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# **Wayward Utopias: Time in Wilde and Goethe**

**A Thesis Submitted by  
Abdulkafi A. Moghrabi**

**to the  
Department of English and Comparative Literature  
Graduate Program**

**May 21, 2024**

**In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

**M.A. in English and Comparative Literature**

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**A Thesis Submitted by  
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**to the  
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**Has been approved by**

**William D. Melaney  
Professor  
Department of English and Comparative Literature  
The American University in Cairo**

---

**Martin Moraw  
Assistant Professor  
Department of English and Comparative Literature  
The American University in Cairo**

---

**Robert Switzer  
Associate Professor  
Department of Philosophy  
The American University in Cairo**

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**Graduate Program Director**

**Date**

**School Dean**

**Date**

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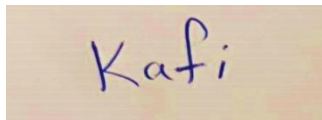
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## Declaration of Authorship

I, Kafi A. Moghrabi, declare that this thesis titled, “Wayward Utopias: Tme in Wilde and Goethe,” and the work presented in it are my own. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University.
- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated.
- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.
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Signed:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kafi".

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Date: May 21, 2024

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## Abstract

In this thesis, I study the dialectical relation between the Utopian imagination and a reality perceived in every way as antagonistic to hope. In the first chapter, I present Ernst Bloch's Utopian vision, as presented in *The Principle of Hope*, which offers an exposition of the author's Romantic Marxism. The second chapter engages Oscar Wilde's only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, demonstrating how a life devoted to self-gratification only results in the constant deferral of Utopian longing, and how, undone, Dorian's demise opens up Utopian possibilities as anticipated by Bloch himself. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's version of the Faust legend composes the substance of the third chapter, where Faust's paradoxical salvation is discussed in its full implications. Ernst Bloch will be cited to emphasize how Goethe's *Faust*, itself a source for all sources, provided the essential model for Bloch's philosophy of hope. The study closes in claiming that Bloch's ideas are not obsolete insofar as the clock is still ticking. Art will continue to figure as a way of reading the Utopian function of culture, even in times that no longer seem able to sustain Bloch's grand vision.

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## Chapter 1: Ernst Bloch's Dialectics of Hope

Cultural criticism comes in hand as we uphold the imagination and artistic illumination as instruments for transcending despair in the demise of the Left in the West and beyond. Ernst Bloch presents with a braver frame of mind his treatment of the problematic of a darkly despondent past and a foolishly cheerful today. His realistic concession that “what is radically intended by man is not delivered anywhere but not thwarted anywhere either” (Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, Volume I, 7) is all that is needed as we venture beyond the complacency that is characteristic of the present moment and of living in a one-dimensional, limiting global culture.

The recuperative restoration of a disparate and variegated cultural tradition, and the unambiguous embrace of Utopian longing as “the only honest state in all men” (*The Principle of Hope*, Volume I, 45) to which Bloch's heightened rhetoric recurrently invites us, is possible only under the rubric of an untraditional, even unpopular Marxism. Hence, what Bloch offers us is mystical and high-flown, incomparably erudite in its attention to aesthetics and to the recovery of a precarious totality in a cultural continuity unified around a Utopian pull towards a future that is entirely other than what prevailed in the present.

This restoration is made possible by an immense effort on the part of Bloch whose major work makes by no means smooth reading but poses considerable challenges in its intellectual scope and elevated ontological wisdom. What approximates a theoretical foreplay, so to speak, opens the encyclopedic *Hope the Principle*, and this in the way of a rehearsal of commonplace thrills and human joys. The daydream of the no longer alienated man, and the vision of a Being devoid of lack blink into the childhood of humanity and tremulously pulsate in the grumpy

resignation of old age, so much so that “[a]nti-capitalist longing” could be said to be “smouldering amongst the bourgeois” (PH, Volume I, 68).

We begin this bumpy and heavy ride of Bloch’s monumental text with a revised theory of drives, which is founded upon the basic drive, the hunger drive. The hunger drive issues forth in the subordinate drives of intending and striving, that is to say, in states of expectancy, in emotions of immediate hankering after that which the subject lacks, in feelings of urgency, in hopes of fulfillment in the urge toward the not-yet-disclosed future, towards the real future known only by the newness of its content (PH, Volume I, 73-77).

Bloch had seen fit to embark upon his philosophical voyage by offering his own version of the transcendental deduction of the categories, after the manner of classical German idealism. An elaborate account of the psychic force of Utopian anticipation, which, together with the transcendental deduction of anticipatory consciousness and the erection of the category of the real future, comprise the foundational Part Two of *The Principle of Hope*. First in a series of academic detours of the highest caliber into commentaries on psychoanalytic theses, the philosopher of the future makes it clear what he would be targeting, namely, the contemplative gaze arrested in a charmed survey of the past, the deity Mnemosyne whom he showers with the arrows of his apostacy. In thus foregrounding the dynamism of the Real future, Bloch assertively rejects the cultural and ontological malaise of static thought:

The previous lovers of wisdom, even the materialist ones, posited the Authentic as already ontically existing, in fact statistically closed: from the water of the simple Thales to the In-and-For-Itself of the absolute Hegel. Time and time again, it was ultimately the ceiling of Plato's anamnesis above dialectically open Eros which kept out, and in a contemplative, antiquarian fashion, closed off previous philosophy,



including Hegel, from the seriousness of the Front and the Novum (PH, Volume I, 17-18).

In thus isolating hope from remembering and remembering from hope, in making plain his intention to set the two at irreconcilable variance from the outset, Bloch could effect a comfortable transition to an inversion of classical psychology into forward-looking Eros (PH, I, 46-59). Moreover, in thus setting the Freudian unconscious on its feet, by turning away from the regressive night of childhood sexuality into the hypostasized unity of all drives in the hunger drive, consisting essentially of economic interest and of the ontological care of alienated selfhood, we sight (perched upon the philosophical edifice) the Utopian function of a future-oriented unconscious.

From the new psychology of the not-yet conscious knowledge of future possibility, there arises the ontology of ceaseless striving in the difficult earth, “an enlargement of our anticipations to include and find satisfaction in their own negations” (Jameson 137). From the phenomenological description of a selfhood experiencing the standstill of lack in a world obdurately resisting the realization of the subject, there shines hope—that is comprehended only in a dialectical relation to its absence, to an objectively-real possibility in history. History in this sense does not constantly negate that realization but allows for a real possibility that is chronically overlooked on the part of a not-yet-conscious human culture, blind to the tendency implied in the future tense to expand into unpredictable infinity. Thus, the neurotic of Freudian psychoanalysis has been transfigured, by means of an astonishing sleight of hand, into an ontologically active subjectivity tracing its steps to a liberated future in which time astonishingly moves on beyond the “as-yet-formlessness of the present” (Jameson 124) toward the utterly new, the heretofore not-lived realization of human victory over time.

Bloch’s alert philosophy does not spell out the content of this victory, nor does it prescribe the social mechanism for engineering its attainment. Only the intentionality is given,

the heady, intoxicating intentionality of an atheism founded upon the Marxian realization of classless man and of the humanization of nature. Aside from these pious references to the Marxian ground of hope, the comprehensive Utopian intentionality holds sway, disdaining to articulate Utopian ideas, always holding the unexpectedly new in higher regard. In this sense, Bloch draws the distinction between filled and hence empty, expectant and genuine emotions, between the recurrence of the same in such abstract emotions as greed, envy and admiration, and the anticipated irruption of the astonishingly new in the concrete moods of anxiety, fear and hope (PH, I, 114-130).

Having reached thus far under the aegis of the explanatory force of Bloch's disquisitions, we plunge into the immense core text of the Second Part of the encyclopedia, which offers the deduction of the categories of anticipatory consciousness (PH, I, 130-330). Thus a new sequence of categories is logically gathered, within which anticipatory consciousness of the not-yet-come future is said to function; and within that givenness, Utopian longing may be said to be provided a new lease of life at every moment it sees its ideal dignity violated. These categories are the Front, the Novum, Ultimum, and the processive Horizon in human time which finds its objective correlate in the deduced real possibility of tending forwards into an as-yet undisclosed infinity.

The Utopian dream could then conceivably be upheld as the most honest human intention in terms of an inclusive rather than limiting dialectic of hope, for beneath every iteration of Utopia in the cultural tradition, behind each expression of anxiety and fearful hopelessness there lurks the forward-longing dimension of human existence, and the correspondence to it of a world by no means carrying the irremediable germs of resistance to its passing into the process of becoming other than what it is for the first time.

The temporal substantiality accorded to the present moment as the original carrier of the Utopian pulse had, besides its intense pathos of lack, a basic ontological value that amounts to a liberal inclusion of disparate cultural varieties of the idea of Utopia. By dramatizing the Utopian pull convulsively wrenching the individual within the confines of the present state of alienated existence, a philosophy of life is erected which does not admit of class affiliation despite the Marxian pillars of the entire edifice. Hence the many and varied images of Utopia in the past of the collective human culture might be supposed to point beyond class ideology to the authentic human drive toward the fulfillment of the Utopian wish: “Thus beyond the end of class ideologies, for which it could only be mere decoration up till then, culture has no other loss than the business of decoration itself, of falsely concluding harmonization. Utopian function tears the concerns of human culture away from such an idle bed of mere contemplation: it thus opens up, on truly attained summits, the ideologically unobstructed view of the content of human hope” (PH, I, 158).

As the towering first volume of Bloch’s magnum opus draws to a close, we gather before us the theoretical positions thus established and could reasonably deduce the interpretive principle underlying the categories of the future-oriented consciousness explicated throughout the core passages of the Second Part of *Hope the Principle*. We may then be poised to sample through a historical review of the many lives of the idea of Utopia in the cultural tradition and in a henceforth secularized religious allegory. In thus successfully holding one’s own against the chronic resistance of Western thought to future-orientatedness (another exploitation of Freud, this time his far from failing theoretical armor), one finds oneself adopting the far from dispensable notion that by revisiting the contemplated past from within the angle of the present, and by glimpsing the augury of the future within both tenses, an authentically Utopian human

culture may be restored to its proper dimension. This dimension comprises the domain of the scholarly and ambitious Second Volume of *The Principle of Hope* that conveniently follows (PH, II, 451-900).

Having provided a brief intellectual report of Utopian ideas, we come full circle to the basic import of the opening remarks of this chapter, which was concerned with Bloch's integration of Utopian longing as "the only honest state in all men," a position that amounts to a liberal inclusion of almost all cultural phenomena under the category of anticipatory illumination of the not-yet-come. This is a primordial illumination which, announcing itself under the surface phenomena of potentially conservative, indifferent, perhaps even anti-revolutionary sentiments, highlights the continuing life of Utopian anticipation in human history. And all of this comes, let it be said, in conformity with the basic tendency in Bloch's thought to (1) resist abstract Utopia associated with the darkness of the present moment and alienated Being-here, in favor of concrete Utopia, the fulfilled future moment into which no man has ever been, in which man may be said to have lived for the first time, and (2) to wage battle on the grounds of culture, in order that reactionary gains could be wrested from the hard Right. The result of this effort would be to reorient culture towards the revelation of that symbol of concrete Utopia detectable only fleetingly in the grey monotony of workaday bourgeois existence, in the fantastically transient fulfilment of the daydream. In this sense, Bloch's peculiarity may be accounted for as a commendable effort on the part of a Marxist intellectual to confront nihilism on its own ground, to fight back, culturally as it were, fascist pessimism bordering on the barbaric.

Thus the Second Volume assumes its proper place in the history of critical theory, alongside the darker strains of Frankfurt school cultural criticism. A representative example of the entire concern of this volume is found in the far from surprising criticism of Plato's Utopia

(PH, Volume II, 484-88, 528-33). This preoccupation arises from the consequences of Plato's erection of a paradoxical Utopia that by no means needed an Aldous Huxley to expose its ironies. In Plato's abstract Utopia, the model of Aristocratic Sparta gallantly overcomes the dream of a freely socialized city, and the superfluity of art is emphasized, so that the content of the distorted dream, with its ideologically oppressive air, is intolerably intensified (PH, II, 485). But for the Marxist intellectual who would deign to detect even beneath the surface of bourgeois triviality a genuine Utopian yearning (PH, I, 356), Plato's Utopia of social order, no matter how problematic its content may be to a philosophy of the future, retains substantiality in its condition as a mere point of departure in the deduced progress of Utopian anticipation in history.

Since our experience of being in the world almost ineluctably corresponds to the regularity of disappointment—disappointment meeting every ambitious step—Bloch comprehensibly needed to account for the contradictory logic of a doctrine of hope at odds with the real world in which we dwell. In the first logical-deductive volume Bloch provides this important admission: “The essential content of hope is not hope, but since it does not allow precisely the latter to be wrecked, it is distanceless Being-Here, present tense” (PH, I, 315). This admission finds an even more resounding echo in the third volume with its emphasis on “guiding images of venturing beyond” in art, and with its valiant confrontation with death in content-based atheism characteristic of a solid Left revived ad infinitum thanks to Bloch's insights against the embittered present.

The inescapable encounter with death in a strict dialectic of hope commences with a rejection of the “obscurantist interest of the ruling classes and their spouting clergy in transcendental fraud” (PH, III, 1107). But as characteristic of Bloch's secularization and rehabilitation of the cultural tradition, the philosopher of hope would still perceive the legitimacy

of Utopian longing in the mystical past. Hence he characteristically digresses into commentaries on mythological overreaching beyond the nullity of death in ancient Egypt, classical Greece, and, for all their antagonism, Christianity and Islam; finally he concludes the sequence with the artistic genius enshrined in the memory of posterity, and the extra-territoriality to death promised in Marxism and the martyrdom of the militant socialist (PH, III, 1105-1182).

With an equally sublime rhetoric, Bloch minimizes the force of death's bite and reechoes his powerful passage, which descends from the lofty heights of the transcendental deduction in the first volume:

The open dimension is also in things, on their leading edge, where becoming is still possible. And urging not only has its outlet or its free space there, where it can still go, still choose, still depart, still take a new path, lay a new path. But apart from the path there is in the objectively Possible something which possibly corresponds to us, whereby the urging does not continue endlessly unsatisfied.

This corresponding something is not itself settled and guaranteed as such, it is not receptive, let alone a solution, but it is prepared for its Possible and is thus at least receptive as something prepared (PH, I, 288).

In the confrontation with death, Bloch stresses the incompleteness implied in the darkness of the lived moment as housing solace-content: "darkness and its core," that is, the latency of the authentic which is not essentially at odds with the tendency of the future tense, "may well have death as their neighbor but they cannot have death as their fate. Therefore the core of existing has not yet set off on the process and consequently is not affected by the transitoriness of the process."

Thus, it may be said, “the core of existing, as still unbecome, is always extra-territorial to becoming and passing.” And this to the extent that the dreamt defeat of death is transferred into the imagined future of a humanity actually living for the first time, a humanity which is other than the collectivity of subjects who had never really lived. Thus, looking forward to a future that is yet to be, Bloch can be sanguine about the concrete world entering into the dialectical process of mediation: “But if the core itself had entered into the process, then its self-objectification, finally its self-intensification and therefore its self-realization would no longer be one of process: with this resultant moment the realm of devouring Chronos would be completely at an end” (PH, III, 1181-82).

Since Bloch’s primary intention is to help humanity learn hope (PH, I, 3), the provision of examples whereby the didactic purpose is best facilitated is understandably necessary. By virtue of their being figurative representations of the processual nature of being, these examples, ranging from the daydream and the startling astonishment at the commonplace, to the verdant upland of artistic genius, remain instructive thanks to their nearness to the human heart, relative to the stifling abstraction of a mere metaphysics of time. *The Principle of Hope*, volume three, abounds in such figures, chief among which is “Guiding figures of venturing beyond the limit” (PH, III, 973-1056). It is here that Bloch resembles Lukacs of *The Theory of The Novel*, standing squarely in that generation of Utopian thinkers of the Weimar Republic. For here we notice the attention given to artistic form as the locus of the original Utopian pull. But rather than foregrounding memory as its proper domain (Lukacs, *Theory of The Novel*, 124-6), Bloch introduced the time of form, pulsating almost unobtrusively toward a completed entelechy of

being, of a mediated being in a still un-realized future, which, though not guaranteed, is not excluded either.

Bloch's philosophy is aware of its insufficiency without the explanatory power of art. We may be justified, therefore, in a transition by no means faithful to the chronology of the text, from the revelation of the life-content in death to the images essential for initiating an interpretive principle that is illuminated by art. If death is the force which makes our life's striving seem to border on the in-vain, on the meaninglessly absurd, art could be said to furnish meaning, when we are least expecting it, in the terminus of death. Thus, we embrace the "faraway and exalted hope" against foundered vaulting ambition, and experience pleasure as induced by the promise of rest imagined in a recently dug tomb in the sunlight, after the lifelong covetous overreaching of a *Respected Sir*.

Having thus foregrounded the priority of art for a fully elaborated philosophy of the future, a redirection of our gaze to concrete literary texts may be in order.



## Chapter Two: Utopia in Wilde's Novel; Time as Form

Having asserted the legitimacy of negative emotions, and having revealed positive content in the more bitter states of human experience that most invite despair, I try here to show the ways in which the form of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde's only novel, deconstructs the more conventional readings of the text. My critical purpose will be to explore the tendency of time to expand into an infinity, anticipating the possibility of Utopia. This chapter commences with an examination of how Wilde's abstract Utopian ideas acquired concreteness in his novel of the future. Concrete Utopia, as may be recollected from the previous chapter, is never itself a solution, as time never comes to rest in the content of such novels as a fulfilled moment that could be arrested for representing the striven-for Utopia. With the establishment of this complex interrelation between the novel and Wilde's abstract ideas, unfolding the basic consistency of Wilde's Utopian thought and inferring its value for future-oriented criticism, we then move on to the text itself. We thus come to examine in detail the presence of Utopia behind the veil of reality in the novel, and as we observe Dorian Gray sampling through small-scale joys and exquisite sensations in the time of form, we perceive beautiful symbolic meaning in the enigmatic What, or Where, of the novel's closure.

Our inference concerning the Utopian function of the novel is, principally, a consequence of a contemporaneous essay published in the same year the novel was revised, the essay where Wilde most memorably writes: "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing" (Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, 40). The Utopian ideas of Oscar Wilde, however, appear in conflict with the novel's plot. First and foremost, we need to approach the contrast between the abstract Utopian blueprint of Wilde's essay and the tragic events in the novel. The consequences

of such a perspective would be to establish that, although it had been present throughout the novel, Utopian longing never emerges in the symbolic vividness of its possible fulfillment until the very closure of the narrative. Moreover, while the sequence of satisfactions—in the sumptuousness and vileness of which Dorian had wallowed—were in some instances contrary to Utopia, uplifting Utopian content is implied in the very waywardness of its realization.

It is true that Wilde's abstract Utopia as spelt out in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* seemingly demonstrates signs of inconsistency with the novel's plot. Addressing this problem, however, will be deferred until we have come to realize the full significance of Wilde's experiment with the abstract freedom of the critical essays. As we hasten to understand the complex interrelation of Wilde's critical remarks and the concrete Utopianism of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, we will not be duped by the misleading semblance that the prefatory passage, which first meets the reader of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, not to mention the entire corpus of the critical essays, betrays the faithlessness to the spirit of *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*. For to dispel such semblance we need only remind ourselves that this novel is a specimen of concrete Utopia whose custodians "tend not to flesh out utopian visions in full but focus instead on objectives, strategy and obstacles" (Fritz 291).

Consequently, we ought not to allow ourselves to be disturbed by such abstract remarks as "Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt", "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book", "An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style" and "All art is quite useless" (*Picture of Dorian Gray*, 3-4). The very fascination of such a cultural aberrance, however, generated a considerable degree of disagreement among generations of critics that the artist might well be justified in feeling "in accord with himself" (4). Since that abstract aberrance was constantly mistaken for the callousness of the indifferent, for justifying

the destruction left in Dorian's wake, it is appropriate first of all to understand the complex relations among Wilde, his criticism and his critics. By so doing, we aim to emphasize a subtle correspondence between Wilde's novel and the abstractions of his philosophical speculation, arguing in favor of a future-oriented purpose to which Wilde had committed himself with soul and intellect. We may then shift our focus to the real events which make the Gothic novel Utopian within the terms of its obtrusively temporal form.

Even now it is possible to sustain the related judgment of a recent critic, who contended that "the way Wilde saw decadence as an avenue not to decay and degeneration—from some pre-established standard—but to growth, is a paradox that the arts and humanities have never fully faced" (Chadwick 50). But in contrast to the humanistic, free-floating psychologism of a cultural libertine, we set out from our solid philosophical approach enlightened by Bloch's hermeneutic of Utopia, an intervention fruitful only under the auspices of a socialist intellectual commitment to concrete, future-oriented criticism.

Does the Wilde of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* merely honor the decadent frivolity of an aestheticism implicated with the leisure of the upper classes who, in many cases, participated in the brutalities of the late 19th century? This question had been the Victorians' way of dispensing with the novel. For the critics who have escaped the temporal trammels of Victorian prudery, an indictment of Wilde for decadence has never been the trodden path of appraisal. What keeps them from this now-abandoned path is, however, the intention to ascribe to the artist a moral sanity—an aim made to clash with the wit of the author's critical essays and the content of his novel—leading to a failure to establish the import of Wilde's wisdom.

The semi-official critical resolution to exonerate Wilde led to the virtual neglect of his critical essays, to the overshadowing of what is beautiful by the ugliness against which Wilde

had warned the cultivated few. The misguided disregard of Wilde's significance for criticism took the shape of dismissing his witty pronouncements as consequence-free and superficial (Manganiello 28) and of holding up the allegedly lamented fact that Wilde's genius had been tainted by his gift for "mere words", a talent so enamored of refuting the anticipated, of disturbing the commonplace, a priori as it were (Oates 420).

The by no means counterintuitive reception of the novel over a century and a half of its canonical life, however, is far from refuted by Wilde in his stated fear of not being misunderstood, indirectly giving credence to his wit (Wilde, *The Critic as Artist*, 379). For had not the contemporary critical endeavor to restore Wilde's moral seriousness, though understandable, led for the most part to the revelation of the artist and the paradoxical concealment of the concrete Utopia of the artwork? Had it not led to the misunderstanding of Dorian Gray's occasional amusement at the disfigurement of his conscience or the indifferent shrug of the shoulder with which he forgets his victims?

The specter of that anamnesis that Bloch, the philosopher and hermeneut, sought to exorcise as the very negation of fundamental hope, is the progenitor of this misunderstanding. The tendency to absolve Wilde of moral indifference, to lament the loss of innocence in the novel, almost to wish, as it were, the novel had never been written, would have us retrace our steps to a blissful past, the first stir away from which proved fatal and is to be mourned. The sacrifice of an ethically sound soul after which Dorian pines (Manganiello 25-33), the corruption of the ideal of the artist which sets the sorry chain of events in motion (Baker Jr. 349-55), the evaporation of an original self, spoiled, though spoiled in a child-like way, a "good-natured, spontaneous, and generous" one, by the poison of a book or the diabolical power of a portrait (Oates 419-28), smack of the sinister anamnesis so vehemently deplored by Bloch, apparently so

utterly inimical to hope as it would arrest our contemplation and forcibly redirect it to the conservative past instead of the open-ended future.

Thus as we establish the significance of Wilde for future-oriented criticism, as we reveal the artwork as essentially tending to the wayward Utopia of a new future, we may be prepared to read the “self-reflexive complexity of Wilde's undertaking” in the novel (Fritz 287). What is implied is the willingness on the part of Wilde the essayist and the novelist to reflect on his abstract vision of freedom by transferring it to the most concrete locus of its enactment, human society. His celebration of individualism and its value for enriching one's personality in realizing true perfection (*Soul of Man* 28-30), his paradox of sinning without sinning, of doing what one wishes without hurting the soul, and wishing for nothing that could do it harm (*Critic as Artist* 437), met with absolute failure in the novel. For although Wilde had been laudably serious when he tested the viability of his abstract Utopian ideas of the critical essays, they could hardly survive the friction with society. This failure of Wilde's abstract Utopianism by no means makes it less Utopian, but could rather suggest the suitability of such abstract ideas as material for concrete Utopian anticipation, for a Utopian striving that is only fulfilled symbolically.

Thus we bow in deference to the cultural aberrance of an artist who rejects the arbitrarily imposed norms of artistic decorum, or insists on adopting an abstract or clandestine mode of resistance against the dictates of an overbearing culture. Hence we understand that Dorian Gray could not have escaped the dangers of a troubled soul, nor could he perfect himself through rebellion, as private property had stood in the way of his unity with a Utopian future in which peace alone reigns (*Soul of Man* 21-22). Dorian's soul was deeply wounded, and this certainly is not meant to be a matter for jest. We therefore reach the conclusion that Wilde's criticism is not callous but rather legitimate, that it could equally serve a Utopian function in anticipation of the

fulfilled moment which no one has ever lived, of the Utopia of the future in which no one has ever been, and which for this reason could be given only fleetingly in the distance of its possibility.

Without foregoing the attribution of a basic consistency to Wilde's confluent oeuvre, and with a pronounced resolve to reckon with the problem of resistance to a future become Utopia, we may be poised to approach the task of uncovering the Utopian time of the novel's form. Commentators who fail to appreciate that the novel is Utopian despite any semblance to the contrary never realize that Wilde had examined therein the conditions of the possibility of the enactment of his abstract ideas, without victimizing others or denying their equal rights to emancipated existence. If the artist eventually found the ripeness of the future for their enactment obscured still by the not-yet-lifted haze of the present, this is no occasion for despair, for Wilde's genius had astonished many with its masterfully wrought model of concrete Utopia.

If we persist in holding up the Utopian potential of the novel, we come to realize the significance of a statement Wilde smuggles into the mouth of Mr. Erskine, a man of considerable culture, who fell into the habit of silence at the age of thirty because he had said everything that needs be said. Erskine contends that "the way of paradox is the way of truth. To test Reality we must see it on the tight-rope" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 41). Significantly, Erskine had spoken doubtless to deliver the main import of the novel. His remark suggests that the story is meant to transfigure the abstract vision of freedom, which would only make a paradoxical Utopia of the tale into a far richer, far more colorful experience of concrete Utopia, opening into a multitude of future horizons. Thus for those who recognize the Utopian function in the novel's deference to the Shakespearean "Ripeness is All," the incommensurability of the real world to the loftiness of Wilde's objectives is merely an obstacle that could be overcome in the symbolic givenness of an

undisclosed future. Hence, we may be prepared to encounter the first object on which is inscribed the protagonist's Utopian wish, which happens to be the focal point of the Gothic text, the portrait of Dorian Gray.

In the oppressive stillness of Basil Hallward's studio, animated only by the monotonous murmur of bees and the penetrating sensuousness of floral fragrance, where "[t]he dim roar of London" sounds "like the bourdon note of a distant organ" (*Dorian* 5), the half-Romantic recasts Faust's dismal pact in the sumptuous ambience of Victorian affluence. When Lord Henry starts his experiment with Dorian, their rapport could but reinforce, rather than compromise Dorian's original selfhood. That selfhood, let it be said, is from the first moment of its appearance petulant and hence yearning, discontented and thus striving (18). Our inference is further supported by the hero's inkling that Lord Henry's words "seemed to have come really from himself" (21).

In appreciating the fateful encounter with the portrait, readers for the most part fail to notice that the portrait could be painted at its finest thanks to Lord Henry's share in its genesis. For had not the hero been made conscious of the anxiety and fear stirring inconspicuously within him by the neutral influence of Lord Henry? Henry Wotton's reminder of the brevity of youth, as the portrait is about to assume its final perfection (20-21), draws its force from the fact that fear of a wasted life, of a youth not lived to the full, has seared many a brain, that Dorian cannot be simply thought to have slid down the path of sin under the sinister influence of a demonic nobleman. This influence, perceived since Goethe as neutral, had merely tempted Dorian to inscribe the first Utopian wish on the first object that met his gaze, and it is among the propitious ironies of the novel that this first object happened to be the portrait itself: "How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. It will never be older than this particular day of June . . . . If

it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that I would give everything!” (27-8).

The hero’s fear that “[e]very moment that passes takes something from me, and gives something to it. Oh, if it were only the other way! If the picture could change, and I could be always what I am now” (28), had not merely resulted in the transposition of flesh into spirit, giving a semblance of purity to that which is inwardly rotten, but it may be said that Wilde’s Utopian consciousness had thereby haunted the portrait, implying its permanent vigilance within the very sordidness of its corruption by the disturbing content of the novel. What is meant is precisely that Dorian’s narcissistic envy of his picture had a twofold consequence, namely, that the hero is set on his path of concrete Utopian striving, while abstract art registers the distance, as opposed to the nearness, of a future moment in which reality is commensurate with humanity’s original Utopian longing. If the painting had not pulled Dorian’s Utopian longing out of its languor, therefore, the relentless Faustian striving toward a future that has not yet come to be would not have been the characteristic feature of the novel’s form.

Having gone out into the world of infinite experiences, his striving facilitated by his great wealth, Dorian’s original search for the genuine moment carries with a provisional devotion to the beauty of art. His dubious emotion notwithstanding, the greater sum of Dorian’s interest in Sibyl Vane is concentrated on his appreciation of her flair for acting, which becomes the next worldly object on whom is left the trace of the protagonist’s Utopian longing ( 55). He found his “divinity” amid the lurid costumes and the tawdry setup of the Jew’s third-rate theater merely because she is an artist of incomparable skill. She can easily spiritualize the “common, rough people, with their coarse faces and brutal gestures” when she is on the stage, to the extent that she extends the appreciation of art to the uncultured who seem to be “of the same flesh and



blood as oneself" (79). When Dorian intrudes on the actress' life and makes her suddenly alive to the ugliness of her surroundings and the artificiality of her existence, she is to lose the only asset which fascinated Dorian, her talent.

When Dorian cruelly rejects the girl's genuine affection (84-5), his soul, transferred into the portrait and therein mirrored as a wakeful conscience, begins a life of its own, and registers the first sign of corruption, with "the touch of cruelty" round the mouth (87). Dorian's picture is a just mirror, and despite Dorian's sly egotism, he would come to realize that he had been cruel to the girl and remembered with what "callousness" he watched her prostrate on the floor to be left there like a trampled rose (88-9). With the beautiful marred face standing there like a judge, there is the possibility of submitting to the fairness of its judgment. That judgment, however, drives the novel to its Utopian close, if only because Dorian will not give up the "passions for impossible things" stirred within him by Lord Henry, the champion of folly.

Dorian Gray thus moves on to a new experience within the inadequacy of the present when he indulges in "the luxury of self-reproach" (94). He covers page after page with "wild words of sorrow, and wilder words of pain" in a letter of profuse apology to the deceased girl (94). What is left from the debris of that short-lived acquaintance, however, is but "the luxury of a regret" (21). When Lord Henry visits Dorian on the evening of Sibyl's suicide, he consoles him by praising the beauty of her death. But the aristocrat, for all of his originality, had merely derived that thought from Dorian Gray, who expressed it thus: "It seems to me to be simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play. It has all the terrible beauty of a Greek tragedy, a tragedy in which I took a great part, but by which I have not been wounded" (98). With a wounded soul, however, Dorian Gray would move on, sampling through an almost infinite

sequence of small-scale joys, both noble and vile, which, like a cigarette, are “exquisite, and leave one unsatisfied” (77).

Having hidden his soul away from the prying eyes of men, in the locked room of his lonely boyhood (118), Dorian would try to purchase forgetfulness of that fatal portrait that is eaten away by a cruel decay of sin, care and age. He induces in himself that forgetfulness by striving ahead on a path laid out to him by his alienated selfhood. He would for some time revel in his publicly avowed authority in matters of fine and fashionable attire (123-26). His restless fascination with catholic mysticism and the material pomp of the church would lose its luster with a passing fancy for perfumes and the dreamy attempt to arrive at their correspondence to human passions and the moods of the intellect (129). Having wearied of what stirred the sense of smell, he grew wild with the misshapen sounds of “barbaric” music and the monstrosity of art created by dead nations whose disfigured aesthetic could not survive the encounter with Western civilizations (129-30). From the awakened curiosity in jewels and the mythology of precious stones to the elaborate embroideries and rich textiles of the past, all had about them the fascination of “absorption in mere existence” (135), of the forgetfulness of the original Utopian wish that is constantly being deferred (130-34).

As his path stretches endlessly before him, Dorian seems never to be conscious of what he truly longs for. Every relished pleasure branches out into yet another demand for that which is charmingly outlandish, to condense into a persistent pining for that which could be new for the first time. A revived hedonism constantly lures Dorian’s attention to temporal ecstasies, while art softly seduces him with tantalizing coquetry, gesturing to the “unguaranteed” release of secrets. While Dorian’s feeling for the sublimity of art initially distances him from the ugliness of the Jew’s theatre and the crassness of its audience, his hedonistic devotion ultimately leads him to a

“vulgar profligacy that dulls the senses” (126). The consequences are that beauty loses its charm for Dorian, and he suddenly becomes invested in ugliness and gives himself over to wasteful sensuousness and extravagant vileness. Even if he could cling to respectable society tooth and nail, that fashionable macrocosm had clearly become intolerably dull for him. Hence, he would strive to forget that “innocent blood had been spilt” in that unpleasant and sordid den of horror (176-183).

What Dorian Gray’s soul is really hankering after is a Utopian eternity, a wish “that our eyelids might open some morning upon a world that had been refashioned anew in the darkness, a world in which things would have fresh shapes and colours, and be changed, or have other secrets, a world in which the past would have little or no place” (127). But, regrettably, the tragic irony is that the genuine wish of the foppish Faust is always being deferred by an excessive passion for overstepping boundaries which “dominates a nature that every fibre of the body, as every cell of the brain, seems to be instinct with fearful impulses” (181). If all epochs of man had never given satisfaction to humanity, a rebellious hedonism which tyrannizes over the peaceful beauty of an artistic dream could only leave us pining with perpetual want. For pleasure, if only conceitedly conceded by Dorian, is never synonymous with happiness (189).

But art, evoked as a painting made possible as a result of the attained level of sensuous approximation of truth, suffers degradation, continues to bear the forlorn burden of degeneration. As the other side of Dorian’s life, more real than life itself, it is a just mirror, and it grudges peace to those who laugh by making others weep. To the protagonist hunted by James Vane, the specter of his impending ruin, “life is chaos, but there was something terribly logical in the imagination. It was the imagination that set remorse to dog the feet of sin. It was the imagination that made each crime bear its misshapen brood” (191). Dorian sees “the common world of fact”

where “the wicked were not punished, nor the good rewarded. Success was given to the strong, failure thrust upon the weak” (191), but the horror of art within art, condemns and saves Dorian when, unhinged, he commits his last crime.

The last pages of the novel reflect the emancipation of culture, which has been brutalized and corrupted until then, in the languid movement of its form. While his final astonishment would rest on the graceful movement of a hare (194), Dorian is exhausted by having had too much of everything, with happiness never realized for him. He could bear not to enjoy a beautiful girl that lacked the talent but only possessed the charm of Sibyl Vane’s pure face. Even Lord Henry would fade, he would sacrifice epigrams at the altar of a newfound sincerity. He would speak of his sorrows and grow melancholy over his wasted life. With reversed roles, he who had a musical voice would fall under the strange influence of Dorian’s art, and would be overwhelmed by a profound longing such as Dorian felt in the novel’s opening. He would beg a dejected Dorian to play a nocturne that seemed to attain perfection as if it prefigured the Romantic end of the player’s life (206-7).

But what had become of the painting? The portrait, with a hardened recalcitrance, and in spite of Dorian’s new sensation of self-denial, now shows cunning as it peers with the lecherous eyes of the disfigured thing, and “the scarlet dew” of newly spilt blood stains the other hand which did not hold the knife that slew the artist (211). If it registered Dorian’s responsibility for either the suicide of Alan Campbell or what very likely was the tragic death of a village girl is an extrinsic matter. The fact of the matter is rather that Dorian loses his wits and slashes the portrait. His servants would discover what would for London’s fashionable society be merely an amusing topic after long tedium:

When they entered, they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was. (213).

After outwardly pathless striving, all that is left is Basil Hallward's portrait, restored to its past retirement, and holding up the pure, untarnished truth that only the cultivated could see. This truth is but a distant, undefined Utopia, given only as a symbol, the figure of a classless society in which a middle ground could be reached, and one "could cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul" (176).

One can only hope, moving beyond so much anxiety that this Gothic nightmare provokes, that in such a society, the rich son of the penniless subaltern and the penniless son of the rich father would be brothers, simply because such classifications have lost their meaning. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* envisaged peace as the perfect state of man under a liberated socialist future. It conceived of no dividing lines between human beings in appreciating art and its Utopian beauty. Oscar Wilde's Utopian dream had sustained the narrative to its auspicious denouement, and the fact that he closes his novel with the poor being the first to contemplate art, from whom it had always been withheld, suggests that he remained faithful to Utopia.

If the dominant critical attitude has put this work of art to such a pitiable use, damning its Preface and its material together as callous and improper, and obscuring its futuristic gesture, this should doubtless be the consequence of a deplorable political, economic and cultural system that chooses to resist the Utopian vision of major artistic luminaries. What had been said about the novel may be said about its literary ancestor, Goethe's *Faust*.

### Chapter 3: Utopia without Foppery: Goethe's Allegory of Becoming

Both Goethe and Wilde produced literary masterpieces that share more than thematic resemblances. Beyond their mutual tapping into the rich resource of Gothic art, Wilde's novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Goethe's poem, *Faust I/II*, are related in both form and content. Both texts dramatize the unending, difficult and breathless striving of their respective protagonists for the ideality of a distant truth to which they never but symbolically attain. Both artworks represent the immense distance that engenders revealing disparities between the content of a sordid realism and the symbolically given arrival at a genuine moment of human fulfillment. Such is the moment, though still not experientially felt, for which our protagonists pine. Finally, the two texts uplift the despondent self by demonstrating how, through the voyage in the eventful yet empty span of time, human guilt and sin, perceived as transitory, need not always be at stubborn variance with the happy arrival in the marvelous, in first landing upon a transfigured earth.

Goethe's dramatic poem, canonized by its determination to engage in the ageless argument of whether our will is adequate to meet a radically new future, is a far cry from Thomas Mann's despondent novel, *Doctor Faustus*. Against Heidegger's anamnestic deference to the past, Goethe saves his Promethean hero in the very act of distorting his salvation in frenzied irony. Erich Heller was among those critics who opined that, had it not been for the grace of an afterthought, or "for the Promethean youth who designed the plot of *Faust*, Goethe, in his old age, might well have damned his black magician" (Heller 17). These critics, for all their darker convictions, must but concede that Faust himself was actually begrudged a positive fulfillment in the very perverse intention to delay his redemption, which is ample evidence that Goethe was no facile optimist. Be that as it may, left with the consolation only of the belated

Kantian intuition that nature might be said to have as its telos, if any, a benign disinclination to scheme our ruin, we might be poised to read in the very negativity of the delayed realization of Utopia the possibility of its Realization in an open-ended future.

In the first volume of *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch remarks:

That which in itself and immediately proceeds as Now is thus still empty. The  
That in the Now is hollow, is only undefined to begin with, a fermenting Not. The  
Not with which everything starts up and begins, around which every Something is  
still built. The Not is not there, but because it is thus the Not of a There, it is not  
simply Not, but at the same time the Not-There. As such the Not cannot bear the  
presence of itself, is instead related in a drivingway to the There of a Something.  
The Not is lack of Something and also escape from this lack; thus it is a driving  
towards what is missing (PH, I, 306).

If Goethe may be supposed to have grudged his wearied protagonist rest after much blind but tantalized groping, this artistic choice should not be read along the lines suggested by Erich Heller and like-minded critics. For they would have us in thrall to a past and an insufficient present beneath the heavy weight under which we groan. By such a crooked invocation of the primordial darkness of time, they seek to lend a justification to future-oriented despair, an emotion which, according to Jameson, is coterminous with hope in its partaking of an active tendency (Jameson 133). Goethe's poem achieves rather the opposite—the descent of Faust to the forbidding realm of the Mothers; the progress of civilization through the course of which the devil acquires a charming character and proves to be presentable, even likeable as company; the evocation of the disparate epochs of poetry and of the incomprehensible chaos of time with which philosophy and poetry had always struggled to come to a perceptive relationship. The poet

had merely returned to the past to confer a sense of direction upon it, to hint at the There that may be said to inhere within the first Not of existence itself.

To glimpse into the apparition of this possible There unfolds the allegory of Faust, with the protagonist striving onwards, persevering in lack and flight from lack, in pursuit of an elusive verity which lends purpose to his existence because it mirrors this existence. The ontological question of what was, of what is, and what could be informs the time of the poem's form, and the dream of answering the riddle may be as distant as the hypothetical quasi-star, or as close as the presumably sweet bosom of a winsome lover in a mild suburban evening. In a Marxist-Romantic reading of this poem, it is the allegory of becoming in a dialectical phenomenology—facilitated by the imagery of poetry—that we seek to fathom. Hence, a mystico-theological description, itself an attempt on the part of Goethe to illustrate the enigma of the recalcitrant question (Goethe, *Truth and Poetry*, 575-78), would be swallowed up by the impenetrable incomprehensibility of existence, so that it is only in the forward-oriented tendency of life that the still not determined horizon of the future may unfold either the positive content of Utopia, or the negative Nihil of a cosmic apocalypse. With this possibility of redemption towards a future stretching incomplete before us, we encounter Faust as he is prompted to embark on his long journey by mere astonishment at the terrible power of the demonic.

Faust, in such a reading, becomes representative of a humanity that, according to the analogy drawn by a nineteenth-century commentator, “striving toward the infinite” is “continually losing itself in the finite” (Rosenkrantz 114). In the Prologue in heaven, the Lord boasts to the Spirit of Negation:

Zieh diesen Geist von seinem Urquell ab



Und fiihr ihn, kannst du ihn erfassen,  
Auf deinem Wege mit herab  
Und steh beschamst, wenn du bekennen musst:  
Ein guter Mensch, in seinem dunklen Drange,  
Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst.  
[Divert this spirit from his source,  
You know how to trap him, lead him,  
On your downward course,  
And when you must, then stand, amazed:  
A good man, in his darkest yearning,  
Is still aware of virtue's ways.]

(*Faust*, Part I, Kline trans, l. 324-29).

Faust, in the Night Scene, does not seem forgetful. He is merely torn between two disparate desires contending for fulfillment, as he would later confess before the city gates (1.1112-17). Having studied philosophy, medicine and jurisprudence, and having exacerbated his skepticism by tireless theological scholarship, the serious-minded Faust laments his failure to overreach himself and know with certainty the secret force which operates in the world, which moves everything and around which everything moves. Striving to achieve such ultimate knowledge and finding himself but the least foolish among the fools, Faust curses his past of tormenting self-denial (1.371-76). After a wishful apostrophe to the moon, he chooses to draw

on his knowledge of magic to venture into outer nature, away from his dismal study, which he curses thus: “Verfluchtes dumpfes Mauerloch” [This hollow, walled-in hole] (Kline trans, slightly modified, 1.399).

He invokes the timeless striver, Erdgeist, in the hope that this spirit might snatch him from his narrow den and eliminate the blind spot in his view of existence. But he would instead find that, contemplating not with a little *schadenfreude* his plight as a debased, enslaved, forlorn and contemptible being, the unapproachable spirit would reject Faust, would refuse to be outgoing with him. The core of existence, in its processive tendency and teleologically still unrevealed (1.501-09), by thus tragically rejecting the adolescent still within him, plunges Faust without hope into the darkness of the moment—which he cannot stand because he pines without the longed-for Object (Bloch, I, 306). Faust thus valiantly confronts his illusion and sees, through its clearing mist, the lack that he needs to escape:

Ich, Ebenbild der Gottheit, das sich schon  
Ganz nah gedünkt dem Spiegel ew'ger Wahrheit,  
Sein selbst genoss in Himmelsglanz und Klarheit  
Und abgestreift den Erdensohn  
[I, image of the Godhead, already one,  
Who thought the spirit of eternal truth so near,  
Enjoying the light, both heavenly and clear,  
Setting to one side the earthbound man]  
(*Faust*, Kline trans, 1.614-17).

He then resorts to the crystal vase which he fills with the most slumber-bestowing potion, the brown flood of his carefully concocted poison (1.686-703). It is not merely the necessity of plot which drew the dark jug from his mouth, but the reminiscence of a lost youth which, paradoxically, led to an adolescence of folly rather than to the collected maturity of a dignified old man. The rejection of the Earth Spirit rankles only within an infinite sequence of forlorn moments which will compel Faust to lead a processive existence as long as the clock is not ominously ticking. By striking us as the chronic discontent in the very first scene, by realizing that his wished-for Object may yet be seized, Faust reproduces history as he comes dangerously close to the spirit which he can comprehend—Mephistopheles.

Thus we would better not read Faust's rapprochement with Mephistopheles as "a renunciation of his earlier efforts to transcend the real world" (Brown 479) as an otherwise astute critic remarked, for Faust, through earthly striving, can depart from the vulgar world in which traces of bitterness are still felt and glimpse the longed-for distance that lies behind the magical mirrors of existence. Faust, by being prompted by the demonic to escape from the sluggish hope of the Wagners of this world, seems only incidentally in need of the tutelage of a diabolical Mephistopheles to soar upwards toward the Real Possible, in eternal evening, with the darkness of the night behind and the everlasting daylight ahead (1.1074-88). With the consolation that Faust could now live out all the joys and griefs of humanity in a lifetime, both acquaintances, subsumable under the order of universal striving—where negation is the prerequisite for creation—could become the medium through which the Nothing or the All may represent themselves in eternal contest for the final fate of the world.

In Night, and before rejoicing in the unsuspecting happiness of the people before the city gates, itself a figure of a perpetual festival in a Utopian future, Faust had abandoned his former

elitist, occult self (1.656-79). Having despaired of ever seizing the verities of existence for himself in the matter of an instant, he felt within himself an anxious calling to share the fate of the broader humanity from which his studies had estranged him (1.631;640-43). He thinks in his delirium that he would rather die than answer this calling, but his longing for the moment of seeing the purpose of time brings him closer to even a Wagner striving with his own mediocrity, since this would be the only available way, if ever, for him to realize his *Carpe Diem*.

Life tugs at Faust and gives him the chance to relive it so as to see beyond the shallowness and depth of life what he laments failing to see. Thus, again, Faust could become representative of the hero who, lacking an omniscient, well-disposed guide, can err through his very serious intention to better humanity (1.632-33). For an unorthodox and inclusive Marxism, Faust becomes a guiding figure of venturing beyond, a Promethean stature with whose wealthy experience not only the blessed boys of the heavenly realms are to be enlightened.

But how is life to be relived when it is already in ebb tide and all the gates would soon be closing? How could Faust's cognizance of the limitations of scholarship possibly be perceived as more than a forlorn wit on the stairs? Here comes the added significance of Mephistopheles' role in Goethe's catalogue of allegorical representations of the flow of time in the poem.

Mephistopheles is a spirit who Faust could comprehend and with whom he could converse with ease. He is closer to man and seems to voice the darker thoughts of humanity in its times of despair (1.280-92; 296-98), thoughts which for the most part cannot but make us press on undeterred. He is the spirit of the present instant and could only lend a key to the one who must descend to abysmal depths. But he also boasts a level of omniscience with respect to nature (1.2368-77) and whoever wrests from nature some of her secrets would become indispensable for being thus both natural and supernatural. Gothic art mobilizes him in order that Faust himself

could be mobilized. He sees through Faust's grumpy wish for withdrawal from the tavern, and a call on the witch is in order.

In the Witch's Kitchen, Faust glimpses behind the magical glass the deity Aphrodite, the apparition of that distant happy land beckoning to us, which we in our distance cannot as yet contemplate; which, for this reason, can only be represented symbolically. Mephistopheles, the incorrigible critic who had previously persuaded Faust that he would always be captive to the fitful sameness of the present (1.1776-84;1786-88;1806-09), insists that Faust's rekindled spirit must be reconciled with what satisfies the senses, for the fleeting apparitions of the *Carpe Diem* rather than the much-longed-for Object which nobody has ever seen and of which nobody has ever heard (1.2603-04). Faust, who had lamented the smug satisfactions of the human race with what amounted merely to a corruption of ideals (1.634-9), whose anxiety is so overwhelming that not even a single moment of his existence seemed to have allowed for his happiness (1.1544-71), had a commanding spirit which, in its very Mephistophelean malice, would seek expansion through drawing the finite experiences and eventual fate of humanity back into itself. It is in this way that Faust could see in the gathered maturity of his old age a premonition of what is still unbecome.

Whoever captures Faust's serious intent in every triviality he had to experience, despite the misery he left behind, of which but the memory of guilt remains, could be sanguine without being corrupt. The sexual, essentially the least governable impulse and the most capable of decaying into monotony, would precisely for these intrinsic reasons become the least imperfect medium through which the Real Utopian wish could represent itself to an astonished world: "Und hier mit heilig reinem Weben / Entwirkte sich das Götterbild!" [And here, in pure and holy form, A heavenly image was expressed!] (*Faust*, Kline trans, 1.2715-16).

However, alas, representations are never adequate; they fall short of fulfilling Faust's longing for his *Carpe Diem* simply because nearness to the Object delays the Realization implied in distance. Faust's lust for the delicious Margarete would soon be dampened, leaving a bourgeois tragedy in its wake. He would exert himself to feign interest in her, but she feels that his post-Walpurgis body is a disinterested, cold flesh (1.4493-95), and rightly so. It is regrettable that, when he strives in a world in which lack is the real devil, Faust "vor Schwindel nicht sicher" [is not free from dizziness] (*Faust*, Kline trans, 1.4434). Then again, is all the blame for Margarete's demise to be laid on Faust? Is it not rather—enlightened by Mephistopheles's caricature of the law—that the wisdom of yesterday often degenerates into the folly of today? Does it not ring true that to be a grandson is a curse? (1.1977).

There are, of course, multiple references that the drama of Faust would not be concluded with the doom hanging over Gretchen. The plot has ordained that into the poem is to flow the hot blood of young Goethe, the handsome poet who had broken many a heart. Into it would also stream the peevish and rather gloomy mood of his advanced age, invigorated only through striving (Heller 13). This on the formal level is doubtless visible, but in the content as well there are scattered intuitions that, for instance, one should not be too hasty to surge with the whirl of the macrocosm, where new riddles present themselves to those who have just solved the problem of their ancestry (1.4041-42).

*Faust*, Part II opens out into the broader world of dreams, magic, dangerous incantations, into dizzying phantasmagoria perversely presented so that readers, not merely the dramatis personae, are inclined to lose their way. We must, however, insist upon the seriousness of Goethe in *Faust*, Part II, for an artist who had been serious in youth cannot willfully jest in old age (Heller 14). What, then, is implied in Faust's Promethean foil to the normativity of the

microscopic Part I? Beyond the phantasmagoria of *Faust* II there sparks the seriousness of the Novum, where the future is in a perpetual forward-dawning (Bloch, I, 288). In spectral procession, we would be sufficiently enlightened by the poetic phenomenology of poetry. First, we read a caricature of imperial leisure within the brutalities of feudal politics, including the birth of paper money with all the local and international malaise that come with inflation. We then encounter the potential of the comical and mechanical Homunculus to impress the devil himself and make Mephistopheles learn in his own right, whose intellectual quickness is so overpowering that we should know better than trust the computerized efficiency of the modern age. There we are to be astonished by a scathing satire of the dwarfish man within the insignificance of an accident perceived as such from the temporal angle of the universe. The Second Part of *Faust* then dramatizes the intercourse of two disparate epochs of culture that fructify that which would quite filially surpass the parochiality and littleness of the moment embracing the shallow intensity of death rather than the profound exile of life (Grek 176). We prepare to leave this concentrated symbolism when illusions seem to spread far and wide, that kingdoms are saved and armies defeated by mere deception, to be yet again in the familiar world of *Faust*, Part I.

*Faust* II does not offer solutions, but opens onto further movement in time, necessitating a closure that needed to be guaranteed as days ran short for the poet. With the last opportunity to be friendly being lost on the sedate and elderly Faust, when his eagerness to colonize nature and subdue its wanton wildness must involve the sacrifice of human life, Faust loses his sight, providing a convenient occasion for the poem to close.

For only in a riot of irony could the Faustian striving come to a hasty close, as the allegory of demonic obsession consisted in Goethe's later works in "an often re-figured, indeed

paradoxical” form of representation (Bloch, III, 993). Faust, standing squarely between the miserable darkness of blindness and the flame-like flash of unmistakable inspiration, resembles the poet in his life-long career. While our own deeds would still delay our Utopian landing (1.632-33), satisfying the sighted, say, with the unbecoming cheerfulness of complacent liberalism, the blinded Faust is not so much deceived as inspired when he enjoys his highest moment (*Faust* II,11586). Throughout his voyage, Faust, in full mastery of his senses, was not to become complacent with any pleasure and suffering through which he sought to realize history in himself. I can perceive no reason to deny that, had he not been blinded, he would have striven forward, unsatisfied still for trees which could have provided a scaffolding with which to expand his range of vision, allowing him to view his life in its entirety (II,11240-50).

Throughout these final restless episodes, constituting the allegory of becoming through a reworked Faustian legend, that white and dark power perceived as the demonic pokes its head out of its most murky cave, poetry. The demonic, subsuming the ideologically available and creatively contrived representations of human history, becomes a latter-day muse which endows the poet with undreamt-of gifts that cancel out the fleeting concentration of history in the fascinating figure of authority in Hegelian phenomenology (Bloch, PH, III, 991). The inspired poet, prompted by neither understanding nor reason, thus haunted by his demon, seeks to exorcise himself through unconscious scribbling, and the resulting form is the emanation of mystery, or, as Bloch expressed it, “the self-manifesting quality which is sealed” (PH, III, 992). Art is hence productively anticipatory by means of ideologically available material through which sound “advancing announcements” in the object-world as a whole; where the work’s content and language reflect that fundamental interaction “between sealedness and Aurora rising”, between Utopian forward-dawning and mystery.



The form of a surrender to the lucid mystery of the demonic is thus still in a fermenting Not. It still is not meaningful, let alone accomplished in happy arrival, for the objective correlate of the demonic is still unobtrusively moving towards the There of an entelechy, and hence unspeakable peacefulness or absolute destruction lie beyond the scope of our vision. Faust's arrival could thus reasonably be deferred, for Goethe's is the realism not of the "reproduced surface" but "of the Real which in every one of its figures is the simile of an intensifying Being"; it allegorically falls back on the overarching allegory of becoming in the Objective world as a whole (PH, III, 992-3). Goethe's *Faust* is, insofar as it continues to inspire posterity, a source for all sources (Burke 397).

What is suggestively tempting Faust, beckoning to him, is the symbol of still undisclosed destiny, called the Eternal-Feminine, as it draws us on. It is the There of a something which hovers between the darkness of night and the broad daylight (II,12110-11). Faust in intending, and only belatedly conscious of what he truly pines for, may not always have been among the most moral, but has the history of humanity ever yielded more light?

## **Conclusion: A Postscript to a Philosophy of the Future**

The disjunction between hope and despair is the sum of the flagrant phenomena of reactionary politics masking as progressive. Increasingly in the contemporary period, the triumph of capitalism and the advertised end of history in Western societies and ultra-conservative Arab states appear to threaten dialectical history and concentrate the confusion of subjective, historical time in what amounts to an ultimate intended telos whereby late capitalism could be immune from negation. Our horizon of the future has become blocked, it would be tempting to say, by the supposedly sufficient knowledge of past and present. And this to the extent that epistemological, and not real, possibility (we should not at this stage meander into an exposition of the logical distinctions drawn here) may be the single category left for contemplation, which is thus essentially passive (Bloch, PH, I, 224-240).

The unsurprising admission that hope has always been thwarted is not oxymoronic, but hopelessness fails to meet the enigma of the question—Why does hope persist despite its starvation? A positive answer to this question comes from the early Jean-Paul Sartre, who posited the priority of ontological freedom over the limitations that are generally assumed to constitute the human condition. At a different moment in historical time, Ernst Bloch had quite ingeniously safeguarded against obsolescence by his insistence that the changeability of the world is not necessarily toward the possible best, that the world might as well degenerate into what is worse. However, the original Marxist intellectual continues to fascinate the many with the precision of his argumentation, circulating around the postulate that time is essentially Utopian, that experienced reality carries the germs of the Not-Yet-nameable becoming within its present insufficiency (Levey 11-2). Indeed, far from joining forces to the detriment of an open-ended future, the present signs of decay comprise the very material for hope.

Bloch's erection of a totality of cultural tradition in which the human intention to "walk upright" unobtrusively manifests its presence through Utopian pre-appearance in ideology, earns him that unerring intellectual dignity and enduring vitality that few thinkers enjoy in relation to newly-fashioned contemporaneity. His insights in relation to art, rather than his ideological critique of Western philosophy and world religions, provided the sustaining impetus for my labor as it sought to extract Utopian surplus-value from select literary texts. If stood on their feet, they can be shown to subvert, rather than reinforce, the dominant ideology, and the value which is the end product of an essentially deconstructive labor is the surplus-value of Utopia. For it is inherent in works of art that they do not readily lend themselves to the established order, and high literature prides itself on being beautiful and subtle, hence quite useless. In the case of rigidly argued philosophical systems, usefulness most readily betrays a narrower outlook and the substance of ideology is therein much more pronounced, as in Plato's and Thomas More's deference to conventional social schemes. Culture, however, remains by no means an all-pervading, invincible leviathan, but is straightforwardly negotiable and hence de-constructable (Williams 4).

However, whereas in philosophy the Utopian surplus-value is nothing but a spark on the road of Utopian anticipation, blinking at a merely formal level, the Utopian value of literature is richer, more radical and more poignant. Hence the ideological interest in incorporating high culture into the dominant order (Marcuse 63), in the effort to conquer unhappy consciousness and to suppress the sense of alienation and loneliness that emanates therefrom, which suggests itself nonetheless so powerfully to a reader condemned to life in an epoch of increasing social atomization and dismal individuality. Among the ironies of great literature is that the heroes are

not “religious, spiritual, or moral” and I would add, respectable and hence performative, but rather subversive and morally ambiguous (Marcuse 62).

Hence the thesis writer felt an irresistible urge to closely study Oscar Wilde’s novel, and to marry it to Goethe’s *Faust* for the unmistakable other dimension they reveal. Dorian Gray’s otherness comes to view when we adequately read his boredom—perceived as implicated in exploitation and oppression—as the complex dimension of Utopian longing in the text. There is certainly no such “Other” dimension as dangerous as the Utopian one for being overwhelmingly meaningful. Dorian Gray becomes not the tempted hero of an ambiguous Marlovian tragedy but his striving is not perceived as illegitimate or essentially evil. His otherness is revealed in the persistence of his boredom through the time of the novel’s form, in the fact that Dorian could only be satisfied in a classless society in which one’s conscience could be free from guilt, because one could simply sin without sinning. This other, meaningful dimension, for which ideology has no use, raises its head from the dusty corner of unintelligibility as the signature of Goethe’s peevish distrust of progress in all modern Faustian vocations, in spite of the insistence of a bourgeois sensibility that Faust’s enjoyment of the highest moment is a celebration of the imminent transition towards industrial capitalism.

Naguib Mahfouz’ literary genius registers this bitterly felt disenchantment, as it veers toward the novel of concrete Utopia in his advanced age. In his 1983 novel, *The Journey of Ibn Fatouma*, Mahfouz engages in a compelling retelling of Goethe’s *Faust*, which demonstrates as well that Mahfouz may have been familiar with Ernst Bloch. Qindil’s boyhood indulgence in the possibilities of fulfillment in the land of Gebel, like the impotent Faust’s devotion to scholastic study in search of truth, would equally be misdirected by a sexual displacement of the Utopian dream in the former’s hot-blooded manhood. But the impossible love for Halima, and precisely

the mesmerized captivity to Arousa, seem to encapsulate for Qindil his whole being in the image of a moment: in its center “there met the awakening of the past, the magic of the present, and the dream of the future” (Ibn Fatouma 27). And just as in every Faustian experiment, the moment of joy would give way to the broader temptations of the world, the Utopian protagonist is only at rest in unrest. Mahfouz’ distaste for Arab fascism and his disappointment with the ascendancy of Jihadist atavism here takes on a global dimension—from a caricature of the capitalist-Imperialist Halba in which the disparities between privileged and the deprived and the persistence of crime discourage a positive appraisal, to a critique of the land of Aman as the rather unfortunate case of communist failure to meet the capabilities of radical socialism—while Qindil pines for the land of perfection, for the real Utopia in which faces are no longer morose or temperaments cold, where it may triumphantly be said, “Patience in the face of the bitterness of misfortune is the door to the sweetness of intimate discourse” (98).

Is Perfection to be found in the land of Gebel? The traveler’s recurring question, for which there is clearly still no articulable answer, dogs the novel’s formal progress towards the beginning, which for this reason is not the end of the journey. Faust’s salvation is indulged in Mahfouz’ derivation of the symbolic significance of a distance so vast so as to obstruct our view of what awaits on the peak of that happy realm, which is not a cloud cuckoo land, although one might not say with certainty whether Qindil would be greeted by a customs officer welcoming the pilgrims to the land of perfection. Mahfouz, like Goethe and Wilde, is optimistic, not naively so, and in the distant mountains he does not hope to meet death, as in Hemingway, but a renewed calling to live, and the promise of fulfillment is given only symbolically and is never linguistically articulated.

Art illuminates the ontological value of hope. Even in Utopia, one would grow weary of a long Utopian life, and hope would be just as vital in Utopia as it is today. In a weary man's Utopia by Jorge Luis Borges, though communities have overthrown governments by not going to war with them, a fellow man's upright walk to meet rest in death is met with the observation that "There'll be more snow". The tall woman's cold utterance suggests that the story is yet another model of concrete Utopia in which all given abstractions are to give way to anticipation of further progress towards the Utopia of intimate discourse.

Art is thus the privileged locus of Utopian anticipation, precisely "because art drives its material to an end . . . and brings [it] to a stated resolution" (Zipes 32). But the studied specimens of high literature dramatize the end as being rather a beginning, insofar as the end unfolds suggestive meanings, inasmuch as literature realistically mirrors existence itself in Utopian tendency, as it corresponds to the suspicion that we are biologically living in a concretely Utopian time. Enlightened by the German socialist sage, we approvingly nod to the remark, "True genesis is not at the beginning but at the end" (PH, III, 1375). In prehistory, humanity cannot but hope, a fundamental feeling whose future-oriented content incorporates the positive and the negative aspects of our faults which are paradoxically called achievements. With a socialist theory married to grounded praxis, we cannot help hoping, we need to hope to realize a humane world in which everyone would be fulfilled in a transfigured earth.

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