INTRODUCTION

SOCIALISM AND THE "EUGENIC TURN"
IN BRITISH UTOPIANISM, 1875-1900

Approximately eighty-five literary utopias were published in Britain during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with interest in the genre peaking in the early and mid-1890s. The majority of these texts remain scarce and little known, with the most famous, oft-supposed epitome of the genre, William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890), standing, to a lesser degree with Edward Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1873), as the supposed representative of trends in utopian writing in this period, prior to the transformatory appearance of H.G. Wells on the literary scene.

To define the development of a genre by two texts, whatever their literary merits, is, however, risky: we may succumb to the myth that "great texts" by "great authors" constitute "literature", or a definitive moment in the history of ideas, when an assessment of the genre as such requires casting our net much more widely, to incorporate discussion of lesser texts and authors, which may delineate quite different shifts or trends in thought. Centrally, for instance, given the propositions explored below, Morris does not address or take up themes derived from and related to the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), which shook Victorian society to its foundations. Yet, as we will see, such themes were central to many other utopian texts in this period. Leaping over texts in this way, moreover, though occasionally excused as a pedagogic necessity, is interpretatively dangerous. It tends to insinuate, in this case, that a shift from utopia to dystopia occurred after Wells began to write, principally as a result of the First World War and the depression of the 1930s, which renders Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948) the quintessential anti-utopias or dystopias of the 20th-century (and indeed further suggests that dystopia is the characteristic form the genre assumes in this period). We will see below how misleading this assumption
is, as well as the degree to which the two new sub-genres of utopian writing which emerge in this period are themselves closely related at some points. This collection of sixteen texts, then, attempts to provide materials for a partial redefinition of the utopian genre in this era. Though many other themes appear in utopian form in this period, I will in this introduction pay special attention to the notion of the uses of the genre to depict corruption and degeneration, both of individual and national character, which I have elsewhere argued was crucial to utopian writing from the early 18th-century until the period under consideration, and which continues to loom centrally in later Victorian texts.⁴

There are three reasons why this was the case. The coincidence of these factors explains why this era witnessed an outpouring of utopian writing unparalleled in the later modern period—and not only in Britain, but also, for example, in the United States. They are: (1) the rise of Socialism; (2) the debate following the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), and even more his *Descent of Man* (1871), which produced what we usually term "Social Darwinism"; (3) the growth in a sense of degeneration and decline in the 1880s and 1890s, producing a sense of "fin de siècle" decadence and emotional and intellectual insecurity. which came widely to pervade the arts, philosophy, literature and science alike.⁵ This was fuelled, certainly, by factors other than Social Darwinism and eugenics, notably by militarism and the increasing imperial rivalry of the European great powers, which greatly facilitated eventual conflict in Europe itself. These themes are sometimes interwoven in utopian works; anticipations for coming race wars for the division of the globe are not uncommon.

The result of these developments was that a new sub-genre of utopian writing emerges by the mid-1880s, the anti-socialist dystopia; while much utopian writing engages in what may be characterised as a "eugenic turn" in the same period. Two of the most prominent characteristics of 20th-century "dystopianism", portraying an authoritarian socialist or eugenicist future, thus make their appearance, albeit in different form, in the last decades of the preceding century.
Socialism

From the late 1870s Socialism became a significant rival to liberalism and conservatism, and began to attract substantial support among both the working classes and intellectuals. Early socialism, in Britain chiefly identified with Robert Owen and his supporters in the 1820s-1840s, spawned some utopian literature, but rather more utopian thought. Despite a fleeting moment in the mid-1830s which witnessed an engagement between Owenism and the trades' union movement, at the point at which the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union was formed (1833-4), Owenism remained relatively small in numbers. The true mass movement of the period, Chartism, did not generate a utopian literature as such, though its occasional romanticised images of the pre-capitalist past contain a utopian component.

After a long hiatus, from mid-century until the late 1870s, there was no large-scale social reform movement, and correspondingly relatively little utopian writing as such. This altered dramatically at the end of the 1870s, one cause being the steady advancement of Marxian revolutionary socialism, which in Britain in the 1880s and 1890s was led by H.M. Hyndman (1842-1921), but which soon found competition from other groups of socialists and anarchists. The key reason for this was economic: an agricultural downturn in the 1870s was followed by a commercial and industrial crisis in the 1880s. Britain now found herself competing with newly-emerging industrial powers like Germany, the United States and Japan. Poverty reached horrific depths as "Outcast London" and the slums of other cities slipped deeper into decline, and the working classes began in larger numbers to reject the capitalist system as such. Socialism provided the chief alternative, and Marxian socialism, indeed, proffered a compelling account of the awful inevitability of recurrent capitalist crises, in each of which the rich would grow richer and the poor poorer, until a final great cataclysm demolished the old world and ushered in the new. More than in any preceding historical period, the future of European, even world, history, was now severely contested.
While there has been a substantial debate about how "utopian" Marxism itself was—Marx and Engels having fobbed the label itself upon their socialist predecessors by way of elevating their own "scientific" brand based upon the "materialist conception of history" as alone credible, parallels between Marxism and classical utopianism are inevitable. Like his most important French socialist predecessor, Charles Fourier, Marx envisioned the future communist society as having abolished the narrow division of labour prevailing in capitalism, and saw the working day in terms of the performance of a variety of tasks. Communist society would be defined by the collective ownership of property, the doctrine which, from Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) onwards, was most frequently associated with the utopian tradition. As importantly, Marx seemingly relied upon a substantial improvement in human behaviour, even a renovated human nature, perhaps reforged in the white heat of revolutionary ferment and sweeping away of the rotten and immoral capitalist system, as a precondition for the success of the communist ideal. More importantly, for his critics at least, he presumed a degree of centralised state administration and efficiency greater than any ever attempted before. They thus greatly feared the possibility that the process of construction of such a system, during what Marx termed the interim period of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", might collapse into a more traditional form of dictatorship, but on an even larger scale, in the same way that the French Revolution had degenerated into the Terror and Napoleonic dictatorship.

Although Marxism was to become the most important and characteristic form assumed by utopianism in the twentieth century, the near-eclipse of other socialist and anarchist alternatives did not occur until the 1930s. In this period a rich variety of socialist ideals contended for public support, more or less centralised, more or less democratic, more or less militant in their approach to revolution, ranging from more orthodox varieties of Marxism through the more decentralised, populist-democratic ideas of Morris, to the advocacy of a "simplification of life" in the socialism of
Edward Carpenter, to the anarchism of Kropotkin, Bakunin and others.

The growth of revolutionary socialism from the mid-1880s clearly promoted the emergence of a new major sub-genre of the literary utopia: the anti-socialist dystopia, forerunner to the most famous 20th-century example of the type, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Typically these portray a revolution gone awry, resulting in the imposition of dictatorship. In *Red England. A Tale of the Socialist Horror* (1900), for instance, close regulation of marriage follows the revolution, with three doctors approving all marriages, and all children being removed from their parents' care at the age of one month in order to be raised by the state. Typically universal compulsory labour is introduced, with shirkers and the idle being sent to penal colonies, as in Henry Lazarus's *The English Revolution of the Twentieth Century. A Prospective History* (1894) (below, vol. 4). In Alfred Morris's *Looking Ahead. A Tale of Adventure* (1892) a socialist revolution produces dictatorship and a decline in population. In "*England's Downfall" or, The Last Great Revolution* (1893) by "An Ex-Revolutionist" post-revolutionary Britain sinks into decline through a lack of managerial expertise. In Charles Fairchild's *The Socialist Revolution of 1888* (1884), which takes up Hyndman's doctrines of nationalisation, the revolution eventually results in a lowering of wages and the ruthless destruction of individualism. In *A Radical Nightmare. Or, England Forty Years Hence* (1885) by "An Ex-M.P.", similarly, Britain has broken up after a revolution, poverty is widespread, and the secret police prevent free discussion. Often revolutions are described as introducing greater social inequality or no improvement, despite the notional abolition of classes, as in W.A. Watlock's *The Next 'Ninety-Three or Crown, Commune, and Colony* (1886). In 'Mr. Dick'. *James Ingleton. The History of a Social State A.D. 2000* (1893) a collectivist revolution which destroys individualism is overthrown, but the individualist counter-revolution concedes that the state should indeed care for the aged, the infirm, and the young.9 (By contrast, leading anarchist social theorists of the period, notably Edward Carpenter, stressed
repeatedly that "the difference between Anarchism and Socialism is not so much a matter of the form of social organisation as of the degree in which it is voluntary and not forced", and hoped that "non-governmental society" would secure a decline in "authoritative regulation ... leaving such arrangements largely to custom and spontaneous initiative".¹⁰

Yet beside such works we need to recall that there were of course a notable number of pro-Socialist British utopias set in this period, besides Morris's *News from Nowhere*. Frederick W. Hayes' *The Great Revolution of 1905; or, the Story of the Phalanx* (1893) describes a successful revolution which introduces a system of "State Industrialism" to promote national welfare and abolish idleness. Indeed socialist utopias are if anything considerably harsher on idleness than were contemporary social theorists generally. In 1891, Percy Clarke's *The Valley Council or Leaves from the Journal of Thomas Bateman of Canbelego Station, N.S.W.* (1891), for instance, those who have not found gainful employment by the age of thirty are put to death. Similarly in *Etymonia* (1875), we are told that

"Allowance is made for everything, except mere idleness, and for this the remedy is stern. ... if a man does not create what we call his economic counterpoise, he must starve in Etymonia. If he is inclined to rebel, and to satisfy his wants by appropriating, or by plucking from out the fields, the wherewith to content his hunger, then he is regarded as having taken that for which he has given no equivalent. To violence is opposed violence; to licence, restraint. Such a one would be confined to a strong room, where he would be supplied with work.

Utopian writers of a socialist ilk in this period almost uniformly reduce the working day, at least to eight and sometimes as little as six hours.¹¹ Health-care is usually provided; a pill "better than Holloway's" is nationalised in one text.¹² The standard of living of the working class is everywhere dramatically raised. The technological vision of expansion makes the abolition of poverty possible for first time, even after dispensing with steam-power: electricity for
factories is produced by windmill in one case; while in another it is by hydroelectric power. In one instance it is used to bring back the dead of all ages, back to Adam. In the most influential technologically-based utopia of the period, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888), probably the most widely-read American novel since *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), one great corporation, the state, organises industry, regulates trade and the labour supply, and guarantees security, comfort and prosperity for all. On the continent works like Theodore Hertzka's *Freeland. A Social Anticipation* (1890) envisioned the abolition of poverty through socialist engineering. United to the great technological innovations of the period, such promises seemed less utopian, and more realistic, than in any preceding period. And utopia itself was based less on the restraint of need, and more on the satisfaction of desire, than ever before.

**Social Darwinism**

The second force to lend an impetus to utopian thinking near the close of the century was provided by the theory of evolution associated popularly with Charles Darwin, but also the work, in particular, of another naturalist, Alfred Russel Wallace and of the foremost sociologist and social theorist of the 1860s-1880s, Herbert Spencer. The social and intellectual impact of Darwinism can scarcely be understated. Evolutionism offered a positive vision of universal history as a comprehensible process in which mankind was situated firmly in the natural world, evolving from a primitive anthropoid state to the present rather than being specially created by the divinity. The agnostic conclusions often deduced from this account, notably by Darwin's "bulldog", T.H. Huxley, were not inevitable, but became increasingly widespread, and in most nations Darwinism fostered a large-scale crisis of religious conscience. The chief utopian component to be developed from Darwinism, however, was derived not from the inevitability of the struggle for the means of subsistence which would notionally result in the "survival of the fittest", in the most popular rendering of evolutionary theory. Instead, it was the voluntarist strand of evolutionary theory developed by
Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton (1822-1911), whose dual assessment of the negative degeneration of the species and the positive capacity of humanity to foster species improvement by selective breeding was to prove enormously appealing over a century-long period. (Indeed, albeit under different guise, the development of eugenics remains directly relevant to present debates over cloning and genetic modification in order to promote physical improvement of type.)

Seen from a utopian viewpoint this is hardly a novel phenomenon; indeed, it commences with the tradition itself: in Plato's Republic (inspired by Plutarch's account of Sparta), where the first priority of the ruling guardians is described as maintaining "the purity of the race" and avoiding the mixing of types (gold-silver-brass-iron). Community of women and children results, with state regulation of marriage, and the disposal of inferior and unapproved offspring (Republic, 460c-461c). And in More's Utopia, we recall, engaged couples view one another naked in order to avoid bodily defects. Amongst later writers, Fourier envisioned future the biological mutation of humans, while Godwin envisioned perfectibility in terms of the prolongation of life. Utopias have thus commonly stressed the physical improvability of human stock as a key goal, usually through the promotion of a healthier life, and from the Renaissance increasingly through scientific advancement. What is novel by the 1890s, in Britain and elsewhere, is that there emerged a much larger-scale debate about "negative" eugenics. This involved proposals to interfere with behaviour to prevent the degeneration of the species through insanity, criminality, alcoholism, racial intermarriage, and the vastly larger birthrate amongst the poor than their social betters, which increasingly threatened to dilute the pool of characteristics transmittable to offspring. At the same time, the notion that a "higher" human type could be promoted by selective interbreeding, indicated a "positive" eugenic ideal. Galton himself wrote a brief utopia, Kantsaywhere, to describe how it might be promoted by a system of the regulation of marriage among the morally and physically fit. Much of this now-brief work (most was destroyed by Galton's bowdlerizing niece, who objected to its depiction of
love) is concerned with the detailed mechanics of the testing process, the ascertaining of ancestry, measurement of skull size, etc, prior to obtaining the prized 'eugenic certificate', for leave to procreate. Those who fail the examination, the 'unclassed', are treated kindly so long as they have no children; if they do, "kindness was changed into sharp severity." The 'very weakly' live in not-too-onerous labour colonies in a condition of celibacy. Where defective children are born to normal parents, they are not destroyed, but may not procreate. Those who "fail to pass the Poll examination in Eugenics" are treated as "undesirable as individuals, and dangerous to the community, owing to the practical certainty that they will propagate their kind if unchecked. They are subjected to surveillance ... [if] they refuse to emigrate." Interestingly, Galton apparently did not regard these ideas as too far-fetched or distant from those of his own time; he suggests that "limitation of families is now a recognized institution among most of the (cultured) [higher] and many of the artisan and labouring classes (in Europe and America), and there is no reason why a sentence demanding it for the protection of the nation should not be passed, and the infraction of that sentence punished as a criminal act." Equally interesting, is that race, taken ontologically, does not seem to be a central category for inclusion/exclusion; indeed, Galton uses the term, as in the phrase "a superior race of men", in the sense of species, much in the way Darwin did in the Origin of Species, and as it was used in discussions surrounding the 1909 Commission on the Deterioration of the British Race. Nor do his proposed questionnaires for introducing the eugenics certificate scheme, designed around 1906, and aimed at the issue of domestic degeneration, broach the issue of race in terms of skin pigmentation.

From the time his first chief work, Hereditary Genius (1869) was published, Galton thus clearly envisioned that what he would term "eugenics" in 1883, "the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage", required a strengthening of the social regulation of marriage. This is less awkward than it may appear; even
liberal writers like J.S. Mill had tied the right of marriage to the ability to support children. But they had not linked this to the future progress of the species as such, which is for Galton precisely what was at stake. Minimally, Galton envisioned that the separation of habitual criminals from the rest of the population was achievable, as was the prohibition of the marriage of the feeble-minded through a system of marriage certificates. Galton's ideal of the promotion of physique, ability and character was indebted to republican and romantic concerns that the proliferation of great cities was gradually sapping the moral and physical fibre of the population (a theme often associated in Britain with William Cobbett and Robert Owen, for instance, but equally evident in Morris's *News from Nowhere*, 1890). Galton was convinced that urban life depleted physical strength, will power, and the willingness to labour, and substituted bohemianism, dissoluteness, and complacency. The great danger to civilisation was "the exhaustive drain upon the rural districts to supply large towns. Those who come up to the towns may produce large families, but there is much reason to believe that these dwindle away in subsequent generations. In short, the towns sterilise rural vigour." And he feared that "a considerable part of the population has already become bearers of germs of degeneracy". For Galton another reference point of particular importance was classical Greece; others agreed: in E. Ray Lankester's well-known account of the problem of degeneration, for instance, it is asserted that "As compared with the immediate forefathers of our civilisation—the ancient Greeks—we do not appear to have improved so far as our bodily structure is concerned, nor assuredly so far as some of our mental capacities are concerned." By the 1890s, then, the belief was widespread that much of the urban working class population, at least, was shrinking in size, prone to alcoholism and dangerous diseases, and capable of inducing the physical decay of the species as a whole.

The antidote to degeneration was for Galton the selective production of a higher class of the "naturally gifted" who would intermarry and promote a "sentiment of caste" amongst themselves in order to avoid any impure admixture. Such a
group, he thought, characterised by "more vigour, more ability, and more consistency of purpose," might achieve some "moderate social favour and influence, including a system of national registration of remarkable persons." It might eventually result in a separatist development of the gifted caste, which might reside in co-operative associations in the countryside. Galton envisioned this transformation as analogous to the creation of a new religion, which promoted "a far-sighted philanthropy, the acceptance of parentage as a serious responsibility, and a higher conception of patriotism."

There are clear similarities here to the Owenite socialist ideal of co-operative communities popularised widely in the 1820s-1840s, except that here it is an intellectual as well as a moral elite which forms the justification for the creation of and withdrawal of communities.

Galton's communitarianism implies that eugenics as such tended politically in a collectivist direction. But there is certainly reasonable evidence that some of its votaries assumed it did. Galton's chief lieutenant, Karl Pearson, notably, felt that eugenics was most closely aligned with socialism, because the latter recognised "that social progress has depended on an organisation of society checking very largely the individual struggle for existence within the group," that socialism would make the most efficient use of existing resources, and that "wish of Darwin that the superior and not the inferior members of the group should be the parents of the future, is far more likely to be realised in a socialistic than in an individualistic state."

Eugenics thus clearly pointed to the deduction, termed by Pearson "Socialist", "that the direct object of government is to form a stable society; that all real legislation, that all foreign action must ultimately be guided by the aim of increasing national welfare". This was not as such for Pearson a "class-conscious" ideal (it was also explicitly anti-revolutionary), for he regarded all forms of labour as equally honourable. But he did wish to abolish parasitism and exploitation. The future society thus "ought to be one vast guild of labourers-workers with the head and workers with the hand-and so organised that there would be no place in it for those who merely live on the
labour of others. In a political or social system based upon labour it would be the mere possessor of wealth who would have no power". And other prominent eugenicists were also notable socialists, such as George Bernard Shaw, whose *Man and Superman* (1903) popularised positive eugenics, and Caleb Saleeby, also a Fabian Socialist. The points of convergence between socialism and eugenics are crucial to the reshaping of utopian thought in this period. Coming from the other direction, some socialists contended that their schemes were best suited to minimalise the otherwise destructive tendencies of species evolution. They were lent great support by the conversion to socialism in 1890 of the co-discoverer of the theory of natural selection, Alfred Russel Wallace, who went on to become a leader of the land nationalisation movement. Some socialists confronted the relationship between both movements positively and directly; Eden Paul's *Socialism and Eugenics* (1911), for instance, proclaimed the "reciprocal necessity of the two movements", both being "complementary parts of the great modern movement known as Humanism". Nonetheless official pronouncements by socialist bodies in this period, while they stress the need to liberalise marriage relations and make divorce easily accessible, rarely discuss any regulation of either marriage or procreation. Some Fabians certainly developed eugenist themes, and the Society took an official interest in explaining the declining birth rate and the hypothesis of "race suicide"; Shaw pointed to the apparent success of the well-known American community at Oneida founded and governed by John Humphrey Noyes from 1869-78, where "stirpiculture", or the pairing of the most "robust" couples together (and Noyes held his own robustness in no small estimation) was designed to promote physical evolution. But others were sceptical that society could every "adopt the Platonic stirpiculture of the 'Republic'", as William Clarke put it. Others, however, like *Socialism, Eugenics and Utopia*

In the utopian literary genre eugenics themes were recrafted and popularised in a variety of ways. In *Pyrna: A Commune; or, Under the Ice* (1875) a new society is discovered beneath a Swiss glacier where there is perfect
equality, fraternal love, and community of property and children. But no sub-normal children allowed to live, and it is explained that "We exterminate every form of life but that which is natural, healthy, and likely to grow up capable of taking its place in our community on an equal footing with its brethren." In William Hay's *Three Hundred Years Hence* (1881), overpopulation at the end of the 19th century has produced a cataclysmic race war in which the Caucasian race, which "Nature has selected to rule and populate the globe" faces inferior races whose "gradual extinction" is described as natural. The result is that "Mongol and Negro, the Inferior Races, [become] entirely things of the past," with their lands settled by whites. Similarly, in Standish James O'Grady's *The Queen of the World or Under the Tyranny* (1900), for instance, it is the English and Chinese who engage in a colossal struggle in the 21st century. Predictably, the "Anglo-Saxon" peoples are often portrayed as conquering the globe—after all, Europeans had nearly done so!—as in Robert William Cole's *The Struggle for Empire. A Story of the Year 2236* (1900), where London becomes the capital of the "solar system". But occasionally the scenario is inverted: in Ernest George Henham's *The Reign of the Saints* (1911), for instance, racial intermarriage results in whites becoming a minority race, who moreover succumb to "want of staying power, love of unwholesome food, excitement, fantastic pleasures, fondness of rapid motion, and the adoption of what was known as the strenuous life, which compelled the continual overtaxing of mind and body in a struggle to acquire wealth or political advantage." Eventually Britain is conquered by the Japanese empire. Other utopias handled the complex issue of race much more tolerantly: in Robert Desborough's *State Contentment: An Allegory* (1870), for example, there is community of property and no poverty, and not only are the races harmoniously mixed, but national pride and prejudice have been eliminated (unhealthy children of any race are put to death at birth, however.

Amongst other utopian works to take up such themes, Henry Wright's *Depopulation. A Romance* (1899)(below, vol. 6)—possibly the worst title ever given to a utopia!—commences
with Galton's assumption of a decline in marriage and family size among the cultured classes. Wright's \textit{Mental Travel in Imagined Lands} (1878) (below, vol. 2) envisions science being used to promote the best qualities in human nature, such as generosity and nobility of character, which had often been eliminated during the struggle for the "survival of the fittest". Anthony Trollope's \textit{The Fixed Period} (1882) has its central theme the ideal of terminating life at sixty-five in order to free scarce resources for the more productive. Set in a British colony called Britannula in 1980, the novel introduces the notion of a 'fixed period', or euthanasia at 65, to save the expense of some £50 p.a. for each person departed. A revolt overthrows this system, but the narrator nonetheless insists its basic ideas are sound. In Walter Besant's \textit{The Inner House} (1888), scientific discoveries have arrested the process of natural decay and crime, while pain and anxiety have been abolished, and there is a debate as to whether these advantages should be only for "the flower of mankind, for the men strong in intellect and endowed above the common herd".\textsuperscript{39} Infanticide to curtail congenital deformities is practised in Robert Ellis Dudgeon's \textit{Columbia} (1873). A marriage bureau similarly regulates the choice of spouses in G. Read. Murphy's \textit{Beyond the Ice. Being A Story of the Newly Discovered Region Round the North Pole} (1894) (below, vol. 5). Euthanasia is the norm in Andrew Acworth's \textit{A New Eden} (1896) (below, vol. 6), where family size is restricted to two children, for women, having become equal, do not want more. Euthanasia for the insane and those who wish to commit suicide is also the norm in Percy Greg's \textit{Across the Zodiac: The Story of a Wrecked Record} (2 vols, 1880). In Kenneth Follingsby's \textit{Meda} (1892), the chief theme of work is the that the world became overpopulated in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century as a result of indiscriminate births. But in the world of 5575 births are regulated, and marriage is according to "educational equality".\textsuperscript{40} The notion that utopia could involve the creation of a "higher" or superior race is also explored in various ways in utopias, for example in \textit{A Thousand Years Hence. Being Personal Reminiscences as Narrated by Nunsowe Green} (1882) (below, vol.
2), where a "natural nobility" is gradually created from the most perfect physical and intellectual specimens of mankind.

Michael Rustoff's What Will Mrs Grundy Say? Or, A Calamity on Two Legs (A Book for Men) (1891), (below, vol. 3) describes "the coarser-grained labouring classes" as having "multiplied like rabbits in a warren. It began to be apparent that the families of gentle blood were gradually dying, crowded out of existence and swamped by the teeming multitudes of children of the lower orders." A State Matrimonial Bureau is thus set up which regulates marriages and creates a new class of nobility. Amongst lower orders these regulations are even stricter: no one may marry without a license, "not merely specifying whom it is he wishes to marry, but how many children he is entitled to have. The number of licences is strictly regulated by the national requirements; no one can marry until he proves his ability to make provision for his wife and children." A new class of nobility is thus sought:

Special attention was given to the proper blending of family characteristics; those, for instance, who had great warriors among their ancestry were mated to those who had been preeminently distinguished in the arts of peace; descendants of famous philosophers or freethinkers were wedded to the stock of eminent divines; scientists mingled their blood with poets, and artists with mathematicians. Peculiarities of form, figure, complexion, were carefully observed, and marriages were arranged accordingly. By this process of intelligent sexual selection over the compass of several centuries, we have at last succeeded in fashioning a race of nobles which is absolutely peerless in the universe".

Those who disobey are banished to distant communities where sexes are separated; thus "the coarser elements of our national life are kept in proper restraint and subordination, and even our lower orders are at least three grades higher in the scale of civilisation than when we began our matrimonial arrangements." Finally, the maximum age for women is fixed at 40, and men at 55, and enforced by voluntary euthanasia, in order to prevent the social and political predominance of the old over the young. (The royal family, clerics and generals are the first objects of this policy.)
In more satirical portrayals of such themes, we find, for instance, in *Spring, Summer, Backwards and Forwards* (1905) that the regulation of marriage by a Socialist government results in dark men having fair wives, tall men short wives, fat men thin wives, and ugly men pretty wives, in order to promote equality. (And Socialism is finally condemned here as a form of slavery. In E.A. Abbott's *Flatland* (1884), we are told that "Any Female, duly certified to be suffering from St. Vitus's Dance, fits, chronic cold accompanied by violent sneezing, or any disease necessitating involuntary motions, shall be instantly destroyed." Sometimes the marriage examination was also extended to include male proficiency in a trade or profession, and female capacity to cook, as well as a physiological investigation. We cannot always tell, however, whether a given text is satirical or not given the close proximity, in the treatment of such themes as poverty and idleness or congenital physical defects. *In the Future* (1875) (below, vol. ), for instance, describes the poor as living in "the new Laboratories, each a combination of asylum and manufactory" where all are classified and numbered and subject to "never-ceasing supervision". But it is by no means clear that the author finds this distasteful. Anthony Trollope's *The Fixed Period* (2 vols, 1882) takes up eugenic themes in a fairly extreme form, but such ideas are also defended by the narrator after the system has been overthrown. Walter Besant's *The Inner House* (1888) portrays a world where poverty has been abolished and life consists chiefly of eating and drinking in variety and abundance.

Many utopian and dystopian writings in this period discuss the "women's question" either positively or satirically. Edward Heneage Dering's *In the Light of the Twentieth Century* (1886), for instance, contains an extended discussion of women's rights, such as to divorce, while *The New Democracy. A Fragment of Caucusian History* (1885) describes the achievement of equality for women under a despotic government. In positive utopias marriage has typically become a mere civil contract, sometimes for a limited period: in *Quintura* (below, vol.) it is three years, while all children become the property of the state. In Mrs.
George Corbet's *New Amazonia: A Poretaste of the Future* (1889) men are prohibited from holding any office of substance (and again, a system of eugenics certificates regulates marriage).

At the turn of the century the leading utopian writer of the period, H.G. Wells, developed eugenics themes in several works. After writing a series of satires and dystopias Wells began to explore the possibility of creating a voluntary, superior brotherhood in his first positive utopian work, *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life* (1901). This ideal was at times termed a "new republicanism", but Wells eventually opted for "The Great State" rather than as "socialism", which he regarded by 1915 as too ambiguous. In *Anticipations* Wells assailed inefficiency and idleness amongst the wealthy and poor alike, insisting that there were two adversaries to genuine progress: the "people of the abyss" and the "incompetent rich". In a remarkable passage describing the possible outcomes of international competition in the coming century, Wells stressed that

The nation that produces in the near future the largest proportional development of educated and intelligent engineers and agriculturists, of doctors, schoolmasters, professional soldiers, and intellectually active people of all sorts; the nation that most resolutely picks over, educates, sterilizes, exports, or poisons its People of the Abyss; the nation that succeeds most subtly in checking gambling and the moral decay of women and homes that gambling inevitably entails; the nation that by wise interventions, death duties and the like, contrives to expropriate and extinguish incompetent rich families while leaving individual ambitions free; the nation, in a word, that turns the greatest proportion of its irresponsible adiposity into social muscle, will certainly be the nation that will be the most powerful in warfare as in peace, will certainly be the ascendant or dominant nation before the year 2000.
Here the central determinant in population planning was "the new needs of efficiency", which dictated that it was the lot of those who failed "to develop sane, vigorous, and distinctive personalities for the great world of the future ... to die out and disappear." Yet Wells, evidently after a thoughtful scrutiny of the scientific evidence, then backed away rapidly from this concept of eugenics. By 1903, writing on "The Problem of the Birth Supply", he agreed with Graham Wallas that the state should not promote any specific system of selective breeding, concluding that "I can only reiterate my conviction that nothing really effective can be organized in these matters until we are much clearer than we are at present in our ideas about them." Famously, in A Modern Utopia (1905), Wells explored the notion of a 'voluntary nobility', the Platonic Samurai, who manage the state and take vows of self-restraint. But this group, while enjoined to marry among equals, are specifically described as "not hereditary classes, nor is there any attempt to develop any class by special breeding, simply because the intricate interplay of heredity is untraceable and incalculable". Wells did acknowledge that "There can be no doubt that these marriage limitations tend to make the samurai something of an hereditary class. Their children, as a rule become samurai. But this is not an exclusive caste." But the tendency of the caste is to increase relative to the total population.

Moreover, Wells in A Modern Utopia was scathing about the fact that "the social and political followers of Darwin have fallen into an obvious confusion between race and nationality, and into the natural trap of patriotic conceit," which had engendered "a sort of delirium about race and race struggle". This had been used to excuse the massacre of Africans by Belgians in the Congo, and of Chinese by Europeans during the Boxer Rebellion. Abjuring any ideal of racial "purity", Wells clearly distanced himself from the most malevolent prejudice of the age, declaring that he was "inclined to discount all adverse judgments and all statements of insurmountable differences between race and race." Society ought not to produce 'inferior types'. But any modern utopia would decently feed, house, and employ the poor (including guaranteed state
employment where necessary) at a reasonable minimum wage. Lunatics and those afflicted with "certain foul and transmissible diseases" would not be killed (though deformed infants might be). Persistent criminals would be exiled to island prisons. But race presented no special case for the application of these rules, and, skeptical that any "all-round inferior race" existed, Wells by 1905 had moved a considerable distance from the positions assumed in Anticipations, though eugenics remained essential to his thinking.

Besides Wells, eugenic themes were also prominent in the writings of another prophetic social writer at the turn of the century, the pioneering woman sociologist Jane Hume Clapperton, the author of Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness (1885) and A Vision of the Future (1904). In Scientific Meliorism, Clapperton accepts, following Mill, Spencer and others, that, given the application of evolutionary theory to society, it should be possible, to avoid the worst excesses of the "survival of the fittest", namely poverty, child labour, and excessive competition. Using Galton, Malthus, and Darwin, Clapperton argues for 'Neo-Malthusian' "artificial checks to reproduction" and a Spartan emphasis on the importance of rearing healthy children as the "the only possible method by which society can reach to the foundation of its miseries". Clapperton combines the liberation of women, a struggle against conventionalism, social experimentation (echoing Mill's On Liberty) on co-operative and communitarian lines, towards an increasing communism, indicating that evolution could consciously move towards union, even towards shared domestic arrangements, and a superior politics. Clapperton also echoed Galton's concern for the decline of the 'white races', but rejected the notion that voluntary celibacy, with its interference in the natural passion of love, could assist in 'race regeneration', preferring instead 'artificial birth control'.

While A Vision of the Future covers much the same ground, Clapperton's physiological interests here received even higher priority. Her economics are now more clearly New Liberal and Fabian, and 'scientific meliorism' is described as contrary to laissez-faire in principle. But Socialism is now clearly seen
as an outgrowth of that sympathy which permits supersession of the old law of the 'survival of the fittest', despite the fact that philanthropy "tends to a lowering of the level of average health and a gradual degenerating of the race through selection of the unfit, and through the power of hereditary transmission". The population problem remains unsolved, but "immense strides" had been made since 1884 towards the acceptance of heredity, and towards the notion, contra Darwin, that population control did not mean impeding the beneficial effects of natural selection. Galton's advocacy of celibacy is again condemned for its interference with human happiness. Clapperton was now more daring about marriage, suggesting that the Nair system of complex marriage might be favourably contrasted with European monogamy. In "conscious evolution sexual functions are no longer regarded as essentially allied with propagation", though dissolute habits are to be avoided. Clapperton's 'vision', thus, involved substantial domestic transformation as an aspect of social reform and "conscious evolution" towards the highest ethical state of justice and equality. Nonetheless reform would not be applied equally to all classes:

"In the lower social strata where any reconstruction of family life is not yet possible, what is immediately required is a gradual rise of wages with steady improvement in all the conditions of industrial labour. Society also must relinquish such patronage of the poor as fosters their too rapid increase, undermines their self-dependence and tends generally to deterioration of race. Parental responsibility must be strongly inculcated and strictly upheld. Public teaching should be given in all natural laws affecting society, especially the laws of health, increase, and heredity; and, under conditions respectful to human dignity, Malthusian doctrine should be taught, and a knowledge of neo-Malthusian method very carefully imparted."}

Ultimately, then, "society will have no class distinctions of the present order, no idlers or parasites, no
poor and no coercive government." The old dream of socialists and liberals alike, the abolition of unproductive labour and social parasitism, was finally to be realized.

Such works clearly indicate that the relationship between eugenics and utopia spanned a series of genres ranging from fictional representation through social forecasting to eugenicist works which push in utopian directions. A good example of the latter is Frank Perry Coste's *Towards Utopia (Being Speculations in Social Evolution)* (1894), which grapples not with delineations of the completed utopian state, but the natural path by which it might be created, through a reduction of family size, the extension of household arrangements to permit joint-family occupancy, (with a concomitant saving in servants' costs!), reducing waste and increasing leisure, utilising resources more efficiently, disdaining merely fashionable luxuries (substituting *vin ordinaire* for champagne, for instance), minimising the number of unproductive labourers and "superfluities" in general. Like mainstream socialist writing in this period, then, the luxury of the rich is often assumed to be, as Robert Blatchford put it, "a direct cause of the misery of the poor".

Utopian representations of eugenic ideas, then, explored both the positive and negative aspects of the wider movement. On the one hand, the idea of the regulation of offspring had a liberating capacity, particularly insofar as women ideally wielded the ultimate decision on the choice of their mates. Although Oneida was an exceptional experiment, it is quite evident that the eugenic turn in social thought generally in this period encouraged greater sexual freedom, just as women were beginning to gain momentum in the quest for the franchise, and at a time when birth control was finally emerging from its taboo status to become an issue of scientific urgency. Karl Pearson, again, outspokenly contended that "free sexual union seems to me the ideal of the future, the outcome of Socialism as applied to sex ... Children apart, it is unbearable that church or society should in any official form interfere with lovers."

On the other hand, although eugenics is not racialist per se, an extreme racialism not witnessed earlier in the century...
becomes more prevalent in this period and was clearly encouraged by eugenic ideals. Pearson, again, as spokesperson for the movement, described "the negro [as] that most difficult of all problems", and suggested that "with sufficient funds, dictatorial power, and longevity in the dictator, a very few generations would suffice to produce a race of negroes with white skin, yellow hair, and blue eyes." Such suggestions would appear merely bizarre if actual attempts to experiment along these lines had not been conducted by Nazi scientists.

Nonetheless, much eugenic discussion was directed towards the issue of domestic poverty and the birth rate of the working classes rather than relations with other races. By 1900 the central theme of utopian writing over the previous century, the idea of the degeneration of character under the impact of commercial society, urbanisation and industrialisation, had finally emerged into mainstream public debate. Increasing poverty, the manifest physical degeneration of the urban working classes, which was widely noted by military recruiters and physicians in particular, and the prevalence of a variety of diseases concentrated interest on the urban poor as never before, for it now appeared that the fate of the entire society might rest on their development. This fear of physical degeneration, widely popularised in works like Arnold White's Efficiency and Empire (1901), overlapped with earlier discourses on poverty in which idleness was soundly condemned. White for instance suggested that twenty-six thousand tramps in Britain should be imprisoned for life, "not because they are wicked but because their stock is corrupt"; and urged that "Until we are content to see the idle perish, if they choose to perish, little change for the better in the health of the people can be looked for".

The attempt to regulate if not abolish idleness, which was central to the new discourse on efficiency, was of course a characteristically utopian theme. So was the regulation of the size of cities (crucial to William Morris, among others), which was increasingly promoted by social theorists in this period. Many socialists were willing to take at least a small
step in the eugenics direction, agreeing, for instance, as Edward Aveling did, that the mentally deficient ought not to marry.\textsuperscript{69} The "eugenic turn" in utopian writing in this period, then, strongly mirrored trends in collectivist thought, while invoking traditional utopian themes. A powerful optimistic trend provided by scientific and technological innovation coincided with an equally hopeful political strand of left-wing, revolutionary thinking, in which the creation of a just and equal society no longer seemed the stuff of dreams, but the consequence of historical progress and conscious, rational human planning.

Conclusion

The influence of both socialism and eugenics on the utopian genre highlights a classic tension running throughout utopian thought generally, particularly in the modern period, between the use of fictional devices to imagine societies in which greater liberty prevails, at least for the majority, than is possessed by them in the society in which the text is written, versus those in which-pace More himself-a much greater stress is given to order and organisation. The shift in utopian thought towards both eugenics and socialism clearly supported the theme of order rather than that of increasing liberty.\textsuperscript{70} Crucial to our understanding of the "eugenic turn" in utopian thought, however, is the fact that it was overwhelmingly viewed as a positive, progressive development. To take the positive utopian imagery of Wells and Morris and then to contrast this, by way of asserting a shift from utopian to dystopian writing, with the later work of Aldous Huxley and George Orwell, is fundamentally to misunderstand how this shift was conceived in the late 19th-century, and to misapprehend its positive significance for the vast majority of those writing on the subject. Today we naturally condemn "negative" eugenics, or the attempt to eliminate by coercive means undesirable traits or characteristics from our genetic makeup, in light of the Holocaust. But equally we applaud all efforts to extend human life, notably through the genome project of genetic mapping, which is a direct extension of many earlier eugenic concerns. Crucially, thus, we need to see
that the confluence of eugenics and utopia was not accidental, but inevitable, and that for many observers the notion of the transmission of inherited characteristics finally made utopian ideals appear realistic. Here is one of the leading British Social Darwinists, Benjamin Kidd:

“If the old view is correct, and the effects of use and education are transmitted by inheritance, then the Utopian dreams of philosophy in the past are undoubtedly possible of realisation. If we tend to inherit in our own persons the result of the education and mental and moral culture of past generations, then we may venture to anticipate a future society which will not deteriorate, but which may continue to make progress, even though the struggle for existence be suspended, the population regulated exactly to the means of subsistence, and the antagonism between the individual and the social organism extinguished.”

What, then, does eugenics tell us about utopia, and utopia about eugenics? The utopian turn towards eugenics in the closing decades of the 19th century is hardly surprising. As Leonard Hobhouse noted in 1924, at the time of J.S. Mill racial character played little role in assessments of national behaviour and institutions, while "Since Mill's time the ascendancy of biological conceptions has transformed the situation and disposed people to think that, while other differences are superficial, it must be primarily race characters that are fundamental." Darwinism had created a new image of humanity's future as well as its past by elongating human time dramatically, and shifting debates about national character and its development to include the issue of species development or extinction. This was widely accepted as implying that human inequality was biologically rooted. As I have argued elsewhere, while the idea of national and class competition had long been parcel of social and political theory, the centrality of race which marks the emergence of Social Darwinism, especially in the 1870s and 1880s. By the 1890s, such conceptions had produced a nearly hysterical fear of 'Race Suicide' in both Europe and North America, and a hardening in attitudes towards non-'white' races in particular, who were starkly, but increasingly commonly told, in line with
the era's obsession with the dogmas of classical political economy, that they had "no right to be a savage; God made him and all men for advance; he must improve, or die out," such improvement being principally the inculcation of "habits of industry, subordination, regularity, and discipline." Yet the relationship between Darwinism, eugenics and utopia is a curiously little explored aspect of this remaking of the dominant ideals of British national character. 

Yet the relationship between Darwinism, eugenics and utopia is a curiously little explored aspect of this remaking of the dominant ideals of British national character. We should not, however, merely equate 'eugenics' with 'racism', for eugenics was not always racist as such, but focussed more often on issues of gender, class, and sometimes age. The eugenic turn in utopianism was concerned more with internal national breeding than with competition between races. Here we see that, while that fear of degeneration through luxury and the vices of great towns which utopias had often warned of had now become the subject of a national debate, utopianism in turn now renewed concerns with population control, the regulation of marriage, and of improvement in physical and mental health as well as the avoidance of degeneration of character, which had been constants in the genre from the ancient world onwards. 

Nor is eugenics as such somehow merely "right wing" or "reactionary"; as we have seen, socialists embraced eugenics ideas as readily—indeed if anything more readily—than extreme conservatives. It is of course tempting, in light of the Holocaust, to portray the embracing of eugenics as the single step which, as such, takes us from 'utopia' to 'dystopia', from the essentially beneficent, 'progressive' ethos of social planning to the nightmarish mechanisation of human production of Huxley's Brave New World. But this is a misreading for two reasons: firstly, because eugenics was widely associated with freedom of sexual choice for women, upon whom the burden of choosing an appropriate mate ultimately fell, and therefore (in Karl Pearson's applause for "free sexual union", for instance) and thus were often perceived as having a liberating rather than a regimenting aspect. Secondly, there were, in fact, many 'progressive' elements in the post-Darwinian debate which did not point to the Holocaust, but rather towards rational population control, the viability of voluntary, not
coerced, abortion and euthanasia, and the cybernetic reconstruction of diseased parts of the human anatomy, which we now term "genetic engineering". It is in this sense that the eugenic turn in utopianism of the late 19th century was simply in keeping with the prominent themes of the tradition as a whole. What was different, now, was that individual, social and national degeneracy were conceived less in terms of the destructive effects of luxury, effeminacy, and dissoluteness, in other words a decay of manners induced by the unleashing of the desire for pleasure which the market mechanism of commercial society had promoted unceasingly since the 18th-century. The crucial issue now was the physical transmission of desirable traits, and much less society's capacity to promote restraint, prudence, self-sacrifice and common identity over selfishness, greed, rapacity and individualism.
I have not commented extensively here upon European or other developments in the utopian tradition. The influence of foreign utopian works in Britain, with the exception of Bellamy, is in fact not strong. Writers like Kropotkin and Bakunin were translated in this period, as was Theodor Hertzka's *Freeland*. A Social Anticipation (1891), and Eugene Richter's satire, *Pictures of the Socialistic Future* (1893), which was translated by Henry Wright, the author of two tracts in this collection. Wright in his introduction incidentally offers a useful definition of the theoretical function of utopian writing: "Richter’s meritorious attempt to paint for us a picture of the Socialist future supplies an omission which the socialists do not attempt to repair, and his little book may arrest attention and suggest difficulties in quarters which cannot be reached by more weighty and philosophical criticism." Specifically, notes Wright, "We are weary of accounts of the equity and beneficence of the Socialist State, but complete silence is observed as to its darker possibilities and to the infraction of our liberties which it necessarily implies." (Wright, it might be noted, is also one of the few utopian writers of this period to have completed an autobiography (Anthony Trollope is another). Wright’s *Eighty-Six Years Young Confessions and Conclusions* (1938) contains useful comments on the publishing history and reception of both Mental Travels in Imagined Lands and Depopulation.

This collection continues my earlier selection, *Modern British Utopias 1700-1850* (8 vols, Pickering and Chatto, 1997), and makes the same assumptions about the breadth of the genre adopted there, notably that satires, anti-utopias, and positive images of an idealised society are all considered as contributing to utopian thought. But the latter, of course, does not always assume a literary form; indeed in this period it tends more to be found in practical programmes and proposals for dramatic social and political reform which assume a fundamental transformation in social relations by comparison with those then existing.


The classic contemporary study is Max Nordau. *Degeneration* (William Heinemann, 1913).

See e.g. John Francis Bray. A Voyage from Utopia (1842), in *Modern British Utopias*, vol. 349-486.


The Island of Anarchy* (1887). 


S.L.S. *The Great Bread Riots or What Came of Fair Trade* (1889).


While most accounts distinguish between these two main forms of eugenics, some authors discuss three forms, e.g., C.W. Saleeby, who analyses "Positive Eugenics, the encouragement of worthy parenthood; Negative Eugenics, the discouragement of unworthy parenthood; Preventive Eugenics,


19 C.P. Blacker. Eugenics. Galton and After (Gerald Duckworth, 1952): stresses that Galton uses 'racial' in the sense of 'inborn' or 'genetical'.


21 J.S. Mill. On Liberty (3rd edn., 1864), p. 194


28 There are useful comments on these developments in Richard A. Soloway. Demography and Degeneration. Eugenics and the Declining Birth Rate in Twentieth-Century Britain (Univ of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 18-55.

29 E.g., Laurence Smillie. Darwinism and Socialism (1906), pp. 5-6.


32 See e.g. Bernard Shaw. Everybody's Political What's What (2nd edn, 1945), ch. 10, "The State and the Children". Shaw elsewhere notes that "It is one of the troubles of our present civilization that the inferior stocks are outbreeding the superior ones. But the inferior stocks are really starved stocks, slum stocks, stocks not merely uncultivated but degraded by their wretched circumstances. By getting rid of poverty we should get rid of these circumstances and of the inferior stocks they produce; and it is not at all unlikely that in doing so we should get rid of the exaggerated fertility by which Nature tries to set off the terrible infant mortality among them." (The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism, 1928, p. 90, and generally pp. 53-7).


38 Walter Besant. The Inner House (1888), p. 28.


40 Below, vol. [ ], p. [ ].

41 Below, vol. [ ], p. [ ].

42 Below, vol. [ ], p. [ ].


46 See H.G Wells. First and Last Things (1917), An Englishman Looks at the World (1914).

47 Below, vol. [ ], p. [ ].

48 Below, vol. [ ], p. [ ].

49 Below, vol. [ ], p. [ ].


51 Below, vol. [ ], p. [ ].


"Scientific meliorism, however, does not imply anarchy or the absence of governing law. Its methods repudiate the laissez-faire principle in every department of life, for this reason: Our developed faculties and accumulated knowledge make untenable the negative or inert position. We are impelled in an epoch of conscious evolution to take positive action favourable to progress." (A Vision of the Future, 166)

It was commonly argued that only about two-fifth of those examined were fit to become soldiers; see, e.g., A. Watt Smyth, Physical Deterioration. Its Causes and the Cure (1904), p. 304.


Arnold White. Efficiency and Empire (1901), p. 117.

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