MAGDALENA SAWA

MODERNITY AND UTOPIA
IN BRUNO LATOUR'S *WE HAVE NEVER BEEN MODERN*
AND GABRIEL JOSIPOVICI'S *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO MODERNISM?*

A b s t r a c t. This article seeks to explore the relation between utopia and modernity on the basis of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) as well as two seminal contemporary studies: Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* (1992) and Gabriel Josipovici's *What Ever Happened to Modernism?* (2010). The ambiguous nature of the modern prototype of utopia which displays both the eutopian and the dystopian (self-critical) impulse seems reflected in the nature of modernity. With auto-criticism inscribed in the constitution of both utopia and modernity, the leading desires of the modern period — for a greater emancipation and domination — prove to be its greatest burden both in the socio-political sphere as well as in art and literature.

Key words: modernity; Modernism; utopia; *Utopia*; Thomas More; Bruno Latour; Gabriel Josipovici.

In his study *Imperfect Garden: The Legacy of Humanism* Tzvetan Todorov conceives of humanism as a pact coterminous and analogous with the one Johann Faust made with Mephistopheles. This time the deal was based on peculiar regulations:

> The devil's ruse […] consisted in keeping the other party to the contract, Modern Man, as humanity was then called, in the dark, allowing him to believe that he was gaining new advantages thanks to his own efforts, and that there would be no price to pay. This time, what the devil was offering was not power or knowledge but will. Modern Man would have the possibility of willing freely, of acquiring mastery of his own will and living his life as he wished. The devil hid the price of freedom so that man should develop a taste for it and have no desire to renounce it at a later date — then find himself obliged to clear his debt. (2)

MAGDALENA SAWA, PhD — Department of English Literature and Culture, Institute of English Studies, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin; address for correspondence: Al. Racławickie 14, 20–950 Lublin; e-mail: sawka@kul.lublin.pl

The aim of this article is to discuss modernity in the context of a different literary pattern—utopia, which, however, is used to unearth similar problems pertaining to modernity, humanism and freedom as the ones suggested in the quotation above. While Todorov draws on the idea of incurring debts, this study considers the supreme values underlying modernity as having a dark side too. The relation between utopia and modernity is explored on the basis of Thomas More's *Utopia* as well as two prominent contemporary works: *We Have Never Been Modern* (1992) by Bruno Latour and *What Ever Happened to Modernism?* (2010) by Gabriel Josipovici. While Latour's study has been critically acclaimed and regarded as revolutionary in the way it debunks the tenets of modernity, Josipovici's book caused commotion mainly due to some critical comments made in passing on a group of contemporary British writers such as Martin Amis, Julian Barnes or Ian McEwan. I would like to demonstrate, however, that both studies are an important voice in the debate on the modern period convergent in the way they point to the utopian nature of modernity and its consequences for the socio-political sphere in Latour's perspective as well as art and literature in Josipovici's approach.

What allies modernity and utopia is the basic fact that the advent of modernity concurs with the emergence of the utopian genre in the inaugural text of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516). As Frederic Jameson notices in his seminal study *Archeologies of the Future*, More's text is "contemporaneous with most of the innovations that have seemed to define modernity (conquest of the New World, Machiavelli and modern politics, Ariosto and modern literature, Luther and modern consciousness, printing and the modern public sphere)" (1). Later on he calls utopias "by-products of modernity" (11) and compares utopian thinking with the practices of the modern scholar: "The Utopian calling, indeed, seems to have some kinship with that of the inventor in modern times, and to bring to bear some necessary combination of the identification of a problem to be solved and the inventive ingenuity with which a series of solutions are proposed and tested" (11). The correspondence between utopia and modernity seems quite entrenched but still in need of a closer analysis.

Right at the onset of his *Archeologies* Jameson speaks of the futility of definitions in the context of utopia indicating at the same time some paths that might be taken in explaining the concept:

> It has often been observed that we need to distinguish between the Utopian form and the Utopian wish: between the written text or genre and something like a Utopian impulse detectable in daily life and its practices by a specialized hermeneutic or interpretive method. Why not add political practice to this list, inasmuch as whole social movements have tried to realize a Utopian vision, communities have been founded and revolutions waged in its name, and since, as we have just seen, the term itself is once again current in present-day discursive struggles? (1)

From Jameson's quotation utopia emerges as a multi-modal phenomenon which can take the form of a literary creation, a political project or any future--oriented everyday endeavour, as it is presented in Ernst Bloch's monumental *The Principle of Hope*. Bloch considers utopia in various forms of human activity including art, philosophy or advertising where the ubiquitous utopian impulse is studied under the term "anticipatory consciousness." However, whether understood narrowly as a literary genre or broadly as a way of thinking, utopia always relies on its modern origin for a detailed explication.

The term "utopia" was a pun used by More in response to Desiderius Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* (1509), in which double meanings abound. It is an amalgam of two Greek prefixes: "ou" meaning "not" and "eu" meaning "good", combined with the Greek word "topos" denoting "place." In English both prefixes create with the root word a homophone with ambiguous signification. Commonly explained as "an imagined form of ideal or superior (thus usually communist) human society; or a written work of fiction or philosophical speculation describing such a society" (Baldick 235), utopia is very often deprived in theoretical discussions of its stimulating equivocation and its chief accomplishment, which is the ability to articulate a complex "tension between the affirmation of a possibility and the negation of its fulfilment" (Vieira 6). Alice Reeve-Tucker and Nathan Waddell in *Utopianism, Modernism and Literature in the 20th Century* complain about this negligence in the following words:

> This originary context is often elided in literary-historical and theoretical discussions of utopianism, even though the term's writerly origins, and its semantic ambiguities, are regularly signalled in discussions of utopian thought. Moreover, the fact that Utopia is as much an undercutting of 'the good life' as it appears to be an endorsement of it tends to be neglected, as does the point that More was not the first author to write self-questioningly about an ideal society. (3–4)

Hanan Yoran's study *Between Utopia and Dystopia*, in which he analyses More's *Utopia* as a work ridden with contradictions, paradoxes and ambiguities (159), complies with the line of argumentation presented in the quotation above. Like Quentin Skinner before him in "Thomas More's *Utopia* and the language of Renaissance humanism," only more radically, Yoran considers More's work in relation to the tenets of humanism and sees this relation as heavily burdened. On the one hand, More's *Utopia* is a product of the Republic of Letters but on the other it is a symptom of its most profound contradictions. Yoran's argumentation builds upon the following understanding of humanism:

> Humanist discourse consequently denied that the meaning of human reality—human history, social institutions, political events—was contingent upon its subordination to a transcendent realm. Instead the humanists presupposed that the human world was a world made by men. [...] Humanism rejected the assumption that the understanding of human reality could be reduced to a set of universal categories arrived at by abstract reasoning. For if the social and symbolic were inseparable, then social activity was inherently performative, an activity of interpretation and communication, and human beings were principally the producers and interpreters of meanings. (3–4)

Yoran's investigation into the way Utopian system violates signification and the process of the production of meaning as well as relies on ruthless practices and institutions leads to a conclusion that the attempt to construct an ideal humanist social order is ultimately based on distinctly antihumanist presuppositions (182).

   The aspect of utopia which is much appreciated and often accentuated by scholars is its sharp critical edge. Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor in *The Politics of Utopia* notice that a utopian vision "transcends normal idealism and is invariably at variance with the imperfections of existing society and so, *per se*, constitutes a critique of social institutions" (4). In a similar way, the authors of *Utopia/Dystopia* claim that "[u]topian visions are never arbitrary. They always draw on the resources present in the ambient culture and develop them with specific ends in mind that are heavily structured by the present" (4). Published in 1516 More's *Utopia* came into being in a transition period of budding modernity of which humanist ideas were the essential underpinning. A leading English humanist and a friend of Erasmus, More adhered to the premises of Erasmian program:

> More's most famous work, Utopia, should be read as an Erasmian work. Erasmian humanism is the framework for accounting for the radical criticism of the European social and political order in book 1 of the work. […] Similarly, the Utopian social organization, depicted in book 2, and the philosophy that legitimizes it exemplify the ideas and values of Erasmian humanism. (Yoran 99)

More ventured in his *Utopia* to confront the late medieval social order with an ideal society based on and proclaiming humanist ideas. On closer inspection, however, as the fictional Morus conjectures[1] and Yoran proves in his study, it becomes clear that this utopian vision is not devoid of defects. In consequence, the critical scope of More's *Utopia* proves quite broad. Not only is More's *Utopia* a satirical improvement on the present but in an implicit and quite pessimistic way it is also self-critical about the potential future possibilities it propounds. The dialogic structure of More's work as well as the ambiguous nature of the interlocutors uncover *Utopia*'s dynamic critical thought. While the conversational parts are meant to promote humanist ideas, a closer analysis of the social structure of Utopia seriously undermines the tenets of humanism on which the social order is supposed to rest. As a result of the apparent tension between *Utopia*'s explicit argumentation and the presence in Utopia of many unattractive institutions and practices, More's text becomes, as Yoran tautologically puts it, a humanist critique of humanism:

> Many of the Utopian institutions and practices are presented as humanist institutions and practices, and the Utopian subjects can be interpreted as embodying the humanist image of man. On the other hand, when we view Utopia from the inside, this picture is inverted. From the perspective of its subjects, the Utopian social order is reified and devoid of meaning. It is an essentially antihumanist world.

All this, Yoran concludes, ultimately makes More's Utopia closer to dystopia (186) and thus germane to the observation that every utopia contains a dystopia as one person's ideal can be someone else's nightmare (Ribeiro 64). If the role of dystopia is to "map, warn and hope" (Stillman 15), utopia takes its roots from the power of hope, from the desire for a better way of being, identified by Ruth Levitas as the essential element of utopia (209). It should not be forgotten, however, that apart from the explicit eutopian

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[1] Cf. "In the meanwhile, though it must be confessed that he is both a very learned man and a person who has obtained a great knowledge of the world, I cannot perfectly agree to everything he has related" (More 108).

impulse, the modern prototype of utopia contains also the implicit dystopian i.e. self-critical element. The warning that *Utopia* tacitly issues is originally embodied in the "not" element which when read as "nowhere" or "never" implies unachievability of eutopian aims. In consequence, the tension between argumentation and actual representation in More's text can be viewed as a conflict between ideas and their implementation, theory and practice, and the final word's of *Utopia*: "However, there are many things in the commonwealth of Utopia that I rather wish, than hope, to see followed in our governments" (108), as an admonition against the latter.

At some point of his study Yoran makes the following remark: "More than any other work, *Utopia*, and indeed the invention of the utopian genre, attest to the identity of the universal intellectual constructed by Erasmian humanism" (159). Related to Jameson's commentary about utopia and the modern scholar quoted above, Yoran's observations establish a very close connection between utopia, humanist ideas and modernity. Apparent promotion of humanism, however, More's *Utopia* reveals also its paradoxes and ambiguities and, more importantly, does the same about modernity: "It is this ambiguity that characterizes humanist discourse and establishes it as the foundation of modernity itself. In this respect, Renaissance humanism should justifiably be seen as the cradle of the modern age" (Raz, Yoran, and Zak 430). All this turns the discussion on More's *Utopia* into what Stephen Greenblatt calls "the struggle [...] not merely over an isolated work of genius but over a whole culture" (58). Ultimately, rather than a mere by-product of the early modern period, utopia unearths its duplicitous nature. The ideas which underpin modernity seem to be inspired by a truly eutopian impulse with modernity often described as

> a set of cultural and political preoccupations that arose during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These involved the nature of moral autonomy, tolerance, the character of progress, and the meaning of humanity. Modernity justified itself through scientific rationality and an ethical view of the good life that rested on universal values and the democratic exercise of common sense. (Bronner 1)

This aspect of modernity is appreciated and studied by many scholars. Goodwin and Taylor, for example, seek to demonstrate in the aforementioned *The Politics of Utopia* that "utopianism as a tendency is a key ingredient of the whole process of modern politics" (XI). It must be remembered, however, that utopia embodies also the self-critical component. Analogously to what

was diagnosed above about the relation between More's *Utopia* and Erasmian humanism, utopia arises from modernity but equipped with the self-critical or dystopian element it becomes also a symptom of its most profound contradictions: "From the earliest days […] the targets of the dystopia have been some of the most cherished shibboleths, what others have called the 'grand narratives', of modernity: reason and revolution, science and socialism, the idea of progress and the faith in the future" (Kumar 19).

As I will try to show further in this article the critical visions of modernity propounded by Bruno Latour and Gabriel Josipovici reinforce the idea of the utopian nature of modernity with a special focus on the double nature of utopia embracing both the eutopian and the self-critical impulse. Latour identifies the eutopian urge of modernity as aiming at a greater domination and emancipation. In a similar vein, Josipovici speaks of freedom and severance from tradition. With self-criticism inscribed in the nature of both utopia and modernity, those two leading desires of the modern period prove to be its greatest burden.

The key argument put forward by Latour in his seminal study *We Have Never Been Modern* is that what lies at the heart of modernity and is wrongly construed as its chief success is the separation of nature and culture. Modern thinking, according to the French scholar, is based on a Constitution which comprises two distinct practices. One of them designates two separate areas for the human and non-human and bears the name purification while the other allows hybridic interrelation between nature and culture and is called translation. Modernity is pivoted on the conviction that these two processes must be kept separate so that the purification process can thrive over the translation practice. The modern emphasis on the separation of the cultural and natural domains is intrinsically linked with the way the moderns conceive of time as an irreversible arrow which hurls us forward towards the future. Latour explains it in the following way:

> The asymmetry between nature and culture then becomes an asymmetry between past and future. The past was the confusion of things and men; the future is what will no longer confuse them. Modernization consists in continually exiting from an obscure age that mingled the needs of society with scientific truth, in order to enter into a new age that will finally distinguish clearly what belongs to a temporal nature and what comes from humans, what depends on things and what belongs to signs. Modern temporality arises from a superposition of the difference between past and future with another difference, so much more important, between mediation and purification. (71)

The modern process of emancipation consists mainly in the drastic detachment from the obscurity of the past defined by the mixture of elements. This modern eutopian drive for the future, for freedom and enlightment is commented on by Latour with a pinch of irony: "The obscurity of the olden days, which illegitimately blended together social need and natural reality, meanings and mechanisms, signs and things, gave way to luminous dawn that cleanly separated material causality from human fantasy" (35). According to Latour, the rift between nature and culture began with the 17th century philosophical dispute between Thomas Hobbes and Robert Boyle whereby two separate spheres of social representation and scientific objective signification were delineated. However, Hobbes' and Boyle's conflict marked a mere distinction in the way nature and culture were apprehended. The distance between those two domains grew with time and the progress of modernity so that the distinction became separation in Kant's philosophy, contradiction in Hegel, insurmountable tension in phenomenology only to reach the point of incommensurability in Habermas and hyper-incommensurability in the postmoderns.

The process of dissociating nature and culture perceived as a way towards greater emancipation was also a means to dominate those who did not share the modern ideal of separation: "Century after century, colonial empire after colonial empire, the poor premodern collectives were accused of making a horrible mishmash of things and humans, of objects and signs [...]" (39). While it is possible for a contemporary anthropologist to write about non-Western nations in such a way as to encompass their culture, nature, history and politics, no anthropologist study approaches the Western world in a similar way. The reason for this, as Latour explains, is that the Westerners render everything separate so that an attempt to write holistically about our world would require that the definition of modernity be altered.

In their blind following of the purification process, the moderns were unaware of a certain paradoxical relation underlying modernity. The separation of nature and culture proved as ineffective as the dissociation of the process of purification from that of translation. Latour explains the correspondence between those two processes in the following way:

> What link is there between the work of translation or mediation and that of purification? [...] My hypothesis […] is that the second has made the first possible: the more we forbid ourselves to conceive of hybrids, the more possible their interbreeding becomes—such is the paradox of the moderns, which the exceptional situation in which we find ourselves today allows us finally to grasp. (12)

The peculiar contemporary situation Latour refers to is the prolifaration of hybrids observable in daily life. Latour's study opens with a list of examples of mixing the natural and cultural elements which attest to his diagnosis of modernity. He mentions AIDS virus, frozen embryos and the ozone debate which fuse together chemical and political reactions: "A single thread links the most esoteric sciences and the most sordid politics, the most distant sky and some factory in the Lyon suburbs, dangers on a global scale and the impending local elections or the next board meeting" (1). The multiplication of exceptions that nobody can any longer situate within their safe boundaries has enormous consequences as it seems to have stopped the modern's flight into the future. The question Latour eventually poses: "So is modernity an illusion?" (40) might be understood as asking about the relation between modernity and utopia. From the perspective of the discussion carried out in this study, the resemblance is remarkable. The purification process can be identified as the eutopian impulse underlying both the utopian genre and modernity whereas the translation practice corresponds with the self-critical impulse which utopia displays and reveals the same about modernity. It is this very self-reflective nature of modernity that enables Latour to formulate his radical statement: "No one has ever been modern. Modernity has never begun. There has never been a modern world. [...] [W]e have never really left the old anthropological matrix behind, and [...] it could not have been otherwise" (47).

To a great degree influenced by social and cultural processes, Gabriel Josipovici's interests in *What Ever Happened to Modernism?* concentrate on the problems of art and literature. Not unlike Latour, Josipovici discusses his issue retrospectively by first examining the effects before trying to explain the causes. He opens his book with a list of quotations from various modernist writers such as Mallarmé, Hofmannsthal, Kafka and Beckett. The passages he quotes concern one and the same thing, which is the writerly inner conflict between the need to write and the feeling that there is nothing to express. This persistent internal struggle defines Modernism as a century of pain, anxiety and despair and earns *fin de siècle* the name of the Crisis of Modernism.

In order to find the reasons for the Modernist predicament Josipovici delves into the past. He begins his search with the "disenchantment of the world" in which, according to Latour, the Westerners evince a "morose delight" (Latour 114). Synonymous with a call for freedom, as Josipovici explains, this phenomenon was precipitated by the changes in mindset incited by the Renaissance tenets of Reformation and Humanism, which proclaimed

"the triumph of the individual after centuries of subservience to authority and tradition, centuries of being bound to the yoke of religion and superstition" (12). However, while some rejoiced in the spirit of the eutopian impulse of liberty, others began to suffer its burden. Waking up to the absurdities of the past marked a transition from the age of cult to the age of the individual (Josipovici 17); the individual who had to tackle the insurmountable feeling of loss and nostalgia for the ordered world. Josipovici's *What Ever Happened to Modernism?* is in its entirety devoted to the study of the motif of loss and anxiety about the creative process which from the perspective of this study can be viewed as the undertow self-critical impulse that modernity displays in the sphere of art.

Latour asks "Is modernity an illusion?" and Josipovici replies in the following words:

> The repressive tyranny of the Church was being destroyed and Protestantism had got rid of old superstitions while Humanism gave the individual a new freedom to express—that at least is the myth that was perpetuated by both Protestantism and Humanism, and one that in its simplicity and apparent self-evidence still shapes the popular imagination. (39)

The tendency to pair modernity with an illusion or a myth stems from its utopian affiliation, from the fact that modernity is driven by the future-oriented eutopian impulse of greater autonomy coupled, however, with the self-critical reflection. Josipovici observes that "Modernism is, historically, deeply intertwined with the emergence of a critical conscience" (139). Connected with this statement is Josipovici's understanding of Modernism itself, traditionally viewed as encompassing artistic activity from the years 1850–1950. This one-hundred year period was indeed the time when Modernism throve and its pursuits were so vigorous that they could not pass unnoticed. Yet the danger of seeing Modernism like that, as Josipovici points out, is to treat it as a style, like Mannerism or Impressionism, or a period of art history, like the Victorian age, and therefore as something that can be clearly delineated and belongs to the past. Josipovici's vision of Modernism is singular:

> Modernism needs to be understood in a completely different way, as the coming into awareness by art of its precarious status and responsibilities, and therefore as something that will, from now on, always be with us. Seen in this way [...] Modernism becomes a response by artists to that "disenchantment of the world" to which cultural historians have long been drawing our attention.

Josipovici's bold extension of the boundaries of Modernism to the 16th century "disenchantment of the world" makes it coincide with the emergence of modernity, but only historically. Ideologically, the way Josipovici conceives of Modernism is close to what Peter Zima says in *Modern/Postmodern* that "modernism could be defined as auto-criticism of modernity, of the spirit of modern times" (6). Consequently, Josipovici's understanding of Modernism makes it synonymous with the self-critical impulse of modernity operating within art and literature.

Josipovici seeks firsts signs of art's attempts at self-reflection in Albrecht Dürer's pair of engravings: *St Jerome in his Study* and *Melancholia I* (1514). Following Erwin Panofsky, he sees those two works as responding to the emergence of a new world and thus representing two contrastive views of life: trust and order on the one hand and suspicion and despair on the other. What these two pictures are meant to show is what was lost in the process of the Renaissance large-scale cultural transformation and what we are left with after it has gained ground. Josipovici deviates, however, from Panofsky's interpretation of the figure of Melancholy as the embodiment of genius, a view popular among Florentine artists and thinkers. According to Josipovici, Dürer presents Melancholy as essentially inactive "and this is not because she is lazy but because all work has grown meaningless to her. Her considerable energy is paralysed not by sleep but by thought. She is reduced to inactivity and despair by the awareness of the insurmountable barrier separating her from the realm of Truth" (25–26).

Josipovici's search for Modernist concerns in literature begins with Rabelais' *Gargantua* where he focuses his attention on the figure of Picrochole. Rather than a tyrant for whose wishes there is no limit, Josipovici prefers to view him as "a figure of the artist in his new circumstances, cut off from tradition and without either the muses or the rules of the Christian iconography to guide him as they guided Homer and the medieval artist, and having to fall back on his imagination" (27–28). With a similar aim in mind, Josipovici points to the opening of *Don Quixote* as a declaration of a purely arbitrary and private nature of Cervantes' creation (Josipovici 28). With no authority for what he says and no access to the truth, in his address to an "idle reader" Cervantes proclaims himself as "the spokesman for a new community of solitary individuals" (29). In this new situation created by the advent of modernity, the need to write comes to be perceived as a curse rather than a gift: "For while the desire to create seems to be the most natural thing in the world [...], what is it in a world without sure-relation to either tradition or authority but a meaningless self-indulgence?" (26).

Inasmuch as the French Revolution brought new horizons of social free-dom, Wordsworthian revolutionary poetry proclaimed a parallel liberation program for literature where genre came to be seen, like aristocratic privi-lege, as a false imposition rather than a natural condition. However, in the same Wordsworthian poetry, apparently self-generated rather than induced by tradition, Josipovici finds a strong self-reflexive impulse. He remarks about "A Night-Piece" in the following words: "This is a poem about *experiencing* a vision, not, like Blake's prophecies, about a vision" (51). Josipovici's study of Wordsworth's poems runs parallel with the discussion on a Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich. His picture *Wanderer above the sea fog* is viewed as prefiguring Wordsworth's concerns with writing. The painting reminds us "that vision is always vision at a particular moment, from a particular place, and that though vision may be the goal it does not subsume life but is only one moment, one experience, within life" (60). Such Romantic artists as Friedrich and Wordsworth, as Josipovici argues, are not visionaries but explorers of what it means to see and what it means to paint or write (Josipovici 62).

Josipovici's seminal study provides an extensive analysis of Modernism proper with reference to a wide array of writers. Apart from Mallarmé, Kafka and Becket featuring at the onset of his book, Josipovici discusses also the writings of Proust, Robbe-Grillet, Eliot and Stevens. Ultimately, Josipovici explains the predicament of Modernist writers as "the sense that they feel impelled to write, this being the only way they know to be true to their own natures, yet at the same time they find that in doing so they are being false to the world—imposing shape on it and giving it a meaning which it doesn't have—and thus, ultimately, being false to themselves" (72). That is why so many Modernist writers have striven to stress that their fictions are not reality but fictional constructs. They have done so "[n]ot in order to play games with the reader or to deny the reality of the world […] but, on the contrary, out of a profound sense that they will only be able to speak the truth about the world if the bad faith of the novel, its inevitable production of plot and meaning, is acknowledged" (Josipovici 73). The same tendency to resist the illusory *passé simple* of the traditional novel can be observed in the visual arts: in Cézanne's refusal "to think of one element as more important than another" (Josipovici 93), in Bacon's aversion for illu-stration as "accurate but dead" (Josipovici 79) and in Cubists' intent on "making works of art that would not let the viewer forget their distinct essence as human products" (Josipovici 101).

Josipovici's reasoning is densly intertwined with philosophical reflections which help him argue his case. He builds his argument on Søren Kierkegaard's statement that "anxiety is the dizziness of freedom" (61), developed by the Danish thinker in *The Concept of Anxiety*. When Kierkegaard explains the difference between anxiety and fear, he points to the fact that fear refers to something definite "whereas anxiety is freedom's actuality, the possibility of possibility" (42). According to Kierkegaard's "dialectic principle," as Josipovici explains, the drama of the Modernist writer is on the one hand related to the tension between freedom and necessity and on the other to the friction between possibility and actuality. The freedom which modernity grants annihilates the necessity prompted by tradition. It does not, however, erase the natural need of self-expression which in the face of endless possibility is forever doomed to the lack of actuality and thus, ultimately, to the lack of possibility itself. Josipovici envisages the Modernist conundrum with one of Kirkegaard's similes: "for without possibility it is as though a person cannot draw breath" (69).

It is impossible to do justice in this short article to the ingenuity of Latour's and Josipovici's studies of modernity, to their erudition, Latour's discussion of contemporary phenomena and Josipovici's commentary on art and music, Latour's witticism and Josipovici's elegance. It must be noted, however, that the ambivalent nature of modernity exposed by Latour and Josipovici is consequential for the way the postmodern period is perceived. There are many ways to explain the relation between modernity and postmodernity, very often inspired by the ambiguity of the prefix "post" which may suggest either a definite break with what went before or a critical continuation. If viewed from the perspective of the relation between utopia and dystopia, post-modernity shows signs of affinity with the latter possibility. In his analysis of Bloch's *The Principle of Hope* written in the years 1938–47 while on exile in The United States, Benjamin Kohlamnn admires how "[t]he individual chapters are keenly attuned to the hesitations that beset utopianism in the modernist period, and they contend that it was inflected by a pessimism about the course of history and by anxieties about the possibility and desirability of utopian thinking" (5). The Modernist period proved coterminous with the crisis of utopianism in the first half of the 20th century (Kohlmann 5) and modernist writers are perceived as those who "have sung the dirge of utopia" (Howe 351). In the wake of the disastrous consequences of utopia coming into existence in the shape of ideology-driven wars and ill-governed political systems, the second half of the 20th century developed a

strong critical approach and was characterised by a huge dose of scepticism or a strong feeling of suspicion to finally earn the name of a dystopian century (Sargent 10). With the dystopian *i.e.* self-critical element originally inscribed in the nature of both utopia and modernity, the relation between modernity and post-modernity does not involve divorcement but rather a dramatic change of proportions between the eutopian and dystopian element, hope and scepticism, confidence and self-criticism.

In their diagnoses of modernity neither Latour nor Josipovici show despair or pronounce the end of the modern period. The former defines his task as "gathering together the scattered themes of a comparative anthropology" (145) to help reshuffle our worldview while the latter appreciates the emergence of a tradition of those who have no tradition (185). Proclaiming the end of modernity would be like proclaiming the end of hope and that is practically impossible.

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NOWOCZESNOŚĆ I UTOPIA
W BRUNO LATOURA *WE HAVE NEVER BEEN MODERN*
I GABRIELA JOSIPOVICI *WHATEVER HAPPENED TO MODERNISM*

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Celem artykułu jest zbadanie relacji pomiędzy utopią a nowoczesnością na podstawie *Utopii* Thomasa More'a oraz dwóch ważnych współczesnych studiów nad nowoczesnaścią: *We Have Never Been Modern* (1992) autorstwa Bruno Latoura oraz *What Ever Happened to Modernism?* (2010) napisanym przez Gabriela Josipovici. Ambiwalentna natura nowoczesnego prototypu utopii, która wykazuje obecność zarówno impulsu (e)utopijnego, jak i dystopijnego (krytycznego), zdaje się znajdować swoje odzwierciedlenie w naturze nowoczesności. Krytyczny aspekt nowoczesności odsłania fakt, że dwa podstawowe dążenia epoki nowoczesnej — do wolności i dominacji — okazują się jej największym obciążeniem zarówno w sferze socjopolitycznej, jak też w literaturze i sztuce.

Streściła Magdalena Sawa

Słowa kluczowe: nowoczesność; modernizm; utopia; *Utopia;* Thomas More; Bruno Latour; Gabriel Josipovici.