

Power to the Educated Imagination!: Northrop Frye and the Utopian Impulse

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Abstract

Recent threats to programs in the humanities like comparative literature, along with the worldwide financial crisis and the generalized anxieties which have accompanied it, have sparked spirited protests ranging from petitions to the Occupy movement to on-campus demonstrations around the globe. In an earlier moment of social upheaval, the May '68 militants of Paris popularized the slogan, "Power to the imagination!", but in recent years we have seen a waning of this power, such that Fredric Jameson could famously remark that it now seems easier to envision the end of the world than the end of capitalism; "perhaps this is due to some weakness in our imaginations." Educating the imagination, as Northrop Frye argued in the early 1960s, is the vocation of literature, and it makes sense that those wishing to impede the utopian impulse of the aesthetic sphere would also hope for a devaluation of comparative literature, the humanities, and liberal arts in general. Drawing upon Frye's consideration of the educated imagination in connection with utopian critical theory, Robert T. Tally Jr. argues that comparative literary studies is essential for making sense of, and imagining alternatives to, the world we occupy.

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Robert T. Tally Jr.

The celebration of a Northrop Frye centennial cannot but be bittersweet, given the circumstances surrounding the literary humanities in the twenty-first century. Everywhere, it seems, the areas of scholarly inquiry that Frye cherished are under attack at colleges and universities, by politicians eager to belittle what they consider impractical or irrelevant fields of study, by corporate interests aiming to maximize a sort of profitability, and by underfunded administrations desperate to balance budgets. The discipline to which Frye devoted so much loving labour, comparative literature, has been among those hardest hit by the prevailing movements to restrict or eliminate academic programs in the humanities. The University of Toronto's 2010 decision to close the Centre for Comparative Literature, of which Frye was founding director, is perhaps symbolic of this larger pattern. Happily, that decision was reversed, at least temporarily, which may be a sign of hope. In 2011, what Slavoj Žižek has referred to recently as "the year of dreaming dangerously," an apparently utopian spirit animated a number of protests against perceived social, political, and economic injustices. Arguably, the resistance to the closure of comparative literature programs belongs in the same category with such movements as Occupy Wall Street or student protests in Quebec, California,

and elsewhere. For, as Frye's work makes clear, if only in sometimes subtle ways, the utopian impulse animates the study of literature.

In this chapter, I want to examine this aspect of Frye's work by looking at his slender yet powerful 1964 book, *The Educated Imagination*, in the context of a critique of advanced industrial society associated with the Frankfurt School of Social Research, particularly with Herbert Marcuse's critical theory. A literary theorist perhaps best known for his analysis of the Bible's "great code" and a Marxist philosopher and sociologist make for admittedly strange bedfellows, and yet both thinkers call attention to the need for a literary and aesthetic education as a means of combatting the alienated, almost mechanistic condition in which members of modern, Western societies find themselves. Although both Frye and Marcuse were addressing the social and spiritual crises of the 1950s and 1960s, their work retains value today. Recent threats to programs in higher education, along with the worldwide financial crisis and the generalized anxieties which have accompanied it, have sparked spirited protests around the globe. In an earlier moment of social upheaval, the May '68 militants of Paris popularized the slogan "Power to the imagination!", but in recent years we have seen a waning of precisely this power. The postmodern condition, as Fredric Jameson has pointed out, is characterized in part by the diminution of the imagination itself, which is apparent in the inability of even the most hopeful futurists to imagine radical alternatives to the existing social and economic formations. The vocation of literature, in Frye's elegant argument, is to educate the imagination, and it makes sense that those wishing to impede the utopian impulse of the aesthetic sphere would also hope for a devaluation of comparative literature, the humanities, and liberal arts in general. The struggles of the present, twenty-first-century

moment thus recall the earlier situation from which Frye, Marcuse, and others launched their own critiques. One hundred years after Frye's birth and fifty years after *The Educated Imagination's* publication, this ostensibly "old-fashioned" critic and criticism finds new urgency and relevancy for scholars today.

In *The Educated Imagination*, Northrop Frye endeavors to explain the value of literature and literary study in the modern, scientific, and—to borrow an expression from the Frankfurt School—highly rationalized society of the early 1960s. Containing lectures originally delivered in a series of CBC Radio broadcasts in 1962, this marvelous little book was intended for a broad, non-specialist audience. This is wholly appropriate, since Frye's overall argument that literature is not a narrow, disciplinary field, but a critical practice for anyone and everyone to engage in. Literary study allows one to make sense of the world by establishing new or alternative ways of imagining the world. As Frye puts it, "[l]iterature speaks the language of the imagination, and the study of literature is supposed to train and improve the imagination" (134). In Frye's view, the function of literature is to educate the imagination, which would empower it and, in turn, lead individuals to greater fulfillment and happiness, freeing them from the crass materialism, status-seeking, and sterile technocracies of Western civilization at that time. I consider this is a fundamentally utopian vision. Indeed, although they come at it from different perspectives and with different ends, Frye's position complements that of Marcuse, perhaps the greatest utopian thinker of that day. In the writings of both thinkers, the utopian impulse behind art and literature establishes these practices in opposition to the societal status quo.

In the early 1960s, both Frye and Marcuse recognized that this aesthetic sphere was under threat in what Marcuse labeled the “one-dimensional” societies of the post-war West, not to mention the often crippling repression of literary productions elsewhere, and both expressed concern that the individual’s life in such societies was becoming increasingly meaningless. For Frye and Marcuse, the imagination, nourished and instructed by literature and the arts, operated as a force that opposed the basic banality and drab thoughtlessness of the era’s mainstream culture. Dated as their language sometimes sounds, with phrases like “status-symbols” or “the Establishment” occasionally jarring the ears of a reader thoroughly immersed in an unavoidable consumer culture today, Frye’s and Marcuse’s critiques seem to me rather timely, in this new Gilded Age of conspicuous consumption, astonishing disparities in wealth, globalization of capitalism, and the permeation of mass media into nearly all zones of everyday life.

Perhaps it seems overly optimistic to say, but the idea of imagination as a revolutionary force retains value in an era in which real alternatives to the status quo are taken to be, not just impossible, but unimaginable. In an oft-cited comment, Jameson has pointed out that “[i]t seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism.” Less well known is Jameson’s indispensable follow-up to this remark: “perhaps this is due to some weakness in our imaginations” (*Seeds of Time*, xii). In this crucial observation lies the fate of the utopian impulse in the era of globalization, for it must be clear by now that the technological and productive capabilities are already far beyond what the most utopian thinkers of past generations envisioned. In other words, it is not for lack of material or

manpower that the vision of some radically alternative social formation seems so remote, even inconceivable; rather, according to Jameson's formulation, it is the weakness of the imagination that appears to be the greatest obstacle to any utopian project. The predominance of a dystopian sensibility may well be a sign of the times, and Lyman Tower Sargent has suggested that "dystopia became the dominant literary form" of the twentieth century (29). In *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, Tom Moylan has demonstrated the degree to which "critical dystopias" might also display their own utopian impulse, that is, by highlighting the utopian text's important negative or critical function, which is to implicitly or explicitly criticize the status quo. But Jameson has also argued that, with respect to both form and content, dystopias are fundamentally unrelated to utopias (see *Seeds of Time*, 55–57), and in any event the inability to imagine a more positive alternatives may be another way of merely affirming the negativity of actual existing conditions. (Indeed, the classic dystopias of twentieth-century literature—such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or George Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*—were very much critiques of the present, or perhaps "near-future," rather than imaginative projections of a distant, different time.) Hence, if alternatives to the present social configurations are to be envisioned, the imagination itself needs to be empowered, and the utopian impulse of Frye and Marcuse, among others, offers an example of, if not a prescription for, how the educated imagination may function as a critical tool for actual praxis in the twenty-first-century world system. This is not to say that the sufficiently well-read individual will be somehow able to design a feasible utopia. Rather, as I argue below, the individual and collective subjects with empowered imaginations may be better able to interpret, and to change, the actually existing world in which they live.

As Frye makes clear in *The Educated Imagination* and elsewhere, the sort of work performed by literature already projects us beyond the flaming walls of the world (to borrow a phrase from Lucretius) and into an alternate, but no doubt still quite real, realm of the imagination. “Literature belongs to the world man constructs, not to the world man sees; to his home, not his environment” (*Educated Imagination*, 27). Even the most realistic literature is already utopian in its ability to produce alternative realities. Here I am not referring to *utopia* as a genre or literary form, which is the subject of Frye’s great 1965 essay “Varieties of Literary Utopias,” although that study artfully demonstrates the ways that the speculative myth-making in the generic mode of utopia help readers and writers make sense of the limits and possibilities of their own “real world.” But the utopian impulse to which I refer is not confined to imagined societies in other spaces or times. It is just as visible in Dickens’s London, Balzac’s Paris, Melville’s whale-ship, or Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County as in the more traditional utopias embodied in More’s, Bacon’s, Bellamy’s, or Morris’s ideal communities. As I have argued elsewhere, the author of a literary work projects a figurative map or spatial representation of the places, persons, and events depicted, and this literary cartography frequently figures forth what might be considered otherworldly spaces even within the seemingly real world (see my *Spatiality*, 146–154). Moreover, one could say that the elements of utopian or fantastic narrative are necessarily present in the attempt to give shape to the world through literary representation. So the utopian functions and effects of literature may reveal themselves any text. And, not surprisingly, the reader’s own experience of the literary world may take on utopian dimensions not necessarily intended by the author. The utopian impulse, in this sense, forms a sort of subterranean thread linking author to

reader and text, which nevertheless emerges and becomes visible in surprising, sometimes unforeseen ways. As I have suggested more recently in *Utopia in the Age of Globalization*, utopia is not so much the depiction of an ideal place or a future state outside of the spatiotemporal limits of the present status quo as it is the attempt to map the world itself. In seeing the world from this strange perspective, one discovers a reality that is in many respects *more real*, something Frye also underscores and as I discuss below.

Fictional worlds are obviously distinct from the one in which we live. However, it is not merely that the imagination can project an alternative reality or “otherworld” that serves as a critique of the actually existing order. The empowered imagination may be all the more important in its capacity of producing an image of reality itself. As Marcuse puts it,

The truth value of the imagination relates not only to the past but also to the future: the forms of freedom and happiness which it invokes claim to deliver the historical *reality*. In its refusal to accept as final the limitations imposed on freedom and happiness by the reality principle, in its refusal to forget what *can be*, lies the critical function of phantasy ... Art allied itself with the revolution. Uncompromising adherence to the strict truth value of imagination comprehends reality more fully. That the propositions of the artistic imagination are untrue in terms of the actual organization of the facts belongs to the essence of their truth. (*Eros and Civilization*, 148–149)

Note here the reversal of the traditional priority of truth and fiction. From this rejection of the straightforwardly, scientifically factual in favor of a more comprehensive, speculative overview afforded by aesthetic productions, the educated imagination is necessarily critical, in the best sense of the word. The aesthetic dimension, which after all refers to ways of seeing, makes possible vistas that would be otherwise unavailable to the individual.

Coming at it from a somewhat different critical tradition, Frye also underscores this point in *The Educated Imagination*. Although he insists that works of literature maintain their independence and autonomy, remaining obstinately apart from the exigencies of the “real” world, Frye maintains that the “anything goes” realm of the imagination inoculates the careful student of literature from bigotry and closed-mindedness. For instance, to name one of many relevant examples, Frye notes that the study of literature teaches tolerance. “In our imagination our own beliefs are also only possibilities, but we can see the possibilities in the beliefs of others. Bigots and fanatics seldom have any use for the arts, because they’re so preoccupied with their beliefs and actions that they can’t see them also as possibilities” (*Educated Imagination*, 77–78). The vistas and vantages made possible through a careful reading of literary texts inform our perspectives as we deal with our own reality, and through this process, they can also transform the underlying reality itself. Literature at once offers a critical distance from and a visceral engagement with the real world in which we struggle to make sense of things. Ironically, perhaps, the estrangements of literature enable one to critically assess one’s reality, not in spite of the literary world’s unreality, but precisely because of it.

This sort of thinking appears especially timely, given recent events, such as the student protests in Canada, in California, and in the United Kingdom, among other places, not to mention the Occupy Wall Street movement, the demonstrations associated with the Arab Spring and its reverberations, and the protests against austerity measures throughout Europe, to name but a few among the many sites of resistance around the globe in the past few years. In these we might hear distant echoes of Paris and May 1968, where one of the great slogans of the militants, scrawled as graffiti on the wall or enunciated in a political speech, was *L'imagination au pouvoir*, or “Power to the imagination!” In this utopian vision, the empowered imagination might be given free rein to create hitherto unthought social formations, as well as new personal relations, creative forms, ways of living and so on. In the heady moments of this or that protest, such utopian possibilities seem very real indeed.

From another perspective, however, such a view may seem a bit naïve. After all, isn't Disney staffed by “Imagineers”? (Perhaps a sign of the corporate “babble” against which Frye posits literary speech, this ghastly portmanteau word was actually coined by aluminum giant ALCOA in the 1940s.) The power of the imagination now seems more suited to technical, industrial, and entertainment-based applications than to social revolutionary activity. A characteristic aspect of triumphant globalization is that even the individual psyche appears to have become so infused with the late capitalist mode of production that one's own imagination is merely so much raw material to be manufactured into commodities. When Marcuse could express alarm at the efficiency with which rationalized societies absorbed, transformed, and redirected forms of revolt into products for consumption, he had barely scratched the surface. It is not merely

coincidental, then, that vocal leaders in the business community, while championing “efficiency” and “accountability” but also “synergy,” “creative destruction,” “disruptive innovation,” or “strategic dynamism” (to pronounce just a few recent buzzwords), have been among the most full-throated critics of liberal education, of the humanities, and of literature in particular. (To name one recent, highly publicized example, the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia caused a nationwide outcry in 2012 when they attempted to oust the popular president of that school. Among the reported leaders of this effort were a hedge-fund manager and a real-estate developer, and, according to the *Washington Post*, the grounds for termination included the president’s unwillingness to eliminate programs like German and classics in what the Board considered a timely fashion.) The proponents of this sort of bewildering capitalism seem to see little value in the educated imagination, although they may be pleased with the more manageable “skilled” imagination. Tellingly, Frye already noted in *The Educated Imagination* that the study of literature also militates in favor of free speech as opposed to “the speech of the mob,” which “stands for cliché, ready-made idea and automatic babble, and it leads us inevitably from illusion to hysteria” (148).

Frye’s opposition to “the speech of the mob” should not be confused with an elitist denigration of what the Occupy Wall Street protesters called the 99%. On the contrary, given the context, Frye is actually siding with the aims of the people, broadly conceived, as against those who would attempt to manipulate the people using such “automatic babble.” Frye even names two of the most pernicious sources of such degraded speech: “advertisers” and “politicians at election time” (146). Using Orwell’s *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* as a clear example, Frye goes on to suggest that under a totalitarian

regime, “the only way to make tyranny permanent and unshakable [...] is deliberately to debase our language by turning our speech into an automatic gabble” (147). But, lest he be confused with one who simply repeats the “gabble” of Cold War political rhetoric, Frye immediately notes that an anti-Communism expressed in “hysterical clichés” inevitably reproduces the state it seeks to criticize. Or, to put it in Orwell’s terms, the double-speak of anti-Communists becomes just as bad as that of Big Brother’s administration, and both kinds are inimical to free speech. But Frye is not merely discussing the hysteria of political “babble.” By naming advertisers even before politicians in his discussion of the forces which, wittingly or otherwise, oppose free speech, Frye emphasizes the degree to which the language of commerce so frequently finds itself at odds with humanistic or humane discourse. The disruptive innovators or strategic dynamists of corporate boardrooms are undoubtedly the products as well as the producers of such degraded speech, but in their persistent appeal to a kind of “mob,” Frye understands, they effectively undermine both the truth and reality.

In this matter, Frye finds another unlikely ally from the Frankfurt School: Theodor Adorno. In *Minima Moralia*, Adorno takes issue with the “ordinary language” favored by certain mid-century analytic philosophers, but he also teases out a moral and political effect of such an approach. As Adorno puts it, referring to something akin to “the speech of the mob” in Frye,

Shoddiness that drifts with the flow of familiar speech is taken as a sign of relevance and contact: people knows what they want, because they know what other people want. Regard for the object of expression, rather than for

communication, is considered suspicious: anything specific, not taken from pre-existent patterns, appears inconsiderate, a symptom of eccentricity, almost of confusion. Contemporary logic, which makes so much of its clarity, has naïvely adopted this perverted notion of everyday speech. Vague expression permits the hearer to imagine whatever suits him and what he already thinks in any case. Rigorous formulation demands unambiguousness, conceptual effort, from which people are deliberately discouraged, and imposes on them in advance of any content a suspension of all received opinions, and thus a separation from oneself that the hearer violently resists. Only what they do not need to know, they consider understandable; only that which is truly alienated, the word molded by commerce, strikes them as trustworthy. (101, translation modified)

Adorno is here speaking of the need for philosophy to be expressed in a language not already colonized and commodified by commercial interests, which appeal far more to “the speech of the mob” than to the considered criticism of the thoughtful reader. In Adorno, the estrangement of truly philosophical discourse, its very difference from everyday communication, make it far more capable of approaching the truth of social life than the ostensibly more familiar, but actually more alienating, language of radio, television, and other segments of the culture industry.

In Frye, literature—and particularly a multinational, multilingualistic, comparative literature—offers a similarly liberating estrangement from everyday experience, from the increasingly pre-packaged sense of the ordinary in modern industrialized societies. In this, Frye is in the august if somewhat unexpected company of Bertolt Brecht and his

Verfremdungseffekt and the Russian Formalists with their *ostranenie*. In all of these, the mark of an effectively literary experience is visible in its ability to estrange or defamiliarize the “real world” for the reader, viewer, or auditor. As Victor Shklovsky put it in one well known formulation, “[t]he technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged” (11). This by now commonplace understanding of poetic discourse, distinguishable from the more prosaic and informational modes of communicating, as a defamiliarization by which one can perceive and linger about the artificiality or constructedness of the work of art is very much related to Frye’s conception of literary studies as a means of educating the imagination. For, once we encounter the sheer weirdness of literary language, whether in poetry or prose, we find ourselves in a contact zone between real and imagined worlds.

The British fantasist and science-fiction writer China Miéville has argued that the distinction between fantastic or realistic literature does not really hold. Rather, he distinguishes between “the literature of recognition versus that of estrangement” (qtd. in Crown). The latter might include not only works of fantasy but also works like *Moby-Dick*, in which the events and characters are technically possible, but which is nevertheless exceedingly strange. For Miéville, both sorts could do an effective job, but he finds that “there is something more powerful, ambitious, intriguing and radical” about the fiction of estrangement. Miéville’s discussion is a nuanced variation of an earlier defense of fantasy. Although he is defending the fantasy genre or mode from those very Marxist critics who would dismiss fantasy as escapist or reactionary, Miéville draws upon the Marxist critique of capitalism in making his claim that fantasy offers a better

approach than even realism for getting at the truth of the “real world.” After discussing Marx’s own analysis in *Capital* of the fetishism of the commodity and the hidden social relations embedded in the commodity form, Miéville observes that “‘Real’ life under capitalism *is a fantasy*: ‘realism,’ narrowly defined, is therefore a ‘realistic’ depiction of ‘an absurdity which is true,’ but no less absurd for that. Narrow ‘realism’ is as partial and ideological as ‘reality’ itself” (“Editorial Introduction,” 42). Further, Miéville insists, the “apparent epistemological radicalism of the fantastic mode’s basic predicate,” namely that “the impossible is true,” makes it well suited to the task of an oppositional or critical project (42–43). It should be noted, however, that Miéville quite rightly does not claim that fantasy is itself a revolutionary mode or “acts as a guide to political action” (46). The value of fantasy lies less in its politics—which could lie anywhere on the political spectrum—than in its imaginative encounter with radical alterity itself. As Miéville concludes, “the fantastic might be a mode peculiarly suited to and resonant with the forms of modernity. [...] Fantasy is a mode that, in constructing an internally coherent but actually impossible totality—constructed on the basis that the impossible is, for this work, *true*—mimics the ‘absurdity’ of capitalist modernity” (42).

I believe that Miéville’s defense of fantasy or the literature of estrangement, much like Marcuse’s discussion of the utopian impulse in the aesthetic sphere, aligns well with Frye’s understanding of literature and literary studies as modes of educating the imagination. Like these others, Frye recognizes that literature, precisely because it provides this access to an imaginative activity beyond the crude *hic et nunc* of daily, lived experience in modern Western societies, makes possible an encounter with a world *more*

real than the so-called “real world” of advertisers and politicians. In a sense, then, the worlds disclosed through literary studies are utopian after all.

Frye concludes his lectures on the educated imagination with a sort of parable about a contemporary everyman, “an intelligent man [who] has been chasing status symbols his whole life,” but who suddenly discovers that this meaningless world has collapsed around him, for whatever reasons and in whatever ways. “No psychiatrist or clergyman can do him any good, because his state of mind is neither sick nor sinful” (150). No, it is his imagination that is impoverished. Now seeking education as a starving man seeks food, he is able to educate his imagination through a study of literature. The man realizes that what he had thought was the *only* world was really two worlds: “One is all around us, the other is a vision inside our minds, born and fostered by the imagination, yet real enough for us to try to make the world we see conform to its shape” (150–151). And, as Frye hastens to make clear, this is *not* a secondary world in which to escape, but above all the window into a place far more real than the illusory society to which the man was previously limited. The world discovered by the educated imagination is emphatically not illusory, according to Frye. “It is the real world, the real form of human society hidden behind the one we see. It’s the world of what humanity has done, and therefore can do, the world revealed to us in the arts and sciences” (152). With an educated imagination, such a person—and all of us, too—may at last begin to see the real world more clearly, which remains impossible while any of us can still manage to get by with weakened or inactive imaginations in a rather limited, therefore unreal, world that is falsely presented to us *as* the real world by those who would have us employ only the speech of the mob.

The slogan of my title, “Power to the Educated Imagination!”, thus reflects a political agenda, a utopian strategy to achieve a life without anxiety, a life beyond the mind-numbing and banal consumerism affirmed on almost all sides today as our sole *raison d’être*. This is not to say that the existential angst can be entirely dissipated by reading literature or that literary criticism will solve the world’s material problems, of course, but that the educated imagination might offer vistas into possible alternatives to the present situation, in large part by allowing one to see the all-too-real present configuration from fresh perspectives. The crises of the 1960s occasioned in Frye a reconsideration of an earlier moment of twentieth-century madness and, perhaps, an optative or forward-looking glance at the struggles to come. As Michael Dolzani writes elsewhere in this volume, “the 1969 Preface to [a new edition of] *Fearful Symmetry* notes a parallel between the crisis of World War II, to which the book was on one level a response, and a present moment in which ‘reactionary and radical forces alike are once more in the grip of the nihilistic psychosis that Blake described so powerfully in *Jerusalem*.’” But in the paragraph quoted by Dolzani, Frye begins by repeating two lines from Blake, about “the central Cities of the Nations,/ Where Human Thought is crush’d beneath the iron hand of Power,” and Frye ends by noting that, “one of the most hopeful signs [today] is the immensely increased sense of the urgency and immediacy of what Blake had to say” (*Fearful Symmetry* 7). In other words, Frye’s dismay at the existential and cultural crises of the 1960s was tempered somewhat by his conviction that literary study, here figured forth in the poetry of William Blake, might empower the imagination in ways that could enable us to overcome the “nihilistic psychosis” plaguing contemporary society. No less than destructive political ideologies, as Frye had also made

clear, the venal commercialism and anti-intellectual popular culture were also mobilized against the freedoms afforded by literary studies through the production of an *educated imagination*. Frye understood well that, whether felt as an iron hand or as a seductive caress, certain Powers were arrayed against Human Thought.

In *An Essay on Liberation*, published the same year as Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* Preface, Marcuse acknowledged that the limits upon the imagination might be imposed by repressive forces in society or by broader historical constraints or both, but beyond such limits, "there is also the space, both physical and mental, for building a realm of freedom which is not that of the present" and "which necessitates an historical break with the past and present" (viii). Frye's own theory and criticism, as well as the incalculable influence Frye has had over others' critical and literary works, demonstrates that such a break can be described and experienced through the study of literature. Comparative literature in particular, by extending beyond locale, region, or nation and into world literature, is essential for making sense of, and imagining alternatives to, the somewhat illusory "real world" we occupy. In the purposive act of reading literature, of taking products of the imagination seriously, this utopian project is already begun.

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