "disillusionment" of his patient. Peregrine disinvests the Antipodes of the fascination that captivated and drained his psychical energies. The last performance that his physician makes him undergo is in fact an allegory of his own illness. By using lavish masks, Lord Letoy's actors perform a dance where Discord, "Folly", Jealousy, Melancholy and "Madness" are personified. It is in fact a psychological parable that gives an image and embodies the diseases of the soul as they are described by Robert Burton. In lord Letoy's performance, the five mental derangements are confronted with their contrary forces or instances: Harmony, Mercury, Cupid, Bacchus and Apollo respectively; these are personified by Wit, Love, Wine and Health. According to the cures recommended by the doctors of the time, these dispositions were the best ways to counter bad humors.

Hughball's "medical treatment" supposes two stages. First of all, the physician proceeds to sublimate Peregrine's environment, namely London, into fiction: the Antipodal anti-London. In addition, he attempts to collapse the criteria of reality and of fiction by applying the process of Baroque "*desengaño*". The patient describes his evolution in terms of an existential disenchantment that reminds one of many heroes of the age, from Don Quixote and Hamlet to Sigismond and Calderon's "perfect prince": "Withal so ignorant of mine own condition-/ Whether I sleep, or wake, or talk, or dream;/ Whether I be, or be not; or if I am,/ Whether I do or do not any thing". (Brome 300) For Peregrine, the voyage to the Antipodes is so confusing and puzzling that from here on out he hesitates to reinvest his energies towards any other object, be it real or ideal.

According to lord Letoy's account of the treatment, Peregrine was lead to pass from madness to folly, and then helped to recover his competent reason (Brome 305).

Hughball applies a similar treatment to Martha's hysteria and to Joyless' jealousy. Crowned king of the Antipodes, Peregrine is invited to marry the local king's daughter, who is no other than Martha disguised as an aboriginal. Thus, the marriage between the two characters that had not taken place in reality, will find its consummation during the imaginary voyage to the Antipodes. Hughball saw things accurately: as Peregrine's attention was displaced from the level of reality to that of phantasms, in order to tackle them one needed to turn his real wife into a phantasm as well. Similar to the way Don Quixote saw his imagined Dulcinea in the person of Aldonza Lorenzo, the village girl, so Peregrine cannot love Martha unless she is the Antipodes' king's daughter.

According to Robert Burton's psychological system, assumed by Richard Brome and used by Dr. Hughball, the best remedy for fighting "melancholy" is love. In Peregrine's case, the black bile excited by reading too many books or Martha's prolonged abstinence is conquered by appealing to a natural marital relationship. If before the cure Peregrine had been living in a desexualized and sublimated world of marvelous fictions, after the cure, following the disaffection of the ideal world, he returns to the contingent world that also includes the passions of the flesh. The madness of the brain is countered by the activation of the senses, by the (re)discovery of sexual life.

Such an explanation draws on seventeenth century psychology terms. One can also attempt to translate the concepts into more actual ones, in Lacan's system for example. The three grand psychological instances of rationalist and empiricist psychologies of the époque – sense, imagination, and reason – could be paralleled, roughly speaking, with the three grand orders defined by Lacan – the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. In Peregrine's case, the mental derangement is placed at the level of the capacity of symbolization. As seen so far, in Malebranche's terms, Peregrine is not "a visionary of the senses"; in other words, using Lacan's terms, the disease does not affect Peregrine at the level of the "real". The character is well capable of perceiving objects and that is why Dr. Hughball's cure resorts to Peregrine's capacity to touch and certify the reality of surrounding objects. In other words, the patient perceives properly from the point of view of sensorial organs, both real objects and artifice (the costumes and the props). He has neither hallucinations, nor apparitions and he does not have sense perceptions of the fancies of the mind.

Also in Malebranche's terms, Peregrine is "visionary of the imagination", in other words, he is a character unable to distinguish between different types of internal images. In order to fight against them, Dr. Hughball must activate Peregrine's logical understanding. More specifically, he places him in situations that oblige him to grant reason the role of discriminatory agent and truth-validating criterion. In Lacan's words, we can consider Peregrine "stuck" in the order of the imaginary. He cannot attain the symbolic order, and is subsequently incapable of developing the symbolizing mechanisms that allow for the organizing and comprehending of chaotic images and the understanding of fancies.

According to Lacan, the imaginary order is the domain of the mother. It is the numinous figure of the mother that draws together images teeming with a phantasmatic

load. Referring to Peregrine, one can notice that his issues derive from his relation with the maternal imago. His mother has died a long time ago and his father remarried a young woman called Diane, who was of Peregrine's age. This could justify the son's need to escape, his running away from the family home. The betrayed son refuses the replacement of his real mother with an adoptive one. Peregrine is incapable of detaching himself from the mother tutorship in order to adopt an adult stance, i.e. to have sexual relations with his wife, procreate and become a father.

However, apart from the Oedipus complex, one may come up with an even more refined explanation. By analyzing early childhood, psychoanalysts such as Mélanie Klein, Françoise Dolto and Maud Mannoni have demonstrated that the infant begins to understand the world by exploring the mother's body⁷. He amplifies the original representation of space through the maternal body to an overall vision of the world. The child continues to construct his identity by exploring the environment through the same reflexes and schemata practiced during gestation and infancy. Children who did not benefit from the presence and care of their mothers, explains Françoise Dolto, tend to compensate this lack with an irrepressible desire to travel. Traversing the world is a symbolic and substitutive satisfaction of appropriating the mother's body.

It is in fact Peregrine's case, whose compulsive need to travel constitutes a phantasmatic quest for the deceased mother. For him, the exploration of the world is a sort of "*regressus ad uterum*", an expedition for recovering the maternal *imago*. In Lacan's terms, the character's attraction towards the past and the foreign keeps him stuck in the imaginary order. The voyage to the Antipodes is an immersion into the archaic unconscious, towards the sacred Mater Gaia. When Dr. Hughball gives him the potion in order to send him to sleep, Peregrine makes a revelatory observation: "What's he? One sent/ I fear, from my dead mother to make stop/ Of our intended voyage" (Brome 245). The character admits that the perpetual "dream" of fantasy is dominated by the maternal imago. At the same time, he is eager to defend his complex: if the imaginary mother tends to stop him from leaving, it is because she feels that, as opposed to all the voyages Peregrine has been on with the aid of his imagination, lord Letoy's theatrical voyage will end up cancelling the numinous hold it has on her son.

It is Joyless' attempts to cure his son ("the joyless father", upset by the death of Peregrine's mother) that bring the maternal phantasms to an end. Using Dr. Hughball's and Letoy's "machinations", the father succeeds in imposing the "name-of-the-father" to his son, bringing him into the symbolic order. The characters' staging are the perfect instruments for Peregrine's "unglueing" from the imaginary order and for activating the processes of symbolization, since art (especially the play within a play) is a mirror that allows for the distancing between the direct and the reflected images. The Baroque "*desengaño*" corresponds to the ascent from the world of swelling phantasms into the world of meaning. Peregrine had difficulty not in differentiating between the sensorial consistency of fictions, but in assigning them intellectual significance. Under Hughball's treatment, he activates the faculty of the understanding that helps him access the symbolic order. By

⁷ See Dolto, *Au jeu du désir*; Idem, *Séminaire de psychanalyse d'enfants*; Maud Mannoni, *L'enfant, sa "maladie" et les autres*.

finally succeeding to exorcise the image of the mother, he will be capable of assuming the *name of the father*, the man, the husband and the father condition. Simultaneously, his father will be cured from jealousy, whose justification may be imputed to the Oedipal competition with his son, since Diane is about the same age as Peregrine.

Hence, Richard Brome's play is an undervaluing parable of the magical and utopian thinking. The explorer and the utopian legislator, personified by Peregrine, are treated as mentally insane people. The passion for voyaging and the projects for ideal societies are diseases of the mind, diseases of the fancy. The Antipodean king is a king of madmen, he is the ruler of a world *à rebours* that represents the somber double of the real world. Narrowly speaking, the drama shows that the utopian world cannot be materialized in the physical reality, but only in the mirror of art. The sole demiurge in this disenchanted vision of utopianism isn't the utopian legislator, but the stage director, the artist. Lord Letoy is "the lord of fancy", but solely as an artisan of fake props and illusory scenes. The only voyage worth taking is, as Anthony Parr puts it, the one that leads to disillusionment (Parr 6). Should we paraphrase Calderon, the conclusion of the comedy could well be "utopia is a dream".

Leveled against imaginary voyages and utopian ideals, the Baroque critique became the juggernaut of the writers of the time. Two years after the publication of *The Antipodes*, an anonymous writer continued Brome's work in *Newes in the Antipodes. Newes, True Newes, Laudable Newes. The World is Mad... especially now when in the Antipodes these things are come to passe* (1642), a satire against Puritanism (the world *à rebours* of the Antipodes is a Puritan society). The epitome of the absurd was attained in Henry Carey's *Chrononhotonthologos* (1733), a burlesque play where the inversions are physically materialized (the Antipodean king for instance walks on his hands).

The utopists that embraced deism or other forms of "*religion raissonable*" populated the southern continents and isles with populations dominated by reason: the Sevarambs, the Hermaphrodites, the Ajaoiens, the Avaïtes, the Salentins, the "new Athenians", the Houyhnhnms, the inhabitants of the Island of reason. The counter-utopists who hastened to denounce this ideal as an anthropological chimera imagined, by contrast, islands for the stupid and the foolish. Generally speaking, these societies are satires of Europe, but the satirical target against our world doesn't change the formal structure that gave these narratives their anti-utopian character: the negative is situated in the exotic "otherness".

In 1713, Edward Ward published *A New Voyage to the Island of Fools*, in which he announced he was going to present "the policy, government, and present estate of the Stultitians". The text was a critique against England disguised in the form of an exploration voyage led by a Venetian nobleman. In a parody of the stereotypes of the discourse on primitivism, the narrator puts himself in the position of the "witness" that observes and narrates the mores of a forlorn nation in five letters. However, in the dedication of the text, the author warns his readers about the rhetorical convention he uses, the allegorical nature of the text, in the register of "wit": "Although this Island of Folly cannot be found on the map, you will have no difficulty in guessing its real name and location by observing its mores and inhabitants" (Ward 1).

The natives of Edward Ward Island are not “Stultitian by nature, but by practice”. Foolishness is of a moral nature and it refers to the vices that caught hold of the nation. Slaves of sentiments, inclinations, interest, avarice, ambition, and desire for vengeance and of “fantasies”, the Stultitians lend themselves to adulations, flattery, serments, false evidence, crimes, rebellions, cheats, treasons, riots, prostitution and “all manner of wickedness and folly” (Ward 5).

According to essay writers such as Thomas Browne and Thomas Hobbes, the cause of human corruption in general is the obsession with superstitions and collective chimeras. The same is true for Edward Ward’s Stultitians: “In order to impinge them to riot or rebellion and to any action in general, it is enough to excite their fancy with a few new Notions or Projects that they will embrace without giving the least thought about their Truth, Reason or their Probability” (Ward 3-4). Stultitians’ folly is caused by the “epidemical pseudo sciences” of the imagination.

The canonical satirist of extravagant designers and crazy inventors remains Jonathan Swift⁸. As Christine Rees argues, the intellectual climate of the eighteenth century was a lot more hostile to utopian thought than the seventeenth century, as the term “utopian” became embarrassing, if not downright pejorative. In this context, *Gulliver’s Travels* is simultaneously “a brilliant exposition and a critique of the utopian imagination”, a perfect example of self-deconstruction of utopian fiction: “the most self-destructive utopian fiction of the period” (Rees 65, 124-135). Balnibarbi and the island of Laputa is a country of fools due to excess of intelligence and rationality, but lacking common sense.

If Gulliver’s fourth voyage denounces deists’ and rationalists’ pretensions of making a better man emerge, tailored by the laws of reason and of nature⁹, the third voyage is a direct attack against “the new science”, that of Cartesian rationalism and Baconian empiricism. By examining the *phenomenon* (in the sense of “miracle”) of human rationality (one should consider the fact that for the Irish dean, man is not an “*animal rationale*”, but merely an “*animal rationis capax*”), Jonathan Swift retraced the origins of the “new rationalism” (enthusiastically received by the English society) to the founding of the Royal Society (Braga, *Du Paradis Perdu* 333-360).

The flying island of Laputa is a political allegory (that accuses the English rule over Ireland¹⁰), as much as it is a pejorative metaphor (synonymous to the “ivory tower”) that condemns the theoretical sciences of being too abstract and consequently inhuman or downright antihuman. In this sense, it anticipates the scientific anti-utopias of the 20th century. In Laputa, mathematicians and musicians are not only ridiculous (they must be woken up from their contemplation by their pages equipped with hitting sticks) and inefficient (tailors measure outfits using astronomical instruments of observation), but also murderous. The technological wonder that is the flying island is used in dominating

⁸ Jonathan Swift, “Voyages de Gulliver dans des contrées lointaines”.

⁹ See Corin Braga, *Du paradis perdu à l’antiutopie aux XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles*, 333-360.

¹⁰ Transparent allusion that all Swift’s commentators agree upon, of whom W. D. Taylor (224) was one of the first.

the people below and, if needed, in punishing its seditions by letting them starve or literally wiping them off.

When it comes to the Academy of Lagado, it represents a training ground for inventors that parody the mania of the “projectors” of the age¹¹ and particularly the projects and conferences held at the Royal Society (Nicolson and Mohler 226-269). For example, in 1704, Thomas Salmon presented *The Theory of Music reduced to Arithmetical and Geometrical Proportions*; in 1717, Nathaniel St. Andrew gave *An Account of an extraordinary Effect of the Cholick* (the experiment originates in the study of excrements and vomit); in 1726, Stephen Hales spoke of *Vegetable Staticks: or, An Account of Some Statical Experiments on the Sap in Vegetables* (a project of extracting solar warmth from vegetables) and *Also, a Specimen of an Attempt to Analyze the Air, by a Great Variety of Chymico-Statical Experiments*, for instance pumping air by using the guts of a dog (Probyn 162-165).

In this context, the “projectors” that Gulliver meets no longer seem so extravagant, when they insist on recovering solar beams out of cucumbers, retransforming human excrements out of food, calcinating glass in order to obtain cannon powder, constructing buildings by starting from the roof, making blind people differentiate between colors for painters’ use, plowing the fields with pigs, using spider webs to weave outfits, fighting cholicks with big bellows, condensating the air up to the point it becomes tangible, softening marble in order to make pillows, indexing all the phrases (and hence inventions) possible thanks to a trade combining words, communicating by replacing words with objects, teaching sciences by writing them on food, treating diseases of the “body politic” by using laxatives and other medicine, changing and recombining anatomical organs of politicians, foreseeing plots by analyzing the fecal matter of the unruly, etc.

As one can swiftly notice, a large number of these experiences are not founded on the Baconian method, but on hermetical thought. They do not imply quantitative measures, but qualitative associations and synesthesia. They place the signifier and the signified, the symbol and the designated object on the same level of reality. In other words, they do not draw the distinction between imaginary and real, which is precisely one of the goals of the “method” of right judgment. Commentators have rightly observed that the “experiments of the Lagado Academy remind one of the pre-paradigmatic phase of science, anchored in the speculative schemata of Renaissance analogies between the macrocosm and the microcosm, that do not contribute to any scientific explanation” (Jürgen and Riemann 95).

Swift has also launched a devastating satire against magic thought in *A Tale of a Tub*. In this small narrative, he describes a sect which he calls the “aeolists”, the worshipers of the “wind”. The narrator of the story is a member of the “republic of dark authors” – advocates of alchemy, Kabala, gnosis and Rosy Cross – that professes reaching the divine through satanic inversion and occult demonic sciences (Pinkus 67-68). The “wind” that they worship is the *Anima Mundi* of the neo-platonic philosophy, the universal Spirit that allows for the exercise of magical influences. Presenting the second cosmic emanation of

¹¹ Whom Richard Brome had already represented in his *Antipodes*, 297.

Neoplatonic philosophy as “wind” and of “air”, Jonathan Swift sends the ontological basis of all hermetic disciplines into the nothingness of illusion and chimeras.

But the satire is not one-sided. The Puritans are criticized just as much as occultists. The “wind” designates not only *pneuma mundi*, but also “wit” and “inspiration” in the way Puritan preachers understood them. Jonathan Swift constructs a parodic syllogism, in which he assimilates magicians and fanatics under the same pejorative umbrella term: “wind blowers”: 1. All occultists are Aeolians. 2. Puritans are Aeolians. 3. Consequently, Puritans are occultists.

However, one should not fall under the illusion that Swift, the unflinching skeptic, only practiced an acid but constructive critique in order to propose a positive alternative to magical esoterism and Puritan fanaticism. He criticized the rest of the ideologies in England as well. For example, the ironic parable of the three brothers: Peter, Jack and Martin targets the three major confessions in England – the Catholic, Calvinist (Puritan) and Anglican faiths, while the parable of the “Tailor-worshippers” satirizes materialism and atheism (Harth 59, 82-83).

The “new science” of the seventeenth century is another favorite of Swift’s polytropic satire. In *A Tale of a Tub*, the writer pokes fun at the projects of the Royal Society of London and The Philosophical Society of Dublin concerning the advancement of natural and experimental philosophy, of medicine and mechanics¹² (Probyn 56). He also attacks Bacon’s “new organon” and “the instauration magna”, Paracelsus’ and Van Helmont’s spagiric medicine, as well as Descartes’ and Newton’s mechanicism (Craven 132, 159-160, 190). Epicurus, Diogenes and Lucretius Apollonius, Paracelsus and Van Helmont, Luther and Calvin, Bacon and Descartes, Toland, Milton, Harrington and Shaftesbury share the same list of “mad philosophers”, whose wit suffers from “winds” produced by digestive disorders.

If Phillip Harth’s and other critics’ position that Swift should be characterized by Christian rationalism is true, it seems logical that “he had been writing from a standpoint opposed to the Enlightenment and any kind of ‘modernism’ ” (Monk 229-230). From this perspective, a religion without Reason would lead to religious fanaticism (the Puritans), while Reason without religious guidance would lead to atheism (Harth 143). In both cases, the result would be “enthusiasm”, in the pejorative sense of the term, following the demise of neo-platonic thought. In his *Treatise Concerning Enthusiasme* (1655), Meric Casaubon states, from as early as the subtitle of the text, that enthusiasm is “an effect of nature: but it is misunderstood by many as Divine Inspiration or Diabolic Possession.”

In *The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, Jonathan Swift mockingly adds a fourth justification: enthusiasm is a “launching out the soul”, a “de-psychisation”, a loss of wit. This monstrous “ek-stase” is obtained artificially by a “mechanical operation” that is the “method” of right reason. Swift thus satirizes the new anthropological model of man as machine as well as the “mechanization” of thinking (Bullitt 124). All in all, the

¹² In 1667, *The History of the Royal Society of London* (1667), Thomas Sprat differentiates between three types of chemists (*chymistes*): the ones who research Nature in general, those who prepare the medicine and those who want to obtain the philosophical stone by means of trasmutations.

Irish writer places the scientists of Laputa and the inventors of Lagado lower on the Scale of Being than Gulliver, who is treated by the king of Brobdingnag as a “little odious vermine” and by the Houyhnhnms and Yahoo as an equally insignificant being. The scientists are beyond bestiality and animalism, as they had quit the biological order to rejoin the anorganical of the automatons, who think logically but lack a soul.

Jonathan Swift returns the critique of enthusiasm and of fantasy, as a boomerang against rationalist and enlightened philosophers that pretend to bring the light of true understanding to humanity. As Jenny Mezciems states, by comparing Swift to Orwell, Gulliver’s third voyage is the most anti-utopian of all, as it questions the promethean myth of the emerging modern society (Mezciems 101). In Swift’s view, the Royal Society and the Academy of Sciences turn into islands for the mad and crazy, of autists and brainless. The category of “projectors” also includes utopists. In *The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, the utopian “commonwealths” are compared to chimeras of the same species as that of the philosophical stone or the quadrature of the circle. The Academy of Lagado is a counter-utopia overtly opposed to Francis Bacon’s Solomon’s House and other “pansophies” of the same period.

Instead of populating the exotic lands with perfect societies, of Adamic innocence and exemplary organization, the classical counter-utopias prefer to imagine negative places, which regroup and criticize the flaws of our world (Claeys VII). By using the theme of the world *à rebours* in its original schema, Antique and Medieval (that supposes the projection of the Evil in a far-away world), they make fictional experiments in which the exotic kingdoms describe what the Ancient World would become, should the tendencies they consider malign gain the upper hand. Thomas Artus turns his *L’Isle des Hermaphrodites* (1605) into a grotesque mirror of France during the time of Henri III, governed by degenerated “mignons”. Richard Head imagines a *Floating Island* (1673) ruled by a group of crooks and bankers that, after going bankrupt, prepare three armed ships *Pay-nought*, *Excuse* and *Least-in-Sight*, in order to find new “colonies” of dupes ; the expedition is lead by Robert “Owe-much”. In 1741, Thomas Stretzer publishes *A New Description of Merryland*, in which the “merry country” discovered by Roger “Phfuquewell” represents an allegory of a libertine society. John Witherspoon publishes *A History of a Corporation of Servants* (1765) and satirizes social and moral reform projects by *reductio ad absurdum*. All of these islands of human faults constitute *à rebours* reflections of Europe.

As a final example of the variety of classical anti-utopias, we chose to mention *Découverte de l’Isle Frivole*, written by father Gabriel François Coyer (1751). The Frivolous Island is a kingdom situated in the Unknown Southern Continent, that offers a parabolic, reversed image of eighteenth century France. Its discoverer, Admiral Anson, is a sober and Puritanical Englishman, who plays the role of a contrastive mirror against the superficiality and ethical disinterest that “rules” the island. Anson learns from the “Grand-Contrôleur des Modes” that before the colonizers arrived, the kingdom was inhabited by a savage people that was on its way to establishing a dignified and heroic society. Unfortunately, this “way” was abandoned as a French ship shipwrecked on the island and introduced the taste for luxury and frivolity. The history of the Frivolous Island is a metaphor for the Enlightenment concept of the inevitable downfall of any

civilization, as well as for colonization through the export of vice, criminal imparting of decadent refinements to the innocent peoples.

Coyer's southern colony ends up looking like the European metropolis and even surpassing it when it comes to corruption. The figure of the "Fivolites" gathers together all the negative traits of the *mundus* (eighteenth century France) by means of an (anti)utopian catalysis. The capital, the City of Wit, is overlooked by an immense Palace, flanked by guild shops "the most necessary to the State": embroiderers, varnishes, jewelers, perfume merchants, New Year's gifts craftsmen, chandelier craftsmen, dessert figurine craftsmen, inventors and fashion quality controllers, city carriage painters, masters of dance, novel writers, etc. All of these arts that make the eyes rejoice (and that corrupt the soul, as father Coyer morosely suggests) became known and were adopted from the books of the French shipwrecked crew: libertine novels, sparklingly witty comedies, gallant tragedies, operas d'amour (Coyer 12-13, 23). The only two absentees from this list of decadent literature are chivalry novels and fantastic voyages.

The characterological typologies of the inhabitants of the Frivolous Island illustrate the idea that refinement corrupts morality. The Fivolites overtly exhibit hypocrisy, that in Europe serves to disguise ambitions and licentiousness of the worst kind under the mask of civility and honor.

A man that steals from a man of great prestige is held in grand consideration: if before he makes his fortune he catches a few Agathines on a road, the law could punish such an indecency. A beautiful woman is ready to forgive anything to a courageous man, except for his least considerate gestures. A husband cannot pretend to embarrass the heart of a woman: but he is allowed to have an outburst should her distractions lack decency. On the arrival of the Admiral an establishment was founded to let the weaker sex lose its virtue in a decent manner (Coyer 38).

In this world of reversed values and virtues, Admiral Anson, whose aim is to earn his living decently, lamentably fails when he gives conferences on useful professions and disciplines (ship building, mines, surgery, geography, physics, mathematics), but wins plaudits when giving speeches on music, dance and cuisine. He makes a fortune by selling trading licenses for ribbons, wigs and lace. But his true opinion of the Frivolous Island, as a mouthpiece of the author, is clearly revealed by the order he imposes on the crew during their return to Europe: keeping the location of the island undisclosed. As a rule, utopian voyagers, charmed and seduced as they are, vow to keep the secret, because of a desire to protect the visited land from the avidity of the Europeans. In Admiral Anson's turn, it is not the Frivolous Island that he wishes to protect, but his own country, England. It is as if he had put his whole crew on quarantine, in order to elude propagating the frivolity virus among his compatriots.

Father Coyer's aim surpasses the mere exposition of the frivolity within the confines of the genre of moral satire. The superficiality rendered in his text touches an ontological depth. Everything on the Frivolous Island seems dematerialized, reduced to surfaces and decorum. Not only are man-made objects fake, but so is Nature. Although fruits are very beautiful and colorful, they only contain "an image of the nutritional substance, that leaves one on his need", trees break at the slightest of touch, tigers are operetta animals, "their claws & teeth only exhibit a flexible cartilage, better equipped to

adorn than to injure”, birds are “misleading”, the land is “as light as flour”, to the extent that peasants plow furrows by simply blowing bellows (Coyer 5-7).

These “phenomena unknown to others” that Admiral Anson diligently writes down in his travel log are manifestations of a desontologised world, reduced to its appearance. The things observed by the explorer are “phenomena”, in the philosophical sense of the term, i.e. apparitions without essence. Father Coyer updates the Baroque symbol of the world as illusion within the mental framework of the Enlightenment. His Frivolous Island is not only a satire of a superficial and decadent society, but also a symbol of a lay, atheist and libertine civilization, which has lost its soul.

The lack of essence reproached to the foreign civilization is located into an imaginary topos: a kingdom of the unknown southern continent. Like Richard Brome’s *The Antipodes*, father Coyer’s utopia becomes a play of misleading surfaces and fake props. With pure appearance and mad chimera, the work acquires the tormenting flavor of dystopias. In conclusion, madmen islands and kingdoms of fools appear as internal critiques of utopian thinking, demonstrating by *reductio ad absurdum* that the application of ideals of reason to social programs only leads to nightmarish societies.

Translated from French by Nicolae-Andrei Popa

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