"The Latter Part of the Commonwealth Forgets the Beginning:" Empire and Utopian Economics in Early-Modern New World Discourse

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> *Gonzalo. I'th'commonwealth I would by contraries / Execute all things. For no kind of traffic / Would I admit; no name of magistrate; / Letters should not be known; riches, poverty, / And use of service none; contract, succession, / Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none; / No use of metal, corn or wine, or oil; / No occupation; all men idle, all; / And women too, but innocent and pure; No sovereignty.*
> *Sebastian. Yet he would be king on't.*
> *Antonio. The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning.*
>
> *William Shakespeare,* The Tempest

> *Utopic practice [represents] the schematising activity of political and social imagination not yet having found its concept... It is a schema in search of a concept, a model without a structure.*
>
> *Louis Marin,* Utopics: Spatial Play

> *... a kind of thought without space... words and categories that lack all life and place, but are rooted in a ceremonial space, overburdened with complex figures, with tangled paths, strange places, secret passages, and unexpected communications.*
>
> *Michel Foucault,* The Order of Things

This essay concerns the shifting and evasive terrain extending between two kinds of utopian vision: a 'historical' one, emerging out of the literature of exploration and conquest of the Americas in the late 15th century, and a 'fictional' one, born in the publication of Sir Thomas More's foundational text *Utopia* in 1516. At the same time, the quotation marks bracketing the words

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historical and fictional are persistent, if awkward, reminders of the permeability and undecidability of the boundaries demarcating these two kinds of vision. To put it otherwise, early colonial history in the Americas was shaped through European topographies of ideal or marvellous polities (from Plato's *Republic* to St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* on the one hand, and from the fantastic Indies of Mandeville and Prester John to the 'Land of Cockaygne' and the lost garden of Eden on the other), just as the modern fictional tradition of utopia was indebted to the historical contingency of New World ventures.[1] Few things epitomize this interpenetration of the historical and the fictional in the early-modern construction of utopia as densely as the narrative premise of More's own "truly golden handbook." His narrator, Raphael Hythloday, discovers the happy island of Utopia when, after taking "service with Amerigo Vespucci," and accompanying him "on the last three of his four voyages, accounts of which are now common reading everywhere," he decides to travel beyond the furthest settlement "to towns and cities, and to commonwealths that were both populous and not badly governed" (*Utopia* 7).[2] The utopian narrative thus conceives itself as a parasite of sorts, one compelled to exploit Vespucci's literal, world-historical and textual 'vessel' in order to stake out its own (immaterial) territory and produce its own (paradoxical) reality effects. Introduced as a modern equivalent of Plato – the man who travels to learn – Hythloday enlists in the Spanish imperial venture yet makes no claims to conquest, extends no king's sovereignty, and brings back no valuable "signs" of what he discovered. He is, after all, an early representative of what Mary-Louise Pratt has termed the rhetoric of 'anti-conquest'[3] – a man in search not of wealth, imperial power and royal favour like his captain or Columbus himself, but of the elevated and dispassioned knowledge of "wise and sensible institutions" (*Utopia* 8).

It is worth pausing for a moment before this peculiar dialectic of Vespucci's and Hythloday's converging yet diverging trajectories, this strange give-and-take between the intentional and the accidental, the pragmatically purposeful and the innocently digressive, the domain of history and that of fiction. Putting it somewhat fancifully, early-modern utopian fiction is inaugurated through an act of departing *with* and departing *from* the narrative and ideological vehicle of Vespucci's conquering ship, which is its necessary but not adequate precondition. More's *Utopia* cannot mobilize imaginative energies except by appealing to the historical reality of New World colonization, and yet it cannot be properly conceptualised until this reality – which in the early sixteenth century still excludes English presence – is bracketed and reconstructed. To paraphrase Fredric Jameson, the existing "real" conditions of colonial history are therefore not passively "represented" by the utopian text but are "borne and vehiculated by the text itself, interiorised in its very fabric in order to provide the stuff and the raw material on which the textual operation must work" (Jameson 7). Being an exemplum of *second degree* fiction, *Utopia* is surrounded by the protective fold of playful speculation, a 'what if' which regulates and mediates the text's relations with the conditions of historical actuality, thus allowing it to contemplate

and narrativise actantial options which seem temporarily 'blocked' by historical conditions.[4]

By couching *Utopia's* analysis within the context of British imperial belatedness, Jeffrey Knapp has allowed us to historicize this peculiarly sophisticated bracketing and suspension of history:[5] one cannot ignore the fact that to Spain's confidently feudalist appropriation of America's disorienting newness, More's England has little to counterpose but the dissolution of its own feudal social structure and the absence of American imperial acquisitions. Knapp's historicism intuits that the gap separating *Utopia* from the 'raw material' of history and from the Spanish utopianism of 'marvellous possessions' may be more than the comforting distance separating humanism from the exercise of naked imperialist power. It could equally well be a response to England's failure to conceptualise a smooth and seamless transition from absolutist monarchy to overseas empire, and, at the same time, an anticipation of a nascent model of colonization: the latter is embodied in the Utopians' own notion of legitimate occupation of *vacuum domicilium*, a settler colonialism which defines itself in opposition to the Spanish model of mercantilist exploitation.[6]

Utopia may thus be understood as both a negative and a positive response to English historical belatedness. Negative, since while the texts of early Spanish travel and conquest persistently attempt to erase or minimize the conceptual and social distance separating Europe and America, feudal precedent and imperial venture,[7] *Utopia* is bound to highlight spatial, historical, and conceptual discontinuity by questioning the possibility of getting 'there' from 'here' (the route to the happy island remains emblematically obscure) and by accentuating the gaps separating text and map, real and ideal, signifier and signified.[8] The text's famously aporetic and inconclusive character – its emphasis on ambiguity, paradox, and disjunction – derives from, and gives figurative expression to, the conceptual ambivalence inherent in the *interregnum* between what is in early 16th-century England gradually becoming residual (feudalism, intra-continental expansion) and what has not yet become emergent (capitalism, overseas imperialism).[9] To borrow from Victor Turner's anthropological schema, More's text becomes the discursive embodiment of the sense of anxiety and suspension inherent in the liminal; it is Utopia in a very apt sense, for it occupies the nether (or neutral) zone of the interstice, the pure distance between discontinuous historical formations.

But liminality also implies a condition of openness, of possibility – to be left behind by history is also to imagine oneself unburdened from its restrictions. Jeffrey Knapp's grounding of the problem of British utopic production within the context of the uneven development of European imperialism leads us to a clearer understanding of the *productive* and *positive* character of *Utopia's* detachment from a historical reality which had certainly seemed to exclude England from its rapidly evolving course. Such a defeating and marginalizing history can provide productive impetus for the Utopian text only when it is made to 'stand on its head', when in other words, the insularity, 'otherworldliness,' and marginality of More's England are converted into *positive* qualities through their

displacement from the 'fortunate isles' of the North Atlantic to the happy island 'nowhere'.[10]

Both the symptom of a crumbling and exhausted feudal order and the unfinished anticipation of a new one, *Utopia* is compelled to simultaneously affirm and negate, constituting itself not in the representation of a static reality, but in a constant process of inversion and reformulation that underwrites its ideological homelessness. Its relationship, then, with the texts of New World discovery and conquest (and particularly with Vespucci's accounts of his four voyages and Peter Martyr's narrative of Columbus' voyages in the Caribbean) is neither analogical (as a naive reading of merely referential similarities would suggest) nor antithetical, but dialectical – and yet this dialectics is itself partial and incomplete. As Louis Marin's foundational theoretical work has shown, the utopian text as product[11] concerns not the resolution through praxis of structural and ideological contradictions (in our case those between feudalism and capitalism, authority and discovery, expansion and insularity, the residual and the emergent), but their purely formal and imaginary transcendence. More's utopic discourse can thus be said to occupy the historically and theoretically empty – or groundless – place of the resolution of a contradiction. As Marin adds, this resolution is the obverse of historical synthesis itself, since it precedes the fulfilment of objective conditions that alone allow true synthesis and enable the production of theoretical / critical knowledge of the past. Instead, *Utopia* represents the "simulacrum" of resolution, the "other," negative equivalent of synthesis which Marin calls the "neutral" (Marin 8).[12]

An early and relatively weak example of such a utopian dialectics occurs in Book I, shortly before the first description of Utopia. Rather than staging and then neutralizing English social contradictions (as the iconic figure of Utopia does), the representation of Polylerite society partially serves to disavow them. Though the example of the Polylerites is overtly used by Hythloday in a reformist critique of the wastefully brutal English penal system, it also works to assuage English anxieties by insisting that geopolitical isolation and lack of imperial activity are not incompatible with social contentment and economic welfare:[13]

> They are a sizable nation, not badly governed, free and subject only to their own laws.... Being contented with the products of their own land, which is by no means unfruitful, they have little to do with any other nation, nor are they much visited. According to their ancient customs, they do not try to enlarge their boundaries.... Thus they ... live in a comfortable rather than a glorious manner, more contented than ambitious or famous. Indeed, I think they are hardly known by name to anyone but their next-door neighbours (*Utopia* 18).

"In a comfortable rather than a glorious manner... more contented than ambitious or famous": nothing could be more removed from this quiet, mundane existence than the Spanish conquest's chivalric medievalism, its delight in the

extraordinary and the marvellous, its militaristic glorification of adventure. Ironically, of course, it was Spanish expansionism which had renewed, at least for early modern humanism, the interest in an idyllic life governed by need alone; the Spanish 'discovery' of America had suddenly transformed a homeless nostalgia for mankind's 'childhood' into synchronic geographical possibility. Nevertheless, I would suggest, the discourse that the Polylerite reference articulates – the disdain for military glory and adventure, the delight in a stable, autonomous economic life – is not entirely contained by contemporary ethnographic referents in the Caribbean. Rather, enhanced and elaborated in the second volume's description of Utopian society, this discourse remains a crucial component of the very different positions England and Spain occupy in the nexus historically formed by late feudalism, early capitalism, and colonialism. Mapping these positions requires turning our attention to Hythloday's critique of English late feudalism in Book I and his description of Utopian society in Book II of More's text.

Hythloday's famous critique of Henry VIII's England largely focuses on an ethical denunciation and rational demystification of aristocratic status and its dependence on ostentatiousness and waste. On the other hand, it also articulates an economic analysis of the consequences of massive land enclosures and the devastating effects of the new nobility's pursuit of money at the expense of corroding the agricultural base of the country and pauperising its peasants.[14] It is quickly obvious that the terms of the two critiques tend to slide into each other. The pride and ostentation of nobles and retainers, quintessential product of the feudal mind, finally 'decodes' feudal order and metamorphoses into a lust for money that acknowledges no moral limits; thoughtless waste is complemented by greedy accumulation or plain robbery; economic malfeasances derive from, and feed into, moral vices. Hythloday's critique, however, remains decidedly one-sided: it documents the destruction of the old much more concretely than it anatomises the birth of the new, and with good reason. The nobility's uncontainable pursuit of wealth lays the conditions of capital accumulation and general proletarianisation necessary for the emergence of capitalism (what Marx calls the stage of 'primitive accumulation'),[15] but it does not belong to the economic regime of capitalism proper. We may thus say that Hythloday conducts a critique of nascent capitalism only to the degree that he conducts a critique of declining feudalism, only, in other words, as long as capitalism appears in the guise of feudal corruption.[16]

The conjuncturally imposed absence of an understanding of capitalism as autonomous economic and ethical formation founded on a new, emerging class generates two rather paradoxical effects. On the one hand, neither the critique of late feudalism nor the utopian alternative to it are ever autonomous from a framework of ostensibly medieval ethical values – what in Jameson's words constitutes "the immemorial religious framework of the hierarchy of virtues and vices" (Jameson 15). Yet the gaps and inconsistencies which emerge within this framework allow the negative expression of precisely what escapes Hythloday's

conscious analysis: the hatching of an early bourgeois ideology 'in itself and for itself,' *irreducible* to the aristocracy-based process of 'primitive accumulation.'

One such gap becomes illustrated by the fact that the signifier of More's ideal English farmers, transcoded and led to flourish in the fertile ground of a communal and unfrivolous economy – Utopia – has no real referent in medieval history, however much this history's 'golden age' be removed from the horizon of its decadent present. Utopia's vigilant ascetics are not only independent of all feudal lords but also alien to peasant culture's economic logic (its seasonal cycles of fasting and feasting, work and idleness, scarcity and plenty, its irreducibly double expression in both Lent *and* Carnival). Nor are they, we would add, simple reproductions of the newly discovered American natives. The relative simplicity of Native American society, its ostensible indifference to material acquisitions and its lack of property relations were not enough to remove the objection that it also delighted in symbolic excess (most notably in ritual and ornamentation), or worse, in 'unnatural,' for ascetic standards, indulgences of the flesh. Caribbean nakedness could well move beyond the last threshold of ascetic simplicity and re-emerge as the spectre of 'natural' excess, imaging the native as the inverted, animalistic double of the European noble.

Utopian society is not therefore completely reducible to the nostalgia for an older and healthier feudalism or the desire to rediscover in the Caribbean a tribal embodiment of older wishful fantasies. What Richard Halpern has called the Utopian economy of the 'zero degree' is to a large degree anticipatory, since it outlines the ideological ground where the emergent European middle-class begins to shape its own consciousness:[17]

> the myth of rational or measured consumption is the most artificial of all – first elaborated by Hellenic philosophy but realized as a social practice only by bourgeois society under the influence of political economy... [Utopia] reforms the feudal petty producing class into the rational consumers of political economy. The myth of the neutral or healthy subject, containing its own self-limiting needs, is the dialectical counter-image of use value, an ideological construct needed to effect the tautological calibration of needs and goods under capitalism (Halpern 173).

If the Utopians' brand of economic rationality is to be seen as the expression of an ascetic ethos, it is an ethos quite unlike the 'epic/naive' Catholicism of a Columbus – who not only saw no discrepancy between relentless accumulation and religious duty, but believed that American gold could only enhance Catholicism's cosmic glory[18] – and surprisingly akin to the 'worldly asceticism' Max Weber has located in early Protestantism, though it seems to pervade the wider ideology of the early modern English bourgeoisie.

Indeed, the similarities between Utopian and early modern bourgeois asceticism do not stop at their common advocacy of a rational/utilitarian moral economy. They extend to their highly paradoxical attitudes towards the accumulation

and expenditure of worldly goods. Max Weber, for instance, notes that despite its condemnation of the pursuit of money and goods, 'worldly asceticism' stopped short of dismissing them altogether. Its "real moral objection [was] to the relaxation in the security of possession, the enjoyment of wealth with the consequence of idleness and the temptations of the flesh ... It is only because possession involves this danger of relaxation that it is objectionable at all" (Weber 1992: 157). But if wealth was acceptable only in the absence of pleasurable effects, it could neither be 'wasted' in the pursuit of bodily pleasure nor allowed to obstruct and divert the relentless activity of the rational individual. Once earned, money and goods had to be accumulated and simultaneously kept mobile in investments so as not to constitute a palpable source of temptation.[19]

The abolition of private property in Utopia restructures the problematic of accumulation and consumption within a collective framework – but with results no less paradoxical. The Utopians are governed by a moral economy of abstention, bodily discipline and unflinching regularity that seems entirely superfluous given the ostensible constancy and extent of the island's economic output; in turn, the island's plenty is rendered inexplicable given the limited (quantitatively and qualitatively) nature of Utopian production. To Hythloday's assumption that English society presents an essential continuity between ethical (vice) and economic (injustice), Utopia seems to juxtapose a radical discrepancy between the two. The island's happiness is made possible by the chasm dividing the moral ideology of asceticism and its delight in 'boundedness' from the economic reality of an inexhaustible market. Ultimately, of course, the Utopians' unrelenting frugality and self-discipline is not premised on the restriction of productive output or on the efficacy of a 'moral' disdain for wealth, but on the elimination of the fear of scarcity. The daily cornucopia of the market renders both accumulation and waste meaningless, since "by constantly offering itself up for limitless waste [the market] dwarfs any petty or individual gestures of ostentation or accumulation" (Halpern 169).

Perhaps no other element of Utopia's description foregrounds its ambivalence towards the possibility of purely rational consumption and its distance from a naively primitivistic understanding of economic relations than the passages concerning the Utopians' attitude towards gold. As with early bourgeois ideology, the origins of accumulation are attributed to the combination of frugality and productivity. Through the universalisation of labour and the elimination of wasteful idleness and ostentation the Utopians have not only virtually eliminated the need for imports but have also consistently managed to produce a surplus of commodities which they export:

> they order a seventh part of all these goods to be freely given to the poor of the countries to which they send them, and sell the rest at moderate prices. And by this exchange, they not only bring back those few things they need at home (for indeed they scarcely need anything but iron), but likewise a great deal of gold and silver; and by their driving this

> trade so long, it is not to be imagined how vast a treasure they have got among them (*Utopia* 49).

Like the 'worldly ascetics' of the early bourgeoisie, the Utopians are averse to hoarding, whether it expresses itself as a gluttonous desire to derive pleasure from the 'contemplation' of wealth, or as a miserly impulse to hide it away, thus paradoxically returning it to the earth whence it came. Thus the gold and other valuables amassed through payments on trade surplus are prevented from congealing into a hoard by being ushered in two directions: first, they are reinvested in bonds and loans with the entire foreign state held as guarantor and kept in that form until an urgent need arises. Secondly, they are converted into items which are intended to eliminate their high exchange value and restore them to their (limited) use value. Gold and silver are used to make "chamber-pots and close-stools" (thus being equated to waste, excrescence, and uselessness). They are also the materials used for the manufacture of the slaves' chains, fetters, and other "badges of infamy" (thus metaphorically embodying the enslavement of mankind to and by the commodity).[20] Finally, precious stones like pearls and diamonds are polished and given to children as "baubles" and toys (thus being coded as worthless trifles and synecdochically associated with the immaturity of childhood).

We may begin unpacking the extraordinary logic of this second and unusual mode of accumulation by remarking that it is presented by Hythloday himself as the embodiment of two contradictory and incompatible states of mind: first, as an impressive and eloquent example of the Utopians' innocent indifference to wealth which in turn springs from the absence of a notion of private property and of money in their society. The rhetoric employed here is quite similar to the one employed by the Spanish *conquistadors* in America, since it registers an outsider's astonishment at the marvellous 'innocence' of a people towards the nature of value. Secondly, the divestment of exchange value from these commodities is presented as a *conscious* ideological program adopted by Utopians themselves. The islanders endeavour "by all possible means to render gold and silver of no esteem" (51), since a *form* of accumulation (the amassing of gold in a tower, or its conversion into vessels and decorative items) which gave the slightest hint that these commodities possess any significant value would, Hythloday reports, quickly breed mistrust, envy, and greed in the virtuous polity.

It would not be mistaken to detect in these contradictory formulations the logic of the fetish itself, what Homi Bhabha has called "multiple and contradictory belief" (Bhabha 75). Surprisingly, the second formulation suggests that the Utopians believe themselves capable of a fetishism far surpassing that of the European mind, for in the absence of both private property and money the desire for and envy of gold becomes irrationally 'empty' and unmotivated.[21] Rather than being returned to its proper or 'natural' place as a mere metal with limited usefulness, gold is thus unwittingly invested with "an innate desirability that transcends all social contexts" (Halpern 146). Indeed, the prophylactic gesture of gold's formalistic defilement is an unmistakable invocation of the pre-

modern meaning of a fetish: an idol on which the ambivalent psychic dynamic of a community is projected in a fusion of reverence and animosity, worship and abuse.[22]

The supposedly prelapsarian innocence of Utopia is thus constructed through multiple relays of disavowal and 'bad faith': the inhabitants' apparent 'indifference' and contempt towards gold masks (and reveals) their fear of it; their irrational fear of it, in turn, masks (and reveals) their 'empty', unmotivated desire for it. It is the culmination of this series of paradoxes that the erasure of gold's exchange value can only be achieved through its use in 'degraded' objects which inadvertently reveal the Utopians' unconscious contempt for utility: chamber pots and chains are supposed to 'degrade' gold though they already have useful, utility-based functions, and though the Utopians' ostensible contempt for gold renders its debasement gratuitous. Chamber pots, toys and chains thus prove far more useful to the Utopians as tropological means of devaluation than as actual contraptions. But their tropological value – embodied in their function as metonymies, synecdoches and metaphors – is nothing else but exchange value, a value produced by the exchange of a literal signifier for a figurative one.

As subjects of the fetish – who, according to Octave Manoni's formula, "know very well but nevertheless believe..." – the Utopians must then perennially vacillate between the 'mature' knowledge that exchange value is artificially created by human folly and the 'primitive' belief that it remains somehow *intrinsic* to the commodity. One might trace this irreducible ambivalence to the impossibility of completely disengaging Utopia from the historical experience which imagines it. Exchange value cannot be merely 'thought away' without leaving invidious traces behind. Utopia, in turn, cannot erase its consciousness of being constructed from the outside. Its compulsion to symbolically encode its contempt for the alienating commodity, along with the desire for gold that this contempt keeps in containment, are equally unmotivated and 'empty' of immanent meaning because what makes them meaningful is not contained in Utopia but in Europe. If Utopia's inhabitants have "multiple and contradictory beliefs", if they re-establish the alienating character of the commodity fetish, it is because they always already view themselves and their society from the alienating position of European history. In short, their convictions lack the unsconsciousness and immanence of what Pierre Bourdieu has called "the primal state of innocence of *doxa*":

> Because the subjective necessity and self-evidence of the commonsense world are validated by the objective consensus on the sense of the world, what is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*... the play of mythico-ritual homologies constitutes *a perfectly closed world*... nothing is further from the correlative notion of the majority than the unanimity of a doxa, the aggregate of the 'choices' whose subject is everyone and no one because *the questions they answer cannot be explicitly asked.* The adherence expressed in the doxic relation to the social world... is unaware of

the very question of legitimacy, which arises from competition for legitimacy, and hence from conflict between groups claiming to possess it. (Bourdieu 167-168 – last two emphases added)

Being imaginary products of a heterodoxical moment – indeed, a moment born in the crisis of historical transition – the Utopians are compelled to break the illusion of doxic innocence by developing a self-consciousness which is in fact the consciousness of an/other (another economy, another history). In turn, their artificially constructed *doxa*, their pretense to a position completely ensconced in 'nature', in equilibrium and in utility will be transported back to English society as the polemical tool of a dissenting discourse aspiring to the position of hegemonic orthodoxy. This slippage from the 'internal' or 'immanent' (Utopian doxa) to the 'external' or alienating (late feudal / early-modern heterodoxy) is reduplicated in the logic dictating the actual use of the accumulated gold in cases of war. On the one hand, the hoarding of gold and silver in Utopia is made possible through its adoption of a self-disavowing form. The degraded chamber pots and shackles are Utopia's forms of shame-faced accumulation, its improbable banks. Yet, once a war has been declared, the precious metals are 'liberated' from their degraded form and used to pay foreign mercenaries, hire foreign assassins, and bribe foreign statesmen into treason:

> They promise immense rewards to anyone who will kill the enemy's king... The same reward, plus a guarantee of personal safety is offered to any one of the proscribed men who turns against his comrades... being well aware of the risks their agents must run, they make sure that the payments are in proportion to the peril; they thus not only offer, but actually deliver, enormous sums of gold (*Utopia* 73).

Like the morally refined and self-restrained bourgeois, the Utopians are averse to the 'glory' of fighting and prefer to engage in it by proxy, through paid and willing 'representatives.' This process, Hythloday remarks, though elsewhere "condemned as the cruel villainy of a degenerate mind", enables the virtuously pragmatic islanders "to win tremendous wars without fighting any actual battles" (73), thus avoiding massive bloodshed on both sides.[23] The Utopian response to the exchange value of the commodity is thus once again split in two distinct and mutually undermining positions: gold is worthless inside the Utopian community, but commands life and death outside it. The Utopians remain somehow 'innocent' and unaware of the corrupting influence of exchange value although they use it consciously and to their benefit outside the country's boundaries.

The ideologeme of a neat division of 'inside' and 'outside' consciousness is founded on the act of literally projecting the corrupting effects of exchange value (bribing, murder, treason, etc.) outside the bounds of the community. In being expended, gold and silver are ousted from the boundaries of the country

and used elsewhere, mobilizing the antisocial propensity of 'fallen' others to sacrifice even the most 'natural' affections – "kinship and comradeship alike" as Hythloday remarks – in the name of the commodity. Thus, expunging the accumulated money not only weakens the enemy's resistances, but removes the internal threat of temptation and dissent. It is as if gold and silver have been charged with all the repressed antisocial and destructive tendencies of the community and released outside it to wreak havoc unto the enemy. Financial expenditure figures as the release of harmful filth, a purifying rite that usefully benefits the body politic. The key to this transformational process is presented somewhat earlier, in the precociously anthropological description of Utopia's rituals of slaughter:

> There are also, without their towns, places appointed near some running water, for killing their beasts, and for washing away their filth; which is done by their slaves: for they suffer none of their citizens to kill their cattle, because they think that pity and good nature, which are among the best of those affections that are born with us, are much impaired by the butchering of animals: nor do they suffer anything that is foul or unclean to be brought within their towns, lest the air should be effected by ill smells which might prejudice their health (*Utopia* 46).

This rite of butchery outside the bounds of the city reappears in the form of the wars fought outside Utopia: both are conducted through proxy, protecting Utopian morality from the contaminating influence of violence. In turn, war always results in the re-accumulation of capital through the payment of compensations to the victorious Utopians. Money, then, comes full circle: it is accumulated, invested with repressed fear and desire, debased as useless, usefully expunged, and finally re-accumulated by a victorious and purified community. The symmetrical logic of signifying transformations within the triad formed by accumulation, slaughter rites and expenditure is represented in the graphs below (Figs. 1 and 2):

Clearly, the organizing logic of this system is a projective and prophylactic one: on the one hand, ideological clusters ***c*** and ***e*** register the multifold forms of uncleanliness (physical and hygienic in the case of chamber pots and slaughterhouse filth, moral in the case of animal slaughter, human assassination, political bribery and treason). On the other hand, clusters ***a***, ***b*** and ***f*** constitute the displacing, distancing and disavowing mechanism which protects the utopic community not only from physical invasion and moral degeneration but also from the very consciousness of the ethically compromising cost of such protection (the *Realpolitik* of immoral and insalubrious means). Finally, enslavement (cluster ***d***) – the becoming-commodity of the human subject itself – is simultaneously one of the effects of successful Utopian warfare (literally), the natural outgrowth of attachment to the commodity (figuratively), and a means of prophylaxis against both the temptation of violence (slaves and Zapolet mercenaries are used as

(1) Forms of accumulation →	(2) Ritual of animal slaughter →	(3) Expenditure of accumulated gold in war →
I. Bonds to *neighbouring* (a) countries *outside* (b) Utopia	I. Expulsion of acts of *slaughter* (e) *outside* (b1) city bounds	I. War is conducted *outside* (b2) the country and often on behalf of *neighbouring* (a2) countries.
II. Storage of accumulated goldin forms suggesting *unclean waste* (c) [chamber pots] and *enslavement* (d) [chains and fetters]	II. Expulsion of *unclean waste* (c1) III. Killings are performed by *slaves* (d1): *violence by proxy* (f)	II. Gold, formerly used for chamber pots [→ unclean waste] is expended [*wasted*] (c2) to pay for *unclean* (c2) *acts* [treason, bribery, assassination] committed by foreigners *outside* (b3) Utopia. III. Brutal mercenaries (Zapolets) are hired to perform the *slaughter* (e2) of enemies: *violence by proxy* (f1)
		IV. War results in *enslavement* (d2) of some enemies
		V. The conquered foreign country is forced to pay compensation for military expenses
		VI. Re-accumulation of gold and return to stage (1)

Figure 1. Signifying transformations within the triad formed by accumulation, slaughter rites and expenditure.

a. neighbours / neighbouring / allies / enemies
b. outside / expulsion / prophylaxis
c. uncleanliness / impurity / waste / expenditure (gold / excrement / offal)
d. enslavement (physical and moral)
e. slaughter / murder / unclean act
f. violence / unclean act performed through proxy (slaves / Zapolets / mercenaries / spies)

Figure 2. Basic Ideologeme Clusters in Figure 1.

Utopia's paid killers) and that of money (gold becomes repulsive by being used to make the chains of the former and to incite the latter to acts of brutality).

The circularity of this highly ritualistic process is what allows Utopia to temporarily ease the unbearable tensions formed between an ascetic ethic and the persistence of accumulation, between utility and exchange, between naive innocence and complicitous awareness. It is, in other words, what allows the text to anticipate the contradictory forces shaping early bourgeois consciousness, its struggles to define itself in opposition to the materialistic ostentation and hoarding of late feudalism, while suppressing the consciousness of its own accumulative tendencies. But unlike the bourgeoisie, which undergoes subsequent transformations along an irreversible trajectory, Utopia is locked in invariable repetition: the fetishism of its economic logic, product of its exterior determination by a culture in suspended transition, condemns it to a perennial vacillation between contradictory positions. Its ritual of transforming shame-faced accumulation into purifying expenditure runs in endless circles, guaranteeing – like all ritual – the repetition of cultural / economic logic, the maintenance of equilibrium against crisis and transformation. Here is a last, crowning paradox then: the anticipation and mobilization of ideological elements which are only beginning to transform the historical / economic order, but at the cost of encasing them in the frozen, ahistorical form of *doxa*; the premature birth of the new at the cost of bearing it stillborn.

The importance of Utopia's heightened ambivalence towards the accumulation of 'earthly treasures' and its hostility towards an ethic of ostentation, belligerent 'glory' and wasteful luxury is not, however, exhausted by the context of England's transition to early capitalism. The 'corrupt' late English feudalism to which More's book responds so critically was, after all, a rapidly declining opponent. Far more daunting and dangerous was the prospect of an entrenchment of the ideology and economics of Spanish theocratic absolutism through its successful transatlantic ventures. More's proficiency in European political affairs and his exposure to Columbus's and Vespucci's accounts suggest that the Utopians' concerted efforts to devalue material accumulation in general, and precious metals in particular, have a critical relevance to the practices of Spanish profiteering in the Americas. The expropriation and accumulation of large amounts of gold and silver was the primary focus of the Spanish crown from the start, and remained crucial to its economic mentality until the demise of the Spanish empire in the early nineteenth century. At the same time, it became the source of a reinforced military strength that dominated the Iberian peninsula, subdued the Netherlands and terrorized the rest of Europe for most of the sixteenth century.[24]

If the links drawn between the economics of Utopia and the ideology of an English proto-bourgeoisie hinge on a shared shame-faced and tortuous attitude towards accumulation and expenditure, the early texts of Spanish discovery attempt to construct the relationship between European and native around an often contradictory and unstable notion of exchange. The Caribbean and coas-

tal natives are seen as combining extraordinary generosity with complete indifference to acquisition and profit. Like More's Utopians, they lack private property and seem rather unmoved by the gold and other precious metals and stones which they possess in abundance. In their case, however, disinterest is not accompanied by a conscious program of debasement; in fact, the explorers' vigilant eyes frequently register and report the fact that some natives adorned their bodies with bits of gold, thus undercutting Spanish claims that native disinterest in precious metals was complete. In addition, the natives' lack of interest in gold and precious metals was not synonymous with stern asceticism; as Vespucci had put it in one of his letters, "their life is more Epicurean than Stoic or Academic" (Vespucci 42).

To their early European observers and exploiters, the MesoAmericans' approach to value seemed more than anything else *indifferent*, in the sense that it made no qualitative differentiations between objects; it lumped things together instead of hierarchizing them on a scale of *relative* equivalencies. In the beginning of his first letter to Spain, for instance, Columbus notes that "whether the thing be of value or whether it be of small price, at once with whatever trifle of whatever kind it may be that is given to them [the natives], with that they are content" (Columbus Vol. I, 8). Noting the same tendency, Vespucci had concluded that in the absence of interest in possession and profit, it was ornateness rather than monetary value which governed the Caribbean approach to exchange: "all their wealth consists of feathers, fishbones, and other similar things ... possessed not for wealth, but for ornament when they go to play games or make war" (Vespucci 43). Thus, large quantities of gold and pearls could be obtained for pieces of broken glass or scraps of metal in good conscience. The incommensurability of the two cultures' concepts of value allowed a complementarity, a perfect fit between useless waste and precious accumulation. In this colonial version of exchange-as-alchemy, it was precisely what was most useless and worthless to the Spanish that could 'marvellously' procure them with what was most coveted and precious.

The combination of 'neutral' ethnographic description and barely containable glee in the passages dealing with Spanish-native 'exchange' allows us to discern the formation of another system of "multiple and contradictory belief", based – as it is in *Utopia* – on the fusing together of two incompatible notions of value. On the one hand, the Spanish would have to defend what envious European eyes could decry as robbery by arguing for a notion of exchange whose equitability was based on mutual incommensurability: the natives were not cheated, because *in their own eyes* gold was worthless and the Spanish baubles constituted rare and exotic treasures. The man, for instance, who reportedly gave Vespucci 157 pearls in exchange for a bell, did not "[deem] this a poor sale, because the moment he had the bell he put it in his mouth and went off into the forest," ostensibly because "he feared" that Vespucci would change his mind about the transaction (Vespucci 43). At the same time, it was inevitable that such transactions would encourage the *conquistadors* to adopt a worldly

and condescending point of view which saw American 'exchange' as nothing more than a profitable farce and the natives as nothing less than gullible victims.

To anticipate or respond to European criticisms, the explorers and conquerors would often have to further complicate their formulations. Columbus occasionally tried to argue that he did his best to take the natives' 'true' interests into consideration, *despite* their own lack of economic reason: "I forbade", he says, "that they should be given things so worthless as fragments of broken crockery and scraps of broken glass, and ends of straps, although when they were able to get them, they fancied they possessed the best jewel in the world" (Columbus Vol. I, 8). Vespucci, on the other hand, was faced with further complications; detractors had already pointed out that if native societies lacked a concept of property and of money relations, their reportedly enthusiastic interest in economic transactions seemed more than a little suspect. Vespucci's rejoinder consists in evoking an ultimately inexplicable native generosity while also attempting to obfuscate the distinction between exchange and gift-giving:[25] "if they *gave us*, or as I said, *sold us* slaves, it was *not a sale* for pecuniary profit, but *almost given for free*" (Vespucci 42 – emphases added). That this unmotivated generosity had ostensibly reached the extent of a voluntary relinquishment not only of physical objects but also of human lives (slaves) had created the further problem of explaining the existence of war and slavery in societies foreign to political forms of domination and to the "greed for temporal goods". Vespucci's answer was to suggest a native tendency to cruelty as mysterious and unmotivated as their propensity for generosity:

> they are a warlike people and very cruel to one another... [a]nd when they fight, they kill one another most cruelly, and the side that emerges victorious on the field buries all of their own dead, but they dismember and eat their dead enemies; and those they capture they imprison and keep as slaves in their houses... And what I most marvel at, given their wars and their cruelty, is that I could not learn from them why they make war upon one another: since they do not have private property, or command empires and kingdoms, and have no notion of greed, that is, greed either for things or for power, which seems to me to be the cause of wars and all acts of disorder (Vespucci 34-35).

Like More's Utopians, Vespucci's natives are overwhelmed by propensities which cannot be rationally explained by their economic values, and which in fact go against the very fundamentals of those values. Through a contorted and intriguing logic Vespucci links the natives' unmotivated generosity to the 'radical evil' of their equally unmotivated brutality and cannibalism, using both as means of legitimising colonial activity. The former works to rationalize exploitation by attributing it to the natives' enthusiasm for unilateral and voluntary gift-giving, thus bypassing the obstacles of both European notions of exchange and of his own statements about the absence of notions of profit and property in native

society. The latter prepares the ground for the extension of violent policies of subjection and dispossession by suggesting that the seemingly Edenic garden of America was plagued by inexplicable and therefore truly inhuman evil. If the natives "live according to nature", this nature is to be considered as demonic and irrational as it is free of European-style tyranny and greed.[26]

What is perhaps most ironic about the Spanish efforts to account for the nature of economic contact with Caribbean and Mesoamerican natives is that Spanish imperial agents could both argue for the cultural arbitrariness of value and fail to take into consideration the implications such an argument had for their own economic precepts. Though both Columbus and Vespucci were perfectly capable of claiming that gold was not in itself a universal bearer of value, they refused to extend the applicability of that insight beyond America and persisted in regarding the Iberian empire's accumulation of gold as an end in itself, the sole guarantor of its prosperity and power. The results of this uncritical equation of gold – what Marx called 'value form' – with value itself were nothing less than disastrous in the long run: massive inflation caused by over-accumulation of specie, economic underdevelopment in the colonies, neglect of domestic agriculture and manufactures, entrenchment of monarchical arrogance, expensive and futile wars.[27] In short, the confident reliance on endless streams of imported gold had helped revive and entrench a retrogressive and unproductive feudalism. The backward character of Spanish colonial rule became a particularly vulnerable target for both creole nationalist propaganda and for antagonistic imperialisms. Economic reform – namely, the extension of land cultivation and trade – came too late for Spain. Most of its acquisitions were lost in a wave of creole-led revolutions during the 1820s and 30s. In the 1890s its last colonial holdings became convenient targets for an American imperialism eager to prove its clout to continental antagonists. Spain was withdrawing from the global scene just as its old adversaries were dividing up Africa and Asia in the second large wave of imperial expansion.

Hegel might have found cause for amusement in such dialectical inversion: though the relationship between English and Spanish forms of global power remained as uneven in the nineteenth century as it had been in the early sixteenth, the roles had been switched. England's feudal decline had prepared the ground for a capitalist development whose effects quickly overshadowed the fickle glories of the Spanish 'Holy Roman Empire'. The absence of precious metals that had so disappointed the expeditions of Martin Frobisher and Sir Walter Raleigh had induced the development of trade and agriculture which laid the bases for England's increasing commercial prowess.[28] The displacement of the 'primitive' mode of specie accumulation, pragmatically necessitated by the nature of North America's resources, became instrumental in the development of a sustainable and non-parasitic colonial economy. And lastly, the relative scarcity of dense and militarily organized native populations had helped British colonialism avoid reliance on an unproductive military elite.

Thus much for the vicissitudes of History. And what of *Utopia,* history's

somewhat reluctant and digressive fellow traveller? If English late feudalism and early capitalism, along with Spanish imperial feudalism and Caribbean tribalism, constitute the four poles of a rectangular force field of historical conflict, More's isle inevitably situates itself at the inert, immobilised point in their middle (figure 3). Lodged between proto-bourgeois ascetic capitalism and MesoAmerican tribal communalism, between Spanish expansionism and British insularity, More's *ou topos* essentially spatialises the cognitive antinomies of historical contradiction itself. And much like Gonzalo's own oxymoronic kingdom, the peculiar fate of this textual dominion is to cancel itself as soon as it forms itself into language, to perennially navigate the unchartable distance between discontinuous ends and beginnings.

Economic Formation	Late Feudalism (England) →	Imperial Feudalism (Spain) →	→ *Utopia* ←	Early Bourgeoisie ← (England)	Tribalism ← (Caribbean)
Economic Morality	waste *and* accumulation	waste *and* accumulation	frugality premised on socialization of waste. Shamefaced accumulation (investment, exports); self- devaluating storage of wealth followed by purifying expenditure	frugality and shamefaced accumulation (investment, exports)	continuity between symbolic waste *and* rational consumption
Distribution of Goods	unequal	unequal	equal (status exceptions)	unequal	equal (status exceptions)
Object of Expropriation	land (peasants)	gold (natives)	communal labour	dispossessed labour	communal labour / nature
Ownership of Property	transitional	centralised	collective	individual	collective
Consciousness of Exchange Value	yes	yes	repressed	repressed	no
Symbolic Code	ostentation	ostentation	asceticism	asceticism	Edenic and demonic 'nature'; ornament *and* nakedness
Historical Effects	decay	entrenchment	equilibrium (absolute) 'Freezing' of the historical process on the level of the iconic	economic dynamism combined with relative equilibrium and stability in private life	equilibrium (relative)

Figure 3. Utopia as the inert point in the middle of a rectangular force field of historical conflict.

Notes

1. For detailed overviews of these interpenetrations, see Mircea Eliade, "Paradise and Utopia: Mythical Geography and Eschatology" (260-280), Manuel Alvar, "Fantastic tales and Chronicles of the Indies" (163-182), and Jara and Spadaccini, "The Construction of a Colonial Imaginary: Columbus's Signature" (1-95). For a more theoretical approach, which emphasizes the tropological and poetic foundations of both 'historical' and 'fictional' representation, see Hayden White, "Fictions of Factual Representation" in *Tropics of Discourse*, 121-134.
2. It must be noted here that the 'reality effect' produced by the appeal to Vespucci's published travel accounts is not without its deconstructive ironies since, despite the commonality of late medieval appeals to the authority of textual precedent (Pagden, European Encounters With the New World, 42, 51-56), the literature of American exploration was bound to raise questions about the efficacy of textual authority itself. Through the influence of accounts such as Vespucci's, America had become the privileged locus of a process of epistemological crisis and conceptual inversion. Its very existence allowed a series of bold speculations on whether what had theretofore been textually accounted as pure fantasy was not in fact reality, and whether what many authoritative classical texts had presented as reality was not after all mere error and folly (See Evans's discussion of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* in *America: The View from Europe*, 3-4). At the same time, then, that *Utopia* seems to use the framing device of Vespucci's well-known travels as a means of legitimising its facticity, it also thematises the destabilisation of the very model of 'established knowledge' it appeals to.
3. Pratt defines 'anti-conquest' as "a utopian, innocent vision of European global authority" (*Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* 39) and uses it to theorize types of travel writing which deviate from the overt norms of imperialist rhetoric (see *Imperial Eyes* 38-85). For a further elaboration of this notion as a means of thinking the relationship between utopian discourse and empire, see Antonis Balasopoulos, "Groundless Dominions: Utopia and Empire from the Fiction of America to American Fiction" (esp. chapter four).
4. Of course, as Denise Albanese aptly suggests, utopia's autonomisation vis-à-vis the real may guarantee its "unexhausted capacity to reconfigure specific historical situations", but it also implies its inability to achieve anything but "formalized solution[s]" to the problems history poses. See "The New Atlantis and the Uses of Utopia," 505.
5. See Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America and Literature from Utopia to The Tempest*, 18-20.
6. Anticipating Locke's position in the *Second Treatise on Government*, the Utopians believe that "it's perfectly justifiable to make war on people who leave their land idle and waste, yet forbid the use of it to others who, by the law of nature, ought to be supported from it" (*Utopia* 45). The precept at work here is that of res nullius, which states that "unoccupied and uncultivated land" is the common property of all mankind and becomes the property of the first person(s) to use and 'improve' it, 'mixing' – in John Locke's trope – their labour with it (see Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 76-77).
7. Perhaps the most typical representative of this stance is Columbus himself, for whom Mt. Ophir is in Espanola, the Caribbean is the Indies, the Caribs are the soldiers of the Grand Khan, the Trinidadians wear Moorish scarves, the trees produce Greek mastic and Asian spices, etc. Even after the 'newness' of America is finally establis-

hed, the weight shifts to the production not of identities, but of similarities, analogies, and equivalencies. The texts of Columbus and Vespucci anticipate this eventually more pervasive strategy: thus, the hair of the Trinidadians is "cut in the manner of Castile" (Columbus, *Voyages* II, 14), the island's trees are "green and as lovely as the orchards of Valencia in April" (32), and the houses in another island are "built with great skill upon the sea, as in Venice" (Vespucci, *Letters from the New World*, 13). Of course, as I have argued elsewhere, such discursive operations never manage to completely 'smooth over' their own constitutive gaps, and never successfully complete their operations of totalisation and closure. In his *Journal*, for instance, Columbus reveals the suppressed fear that the signs of the non-European world, far from being identical or analogical to Europe's familiar reality, are monstrously empty of any meaning: "now that no land has appeared they [the sailors] believe nothing they see, and think that the absence of signs means that we are sailing to a new world from which we will never return" (*Journal* 88). What is expressed here, even momentarily, is the uncanny notion that otherness may be uncontainable and incommensurable, that the world of the Antipodes is an anti-world whose disjunction from the existent is more radical than even More's 'land nowhere'.

8. See Marin, *Utopics*, 114-142 and Jameson, "Of Islands and Trenches: Neutralization and the Production of Utopian Discourse," 16-18.
9. For an explication of these terms and their relationship to uneven development, see Raymond Williams, "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent" in *Marxism and Literature*, 121-127.
10. I am here borrowing heavily from Knapp's new historicist analysis of *Utopia* in *An Empire Nowhere*, 18-61.
11. Marin distinguishes between the dynamic and processual nature of utopic discursive practice and its product. The latter constitutes "a picture within the text whose function consists in dissimulating, within its metaphor, historical contradiction – historical narrative – by projecting it onto a screen. It stages it as a representation by articulating it in the form of a structure of harmonious and immobile equilibrium. By its pure representability it totalises the differences that the narrative of history develops dynamically" (Marin, *Utopics*, 61). As Fredric Jameson has shown, Marin's influential analysis of *Utopia* operates through linking this distinction to an entire chain of homologous ones (énonciation / énoncé: energeia / ergon: narrative / description: figuration / iconic representation: dialectical movement / equilibrium and stasis: contradiction / neutralization). See Jameson, "Of Islands and Trenches: Neutralization and the Production of Utopian Discourse," 5-6.
12. On the question of the neutral in Marin and on its relation to the distinction between utopic figure and utopic practice, see Marin, "Of Plural Neutrality and Utopia" in *Utopics: Spatial Practice*, 3-16, and Jameson, "Of Islands and Trenches," 5-6. Bakhtin and Medvedev's approach to literary ideology in their 1928 *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* is in some ways startlingly similar to Marin's spatially based understanding of utopian anticipation and to Pierre Macherey's understanding of literature's transformative ideological work: "Literature does not ordinarily take its ethical and epistemological content from ethical and epistemological systems ... but immediately from the very process of the generation of ethics, epistemology, and other ideologies. *This is the reason that literature so often anticipates developments* in philosophy and ethics (ideologemes), *admittedly in an undeveloped, unsupported, intuitive form*. Literature is capable of *penetrating into the social laboratory* where these ideologemes

are shaped and formed. The artist has a keen sense for *ideological problems in the process of birth and generation*" (17 – emphases added). For another explanation of the relation between utopic discourse and cultural anticipation (one predicated on the notion of the uneven interaction of base and superstructure) see Jameson, *The Seeds of Time*, 76-77.

13. Hythloday responds to the intransigent English jurist by evoking the example of a society where the wasteful destruction of the roaming and thieving *Lumpenproletariat* of England is replaced by the labour exploitation of disciplined slaves. Louis Marin argues that these slaves, who sell their work only to guarantee their own upkeep, anticipate the industrial proletariat, though this reading is feasible only after critical theory has inverted the Utopian formula which itself is an inversion of the historical reality of England (*Utopics*, 161-162).
14. On the double aspect of Hythloday's critique – against the feudalist vice of pride and vanity and against the early capitalist vice of money – see Jameson, "Of Islands and Trenches," 15.
15. On the origins of 'primitive accumulation' in the expropriation – through land enclosure and seizure of Church property – of land from the peasantry and on the subsequent formation of an early proletariat 'freed' from the land and from the fetters of the corporate guilds, see Karl Marx, *Capital Vol I*, 717-733.
16. This is more or less justified by the *collaborationist* function that feudal elements had in the transition to capitalism, and indeed in the unusual alliance formed between the landed nobility and the early bourgeoisie against the property rights of the monarchy (Crown lands), peasantry (communal lands) and Church (Church estates). See Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, 19-21, and Marx, *Capital Vol I*, 724.
17. As long as 'primitive accumulation' was achieved by usurious and expropriative means made possible through the manipulation of inherited social privilege rather than through the enhancement of productive output and the significant extension of markets for goods, the early bourgeoisie could not but form the foundations of its class consciousness on the assumption that wealth is limited and can easier be 'consumed' than multiplied. Therefore thrift and the curtailment of consumption seemed essential to its survival. This ideology, inadequate for the bourgeoisie itself once the foundations for a properly capitalist mode of production and for extensive markets had been laid, became nonetheless extremely useful both as polemic against aristocratic and 'primitive' societies and as tool for the psychic, sexual, and bodily disciplining of the proletariat.
18. The vision of material exploitation as the necessary foundation for the ecumenical glory of the Catholic church – and therefore as virtuous 'work' – underlies Columbus's famous fusion of the material and spiritual functions of gold: "Genoese, Venetians, and all who have pearls, precious stones, and other things of value, all carry them to the end of the world in order to exchange them, to turn them into gold. Gold is most excellent. Gold constitutes treasure, and he who possesses it may do what he will in the world, and may so attain as to bring souls to Paradise" (*Voyages Vol. II*, 102-104).
19. See Max Weber's "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism" (1958: 313), where Weber discusses the Methodist prohibition against gathering "treasures on earth" which prevents the transformation of investment capital into "funded wealth".
20. Anticipating the Marxist critique of alienation and commodity fetishism – though reducing the issue to a moral one and substituting the debasement of value for its so-

cialization – Hythloday remarks that the Utopians "wonder much to hear that gold which is itself so useless a thing, should be everywhere so much esteemed, that even men for whom it was made, and by whom it has its value, should yet be thought of less value than this metal" (*Utopia* 51).

21. Karl Marx aptly anatomises the historical / ideological character of Europe's gold fetish: "with the very earliest of the circulation of commodities, there is also developed the necessity, and the passionate desire, to hold fast the product of the first metamorphosis. This product is the transformed shape of the commodity, or its gold-chrysalis. Commodities are thus sold not for the purpose of buying others, but in order to replace their commodity-form by their money-form. From being the mere means of effecting the circulation of commodities, this change of form becomes the end and aim... The money becomes petrified into a hoard, and the seller becomes a hoarder of money" (*Capital Vol. I*, 130).
22. Freud's discussion of the "ambivalence of emotions" in *Totem and Taboo* (esp. 56-69, 85-97) is a provocative take on this strange fusion of worship and debasement / hostility, as is of course the fetishised female body in properly psychoanalytic terms.
23. It is worth noting here that this exercise of violence through appointed 'representatives' is anticipatory of the institutional mediation of violence represented by the bourgeoisie's repressive state apparatus and, occasionally, by the sub-contracting of coercive activity to various extra-state formations (private police, labour and community terrorisers and *agent provocateurs*, paramilitary groups, etc.). Such mediating mechanisms embody the bourgeoisie's shamefaced ideological relation to social coercion, its unwillingness to link itself directly to the naked exercise of force (See Louis Althusser's classic reflections in *Lenin and Philosophy* 136-165).
24. See Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World*, 66-67 and Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere*, 233.
25. That this is a disingenuous argument is revealed by Vespucci's own remark in the first letter that the natives' offers of goods were motivated "more out of fear than of love" (*Letters from the New World* 10).
26. See ibid., 50.
27. See Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 70-73.
28. For an outline of the multiple disappointments visited on the British dreams for "instant wealth and prosperity" in the Americas see Evans, *America: The View from Europe*, 23.

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"The Latter Part of the Commonwealth Forgets the Beginning": Αυτοκρατορία και ουτοπική οικονομία στον λόγο για το Νέο Κόσμο το 15ο-16ο αιώνα
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Το άρθρο αυτό χαρτογραφεί την αμφίθυμη σχέση που αναπτύσσεται στην πρώιμη νεοτερική περίοδο μεταξύ «ιστορικών» και «μυθοπλαστικών» κατασκευών της ουτοπίας του Νέου Κόσμου, όπως αυτές ενσαρκώνονται στα γραπτά των Κολόμβου και Βεσπούτσι, από τη μία πλευρά, και στην *Ουτοπία* του Τόμας Μουρ, από την άλλη. Η σχέση αυτή τοποθετείται στο πλαίσιο των ιδεολογικών εντάσεων αλλά και απρόσμενων συγκλίσεων που χαρακτηρίζουν την άνιση ανάπτυξη της πρώιμης νεοτερικότητας στον Ευρωπαϊκό χώρο: του περάσματος, πιο συγκεκριμένα, από την απολυταρχική μοναρχία στον πρώιμο καπιταλισμό και από τις ενδοκρατικές και ενδο-Ευρωπαϊκές διαμάχες στον αποικιοκρατικό επεκτατισμό. Εστιάζοντας ιδιαίτερα στον εκρηκτικά αντιφατικό τρόπο με τον οποίο τα υπό συζήτηση κείμενα διαπραγματεύονται την έννοια της ανταλλακτικής αξίας και των συνεπειών της για την επεκτατική δραστηριότητα και την οικονομική και κοινωνική δομή του κράτους, το άρθρο αποτελεί μια προσπάθεια επανατοποθέτησης του προβλήματος της ουτοπίας στα πλαίσια όχι κάποιου γενικόλογου ανθρωπισμού, αλλά μιας λεπτομερούς ιστορικής, ιδεολογικής και σημειολογικής ανάλυσης του κειμένου. Αντίθετα με παλαιότερες προσεγγίσεις, το ζητούμενο εδώ δεν είναι η κατανόηση της ουτοπίας ως λιγότερο ή περισσότερο επιθυμητής εικόνας ενός καλύτερου κόσμου, αλλά η κατανόηση των τρόπων με τους οποίους οι κειμενικές συμβάσεις της ουτοπιστικής μυθοπλασίας επιτρέπουν την επεξεργασία, διαπραγμάτευση και φαντασιακή εξουδετέρωση των βασικών ιδεολογικών αντιφάσεων που χαρακτηρίζουν περιόδους κρίσης και μεταβατικότητας.