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# Dictionary of Literary Utopias

Edited by  
Vita Fortunati and Raymond Trousson



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HONORÉ CHAMPION  
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VITA FORTUNATI and RAYMOND TROUSSON



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bility of living only for ideas, of developing "an I. Q. of over a thousand," of becoming "alive." He is ready to be bought.

**Analysis:** This is a dystopian novel, one of several fictional prophecies in which Hersey explored what may happen if things go wrong. Hersey had long criticised the lack of attention given to intellectually gifted children, and *The Child Buyer* engages the plausible, utopian ideal of eliminating those parts of the educational system that hold back the brilliant child, of freeing youthful intelligence to attain its true, higher level. Many excellent utopian tales describe how this goal can be achieved. In this case, however, the end is overwhelmed by the means: freeing the child to attain a higher level is achieved by a brainwashing technique that strips away humanity and replaces it with something resembling a machine's intelligence that can solve incredibly difficult problems. The fact that this inhuman approach – people as mere statistics – matters so little to all concerned is dystopian too.

**Bibliography:** A. Burton. "Existential Conceptions in ... *The Child Buyer*." *Journal of Existential Psychiatry* 2 (1961): 243-258. – D. Sanders. *John Hersey Revisited*. Boston, 1991.

[A. Lewis]

CHRISTIANITY → RELIGION

CHRISTIANOPOLIS → REIPUBLICAE CHRISTIANOPOLITANAE DESCRIPTIO

ЧТО ДЕЛАТЬ? (ЧЕТВЕРТЫЙ СОН ВЕРЫ ПАВЛОВНЫ)  
[WHAT IS TO BE DONE? – THE FOURTH DREAM OF  
VERA PAVLOVNA]

Nikolaj Gavrilovich Chernyshevskij (1828-1889, RUS)

**Dates:** A novel written and published in 1863 in *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*) 3, 4 and 5, a review directed by N. A. Nekrasov. The work was republished in 1905.

**Summary:** The social ideal of Chernyshevskij finds its metaphorical expression in *The Fourth Dream of Vera Pavlovna*. The description of a future society appears to be the ultimate aim of the social experiments described in this novel. This society should be the positive result of such experiments: a triumph of the Right cause. An enormous building is surrounded by cultivated fields – which offer bountiful harvests – citrus plantations and woods. Outside the building is made of glass and cast iron, while its interior is depicted as a real, immense house encircled by that glass structure. The inside of the house is all made of a light but strong aluminium "sooner or later aluminium was

to substitute wood and stone" and it is inhabited by men, women\*, old people and children. Young people are more numerous and old people are very few because in this place it takes a very long time to become old, and life is healthy and serene. In the fields surrounding the buildings men and women work singing happily together. Machines controlled by men help them reap very quickly. Everything is done with maximum ease: as the machine advances, it follows the workers and protects them from the sun with a mobile fixture. It is children and old people who perform housework activities. At the end of a working day people have dinner all together in a big dining room and each individual can have what he/she needs. Whoever wants the best food can have it if prepared to pay. All this happens in the warm and sunny seasons, whereas during the cold seasons people move towards warmer regions of their choice in the South. Most people go towards the New Russia, while others go to different countries where there are similar crystal-made buildings covered with white curtains. Each individual lives where and how he/she prefers, but very few people actually choose cities (99% live outside cities), with the result that towns have decreased in number and they are used simply as places to have social relations and where goods are cleared through Customs. Everywhere land has been reclaimed thanks to the work of man and machines, and deserts do not exist anymore. During the day people work, in the evening they have fun going to dances and theatres and everywhere there is joy.

**Analysis:** N.G. Chernyshevskij was a literary critic, theorist and polyglot, among the most distinguished of his time. In 1855 Russia underwent a political and social change. Nicholas I succeeded Alexander II while war was being waged in Crimea. After the fall of Sebastopolis some special reforms began to be implemented, namely censorship and new social laws. Russian Democrats expressed their ideas in literary and social reviews such as *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*), interested in economical and social issues (peasant reform projects, the abolition of the serfdom), and *Russkoe Slovo* (*The Russian Word*), directed by Pisarev, which dealt with problems relating to individual ethics. In 1861 Chernyshevskij constituted a secret society in Petersburg and called it "Zemliya i Volya" (*Land and Will*). In 1862 *The Contemporary* was censored and in July of that same year Chernyshevskij was imprisoned in the jail of Peterpaul and condemned to death. The sentence was later commuted to hard labour in Siberia. The author stayed in Siberia for seven years and was then exiled in Astrakhan. Only in 1888 was Chernyshevskij given his freedom again but he died soon after. His life was a long exile during which he wrote continuously. Almost all his works

were destroyed except for the letters to his wife that still constitute a precious testimony of that era. Chernyshevskij was a utopian-socialist whose dream was the transformation of Russian society. The novel *What is to be Done?*, written in four months between 1862-63 in the fortress of Peter-paul, initially circulated underground. Before being published in 1905 it had a strong influence in Russia and was soon translated in many different languages gaining even more popularity. *The Fourth Dream of Vera Pavlova* is the sequence of the classical Russian utopia\* inserted in the famous novel *What is to be Done?* *The Dream* presents all the characteristics typical of the utopian genre. A harmonic future society is surrounded by vast cultivated fields, gardens and flowers. Rivers, mountains and woods protect this closed world that is a sort of microcosm in which everybody leads a peaceful life made of work, amusement and rest. The economy\* described by the author is closed and autarkic. All necessary trades are carried out in places that are not populated, that is in big cities where people rarely go, and when they do it is only to have a change and to work for very short periods. Another typical element of the utopian genre\* – the geometric structure – is present in the dream\*-realm. All the buildings are immense, they resemble each other and are placed at regular distances: "they are like chess-pieces on a chess-board". Palaces in the north and south alike are refined in aluminium and crystal, and surrounded by a wall (see Dostoevsky and Zamyatin). In the north, buildings are inserted inside other buildings, whereas in the south, buildings are enclosed by enormous piers. The author presents a classical example of utopia in an unchangeable present time\* which does not know either past or future because it is too perfect to be changed. Vera Pavlova enters this utopia in her dream\* and finds it working perfectly. In this utopia all citizens are subject to the same rules in the name of equality\*. People, however, can obtain more or different things if they pay. There is never any contention, nor associations or parties of any kind. The single citizen is conceived as part of a whole. Life is led with no elements of individualism. People eat together, they work together in the fields and finally they have fun together. Collective amusement, namely dancing and singing, are shared in a perfect balance with daily work\*. In fact only through hard work it is possible to understand the deep importance of joy. This future society is a happy one because everything is done according to natural rhythms and to Man's natural needs. The most important among such needs is love\* which does become possible in such a monolithic organism. All people are free from any material and social oppression. The family\* institution disappears with all its implications. Relatives are con-

sidered from a new perspective where the family stands for universal humanity.

**Bibliography:** N.L. Brodskij, N.P. Sidorov. *Kommentarij k romanu N.C. Chernyshevskogo "Chto delat'?"* Moskva, 1933. – V.G. Smolitskij. *Iz ravelina. O sud'be romana Chernyshevskogo "Cto delat'?"*. Moskva, 1977. – P.A. Suponickaya. Ed. A.A. Demchenko. Saratov, 1985.

[N. Malinin]

**CHULIO CHURENITO** → **NEOBYCHAJNYE POCHOZH-DENIYA CHULIO CHURENITO [THE EXTRAORDI-NARY ADVENTURE OF JULIO JURENITO]**

**CHURCH** → **RELIGION**

**CIDADE E AS SERRAS (A)**

José Maria Eça de Queirós (1845-1900, P)

**Dates:** It was published posthumously in 1901. The proof-correction of about a third of the whole book, usually experienced by Eça as a real reformulation of the text, was carried out after his death by a friend of the author, Ramalho Ortigão. This fact causes major problems in the critical exegesis of the text.

**Summary:** Jacinto, descendant of a noble Portuguese family fled to France after the liberals' victory, lives a life of ease and luxury at number 202, on the Champs Elysées, in 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris\*. He is the perfect decadent *fin de siècle* dandy: modern, rich, wilful, cosmopolitan, erudite and sharp. In his opinion, man is perfectly happy when he is perfectly civilised, that is thoroughly able to enjoy the advantages of progress\* and modernisation. Such a notion of civilisation is, moreover, inseparable from an urban environ-ment\*: Jacinto considers the countryside as a syn-onym for tediousness, backwardness and passivity in the face of the advance of science\* and techni-cal devices. This is the reason why he turns his Parisian mansion, at n. 202, into a surprising shel-ter for a mass of technical innovations, a triumph of mechanisation\*, the materialisation of an Expo-sition Universelle catalogue. In spite of his privi-leges, Jacinto leads a grey existence and a tedious public life, ruled by conventions, exoticisms and eccentricities of the time, dominated by cultural trends and by the loneliness of a world in obvious decline. The voice describing the great city and Jacinto's life belongs to the narrator of the novel, Zé Fernandes, one of Jacinto's colleagues in his former studies, who decides to pay him a visit at n. 202 from Portugal. Zé Fernandes clashes with Jac-into as he is not a part of this decadent world and is